

**Submission  
No 281**

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

**Organisation:** Wollongong City Council

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The Hon Paul Green MLC  
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Dear Mr Green

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

Wollongong City Council welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the *Inquiry into the Music and Arts Economy in NSW*.

Wollongong is a city transformed. Traditionally known for its world class steel making and coal making industries, Wollongong is today an important knowledge services centre, a globally connected international trade hub and a leading university city.

Wollongong is NSW's 3rd largest city, approximately 80km south of Sydney and is the regional capital of the Illawarra region, contributing around 61% of the Illawarra's \$20B economy. The Wollongong City Centre or 'Metro Wollongong' plays an important role as an administrative centre for the Illawarra region, with over 20,000 people employed in the city core.

The Wollongong City Centre has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, seeing \$1.3B in investment and a further \$300M in the pipeline. As a result of this investment, forecasts predict a 150% increase in the city centre population over the next 2-3 years.

### *Wollongong City Council's Cultural Plan*

Wollongong City Council recognises the importance of a strong Cultural Plan, and that a range of activities and experiences are important in terms of achieving and maintaining a creative and vibrant city.

In 2014, Wollongong City Council endorsed the Cultural Plan 2014 – 2018, incorporating the:

- Evening Economy Action Plan
- Live Music Action Plan
- Creative Spaces Strategy
- Public Art Strategy.

As a result, Wollongong's Evening Economy has also undergone a considerable transformation. The city's dining culture has thrived, with 65 new small bars and cafes opening over the past 3 years which has significantly activated the city centre and made the city an enjoyable place for people to come and visit.

The approach of improving culture in Wollongong has seen noteworthy safety improvements. The latest crime statistics show Wollongong's improvement in the rate of alcohol related assaults - down 12.5% on average annually over the past 5 years. These results have created a City Centre that is more desirable than just a place to work. With apartments under construction currently in the city centre B3 and B4 zones it is estimated that the city centre population will increase by 150%, due to a renewed interest in inner city living, to the rapid urbanisation of the evening economy and subsequent safety improvements of Wollongong's core.





# **Inquiry into the Music & Arts Economy in NSW**

**Submission by  
Wollongong City Council  
February 2018**

# 1. Executive Summary

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In 2014, Wollongong City Council implemented the *Cultural Plan 2014 – 2018*, incorporating the *Evening Economy Action Plan 2014-18*, *Live Music Action Plan 2014-18*, *Creative Spaces Strategy and Public Art Strategy* which contain a number of actions to achieve and maintain a creative and vibrant city delivering cultural, social and economic benefits.

Wollongong's City Centre has a strong evening economy which attracts people to visit, socialise, eat and listen to live music. The Wollongong City Centre is fast gaining a reputation as a 'foodie's paradise' with over 65 new small bars and cafes opening over the last three years. It is also becoming an increasingly pivotal employment hub further highlighted with 15% employment growth over the past 5 years.

The approach of improving culture in Wollongong has seen significant safety improvements. The latest crime statistics show Wollongong's improvement in the rate of alcohol related assaults - down 12.5% on average annually over the past 5 years. These results have also created a city centre that is more desirable than just a place to work. With apartments under construction currently in the city centre B3 and B4 zones it is estimated that the city centre population will increase by 150%, due to a renewed interest in inner city living, to the rapid urbanisation of the evening economy and subsequent safety improvements of Wollongong's core.

This submission makes a number of recommendations which could be implemented to further improve Governments approach to the role of arts and culture in local economies:

1. The NSW Night Time Economy Taskforce expands its focus beyond Sydney to encompass Regional Capital Cities including the City of Wollongong
2. The NSW Night Time Economy Taskforce involves the NSW Night Time Economy Councils' Committee (NTECC)
3. The NSW Government implement a proactive approach to entertainment noise in existing planning regulation through the introduction of 'agent of change' provisions
4. Implement an integrated approach to planning controls to support pop-up or multi-use live music and cultural venues
5. Implement an integrated approach for dealing with noise complaints
6. Implement an integrated application process for Liquor Licensing and Development Applications.

