

**Submission
No 258**

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

Organisation: Time Out Australia

Date received: 28 February 2018

Email to: portfoliocommittee6@parliament.nsw.gov.au
FAO: The Honorable Paul Green, MLC, Chair
Date: 28.02.2018

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

Dear Sir

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to NSW Parliament in relation to the Music and Arts Economy.

Background on Time Out

[Time Out](#) was founded in 1968 in London with the mission to inspire city dwellers to get out and about in their city, and to experience all it had to offer. [Time Out Australia](#) launched with the same mission in Sydney in 2007.

As an entertainment planning tool that works actively to inspire audiences to leave home and discover their city, we have a deep understanding of audience motivations and processes when it comes to making that decision. In recent years, Time Out has started surveying its audiences in different markets, to better understand how audience feels about the city in which they live.

Time Out Global Research

The Time Out City Life Index 2018 polled 15,000 people in 32 cities internationally to discover how they feel about the place they live. Questions related to aspects of city life including affordability, happiness, dining, mobility and engagement with live performance and arts and culture. Ranked ultimately according to how exciting city residents believe their city to be, Melbourne came in fourth (behind Chicago, Porto and New York) while **Sydney ranked 28th** (only Dubai, Boston, Singapore and Istanbul were deemed less exciting). In 2017, 18 cities were polled and Sydney landed in a similarly low position place, 16th.

Sydney locals polled were less than enthusiastic about the city's eating and drinking options, its culture, its expense and its liveability.

Before and after Callinan

Callinan's review noted that elements on the lockout strategy had worked (reductions in violence) but that there had been unintended consequences on other aspects of the night-time economy including

live music, and small businesses that service the night, including small bars and late-night food offerings.

Reforms introduced to address these consequences have had minimal impact. Here are some observations:

- a) Sydney's ranking on the Time Out City Index has been relatively stagnant.¹
- b) Time Out maintains the only city Bar Guide which is completed on an annual basis, There have been multiple closures of bars and restaurants particularly in the lockout zones, year on year.
- c) While the small bar changes post-Callinan were a step in the right direction, they have not materially altered the landscape due to policing and planning challenges. The submission to this inquiry from Sydney Small Bars gives more detail of these challenges.

It is the view of Time Out that the main reason the reforms have not worked is that lockout has had a lasting impact on how audience thinks about and plans their going out behaviour in the affected precincts. Audiences have now deserted those precincts in favour of others (Newtown for example) and won't easily return.

Restoring vibrancy

The Committee would be interested in understanding comparable cities that performed well in the Time Out City Life Index. These were:

- Chicago
- Melbourne
- Madrid

It is worth dwelling on Chicago and the facets of the survey that saw it take the top rank two years running. These were:

- An outstanding food and bar scene (ranked 2nd in the world)
- A deep and rich cultural offering (ranked 4th in the world)
- Friendly citizens (ranked 9th in the world)
- Affordability, with 81% of those surveyed saying they were satisfied with the value proposition
- Liveability including transport (ranked 5th best in the world)

Similar factors saw Melbourne and Madrid rate well.

¹ It is acknowledged that the sample of cities in the survey year to year was different i.e 18 vs 32. Over time, movement on this index will be a quantitative measure of improvement in Sydney's liveability.

Learnings we take from the survey and the cities that perform well include:

- The State should recognise and treat the night as an economic asset.
- Audience behaviour should be centred around arts and culture, with food and beverage the support act to cultural activities. A stand alone food and drink offer, or food and drink consumed as entertainment is one dimensional and limiting.
- Create the wider environmental conditions for cultural activities, eg cheap/free public transport.
- Affordability is a key consideration to engagement by citizens with their city.

Recommendations

We make the following recommendations:

1. **(Night-time Ministerial oversight)** Having had regard to the jurisdictions and frameworks that need to be coordinated, Time Out supports the idea of ministerial oversight of the night in its own right (like the night mayor model from Amsterdam, but at State level). This should include live music, entertainment and the performing arts, and with the remit to coordinate the NSW government's approach across multiple sectors and government agencies. For example, aligning the strategies and action plans of multiple LGAs where appropriate, working with Police, Health and Transport to ensure a safe, diverse and vibrant nightlife returns to Sydney and the regions beyond.
2. **(City vibrancy)** Restoring vibrancy to lockdown affected areas will be a 3 - 5 year process. Multiple initiatives should be considered here, such as:
 - a. those being affected at City of Sydney level through grant programs for night time events. The State could consider collaboration or symbiotic co-investment;
 - b. The Museum "Lates" project has been a success in the UK. State administered assets like Museums could be co-ordinated on occasion to open up public institutions after hours en masse (combined with off-peak cheap/free public transport), in collaboration with the F&B sector, say once a month.
3. **(Creativity as an economic driver)** With due respect, the language of the inquiry as the "music and arts economy" is dated in comparison to other jurisdictions. The UK, the State of Victoria, Wellington in NZ, Singapore, all markets with which we need to be competing, see creativity more broadly, and frame it as an economic driver. There are numerous examples

of success where cultural institutions are meaningfully collaborating with industry and producing outstanding results that give rise to economic benefit, innovation, and most importantly jobs. We are rapidly falling behind.

Perceived with that ambition, restoring Sydney's night-time ecology would itself become a priority.

Conclusion

The Time Out City index points to a hard truth – Sydneysiders do not find their city exciting.

Comfortable? Yes.

Picturesque? Definitely.

Inspiring? No.

Inspiration is the precursor to creativity. Let's re-discover it, because when combined with the city's natural beauty, financial markets, size, and most important, the talents of our people, NSW has the potential to genuinely be both the region's creative leader, and a better place to live.

I am willing to elaborate in person should I be called to give evidence.

Yours faithfully,

Michael Rodrigues

Managing Director, Time Out Australia