



Gig Economy

Making Sydney a great place for live music



Committee
for
Sydney



Executive summary

Sydney could be a truly great city for live music. It already has most of the ingredients.

The extraordinary flourishing of grassroots music talent currently underway in Sydney offers the potential for major creative, community and commercial opportunities. To properly capitalise, we need to overhaul our approach to live music, addressing key infrastructure, training and investment gaps.

While live music in parts of the city appears to be thriving, foundational problems are creating serious risks for the sector.

Sydney experienced the nation's largest fall in revenue and ticket sales for live performance during Covid-19. Revenue per attendee for live music remains stubbornly flat compared to other Australian cities, highlighting the slim margins in staging live music in our city. Our city is benchmarked well behind global leaders on culture, and major success stories such as The Kid Laroi, Flume and DMA's are the exception, with grassroots talent and skilled workers struggling to make the transition to mid-long term viable careers.

Key gaps in infrastructure, investment and training are part of the problem, alongside profound disruption to the sector.

What people want from a night out has changed (less drinking, band rooms lost to pokies/dining, volatile ticket sales, rise of 'experiences').

Workers have long faced precarious conditions and many left the sector in Covid-19, while new skills are needed due to broader transformation of the business (streaming, sync rights).

Our analysis highlights significant gaps in west/southwest and mid-sized venues, and in hubs for music ventures.

These factors have been exacerbated by patchy coordination of government efforts to support and regulate the sector.

While the ambition of the past five years' regulatory reform and initiatives is very welcome, and another wave of vibrancy reforms are currently being proposed, the job is not yet done.

This report proposes six recommendations (and 16 specific actions) for government and businesses to make Sydney a great city for live music. Detailed in the recommendations section, these aim to:

- Prioritise and promote domestic talent
- Deliver industry-led training
- Better target funding mechanisms
- Get planning and regulation working in concert with live music
- Make it easier to work with government
- Bring the reforms to life.

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of our land. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present. We recognise sovereignty was never ceded. This was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Music has long been a repository of cultural, ancestral and ecological knowledge for Indigenous peoples. From the pulsating rhythm of the didgeridoo to the electric energy of First Nations hip-hop, there is so much to celebrate and explore in the world of Indigenous music.

Greater Sydney especially has a wealth of established and emerging First Nations artists. We've started a very much non-exhaustive list here.

Talent

[A.GIRL](#)
[Barayagal First Nations Choir](#)
[Eric Avery](#)
[BLANCHE](#)
[Becca Hatch](#)
[Moogahlin Performing Arts](#)
[KARI Singers](#)
[INKABEE](#)
[William Barton](#)
[Mi-kaisha](#)
[Walkerboy](#)

[DOBBY](#)
[BARKAA](#)
[Diramu Aboriginal Dance and Didgeridoo Performers](#)
[The Kid LAROI](#)
[Green Hand Band](#)
[Ziggy Ramo](#)
[Kobie Dee](#)
[Tasman Keith](#)
[Thelma Plum](#)
[T-Breezy](#)

Resources

[First Nations at the Sydney Opera House](#)
[First Nations Sounds of Australia](#)
[First Nations artist directory,](#)
[Bespoke Entertainment Agency](#)
[Songs in Australia's First Nations languages](#)
[Koori Radio](#)
[Blak Out at Sydney Festival](#)
[Ngana Birung Festival](#)

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Innovation Fund Partners

We would like to thank our Innovation Fund Partners for their support of the Committee for Sydney's research. Our Innovation Fund Partners are future focused, and outcome driven. They are leaders of change. Their combined investment underpins our annual research program and together with our members, enables us to grow our impact and output – striving to create a better Sydney that offers unparalleled opportunity and quality of life for everyone.



Section 1

Introduction



More Sydneysiders are employed in live music than any other Australian city – real and per capita – with the pipeline of talent arguably stronger than it's been in decades.

Technological and cultural changes have spurred an unprecedented flourishing of musical talent. Hip-hop and R&B artists in the west have found their voice, just as Sydney's globally visible club culture continues to do.

We've seen a big resurgence in hardcore and Americana, and a growing underground ballroom scene. Over-40s are watching a wider diversity of legacy acts as breakthrough genres mature into middle age, and waves of talent are emerging through new channels like TikTok, bypassing the older channels and gatekeepers.

However, Sydney is benchmarked well behind global leaders on culture, and experienced the nation's largest fall in revenue and ticket sales for live performance during Covid-19.

Revenue per attendee for live music remains stubbornly flat compared to other Australian cities (Figure 3), highlighting the slim margins involved in staging live music here.

There is not yet a central source of truth on live music venues, but our analysis (Figure 9) highlights significant infrastructure gaps in the west/southwest, in mid-sized venues, and in hubs for music ventures.

A powerful catalyst for cities

The joy of music – especially live – is one of the great things in life, a deeply and inherently social activity. Few experiences compare to the thrill of seeing a band in full flight, dancing endless hours in a sweaty club, celebrating and feeling the connection with hundreds, even thousands of others at a festival.

Live music draws people into different parts of the city and gives them a sense of agency and independence. It's how people meet, bond and find their voice. The research is clear on music's direct health benefits and role in creating social capital. It's a dynamic part of the fabric of communities.

For this reason, live music is a powerful catalyst for many of the great things that come from people bonding and sparking off each other. It's one of the things that makes a city worth living in and visiting. The economic benefits permeate through city streets, supporting vibrant culture day and night, and attracting global talent and investment.

Sydney ranks

27th

out of 48 global peers for opportunities for cultural interaction

This metric includes measures of nightlife options, number of theatres and cultural events.

Source: Mori Memorial Foundation, 2022

Recent work by the Committee for Sydney:

- A new look at Culture - submission (2023)
- Six actions to get Sydney's events sector back on track (2021)
- A vision for Kings Cross (2021)
- Joint Select Committee on Sydney's night time economy (2019)
- Safety after dark: Creating a city for women living and working in Sydney (2019)
- Sydney as a 24-Hour City (2018).

Rocked by widespread disruption

For music ventures, the impact of venue lockouts, Covid-19 lockdowns, bushfires, heavy rains and flooding have been loaded on top of long-term trends of severe disruption to virtually every aspect of their operations. That's created fundamental changes in the context for live music.

What people want from a night out has changed:

- Young people are drinking less (Figure 1) – due to cost, health and cultural change
- Many band rooms have been replaced – first by pokies, more recently upgraded dining
- Ticket sales are volatile, and so is attendance
- Rise of the 'experience' industry – e-sports, escape rooms, axe throwing and so on.

The business of music has changed:

- Streaming made it easier to reach large audiences, with a reported 100,000 new music files loaded onto streaming services daily, but it also means new releases need to stand out in a vast music database
- Sync rights to use music for advertising, broadcast, streaming on TikTok, Peloton, Triller and Roblox, brand partnerships and other revenue streams increasingly underpin financial viability.

Broader issues:

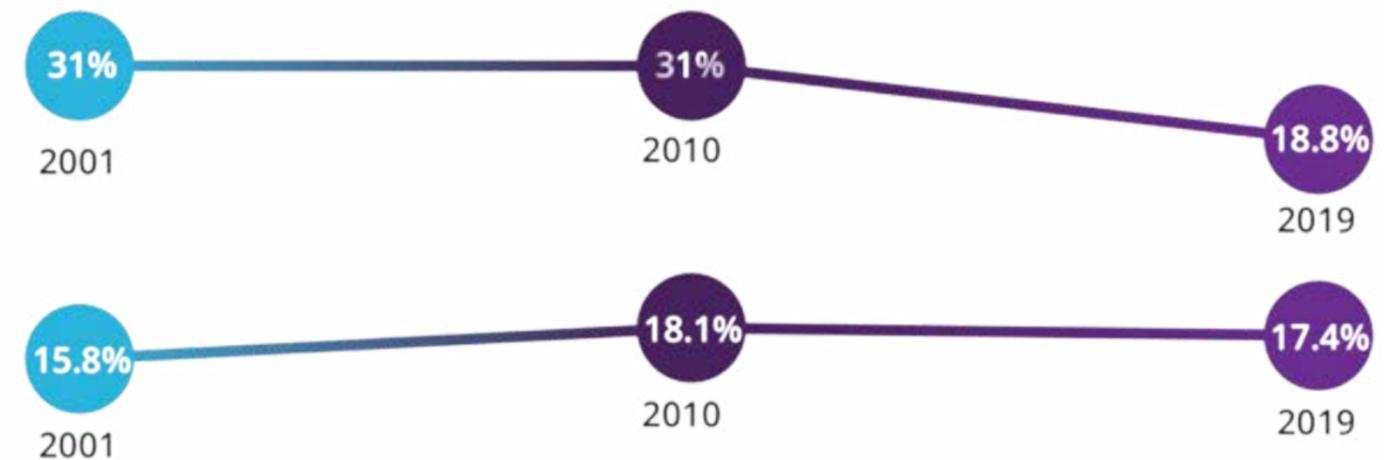
- Investing in Sydney's culturally diverse west and southwest lags the rest of the city – a major missed opportunity to date
- Live music venues made to jump through punitive hoops, instead of being supported for the community service they provide in giving voice to their communities and creating anchor destinations

- An approach that characterises music as a high-risk activity, with a heavy-handed approach to safety and compliance, common reports of profiling by music genre, sniffer dogs and 'user pays' policing putting a prohibitive cost on events.

More people are leaving NSW than any other state amid soaring housing prices and low wage growth.

Source: [Centre for Population](#)

Figure 1: The proportion of people drinking dangerous amounts of alcohol has remained stable for older groups since 2001, while declining for younger groups



Top shows lifetime risk among 18-24 year olds, with a significant decline since 2010. Bottom line shows lifetime risk among 60-69 year olds has remained relatively stable.

Source: National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019, AIHW

Tightening the focus

This project began with a reflection on the past five-to-10 years of regulatory reform, a period in which politicians, bureaucrats, campaigners and the music industry worked together to modernise planning, licensing and other controls that affect the music industry.

