

Email to: portfoliocommittee6@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Office of Michael Rodrigues
c/ 41 Bridge Road
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26.02.2018

To: The Honorable Paul Green, MLC, Chair

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.

Music and arts and cultural experiences are central to civic participation, which contribute overall to the liveability of our state and the wellness of us as citizens.

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.

Which has surprised no one who has an appreciation of the intricacies of the going-out ecology.

The reforms, while welcomed in principle, were and remain in their current form and ambition incapable of reversing the deep and lasting effects that lockout has had on changing the way the city thinks about going out, at a time when it has never been easier and cheaper to be entertained at home.

How audiences think about going out

I am the MD of Time Out Australia, which celebrates this year 10 years of helping Sydneysiders plan their entertainment choices day and night. It celebrates 50 years of providing that service globally.

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.

Audiences look at the overall offering in making an investment in leaving the home to be entertained. This can be easily understood by thinking about the concept of access. In this use of the word, access boils down to three primary considerations:

- is the entertainment offer relevant to me?
- can I get there?
- is the overall experience affordable?

Take for example the current primary offer in our lower CBD and apply these principles to say, for example, an evening out at our beacon of music and art, our beloved Opera House.

The conservative estimate on a night out here for two assuming a meal and drinks, transport costs (before adding in child minding if applicable) and the tally approaches \$500 or more. On a good day, the art or music you experience might engage and entertain you. Or it might not – that's part of it.

Now how does that compare to an evening at home on the couch watching *House of Cards* or *Game of Thrones*, while Deliveroo serves you up a gourmet burger?

Simple maths puts the comparison at \$500 vs \$40.

This is the decision-making matrix the State has created for young audiences in its fumbling of Sydney's night-time economy, and they are voting with their thumbs and their posteriors. Thumbs stick to addictive devices and remote controls, and posteriors are increasingly planted on couches in preference to the feet which they should be out and about on, engaging with our city landscape and contributing vibrancy to our city.

Going out and mental health

This "global trend towards inwardness" is real. In December 2017 Facebook admitted that social media may be [bad for mental health](#), while in the month preceding, one of the founders (Sean Parker) openly admitted that it was [designed to be addictive](#). The "attention engineers" from Vegas casinos at the helm of our major digital infrastructure companies (like Netflix, Facebook, Instagram), in the absence of regulation, are currently having a field day with young minds. Addiction leads to isolation, depression, anxiety and propensity to suicide.

In this context there has never been a more important time for the State to work aggressively towards an environment that facilitates the going-out habit, rather than stymie it. Active participation in community has always been central to our survival and well being as a species, and the State is obligated to foster it.

This is particularly so as it is the State that controls so many of the levers that underpin healthy going out habits:

- A. good, reliable and affordable public transport
- B. health and public safety regulations
- C. planning instruments
- D. sensible policing where the police force at all levels understands and is committed to a vibrant city at all times of the day, twilight and night

Currently these functions exist within NSW Government but are not administered in a manner that recognises the creative ecology of the city. That is to say, the interdependency between musicians, artists and hospitality professionals that leads to inspiration. Nor are these powers co-ordinated in a manner that recognises that the night is an asset that we could exploit, not waste, and could, as it does in other cities like Melbourne, Amsterdam and New York, contribute both financially to our economy, and to the mental health of our nation.

Recommendations

I believe that we would benefit from ministerial oversight of the night in its own right (like the night mayor model from Amsterdam, but at State level), including 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.

So deeply was the nightlife of our city gouged, I would also recommend modest financial incentives to help stimulate finegrain entertainment (live music, arts and culture) in the lockout precincts.

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

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Rodrigues', written in a cursive style.

Michael Rodrigues

Managing Director, Time Out Australia

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