

**Submission
No 292**

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

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Date received: 27 February 2018

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Submission to the Inquiry into the Music and Art Economy in New South Wales

I have been a community broadcaster presenting and producing radio shows for over 10 years on stations including 2RRR, 2SER, Eastside FM and Radio Skid Row. Shows I have been involved with have been focussed on arts and local music, giving exposure to community-based events and local artists.

I have been concerned about the state of the arts and music scenes in Sydney for a number of years. I have seen many venues and small galleries close, often as result of an officious regulatory environment.

I am also concerned about where government support for arts goes. There seems to be much funding for elitist arts and music, such as ballet, opera and classical music, while music and art that is able to resonate with the broader community is left to fend for itself. In other words, if opera were treated like rock and had to pay its own way, it would not survive. Popular music struggles because it does have to pay its own way while coming up against a hostile regulatory environment.

While the elitist art forms have dedicated and protected venues, including the Opera House, AGNSW and the City Recital Hall to name a few, operators of more popular music venues have to compete with urban developers who seem to have the support of local authorities. Not only that, they also have to deal with hostile new neighbours. These people have moved into the area because of the vibrancy generated by the arts and music scene, and after settling in, want to change the environment to suit their own needs. The demise of the Annandale Hotel is a case in point. That hotel had been pumping out sweaty rock for decades, but new neighbours put an end to that.

In my opinion, Sydney compares unfavourably to other cities in the country. In Melbourne for instance, where there is conflict between developers and long established venues, the courts have been sympathetic to needs of venue operators. The Evelyn Hotel in North Fitzroy is another case in point. My understanding is that a developer built a block flats next to the hotel and took noise issues to court. The developer's case was rejected by the court. I don't know of case where that has happened in Sydney.

To conclude, the New South Wales government needs to do the following:

- Recognise that there is an arts and music economy and it exists in the suburbs, not just around the Opera House and AGNSW.
- Provide legal support when venue and gallery operators face regulatory hurdles.
- Recognise the historical context of the arts and music economy by taking a less developer-friendly approach to urban renewal.
- Provide funding to grass roots arts and music communities, especially important because the Australia Council is only interested in funding big ticket items.
- Appoint a dedicated arts minister – not just tack it on to a minister's list of more important portfolios.
- Take pride in and recognise the achievements of our artists and musicians.