The Committee's 'Sydney as a 24-Hour City' report (2018) highlighted a central concern for our city – that failure to stimulate a vibrant and successful night-time economy, of which live music plays a crucial part, would have serious economic and social ramifications for Sydney and NSW. Five years on, that concern has been responded to with gusto.

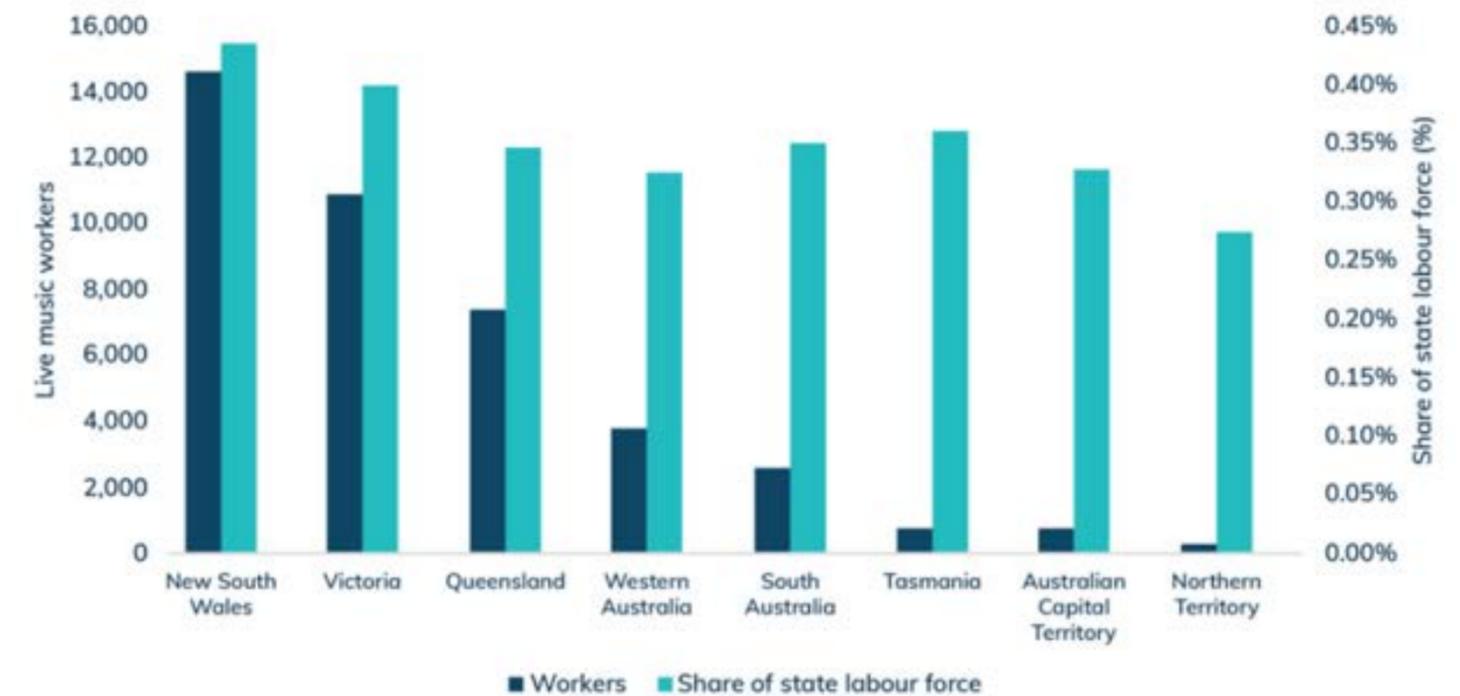
As we go to press, another wave of reform is underway.

We are delighted to see the NSW Government's proposed vibrancy reforms, which will address some key challenges facing Sydney's night-time economy. These include steps to improve sound management around venues, create vibrant well-coordinated precincts, an activated outdoors, licensing, improving the night-time sector for workers, and bolstering the position of the 24 Hour Economy Commissioner to coordinate and lead this important work.

While this body of changes has not been fully realised, and continued reform is required, the shift has been profound.

We have come so far. With this report, we tighten the focus on actions required to make Sydney a truly great city for live music, and seize this tremendous creative, community and commercial opportunity for our city.

Figure 2: Most live music employment takes place across the eastern states, where a large proportion of Australia's population is located



Live music employment in Australia by state and territory (number of live music workers and proportion of labour force).

Source: BCARR analysis, custom ABS 2016 Census data.



Loose Fit



AnSo



SPEED

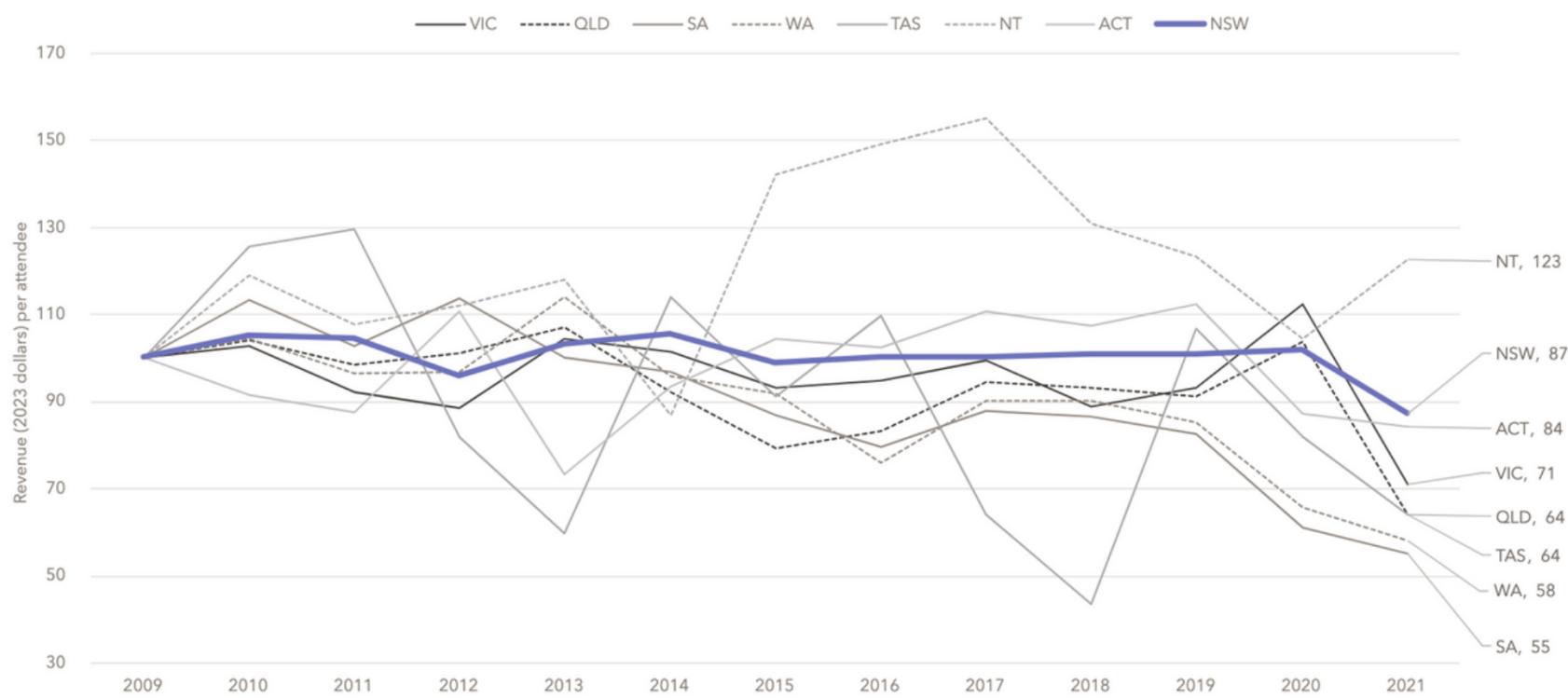


The Grateful Dads



Munasib

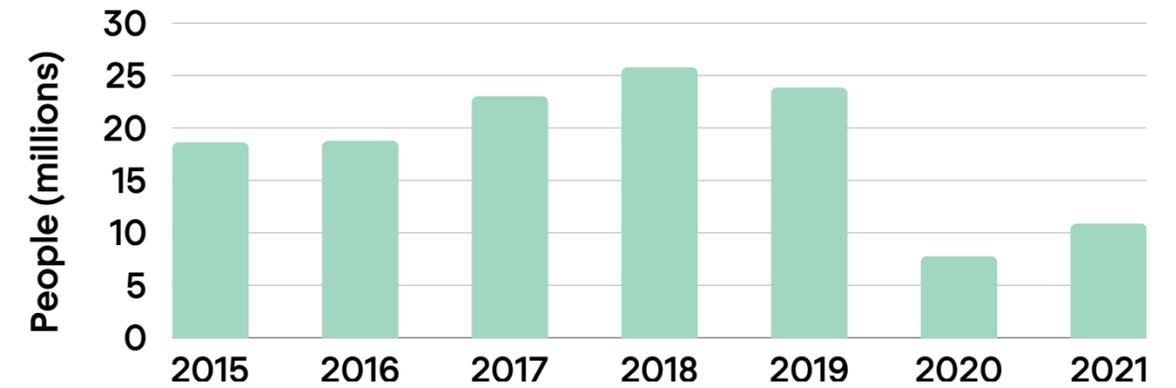
Figure 3: Compared to the turbulence of other states and territories, revenue per attendee in NSW live music venues remained remarkably stable, even during the lockdown period