## 2. Introduction

Wollongong is a city transformed. Traditionally known for its world class steel making and coal making industries, Wollongong is today an important knowledge services centre, a globally connected international trade hub and a leading university city. Wollongong is NSW's 3rd largest city, approximately 80km south of Sydney. Wollongong is strategically located just over an hour south of Sydney International Airport, just over 2 hours drive from Canberra and has global connections through the port of Port Kembla. The Wollongong City population forecast for 2017 is 212,630, and is forecast to grow to 253,792 by 2036.

Wollongong is the regional capital of the Illawarra region, contributing around 61% of the Illawarra's \$20B economy. The Wollongong economy is diversifying with the top 5 sectors (by employment) including: health, manufacturing, education, retail and food/hotels. The Wollongong City Centre or 'Metro Wollongong' plays an important role as an administrative centre for the Illawarra region, with over 20,000 people employed in the city centre.

The Wollongong City Centre has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, seeing \$1.3B in investment and a further \$300M in the pipeline. Major projects completed as part of this investment include: the \$200M investment by GPT in Wollongong Central, the new \$120M Wollongong Private Hospital and the \$134M expansion of the Wollongong Public Hospital. As a result of this investment, forecasts predict a 150% increase in the city centre population over the next 2-3 years. Wollongong

City Centre's importance as an employment hub was further highlighted by the 15% employment growth over the past 5 years.

### ***Evening Economy Action Plan 2014-18*** ***Live Music Action Plan 2014-18***

Beginning in 2012 with large scale construction and a plan to revitalise the City Centre, Wollongong City Council recognised a strong evening economy is important to the city's identity and attracting investment, employment and consumer spending. To move beyond the '5pm flight' that can hinder the liveability and activation of many regional cities, Wollongong City Council convened a Live Music Taskforce engaging community including musicians, promoters and venue owners with the goal to rethink and redesign the type of city centre beyond 5pm with respect to restaurants, cafes, small bars, live music, pop-ups and retail activity. As a result Wollongong City Council endorsed the *Evening Economy Action Plan 2014-18* and the *Live Music Action Plan 2014-18*.

On the basis of these plans Wollongong City Council has committed to a number of actions, many of which are complete including:

- Implementing free Wi-Fi in the city centre;
- Ensuring that section 149 certificates issued for residential entertainment and evening economy zones, clearly identify that these areas have capacity to trade in the evening to alert the purchaser;
- Incorporating into our planning controls outdoor dining in the city centre up until midnight with appropriate controls;
- Establishing a dedicated small business assessment team to specifically cater to the needs of small business;
- Developing information guides for start-up businesses that provide specific information on process requirements and resources available for setting up a temporary or permanent venue/activity;
- Implementing a new events process, which streamline eight different applications into one single event application, minimising red tape for small businesses resulting in generic Events DA's for 8 specific sites within the LGA and generic DA for Street trading in the City Centre (Crown Street Mall);
- Developing a Crown Street Mall Activity Policy to encourage and provide guidelines for increased activation of the Crown Street Mall;
- Support local promoters to deliver high calibre live music events in the city.

### ***Night Time Economy Councils Committee***

In late 2016 Wollongong City Council was one of a group of Councils who came together, with the support of LGNSW, to establish the NSW Night Time Economy Councils Committee (NTECC). The aim of the committee is to help shape vibrant, safe and sustainable night time economies with current membership including Wollongong City Council, City of Sydney, City of Newcastle, City of Parramatta, Waverley Council, Liverpool City, City of Canterbury–Bankstown, Lake Macquarie City and the Northern Beaches.

The Committee organised a NSW Councils Night Time Economy Forum in October 2017, bringing together over 130 staff from across 30 NSW Councils, with 32% regional representation. The Forum provided a platform for information sharing and established a network to facilitate collaboration across NSW Councils to deliver sustainable growth in evening economies.

The forum identified a number of key issues, including:

- Establishing a common vision, strategic direction and policy framework for the evening economy for NSW Council's;
- Harmonising approaches to nightlife development and regulation across NSW government agencies (Police, Transport, OLGR, Greater Sydney Commission);
- Establishing an evening economy grants fund to support local economies;
- Access to best practice guidelines;
- Guidance on how to create community and business-led local collaboration and harnessing local opportunities to develop cultural tourism; and
- Measuring and reporting the economic and social impacts of the night time economy.

