

**Submission  
No 257**

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

**Organisation:** Ice Bank Hospitality

**Date received:** 28 February 2018

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Email to: [portfoliocommittee6@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:portfoliocommittee6@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Tim Philips-Johansson & Linn Philips-Johansson

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28.02.2018

To: The Honorable Paul Green, MLC, Chair

## **Re: Submission to the inquiry into the music and arts economy in New South Wales**

When my husband and I opened Bulletin Place in December 2012 it was the first bar to focus on seasonal produce. We have a list of five cocktails that change daily, based on what fruits are in season and best available in market. We have a passion for collecting rare single malt whiskies and pride ourselves on being one of the few cocktail bars in Australia serving a range of hand-picked and unique whiskies from around the world. Our goal has always been, since opening, to create a safe and enjoyable environment for people to socialise in, with a high level of customer engagement.

Bulletin Place is a genuine small bar with a 50 person maximum. It prides itself on establishing a refined drinking culture in Australia, and by our choice, not legislation, the maximum group size we allow is 8 pax. This is a self-imposed measure to ensure that Bulletin Place can meet our exacting customer service standards.

Our bar is table service only, which enables a much higher level of service and allows us to know exactly what people have consumed in our venue and therefore mitigates the need to have to remove anyone for intoxication. This also ensure all patrons have a glass of water in front of them, as well as their alcoholic drink.

Bulletin Place is an award-winning cocktail bar, we have been awarded *Bartender Magazine's* National Cocktail Bar of the Year four years in a row, and *Time Out's* highly regarded Bar of the Year in 2014. As co-owner of Bulletin Place, I'm one of the world's most recognised bartenders, and the only Australian to have ever won the prestigious global bartending competition World Class. Not to mention, Bulletin Place has been listed in the World's 50 Best Bars four years in a row. But despite being recognised as an institution in Australia and beyond, we have seen a continuing decline in patronage, largely due to reduced foot traffic in the area.

On one hand the Government says it wants to support smaller venues like mine by increasing the small bar patron limit to 100, and reducing some of the red tape, this is a sensible move and I welcome it, but on the other hand we face the much bigger issue of restrictions that are directly impacting our operation and hampering the growth of our industry. Meanwhile, friends of mine running cocktail bars in Melbourne report that the scene is thriving and the rates of antisocial behaviour and violence continue to go down.

We employ eight staff members and not only face the struggles affecting all small business operators but also the heavy liquor licensing restrictions that were introduced in 2014. Not only small bars in the area affected by the lock-out laws in various ways, but also our neighboring restaurants, late-night food vendors and cafes too. This greatly reduces passing foot traffic for all our businesses.

When you look at the practical impacts of the restrictions there are some bizarre outcomes, especially given we are a bar that specialises in cocktails and spirits. I've lost count of the number of times I've had to explain to tourists that after midnight they cannot drink a single malt whiskey on the rocks, but they can drink the same whiskey if it's mixed with coke, or in a listed cocktail. If a patron wants a cocktail that isn't on an existing printed menu at 12.01am, we have to refuse them. The same is true if they want a classic cocktail such as a Martini, Negroni or Old Fashioned, because they contain a product with more than 50% alcohol-by-volume (ABV).

Bulletin Place has a small bar license and is allowed to operate until two am, however in circumstances where we are one of few bars in the area with a late license, we don't want to jeopardise our broad offering by being a destination bar for people 'desperate for a drink'. Thus, we have decided to not operate past midnight as we don't want our prime offering, and the refined drinking culture we are striving to establish, to be affected.

We believe that if the city wide restrictions were relaxed, patrons would return to the precinct and this would give us the option of later trade, with our preferred clientele.

I fully support the Government's intention to reduce alcohol-related violence – any patron who causes trouble and any operator that allows it to happen on their premises should be severely punished. However I am at a complete loss to understand how these restrictions mitigate these problems, particularly in safe and smaller venues which have never experienced violence or antisocial behaviour. This in turn puts people off going out in the city, and our city needs all the support it can get to attract patrons.

The current legislation for small bars in NSW is affecting our ability to operate and are detrimental to the future of my beloved cocktail bar. While these laws remain in place the whole industry faces an uncertain future. Your support for these changes would demonstrate support for low-risk, responsible operators and show that Sydney is open for business again. I've also written directly to the Premier's Office.

I look forward to discussing this further with you and hearing about the support you can offer me in reversing oppressive licensing restrictions on my small business.

Best regards,

Tim Philips-Johansson & Linn Philips-Johansson  
Co-owners, Bulletin Place - 10-14 Bulletin Pl, Sydney NSW 2000