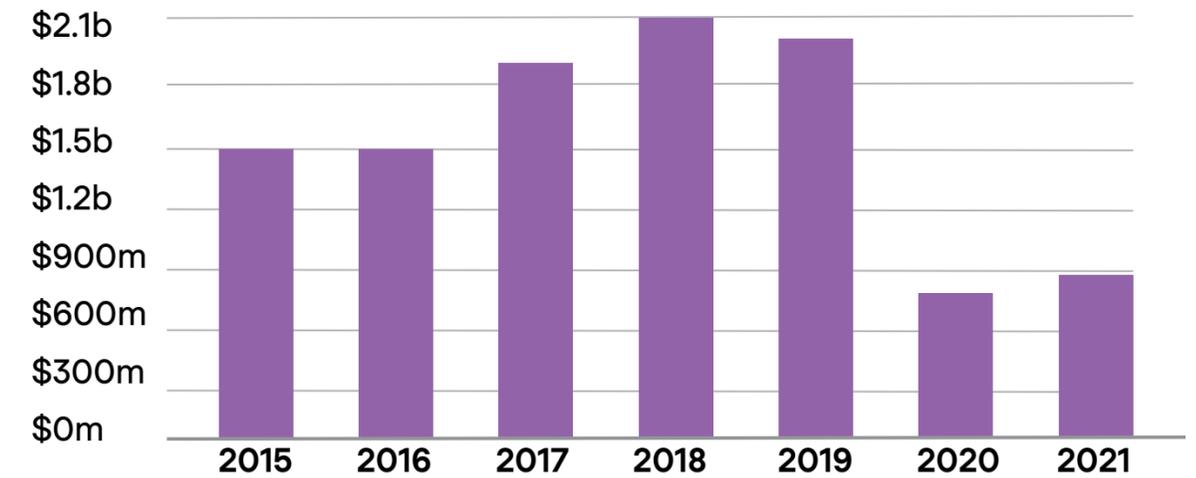
Revenue (2023 dollars) per attendee at live music events, by state and territory, 2009-2021.

Source: Scyne Advisory analysis 2023, based on revenue and attendance data sourced from EY 'Live Performance Industry in Australia' (2023). Revenue figures inflated to 2023 dollars using relevant capital city CPI, June quarter values from 2009 to 2023.

Figure 4: Sydney's live sector had revenue and attendance challenges before the pandemic



Attendance at live shows increased in the year to 2021, but still well below 2018-19 due to reduced venue capacity, operational restrictions and closures for extended periods due to Covid-19 restrictions.



Revenue in NSW's live performance industry grew in 2021, after a reduction in 2019, and again in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Source: EY, Live Performance Industry in Australia, 2021 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Report

Section 2

Sound check

Talking with the live music experts





How can we make Sydney a great city for live music?

In developing this paper, we had 90+ in-depth conversations, workshops and consultations with people across Sydney's live music industry – music managers and bookers, venue owners, music makers and DJs, publicists and media, local and state government policymakers, planning and acoustic consultants, lawyers, police and many others – to understand the state of play.

Our objective has been to stop and reconsider the challenges and opportunities for Sydney as a live music city in 2023 and beyond. The conclusions: mixed, with the sector simultaneously more fertile and precarious than it's been in the careers of most we consulted.

Some are doing well – touring businesses and artists such as G Flip, Sampa the Great, H3rizon and Rufus

du Sol enjoy sales, acclaim and chart success, which benefits the economy and helps position us on the world stage.

But Covid-19 hit music harder than other sectors and many are still reeling. Housing unaffordability and cost of living are hitting artists and workers, and then again with the audience and its ability to buy tickets. The issues and opportunities crosscut access and inclusion, culture and language, gender, location and socioeconomic status. Live music isn't getting any cheaper, putting on shows is labour intensive with slim margins. For many, the next one to two years will be make or break.

And yet, time and again, despite the challenges, people told us they are choosing to live in Sydney, to make music, put on shows and go out to see music, and that's why it's so exciting right now – people are choosing to live here and do all these things because they believe in what it could be.

So how do we harness that talent and energy to create something deep, long-term and truly special for our city's music culture?

How do we head off the risk that these talented Sydneysiders – who say the current situation can't hold forever – leave our shores for better conditions elsewhere?

How do we make Sydney a great city for music, and recognise, celebrate and support the community contribution music makes?

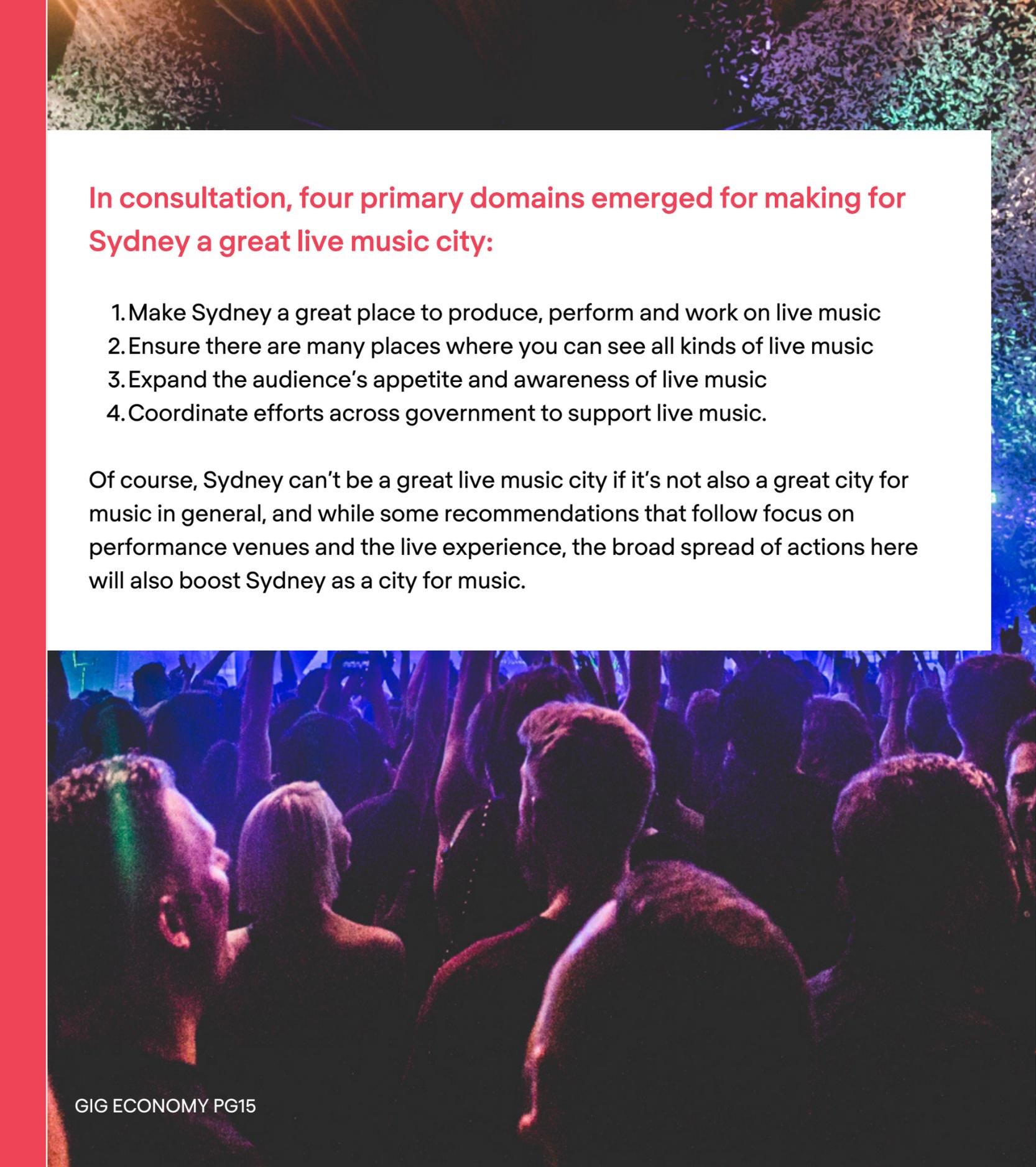
In-depth conversations, workshops and consultation:

- Jonathan Wilson, Art Gallery of NSW
- Glenn Wheatley, Arup
- John Oddy, Julia Robinson, ARIA/PPCA
- Alicia Talbot, Blacktown City Council
- Peter Sabbagh, Bodega Collective
- Manoli Politis, Julian Cincotta, Butter
- Brittany Green, Adam Porter, Mouna Zaylah, Campbelltown Arts Centre
- Rebecca Grasso, Adam Porter, Brittany Green, Campbelltown City Council
- Nicole Carnegie, Gavin Seow, Amy Wilson, Aileen Robalino, Carly Choi, Mark Egan, City of Parramatta
- Craig Donarski, Casula Powerhouse
- Lisa Colley, Lex Davidson, City of Sydney
- Eugenia Kolivos, Jennifer Ward, Christine Covington, Corrs Chambers Westgarth
- Bec Dean, Karen Rodgers, Ian Cifuentes, Create NSW
- Nathan Richman, Elastic
- Tim Levinson, Elefant Traks
- Michael Hodgson, Sam Romaniuk, Entertainment Quarter
- Amy Douglas, Nina Macken, Madeleine Beart, Michael Oliver, Craig Allchin, Ethos Urban
- Tanya Ali, FBi Radio
- Tania Katsanis, John Meers, Leo Chant, Andrew Williams, Georges River Council
- Alison Avron, The Great Club
- Na-aim Abdie, Greater Cities Commission
- Stephen Moore, Hatch RobertsDay
- DJ SOLLYY, Hotter Out West
- Jack Rule, House of Music and Booze
- Jarrad Sheather, Naomi Bower, Inner West Council
- David Krug, Krug Consulting
- John Wardle, Lucy Joseph, Live Music Office
- Matt Francis, Live Performance Australia
- Susana Freitas, Liverpool City Council
- Kenny Graham, Mary's Group
- Connor Mackenzie, Mecone
- Nick van Tiel, Merivale
- Bertie Blackman, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences
- Jess Keeley, Music She Wrote
- Emily Collins, MusicNSW
- Mike Rodrigues, James Hulme, Emily Crocker, Julie Prentice, Office of the 24 Hour Economy Commissioner
- Mick Gibb, Night Time Industries Association
- Josephine Bennett, Justin Burke, Northern Beaches Council
- Commander Martin Fileman, NSW Police
- Beau Reid, Penrith City Council
- Beau Neilson, Phoenix
- Anita Mitchell, Kate Bryant, Placemaking NSW
- Anthony Dunsford, Playbill Venues
- Katie Anderson, Randwick City Council
- Janice Lee, Jessica Yu, Tianjiao Liu, Jackson Hrbek, Scyne Advisory
- Cam Coghlan, Brendan Maher, Second Sunday
- Sam Benjamin, Seventh Street
- Harry Good, SGS Economics & Planning
- Krishtie Mofazzal, Soft Centre
- Elliot Solomon, Solotel
- Aaron Curnow, Spunk
- Reg Harris, SXSW Sydney
- Chris Twite, Sydney Festival
- Kerri Glasscock, Sydney Fringe Festival
- Joe Hardy, Sydneymusic.net
- Ben Marshall, Sydney Opera House
- Sheridan Morley, Sydney Symphony Orchestra
- Sam Beck, Team Leisurely
- Michael Dagostino, Sophia Ruokari, University of Sydney
- Prof. Andy Marks, Tom Nance, Western Sydney University
- Ricky Simandjuntak, Worlds Collide

