

**Submission
No 173**

**INQUIRY INTO THE MUSIC AND ARTS ECONOMY IN
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: The Newsagency

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I am Alison Avron, a singer and piano player. I also started and run the music venue, The Newsagency in Sydney. What started out as a 40 capacity venue because I need a place to launch my own EP, has increased to a 100 cap venue. It is completely independent, DIY and community focused.

I am proud to run this venue which has given a stage to some of the best artists in the country. Many of them who had their first show on our stage have gone on to win ARIAS, toured nationally and internationally and produced albums of critical acclaim. As an artist, I have been given opportunities to perform around the country, speak on discussion panels and record with some top notch producers because of how The Newsagency has broadened my networks. I have also learnt many skills in event management, curating and presenting music that I wouldn't have had if it weren't for starting the venue.

Originally I was running the place out of an old newsagent which had an apartment out of the back. It worked on a venue-for-hire system and unfortunately doing Airbnb, was the only way to keep the music side of things afloat. I have made minimal profit for the last six years and have basically run the place on the smell of an oily rag, a couple of grants and the kindness of strangers.

I have now moved to a bigger and better location, with very supportive landlords, but this comes with it's own new set of issues and challenges. The most glaring one being that it is near impossible to get council approval because of the location/zoning I am in. While it might seem better for me to just move to a place that has an existing bar license and council approval, I would then be faced with noise complaints and renovation costs that would send me bankrupt. I feel damned if I do, and damned if I don't.

The biggest challenge I face is cash flow. What would really help is if I didn't have to match the funds that are up for grabs with grants. It makes no sense to ask people in the arts industry who are already so very underfunded to cough up \$50,000 just to get \$50,000. It would also help immensely if councils treated art institutions as a case by case situation. We are not here to cause trouble, we're here to build community and experiences for people. If selling liquor is how we are going to keep afloat, then let us do that without treating us like beer barns that don't serve alcohol responsibly.

I want to keep this venue alive because of what it contributes to the arts community and the people who come out to experience it. As an example, just last month I paid approximately \$13,000 to artists alone - I'd love to be able to increase that and make it a regular thing. I see this economic stimulus as how I would help the government.

Unfortunately with debilitating council approval, legislative rules around selling liquor and increasing rental prices, I fear that after this year I will have to shut my doors. Doing something for the love and the street credit just isn't enough. It would be a shame to think that my hard work, skills and experience into the venue and the community surrounding it would have to be transferred to a job in the corporate sector - which is where I feel my options are leaning towards with the current lack of funding and appreciation of the arts in NSW.