

**Submission  
No 169**

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

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To Whom It May Concern:

I grew up in Sydney and spent my 20s enjoying all the city had to offer. I moved away some years ago and lived in Melbourne and I have spent the last few years living in various countries overseas. I visit Sydney regularly.

To begin with, I made several observations when I lived in Melbourne:

Firstly: Melbourne *always* has a large number of events happening. There is always a huge variety of choices of things to do whether they be sports, arts, cultural events, music or more. When you go to the websites that list all events in the city it is an endless list. If my friends with kids wanted something kid-friendly to do, we could look and there'd be a number of unique temporary things happening at any given weekend or holiday that were fun things we could take them too. When I would come up to Sydney and look at the equivalent websites for Sydney there often wasn't much on at all. If my sister and I would look at things to do with kids in summer the options listed would almost always be: the beach, the zoo, Luna Park, the Powerhouse Museum (all permanent options). There would occasionally be a kids' play. Often there was just nothing else. I came to feeling that Sydney relies too much on the beaches and the Harbour and is not cultivating a vibrant city atmosphere. It is not cultivating an environment where pop-up events are easy to plan and implement and thus happen all the time. It is making everything too difficult. Sure there are events like Vivid or the various wine or jazz festivals - but these are far and few in between. Sydney lacks any spontaneity.

Secondly, Melbourne has endless cute and quirky little bars and restaurants everywhere. I have had friends who work managing and owning bars and restaurants in Sydney come down to Melbourne and when I took them to my favourite joints they would tell me that this would never be legal in Sydney. That these places were breaking all sorts of endless rules that Sydney has and would never get off the ground. And yet they run perfectly well in Melbourne seemingly without any safety or other issues. So it would seem that one of the things hindering Sydney's small bar scene is that it is too strictly regulated and it strangles the opportunities that are out there.

As for now, currently I am living in Athens but prior to that I was in Tokyo and I have moved around Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and LATM for the last few years for my job. I meet many many people and travellers as I do this. And sadly, in the last few years, when I meet people who have been to Sydney they have all told me the same thing: it is beautiful, but incredibly boring and restrictive and they won't be back. Ever. This is devastating to me to hear. I am proud of my city and my home. However it is undeniable that the vibrancy and fun of the city has been choked out of it. It is no longer an international city of note. The nightlife is virtually non-existent. It is bogged down in rules and restrictions, it is hard to find fun venues, and in the centre of the city it is largely turning into endless real estate with no LIFE to break it up.

Just a few nights ago I was ranted at for *two hours* by a man who went with a friend to Sydney over the New Years break. He said it was the most boring place he had ever visited and a huge mistake and he will never be back. This is someone who owns some of the most successful high-end bars and restaurants in Athens and Mykonos. He told me about their efforts to find interesting places to go out in the afternoon and evening to meet people and their complete failure to find many of these places at all. About all of the crazy restrictive

drinking rules. About the fact that they couldn't move venues. On New Years Eve after their boat ride finished after the midnight fireworks they could not go to any bars or clubs. They were invited to a house party but it was almost immediately closed down by the police. They were invited to a second house party which was also closed by police. They ended up alone in their hotel room because there was nowhere else to go. This is on New Years Eve. These are people in their 30s. They could not find a place just to go out and have a few drinks, meet people, have fun, on the biggest night of the year because Sydney is shut down. What a disgrace. What defence could I offer? It has nice beaches and a nice harbour and occasionally some great fireworks but not much else at current time.

I have friends who work in bars, restaurants and in music. All of their careers have been negatively impacted by the choices of the government to close Sydney down at night. Venues have closed, restaurants too. DJs and musicians have barely anywhere to play anymore. An industry is being eradicated. Something that makes our city a great place to be is being ground out of it.

I have spent a lot of time in some of the greatest cities in the world: New York, San Francisco, London, Barcelona, Madrid, Tokyo, Hong Kong... Something all of these places have in common is a vibrant nightlife. Restaurants and bars and cafes at every turn. In New York you can step out of your door at any time of any night and find something to do. In Tokyo you can go to endless bars, clubs and restaurants at all hours every night. People from all over the world are drawn to these cities and have a wonderful time. They come back again and again.

The solution to reducing violence in Australia is not to lock people in their houses at night and remove any fun and vibrancy from the city. It is not to give people as their only option a bunch of casinos (which is another factor which is utterly revolting in itself). Sure, if no one is out ever then no one will be in a hospital for drunken idiocy - but that is not a reasonable solution. You can't punish everyone for the actions of a few. You cannot destroy the culture of a city because some people mix steroids with amphetamines and go about punching kids at 9pm at night. What is needed? Well a cultural change for sure. Smaller venues are more controllable than large ones and these should be encouraged. A push for more and better food to be available at all times in venues which serve alcohol (this is something you see in Tel Aviv for example). Better public transport and taxi options. Better policing. Harsher punishments for violent behaviour. Cultural/social shaming of violent behaviour (something that can only happen gradually and with time). Take it to the public: what can help here? How can we reduce these issues? In addition, government needs to stop pandering to real estate developers, casino owners, and the push of an ageing baby boomer demographic to make inner city areas with a long history as entertainment precincts to be "quiet" and "peaceful" at all times - because this is a ridiculous expectation.

Please, fix this huge problem you have created. Damage has already been done to Sydney's reputation internationally - all the pretty tourism ads in the world can't fix that right now. You need to rip out these laws and start again. Build Sydney as a true international city with a vibrant culture and endless entertainment options. Build up the lanes. Encourage smaller venues to pop up. Allow people choices - to move around, to bar hop, to drink when they want, to drink what they want, to have a house party now and then - particularly when it is a holiday. Make it easier to plan and execute events of all sizes so that there is more to do for people of all ages - from kids to the elderly. Foster an environment of creative events and ideas so that the city has some spontaneity and fun. Allow people to feel that they can have

fun and experience new things without everything being so utterly controlled at all times. This will benefit tourism, hospitality, entertainment and the people at large. Learn the lessons of the great cities of the world and apply them and make Sydney one of the best places to live and visit in the world.

Thank you for listening, now it is time to act.

Kind Regards,

Susannah Reed