Section 3

Four domains for making Sydney a great city for music





In consultation, four primary domains emerged for making for Sydney a great live music city:

1. Make Sydney a great place to produce, perform and work on live music
2. Ensure there are many places where you can see all kinds of live music
3. Expand the audience's appetite and awareness of live music
4. Coordinate efforts across government to support live music.

Of course, Sydney can't be a great live music city if it's not also a great city for music in general, and while some recommendations that follow focus on performance venues and the live experience, the broad spread of actions here will also boost Sydney as a city for music.

3.1 Make Sydney a great place to produce, perform and work on live music

Sydney is Australia's cultural production capital and centre of music making, with more activity in real terms and per capita than any other city. But there's a growing gap when it comes to developing talent into viable medium and long-term careers.

This is not like creating a manufacturing industry, it's more like supporting early-stage startups – many will fail or not thrive, some will go on to marginal success, a few will become major stars.

Success can mean critical acclaim, commercial results, cultural resonance and influence, and it could be all the above or none. For every unicorn like The Kid LAROI, many simply aspire to making a decent living. And while much of the industry is geared to national fame, many that have achieved global acclaim were never mainstream stars domestically. We need to cast the net wide if we're to succeed.

3.1.1 Address cost of living

Describing live music as the original gig economy is no joke. In 2020, the median creative income was just \$6000 a year in Australia, with four-in-10 professional artists unable to meet minimum living costs.

Chronic housing unaffordability and cost of living are biting. If you don't have the resources to pay for rent and food, you're going to do something safe or on the side, rather than taking a risk on something new and different – or move somewhere else.

To make ends meet, many musicians we spoke to have a 'day job' (e.g. packing shelves at a supermarket, fixing car engines, making policy, running a record label). Anecdotally, the figures are high, but we don't have reliable and consistent data because the census doesn't capture secondary employment. These workers face the frustration of knowing the jobs limit their ability to grow as artists, but without them they couldn't pay the bills.

Addressing housing

This reduced rent live/work space provided to composer, lyricist and singer Vidya Makan by City of Sydney/Brand X is an example of approaches being taken to help address the city’s chronic housing unaffordability. Austin, Texas, has taken a similar approach, while in Nashville the city government provides low interest loans to enable low-to-moderate income artists to purchase property. Some Sydney councils are pushing for music workers to be added to the definition of ‘essential workers’ for access to permanently affordable rental housing.



Music workers have also faced widespread poor employment practices and conditions.

Cities thrive when there’s space for all sorts of people from all walks of life, and the opportunity to experience all types of culture, but if it’s not affordable for creative people to live locally, it’s harder to achieve those agglomeration benefits.

Recommendations to address this:

- Review employment conditions
- Prioritise and promote domestic talent
- Tax offsets for artists.

3.1.2 Catalyse creative production

Governments have powerful tools to spark creative production, including grant programs and their own creative programming and procurement, and we should consider the potential for tax offsets and other new measures.

One option is to take a leaf out of the 'government as first customer' approach common in tech, and deliberately mobilise public procurement budgets to help music ventures scale. Budgets for advertising and video, on-hold content for phone lines, performances at events and so on are big enough to make a difference, and governments accrue the community and economic benefits of thriving music ventures. Note government policy makers told us they face an internal narrative that artists should be grateful for opportunities and exposure, and accept reduced pay or none at all – this must be addressed.

Grant programs need to be fit for purpose, and many are under review and seem to be moving in the right direction. However, grant programs have historically been difficult to navigate, apply for, and acquit.

Many would-be applicants have not even been aware there are funds available to them. As we rework policies, we need to ensure that rather than simply being open to all applicants, support programs should be targeted to convince would-be applicants in key locations or demographics that their work is valued, celebrated and wanted as part of the program. That means being on the ground, with people from the community involved in delivering programs.

Recommendations to address this:

- Tax offsets for artists
- Reboot Dine & Discover to support live music
- Prioritise and promote domestic talent
- Mandate support by music streamers.



Touring artists offset

Going on tour in Australia is expensive, considering the vast distances involved. Using a tax offset to cover half the cost of travel expenses, including van or vehicle hire, airfares and accommodation, is an elegant solution because unlike grants it gets government out of the business of picking winners, and makes for a long term more sustainable approach to funding live music.

Under the proposal, eligible artists would need to meet minimum criteria around number of performances, travel expenditure and release of new material. Economic modelling by BIS Oxford Economics shows 200-300 artists would be eligible for the offsets per year, costing between \$4 and 9 million per annum.

Source: [APRA-AMCOS](#)

“On the ground it doesn’t feel like the government cares about us. In terms of applying for grants, it doesn’t feel like the funding is for us.” – event promoter



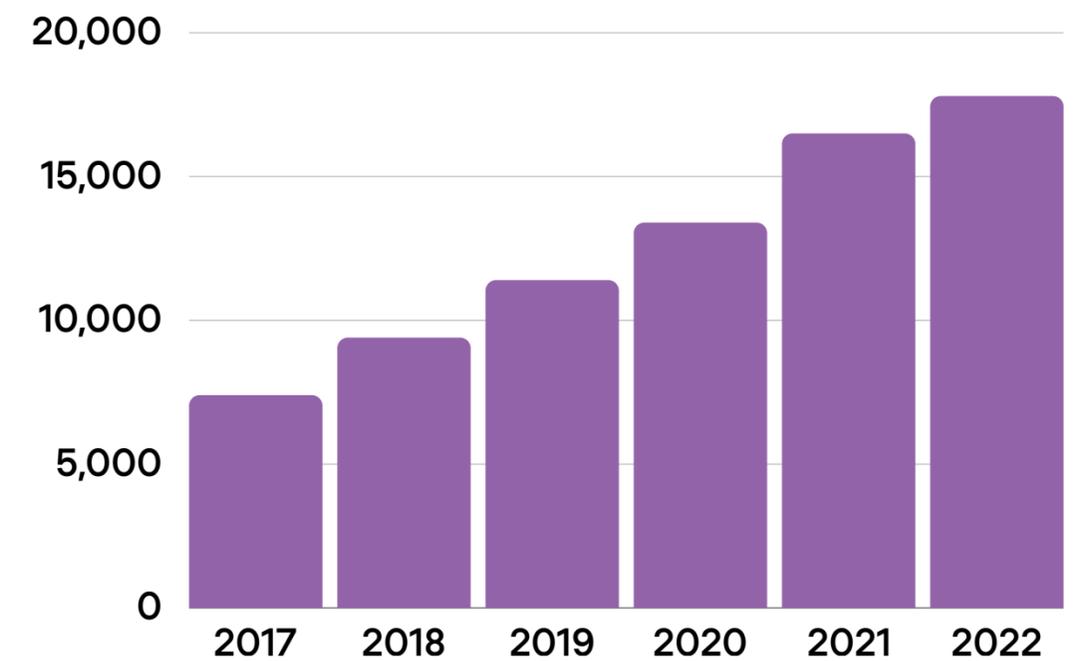
Gold Diggers Club at Parramatta Lanes

Parramatta Lanes has cemented its place on the Sydney calendar. Alongside the delicious street food and electric atmosphere, Lanes gives the area’s rising music talent a rare stage. City of Parramatta’s festivals, including Parramatta Nights and Ngana Birrung, attract thousands of attendees showing how hungry the audience is for this kind of experience.

Other councils running great street programs include Randwick City Council (Block Party Maroubra led by Kobie Dee), Northern Beaches Council (the long-running Northern Exposure band competition that has unearthed stars like Lime Cordiale and Ocean Alley) and Georges River Council (Mobile Musos funds artists like Elsa Clement to perform in public places).

“It’s like I’ve been polishing this perfect diamond all year, and now I have to toss it on a pile of other diamonds and hope people see it.” – music maker

Figure 5: Worldwide just 17,800 artists earn more than \$50,000 from Spotify (of 9 million people that have uploaded music to the platform)



Number of artists that generated recording and publishing royalties over \$50,000 on Spotify. The company reports 213,000 have released at least 10 songs all-time and average at least 10,000 monthly listeners (meaning they have been able to attract the beginning of an audience).

Source: [Spotify Loud and Clear](#)

3.1.3 Industry-led skills training

It takes a village to make live music, including performers, bookers, lighting techs and AV staff, sound and venue management, publicists, promoters and many others. But like the rest of the economy, live music faces severe labour and skills shortages. And while many of the people who held on through the past few years are doing well, and very much in demand, many workers have left or are leaving the sector.

