

**Submission  
No 330**

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

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To the honorable members of the NSW Parliament,

I hail from Seattle, WA and I had the great honor of visiting your beautiful country in November and December 2017. I came to Sydney by invitation, and with great interest, because I have heard of the struggles the music and nightlife industries are having there. I write to you now, in response to your inquiry into the music, arts and night time economy in New South Wales.

As background, I spent many years in Seattle founding arts and music organizations and producing concerts for young people. I founded the Old Fire House, a creative commons in Redmond, WA that serves tens of thousands of young people every year, and is the longest running all ages venue in the Pacific Northwest: <http://www.redmond.gov/cms/one.aspx?objectId=4201>

I also co-founded the Vera Project: <https://theveraproject.org/>, ran a arts program in Los Angeles for gang-affected young people, and then spent five years working in Seattle's prestigious historic theatres at Seattle Theatre Group <http://www.stgpresents.org>.

Throughout my career, I produced more than 1,000 all ages shows, and I was very involved in engaging with local government to advocate for changing laws and legislation that were thwarting the growth of our music and nightlife economy.

(While I submit this statement to you as an individual, because much of my work in this field occurred before 2014, I must disclose that I was appointed to be the Director of the Office of Film + Music for the City of Seattle in February 2014. I was recently re-appointed by our newly elected Mayor Jenny Durkan, and I serve on the Mayor's Cabinet. The mission of the Office of Film + Music is to grow the creative economy equitably, centered in film and music. At the heart of our mission is keeping filmmakers and musicians employed, and the ecosystem that surrounds them stable, and offering accessible opportunity. The City has a complementary Office of Arts & Culture, that has a dedicated funding stream, and is the funding arm of the City for artists and non-profit organizations, and focuses on arts education and cultural development. )

In Seattle, we call ourselves the 'City of Music', a brand we embrace with great pride and enthusiasm. It hasn't always been this way, however.

Until about a decade ago, in Seattle, local government and the nightlife industry had very adversarial relationships, forged over many years of distrust of each other. A series of enforcement actions, some of which were found by the courts to be unjust, were brought against nightlife proprietors. There was a Teen Dance Ordinance, that prevented young people from coming together for the purposes of dancing and listening to music. There was a poster ban, and undercover stings at bars and nightlife establishments. Clubs were shuttered and music scenes were significantly impacted, and local government was blamed.

Then the music and nightlife industry organized. They formed organizations, including the Teen Dance Ordinance Resistance, and JAMPAC (Joint Artist and Music Political Action Committee). They got a rock star involved, who ultimately hired an attorney to help get laws that oppressed

the music and nightlife industries repealed. They began throwing their political weight around, and endorsing political candidates. Soon, they'd become a force to be reckoned with.

By 2005, political leaders realized and responded to these pressures, bringing about waves of change. Instead of trying to stop these important cultural and economic drivers, in a city known for its music and culture, political leaders chose to embrace the nightlife and music industries. In 2005, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels launched the Office of Film + Music.

A 2008 Advisory Group comprised of Office of Film + Music leadership, and music and nightlife industry leaders, came together to envision what a healthy music culture and economy could look like. An economic impact study revealed that the local music industry was much more economically important than had been widely known. This gave traction to the effort to launch a new strategy and in 2010, the City, in collaboration with music industry leaders, launched the City of Music vision, a 10 year strategy to make Seattle a true 'City of Musicians. City of Live Music. City of Music Business.'

As part of this new initiative, the City of Seattle appointed and empowered a 21 person Music Commission, 10 of whom are appointed by City Council, and 11 of whom are appointed by the Mayor. This commission is comprised of music business professionals, nightlife proprietors, working musicians, entertainment attorneys, and music teachers. Now, instead of having this sector organizing outside of and against government forces, they are voluntarily collaborating with and providing counsel to local government, creating a much healthier environment for both music, nightlife, and politics.

Now, eight years into the City of Music strategy, relationships between local government and the music and nightlife industries has changed markedly. The City makes proactive efforts to constructively work with small businesses, and the entire music and nightlife ecosystem, to troubleshoot and problem solve issues in real time, not waiting for the cumulative impact of multiple situations to amplify. Additionally, across government, music is embraced as important part of our culture and economy.

This shift in operating strategy from the City, has encouraged the music and nightlife industry to work closely with politicians to grow the creative economy, fortify our cultural fabric and create equitable opportunities for aspiring creatives.

Examples of this include:

- **City of Music Career Days:** Now in its seventh year, City of Music Career Day brings together dozens of local music industry professionals to keynote, panel and mentor hundreds of high school students interested in a career in the music industry. In 2018, based on the success of this model, the City launched three more Career Days: Literary Career Day, Film Career Day and Visual Arts Career Day.