NTECC has started planning three smaller workshops for 2018 to help build the skills of council staff in strategy development; business and community engagement; and planning regulations regarding the night time economy.

### 3. NSW Night Time Economy Action Plan

Wollongong City Council has prepared the following comments on the Committee's Terms of Reference.

#### **A: Progress on the implementation of the government response to the New South Wales Night Time Economy Round Table Action Plan**

The *Sydney Night Time Economy Roundtable Action Plan (August 2016)* has a main focus on improving the Sydney CBD's night time economy. Wollongong City Council notes that there are a number of action items that could be expanded beyond just the Sydney CBD, to include regional capitals, such as Wollongong. This would ensure a more inclusive and coordinated approach to the development of the night time economy and ensure that all regional capitals are able to participate.

Wollongong City Council notes that the action to establish a new entity with ongoing responsibility to promote Sydney's night time economy should include a regional city representative. This would ensure that regional cities such as Wollongong are included in future conversations and are able to participate in the actions identified and have a platform to raise issues which affect them.

In addition, NTECC has demonstrated that there is a real desire amongst Councils across NSW to develop their night time economies and establish clear and consistent policies and strategies to achieve this. Wollongong City Council recommends that the NSW Night Time Economy Taskforce involve NTECC.

***Recommendation 1 - The NSW Night Time Economy Taskforce expands its focus beyond the Sydney City Centre to encompass Regional Capital Cities including the City of Wollongong.***

***Recommendation 2 - The NSW Night Time Economy Taskforce involves the NSW Night Time Economy Councils Committee (NTECC)***

#### **B: Policies that could support a diverse and vibrant music and arts culture across NSW**

In order to balance a vibrant economy that supports the music and arts culture, it is necessary to ensure that new developments are better attenuated to minimise potential land use conflicts between sensitive uses and the night time economy.

While Wollongong City Council has introduced Section 149 certificates issued for residential entertainment zones, developed night time economies would benefit from the introduction of the "agent of change principle", introduced by the Victorian Government in 2014.

The Victorian provisions impose obligations on the 'agent of change', for example a residential developer, with respect to noise from live music performance across Victoria, and aims to protect live music venues from residential encroachment. The agent of change principle requires a developer to include noise attenuation measures when a proposed residential development is within 50m of an existing live music performance venue. Similarly, if a live music venue seeks to expand, the owner/operator will be responsible for attenuating any noise effects that are caused by that change. The 'agent of change' principle is triggered automatically when a new planning permit application is lodged.

Wollongong City Council recommends that the NSW Government implement similar planning reforms to reduce noise amenity impacts and build broad community support for the night time economy.

***Recommendation 3 – The NSW Government implement a proactive approach to entertainment noise in existing planning regulation through the introduction of 'agent of change' provisions***

**C: Policies that could support the establishment and sustainability of permanent and temporary venue spaces for music and the arts**

Wollongong City Council recommends that reforms to current planning legislation be undertaken to ensure the sustainability of temporary and permanent use venues for live music and/or cultural events.

A more integrated approach to NSW Planning Controls to support pop-up or multi-use live music and cultural venues would surely attract more activation for arts and cultural uses and introduce a more diverse range of options. Additionally, small-scale and temporary live music and performance activity could be further supported through consideration of expanded 'Exempt and Complying Development' provisions in the Local Environmental Plan.

***Recommendation 4 – Implement an integrated approach to Planning Controls to support pop-up or multi-use live music and cultural venues***

**D: Policy and legislation in other jurisdictions and options for NSW including red tape reduction and funding options**

There is an opportunity to reduce the administrative burden and red tape across the evening economy sector and for the NSW Government to harmonise the approach to nightlife development and regulation across NSW. Harmonisation would improve and streamline application processes, giving more certainty to potential operators and attracting further investment.

For example, the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* and the *Liquor Act 2007* all deal with the issue of entertainment noise. This raft of legislation makes it difficult for a venue, residents and applicants to navigate and understand the process.

***Recommendation 5 – Implement an integrated approach for dealing with issues of entertainment noise***

***Recommendation 6 – Implement an integrated application process for Liquor Licensing and Development Applications***

ATTACHMENTS

Wollongong City Council – *Cultural Plan 2014 - 2018*