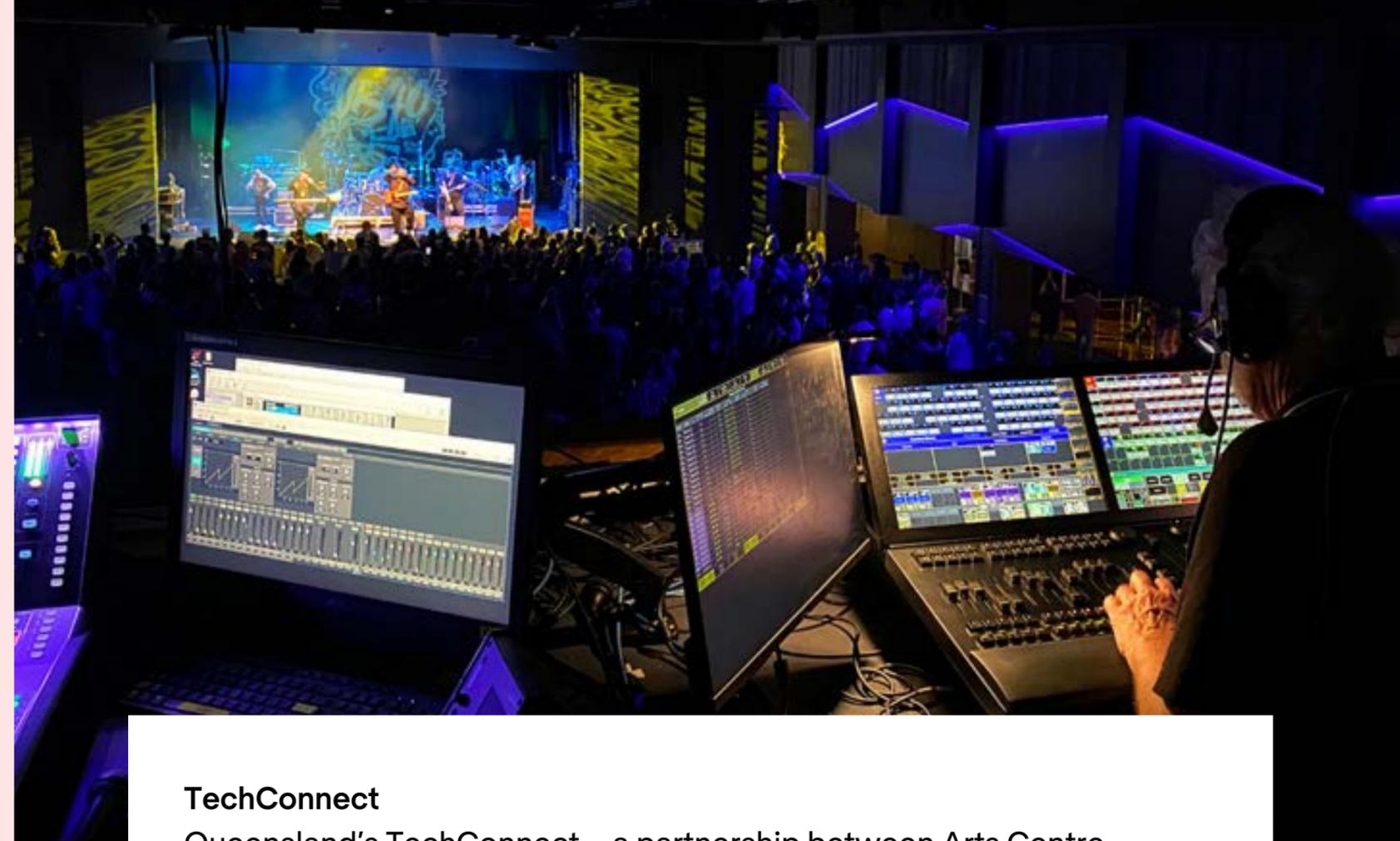
Young people are not coming up the ranks, and a lot of on-the-job learning has and is being lost (e.g. security staff that work in the pit and just know when things are okay, and when they're not). Other skills in short supply include lighting technicians, sound engineers, tour managers and crew, and there's no show without them.

A separate issue is that ease of music production is facilitating enormous amounts of recorded music, making it difficult to stand out, and the competition is not just other music, it's the dopamine hit of TikTok and Instagram, WhatsApp chats, Netflix binges and so on. Increasingly the artists that achieve success have done the work building an audience and sales, with digital marketing and branding, licensing/rights management, videography and a range of other skills.

Industry-led training and skills development in these areas, along with broader music education, will bear fruit, and needs to be backed with early learning, secondary and tertiary education to support the future pipeline of talent – particularly addressing inequity of access in Sydney's west.

Recommendations to address this area:

- Industry-led skills development.



TechConnect

Queensland's TechConnect – a partnership between Arts Centre Melbourne, Queensland Performing Arts Centre and Stage QLD – is an accredited industry training program for technical crews (funded by post-covid collaborative funding). It's one of several models that have emerged for industry-led development to fill labour and skills shortages in culture.

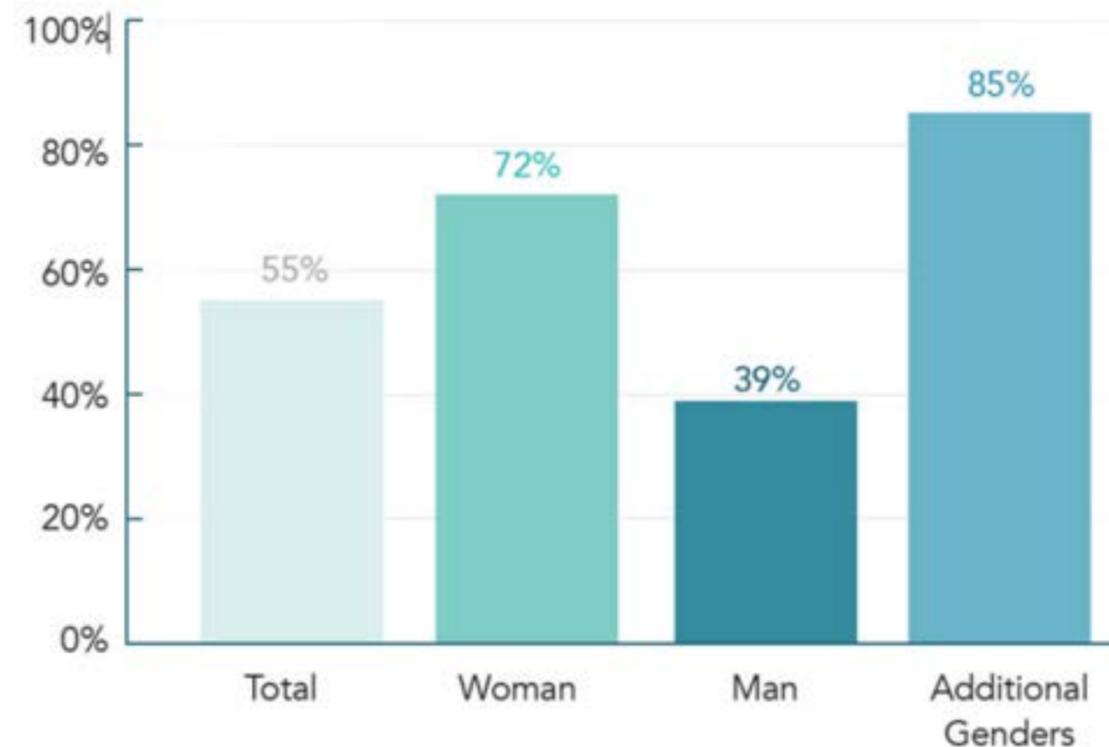
Another example is the NSW Managers Round Table, run by Association of Artist Managers, which pairs five early-mid career managers with established leaders to help them build skills and learn. The NSW Government also offers fee-free short and full qualification courses to support key sectors, including hospitality and culture.



FBI Radio

While FBI's on-air support was referenced through the consultation, its behind the scenes initiatives also play a role in developing talent. Dance Class (pictured) is a DJ training and mentorship program to support women, non-binary and trans talent. Another program, Tracks (with Blacktown Arts, Create NSW and MusicNSW) was influential for emerging talent in Sydney's west, while the long-running monthly Music Open Day lets musicians meet with the station's music coordinator.

Figure 6: People who experienced sexual harassment at some point in their music industry career



Raising Their Voices, a national review of sexual harm, sexual harassment and systemic discrimination in the contemporary Australian music industry, made a series of recommendations for reform.

Source: [Music Industry Review](#)

"Sydney's general work culture has squeezed out people's opportunities for the things that give them life." – website creator



Source: Campbelltown Arts Centre

Conscious

Conscious started as a professional development program to help western Sydney talent develop skills to expand the area's music scene, with alumni such as Becca Hatch, Nardean, A.Girl and Zion Garcia. Facilitated by artistic director and southwest Sydney rapper L-Fresh The Lion with Campbelltown Arts Centre, it's since grown to include commissioning new tracks and video clips, and performances at Parramatta Lanes, FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup and Parramatta Eels games.

Other key training grounds include Parramatta's Arts & Cultural Exchange, Music NSW's Sound Advice and the NSW Government's 'Kickstart Your Career in Hospitality' program. Instead of reinventing the wheel, supporting successful programs to scale will speed uptake and impact.

3.1.4 Support emerging talent to scale

Emerging music talent and entrepreneurs need professional development, networks and mentorship to grow and scale.

For them, different parts of Sydney can seem like different worlds – which is useful for incubating new scenes, less so for creating viable medium-to-long-term careers and businesses. There's a feeling of disconnection from the larger music community, particularly in the west and southwest.

We recommend a culture of spotting these would-be-entrepreneurs and supporting them, wherever they are across Sydney, and recognising them as the community builders they are. They need opportunities to incubate and showcase their work, to meet role models and people who can connect them with opportunities.

