

**Submission  
No 251**

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

**Organisation:** SongsOnStage  
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I am Russell Neal and I run SongsOnStage, an organisation dedicated to giving songwriters and other singers/musicians the opportunity to perform in public and improve their stagecraft and musicianship. I have been organising and hosting Songwriters/OpenMic nights, Concerts, Contests and other shows for 10 years. I have organised up to 85 shows in a single month, but now average under 40. Meanwhile the mailing list for my weekly SongsOnStage Newsletter has grown to over 3,350 email addresses! There are thousands of talented people out there wanting to perform, but a terrible shortage of venues.

Many live music venues have closed over the past 10 years, usually due to noise complaints or fire safety issues. Rather than letting these often iconic venues close, the NSW Government could subsidise the venues to noise-proof or improve fire safety.

Pubs and Clubs make most of their money from gambling. Clubs have a legal responsibility to return some of their income to their members and the community at large, but Pubs have no such responsibility. It would be great if the NSW Government gave some incentive to both types of venue to invest more in live music, e.g. poker machine tax breaks for venues with live music.

I frequently approach Pubs, offering to put live music on, and many have told me they don't have live music because the licensing is too expensive. The NSW Government could look at ways to make this more affordable, also perhaps subsidising APRA payment.

The reason why many venues don't want live music is that it costs them money and they don't see a return on that. People used to go to live music venues in 1970/80s, but have now got out of the habit. A government campaign to get people to venues might raise awareness, also a return to the regular gig guides on radio and newspapers (not just street press).

I am happy to be contacted to discuss this further, I have many more ideas.

Thanks and regards

Russell Neal