- **Music Safety Summits:** 4 years of convening law enforcement and medical professionals, with EDM (Electronic Dance Music) producers and promoters, harm reduction experts, private security and public health officials to increase harm reduction in a dance music scene that is pervasive in our region

**Joint Enforcement Team (JET):** As part of a larger Nightlife Initiative, designed to balance safety with liveability, this interagency team works together to provide enforcement through education, always with a proactive approach, attempting to help businesses address issues as they arise, and find a successful solution, avoiding enforcement action as much as possible.

#### **Monthly Security Meetings**

SPD (Seattle Police Dept) meets monthly with private club security representatives. There is a level of trust and candor in these meetings, that allows for a good flow of information both ways. This has aided security teams in enhancing club safety and aided law enforcement in solving crimes.

#### **Monthly Creative Economy Mixers**

Office of Film + Music, in partnership with three film and music organizations, produces a monthly all ages Mixer, bringing together film and music industry professionals for a monthly networking and professional development event. This event is in its 9<sup>th</sup> year.

#### **Quarterly Nightlife Advisory Group Meetings**

Office of Film + Music Nightlife Business Advocate convenes nightlife proprietors quarterly to stay abreast of industry trends and issues, and respond, in a timely fashion, to new issues.

#### **Experience The City of Music Initiative**

Launched in 2012, this initiative is targeted at tourists. Every passenger coming through Sea Tac Airport should be exposed to local music in some way. Live musicians play throughout the airport, two curated visual art Seattle music displays are installed, and overhead airport announcements are made by some of Seattle's most renowned musicians.

#### **Creative Economy Study**

Seattle has a Creative Economy Study underway, led by the Office of Film + Music, in collaboration with the Office of Economic Development and the Office of Arts & Culture. This study seeks to gather qualitative and quantitative data that informs the City on the economic and social impacts of our local creative economy. This Creative Economy Study aims to identify areas of focus where the City can make the deepest impact with limited resources.

As evidenced by the examples listed above, the City combines a City of Music strategy with our Nightlife Initiative Strategy to really offer a comprehensive suite of services that address the

most salient and pressing needs in these sectors, while supporting business retention and growth.

To a one, these efforts involve engaging private sector and non-profit representatives, concerned with the holistic health of the industries they work in, working collaboratively with City officials, to contribute labor, connections and advice that moves these industry sectors forward.

Combining a public safety approach with an economic development approach, has allowed Seattle to grow and retain a vibrant live music scene, encourage best practices in our nightclubs and music venues, enforce selectively and only on those who refuse to comply with local regulations, and take a proactive approach to the industries.

Tourists love our music scene and nightlife industry, and it ranks very high in tourist surveys, and is clearly a compelling motive for people to visit Seattle. Now, with a vibrant and safe nightlife industry and music scene, our local corporations use this as a talent recruiting lure. And our locals have a music and nightlife scene that allows them to experience music, have neighbourhood options for entertainment, and ultimately, civic pride in their government.

Seattle is a city that is committed to inviting everyone to the table, and raising the tide for all boats. To this end, our work has a deep race and social justice focus, and we implement significant efforts to make sure that all aspects of our city are truly welcoming, and that we are outreaching to historically marginalized communities.

In this fast growing city, where affordability has become a challenge for many, and issues common to gentrification and increased density are on the rise, we will continue to focus our efforts on championing small business, preserving historic venues, responding to the voices of those who are most vulnerable, nimbly trouble shooting and problem solving, while championing the success of the industries that contribute so much to our civic identity.

Some of the policy initiatives we are considering in 2018 include Agent of Change legislation, as well as Extended Hours policies. With a new Mayor in office, we will launch our refreshed nightlife initiative by the end of Q1.

When I was in Sydney three months ago, I loved your city, and had an absolutely wonderful time there. That said, staying in Kings Cross, and going out every night with colleagues from around the world, the lack of nightlife was palpable. Sydney had some things that Seattle still dreams of : 24 hour coffee shops, bodegas, kebab and meat pie vendors. Much as I loved the late night street scene there, and it did feel entirely safe, it lacked music. Your incredibly beautiful city could be so much more alive, while growing your night time economy.

As you all navigate the challenges and delicacies of the inquiry into the arts and music economy, I hope that the lessons we have learned in Seattle, may be of some value to you. We have found it to be far more effective, and economically lucrative, to connect and convene

industry leaders as thought partners, in navigating the complicated waters that are the music industry, the creative economy, and the nightlife industry.

My colleagues and I work hard to stay abreast of relevant trends and best practices, and we are happy to share these learnings with the NSW Parliament or the City of Sydney, if they would be of value.

From Seattle, my colleagues and I salute the good work that you are doing to implement the Government response to the NSW Night Time Economy Roundtable Action Plan. I hope that your work is progressing in a way that fortifies and sustains a diverse and vibrant music and arts culture and economy throughout NSW.

Please do not hesitate to call on me, if I can be helpful as you move forward with your inquiry.