An obvious solution is spaces where industry can come together:

- Major networking and showcase opportunities (e.g. SXSW Sydney, SoundWest)
- Physically co-locating in 'music hubs' with office, rehearsal and performance space.

Recommendations to address this:

- Music hubs
- Industry-led skills development.

**"The bugbear is, if we're having an event, there's an expectation to have musicians/performers play for free. Would never ask sound or staging people to do that."
– council staff**



Music entrepreneurship accelerator

Australia's only music focused startup incubator, and one of just a few globally, is based at the Australian Institute of Music in The Rocks. It's home to early-stage ventures in music therapy, AI rights, haptics and tour logistics, and brings them together with industry partners, mentors, investors and artists. [Read more.](#)

**"We're not taught to be entrepreneurs in school – take risks, relationship with money, particularly in western Sydney with lots of immigrant kids, low socioeconomic status, taught to be very risk averse, scared about money, don't know to ask."
– artist manager**



The Push

Gena Rose Bruce and Madeleine O'Gorman participated in Melbourne's The Push – a national mentoring program that places 60 young people in key music businesses to develop skills in event management, technical production, business operations and marketing and promotions. It aims to address skills shortages and create a pipeline of work ready talent for the contemporary music sector. [Read more.](#)



Music hubs

Melbourne's Music Market at Collingwood Yards was designed as a home for the Victorian music industry. Over two levels, it includes event and performance spaces, meeting rooms, co-working areas and business support services. A music manager we spoke to said, "You can go and do a day of meetings with all the key people and never leave the building."

Another model is Pirate Studios, a UK-born commercial operator providing low cost, 24-hour access to studio space for DJs, music makers, podcasters and performers globally. Operated on a self-service basis, users are sent a door code when they book, with no reception staff, which makes it less intimidating for new entrants to the industry. Sydney spaces, including the prolific Bodega Collective in Annandale and Opn Src in Glendinning, provide a similar operation.



Equitable spaces for neurodivergent musicians

Club Weld nurtures talented neurodiverse musicians with weekly music making sessions and performances. Based at Parramatta's Arts & Cultural Exchange, the program has inked partnerships with ABC Music, Sydney Opera House and Art Gallery of NSW, as well as collaborations with established musicians, opening the group's music up to wider recognition.

3.2 Ensure there are many places where you can see all kinds of live music

Sydney has the world's most iconic live music venue, the Sydney Opera House.

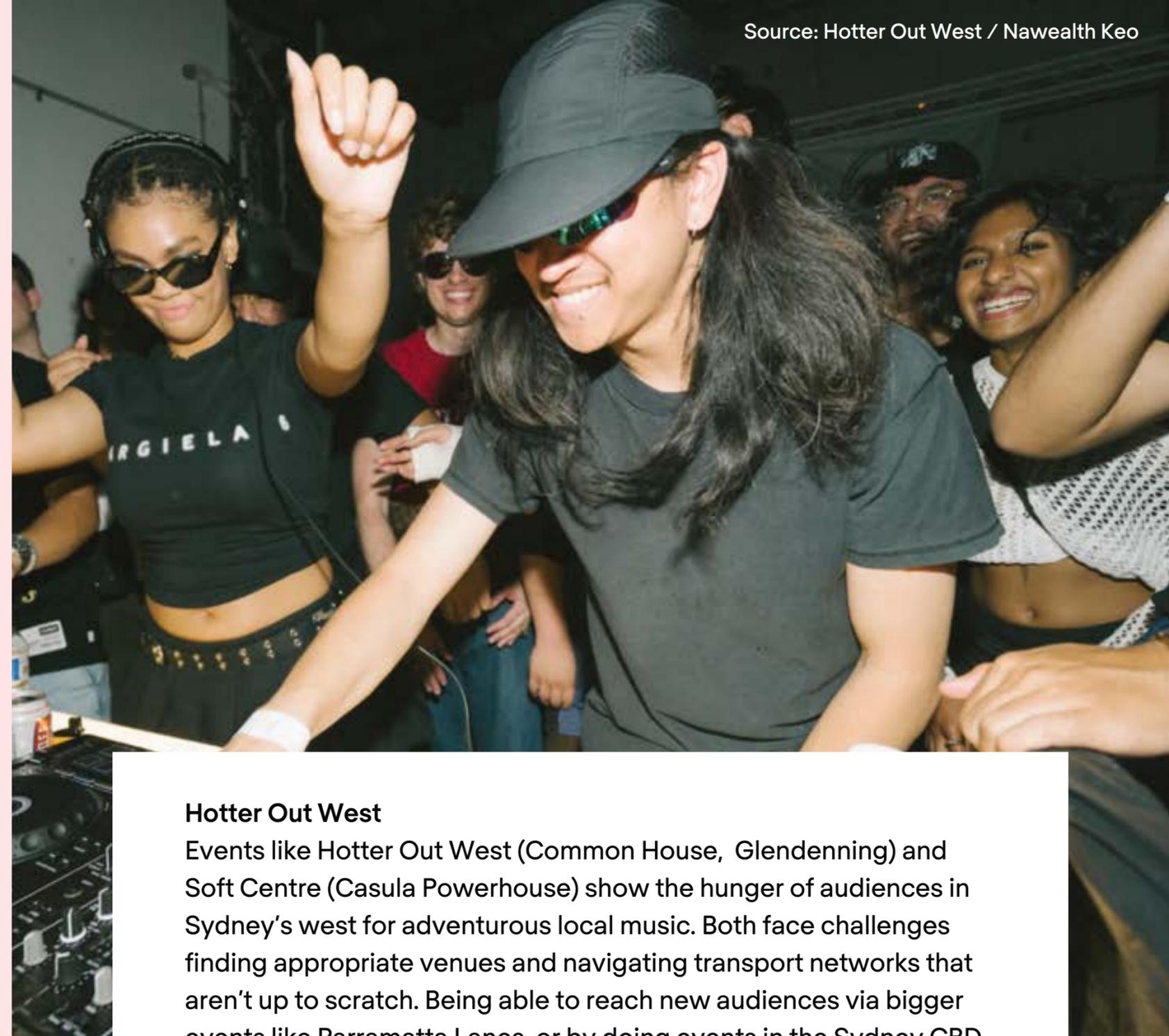
There are plenty more: classic mid-sized rooms like the Enmore, Hordern and Factory, small clubs like Mary's, Oxford Arts, The Bridge and Phoenix. We have large stadiums for big touring acts, such as Taylor Swift or Harry Styles, as well as popup use of heritage buildings like the Barracks at Hyde Park and North Head.

In recent years, we have seen memorable closures of some venues, while others have opened. But across Greater Sydney, there are gaps in three key areas:

1. Sydney's west and southwest. It's tough through to impossible to get a gig in Liverpool, Campbelltown and much of southwest Sydney.

People are making music throughout the area, and staging at-home or quasi-legal events, but there are virtually no venues for them. This is an equity issue, and a major missed opportunity.

2. Venues/spaces for different kinds of performance, and where alcohol is not a primary focus. Given Sydney's wealth of cultural and linguistic diversity – with music from Iran, Syria, Israel and the Pacific Islands, everything from klezmer to Arabic rock, drill and hardcore punk, not to mention the changing drinking culture – we need new kinds of performance venues that haven't been built yet.



Hotter Out West

Events like Hotter Out West (Common House, Glendenning) and Soft Centre (Casula Powerhouse) show the hunger of audiences in Sydney's west for adventurous local music. Both face challenges finding appropriate venues and navigating transport networks that aren't up to scratch. Being able to reach new audiences via bigger events like Parramatta Lanes, or by doing events in the Sydney CBD is helpful, but good venues and infrastructure locally is key.

3. Mid-tier venues (approx. 250-1250) programming music as the key offer. Many artists that have gone on to successful careers started playing night after night in small rooms, taking time to build an audience and develop a sound. We need more of them.

The new airport will bring parents and relatives of international students, business travellers and others direct to Sydney's southwest. The area is a rich melting pot of talent, but the one thing these performers don't have is places to perform. Currently community centres, cultural institutions and galleries are taking up much of the slack, but they face straitened financial conditions post-covid.

Figure 7: Estimated count of live music venues in Australian capital cities, 2011 and 2023

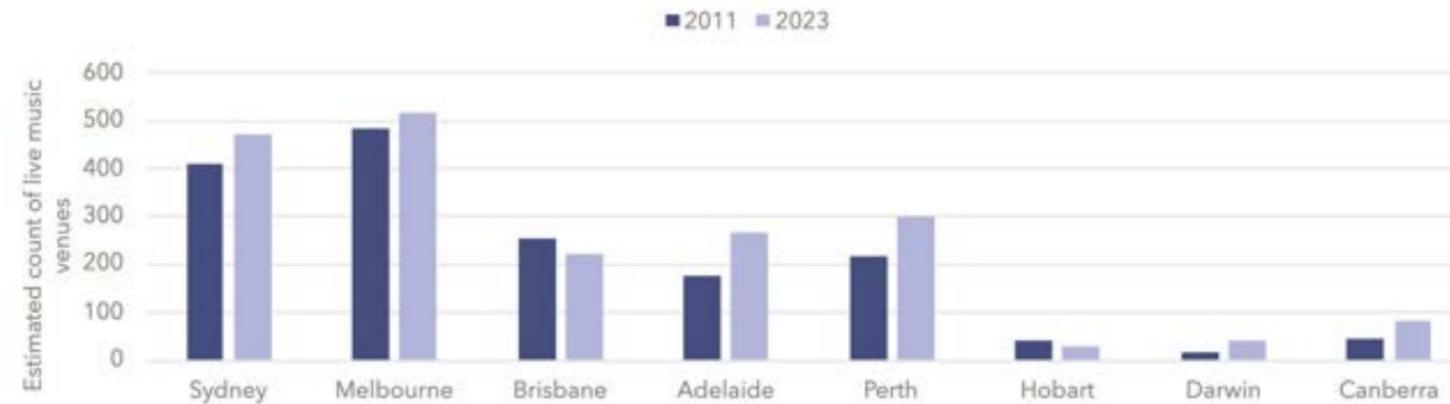


Figure 8: Population per live music venues in Australian capital cities, 2023

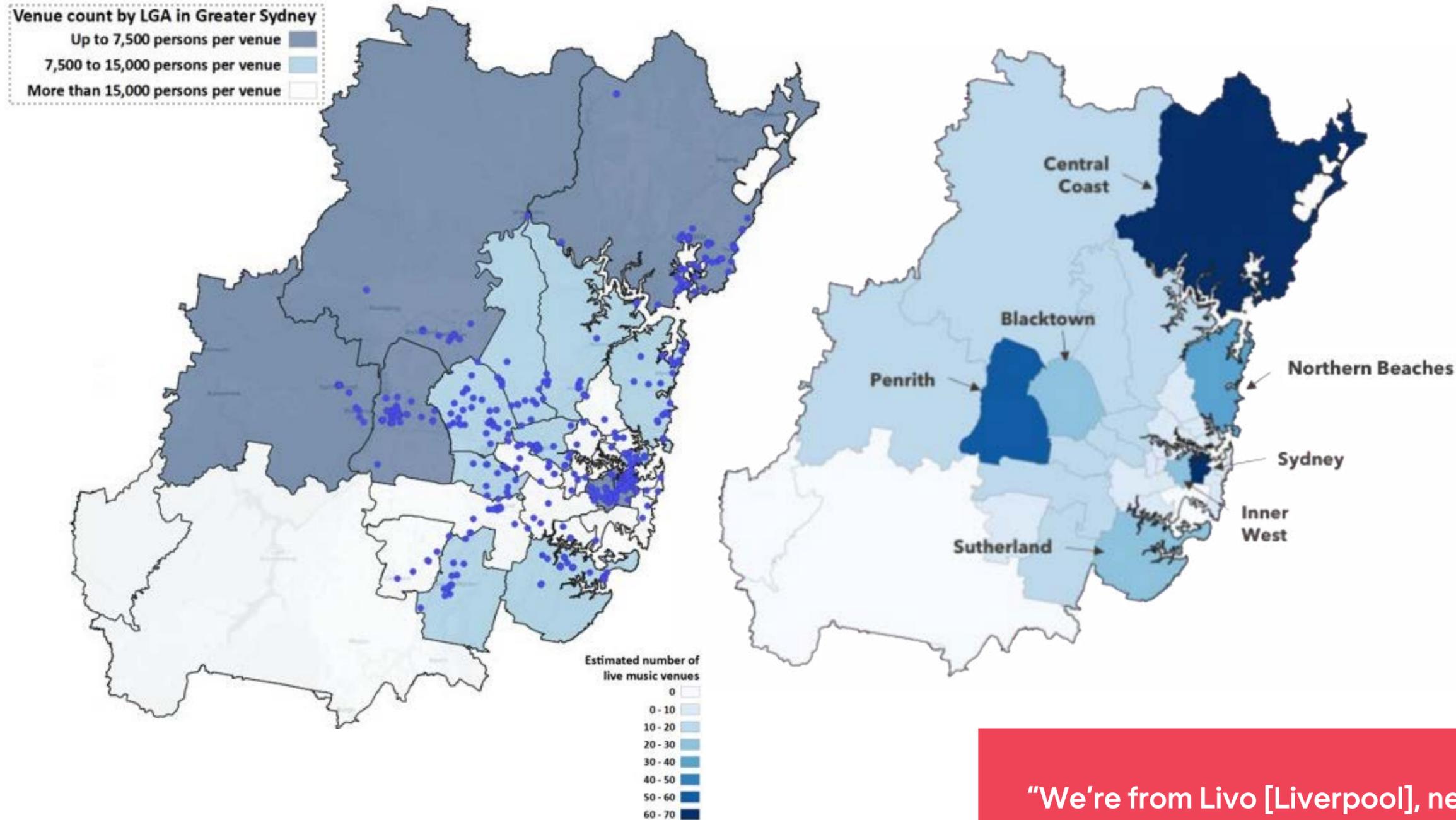


According to this analysis, Sydney has the second-most live music venues in Australia, with the estimated number of venues increasing by 15% between 2011 and 2023.

However, it has a relatively low number of live music venues per capita – based on the 2022 population of Greater Sydney, there is one live music venue for every 11,300 people, which is the second lowest across Australia's capital cities, while Greater Melbourne offers one live music venue for every 9,800 people.

Source: Scyne Advisory analysis, based on data from partial web scraping of Google Maps data in October 2023 and data from Deloitte Access Economics (2011), 'The economic, social and cultural contribution of venue-based live music in Victoria'. Other sources

Figure 9: Live music venues in Greater Sydney, 2023



There is no central source of truth for all live music venues in Sydney. While some data exists, we start with a broader definition that includes any premises or location used to host live music or concerts (for example, pubs, bars, restaurants, stadiums, concert halls, theatres, libraries and churches). Based on a partial web scraping of Google Maps, around 800 venues are programming live music across the state, including around 470 in Greater Sydney.

Source: Scyne Advisory analysis based on partial web scrape of Google Maps data for 'live music' venues from October 2023 and estimated resident population by LGA at 30 June 2022. It includes venues classified as live music venues, but also reviews and may therefore over-estimate actual number of live music venues. Regions based on local government areas at 2023, and Greater Capital Cities Statistical Areas, as defined by the ABS per ASGS 2021.

"We're from Livo [Liverpool], never had a gig here. 150,000 views on YouTube, can't get a gig in this town." – music maker

Vibrancy reforms

As we go to press, a new wave of reform is underway. We are delighted to see the NSW Government's proposed vibrancy reforms, coming to parliament with the '24-Hour Economy Legislation (Vibrancy Reforms) Amendment Bill 2023.'

The proposed reforms would deliver:

- Sensible venue sound management – with Liquor and Gaming NSW as the lead regulator of entertainment sound-related complaints for licensed premises, removing complex and subjective noise tests
- Vibrant, coordinated precincts – strengthening the Special Entertainment Precinct framework, and empowering councils to protect existing and support new creative and cultural space
- An activated outdoors – permanently relax the rules for outdoor dining, and make pop-up street events and festivals easier with street closures and blanket pre-approvals for event sites
- Empowering the 24 Hour Economy Commissioner – to be made a statutory appointment, with a remit that extends to Newcastle, Wollongong and the Central Coast
- Licensing – a common sense approach, removing outdated rules and starting to streamline planning and licensing processes, with meaningful incentives for live music and performance
- Improving the night time sector for workers.

3.2.1 Support venues that put on live music to succeed

Live venue managers face a challenging operating environment, with a return to highly volatile ticket sales, and reports of lower alcohol sales when staging live music. The high cost of insurance premiums is a major issue for live venues. While recent legislative reforms are welcome and will support more operators to curate more performance later into the evening, these same operators will inevitably face rising insurance premiums.

Let's be clear, it's not government's job to prop up poorly performing businesses. Some will fail due to poor management, marketing, booking or a range of other issues. But we also need to be clear that venues that put on live music, particularly new and emerging local music, are doing a community service, and we should regulate and support them as such.

The state government's proposed vibrancy reforms should relieve some of the frustration for live venues that currently have to struggle through up to seven different government agencies to improve their operations.

Many existing venues are also subject to historic restrictions on events and operations that limit their ability to host live music. Even the recently approved Sydney Football Stadium is the subject of a 30 -year noise control order, requiring an expensive and months long process to change requirements to reflect the opportunity provided by the new stadium's infrastructure, which includes improved noise monitoring and controls. These restrictions create significant red tape for the hosting of events, often meaning that events either do not proceed or go to other venues. Government-led change is required to ensure existing venues are capable of being used to their fullest extent possible.

Recommendations to address this area:

- Tax offsets for venues
- Reboot Dine & Discover to support live music
- Industry-led skills development
- Sensible sound controls
- Expand Hospitality Concierge
- Trial music liaison in police
- Trial new approach to safety in precincts
- Live music toolkit for councils.

Hospitality concierge

The NSW Government's Hospitality Concierge is a team of experienced industry professionals available to guide hospitality venues through government processes:

- Help navigating support for live music, with incentives including an 80% reduction on annual liquor licence fees and permanent extended trading application fees, and 60-minute liquor trading extension when a 'live music performance' or 'other arts and cultural event' is provided after 8pm for 45 minutes or more
- Support to navigate government and council approvals, including for more outdoor dining and general support for special entertainment precincts.

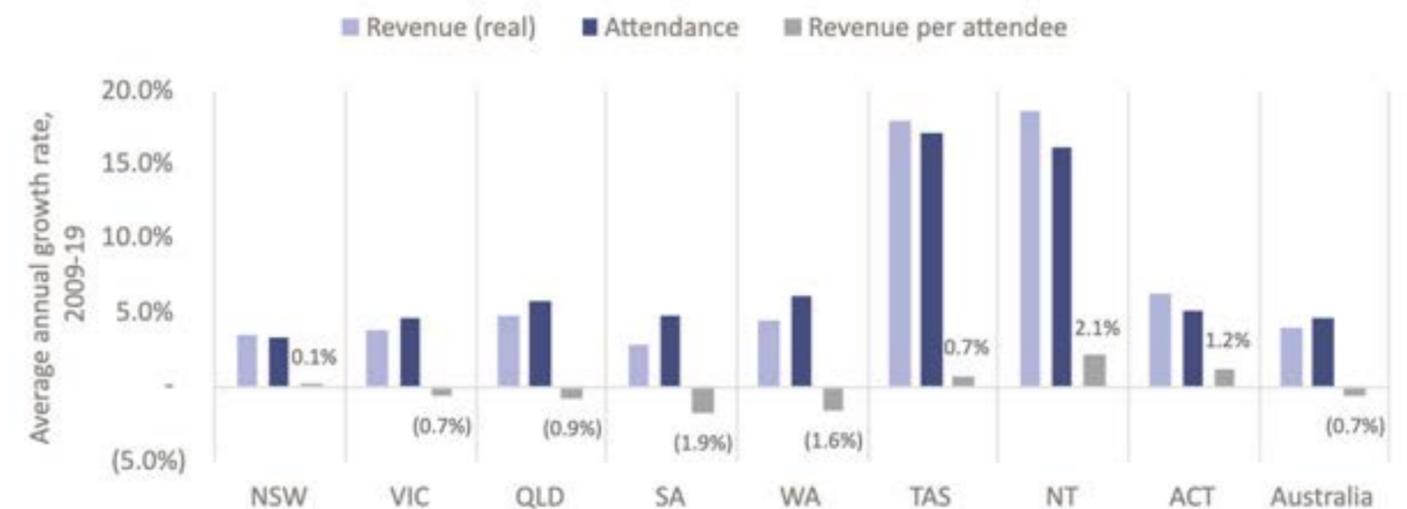
Originally funded for two years, it's now a permanent ongoing team within Liquor & Gaming NSW.



Live music venue offset

Staging live music is expensive, with high insurance costs, volatile attendance and shortages of skilled and other labour, and the costs of preparing development applications with all the attendant consultant reports, driving up payroll. A tax offset (e.g. covering 5% of the expenses of operating live music venues, and a one-off \$12,000 in expenses for new venues) would create a more equitable and long term sustainable approach to incentivising live music. Under the model, if each new venue puts on 16 gigs in a year, it would deliver an additional 150,000 gigs nationally. BIS Oxford Economics modelling estimates it would boost the incomes of musicians and artists by \$205 million per year with an additional 203,200 gigs, putting \$636 million into the economy. [APRA-AMCOS](#)

Figure 10: Growth rate of revenue and attendance at live music events (2009-2019)



Revenues and attendance at live music events in NSW have both been increasing over the long-term – before the Covid-19 pandemic, revenues (in 2023 dollars) increased by an average of 3.4% per annum, while attendance increased by around 3.3% per annum.

While attendance growth of 3.3% per annum is the lowest in Australia, NSW experienced growth in per capita revenues while Australia, on average, experienced a decline. Portioning-out revenue and attendance according to the share of NSW venues in Greater Sydney (59% in 2023), the Greater Sydney area saw over 4 million attendees at live music festivals in 2019, which dropped to 1.5 million in 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Source: Scyne Advisory analysis 2023, based on data data sourced from EY (2023) 'Live Performance Industry in Australia'.

3.2.2 Targeted support for new venues, emerging formats and innovators

There is a wave of energy in Sydney's going out economy, with new venue formats including microbreweries, growth demographics (e.g. over 45s), multiple shows a night, shops and restaurants staging music alongside their usual offers or switching in the evening, and venues with multiple operators.

Already many young DJs get their start playing at shoe shops (e.g. Hype DC, Platypus). Hardcore band Speed has been doing shows in skateboard shops, Flume had a popup store at Central Station. New rules passed by the state government, the 'Fun SEPP,' allow all this and a lot more.

Venues like Sir Rudy's, Bedouin and the Coogee Pavilion switch uses at night, Hello Sailor/Big Poppas has a bar upstairs and food down,

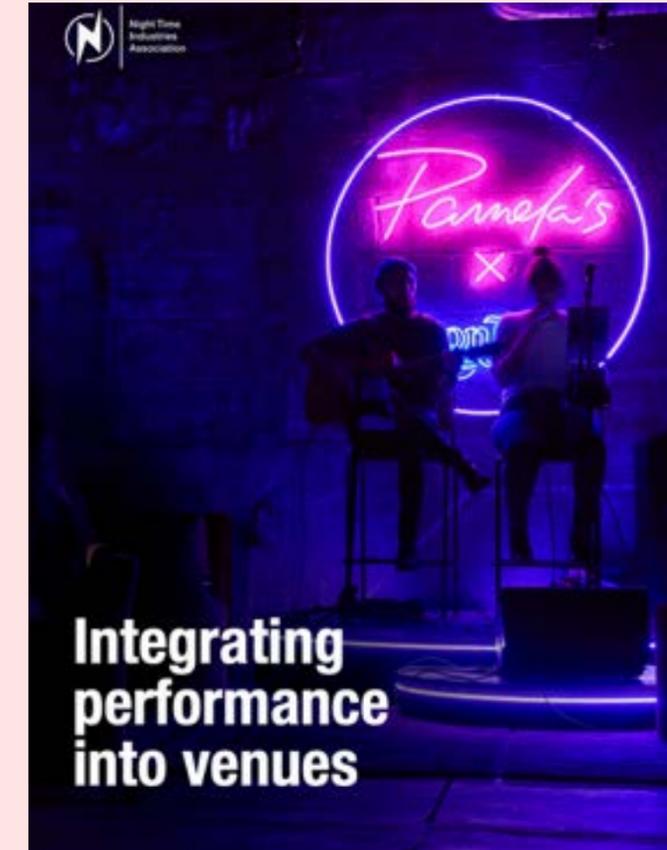
and Butter Surry Hills clears out the seats and tables for live shows once the food service is done.

Once great venues that fell into disrepair have been revived, with Pleasures Playhouse in Chinatown a standout – Parramatta's Roxy Theatre and Kings Cross's Metro/Minerva offer similar potential. The review of gaming in pubs opens the potential of reviving stages across Greater Sydney.

But trying new things is risky, particularly with laborious approvals. We should be looking to encourage venues to consider programming live music through planning incentives, grants and other measures. For example, liaison services provided by key councils (Inner West Council, City of Parramatta, City of Sydney) to help venues navigate government processes.

Recommendations to address this area:

- Industry-led skills development
- Tax offsets for venues
- Reboot Dine & Discover to support live music
- Expand Hospitality Concierge
- Trial music liaison in police, and a new approach to safety in precincts
- Development incentives to deliver cultural infrastructure
- Sensible sound controls, and a live music toolkit for councils
- Awareness campaign on reforms.



Live venue starter kit

While venues may love the idea of staging live music, many don't know where to start and, if the first experience is a flop, they might give up. The Night Time Industries Association has released guidebooks to address this, with advice on:

- Integrating performance into venues
- Navigating planning and licensing
- Managing sound and noise
- Building a brand and identity
- Promoting safety and wellbeing.

Source: [Night Time Industries Association](#)

Fun SEPP at the Fringe

Lola's Piano Bar (pictured) was created as part of the Sydney Fringe Festival's 2022 season, with Placemaking NSW, using new provisions in NSW's 'Fun SEPP' to activate vacant space in The Rocks. While activating spaces like this is what the Fringe has always done to a certain extent, the new regulations helped activate seven buildings in 2022, including terrace houses, an old coroner's court and retail shopfronts.

This created a total 12 performance spaces for some 200 performances of pop-up theatre, music, comedy, storytelling, visual art and other immersive experiences. The new rules create a huge opportunity to democratise access to live performance venues, particularly in the west and southwest, but to succeed will require an awareness campaign targeting councils, building owners and creative producers.

Source: Sydney Fringe Festival



**“Butter chicken joint is a beacon for lots of African and Pasifika kids, felt like the hip-hop version of the Hopetoun in the ‘90s.”
– council staff**

3.2.3 Deliberately plan for music in new precincts

Sydney has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to rebalance the provision of live music and other cultural infrastructure as part of the delivery of new precinct and gateway developments underway or on the way across the city – including Bradfield, Westmead, Tech Central, Sydney Olympic Park, Parramatta, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Green Square, as well as metro and other transport hubs

Major developments often come with promises of amenity and cultural investment, not always borne out in delivery. 'Highest and best use' of a site is rarely culture in the short term. However, medium to long term, venues and other facilities become an anchor for culture and the creation of deep community capital.

The balance of these controls should be shifted to welcoming, rather than limiting, live music. We should also plan for venues operating with different business models (e.g. the lower overheads required to run a venue with reduced or no alcohol consumption).

This could be through planning incentives and development contributions, or inverting the usual process in well-designed precincts – instead of reducing regulation, a presumption that live performance within set hours requires no approvals to happen (i.e. blanket approvals for certain activities).

Many councils already designate areas where restaurants and bars can operate with extended hours, creating the social license for these uses and creating an expectation that obtaining planning permission will be possible.

This has the potential to expand with the creation of Special Entertainment Precincts and the Uptown Accelerator program, as well state-led precincts (e.g. The Domain, Sydney Olympic Park and Bradfield). This would provide greater confidence and guidance for new venues and event organisers about the location and operating conditions that can be achieved.

Recommendations to address this area:

- Precinct and region planning to deliver the Neon Grid
- Development incentives to deliver cultural infrastructure
- Trial a new approach to safety in precincts.

Delivering creative space with a VPA

A new cultural facility in the Sydney CBD was funded with a voluntary planning agreement (VPA) between developer Greenland and City of Sydney – with a VPA, the developer agrees to provide or fund community infrastructure as a contribution in return for development approval. In this case, the result is 30 spaces across five storeys (total 2000sqm), including rehearsal spaces, recording and editing suites, visual art studios, workshop and screening rooms, office space, café and an artist-in-residence apartment.

Source: City of Sydney/Matt Lambley



Source: City of Sydney

Venues as precinct anchors

Across the USA, developers are using midsize venues to anchor their projects and energise new precincts:

- The Anthem (pictured) – a 6000 pax venue, as part of the Wharf, a \$2 billion waterfront reclamation project in Washington DC
- Mission Ballroom – a 4000 pax venue, as part of the North Wynkoop warehouse redevelopment in Denver
- ocVIBE – a 6000 pax venue, as part of a \$4 billion entertainment and commercial district in California.

With flexible configurations, these venues can accommodate bands, DJs and e-sports, as well as launch parties and trade shows – that versatility underpins a growing trend for venues as anchor destinations for major precinct developments.



Embedding live music in greenfield precinct planning

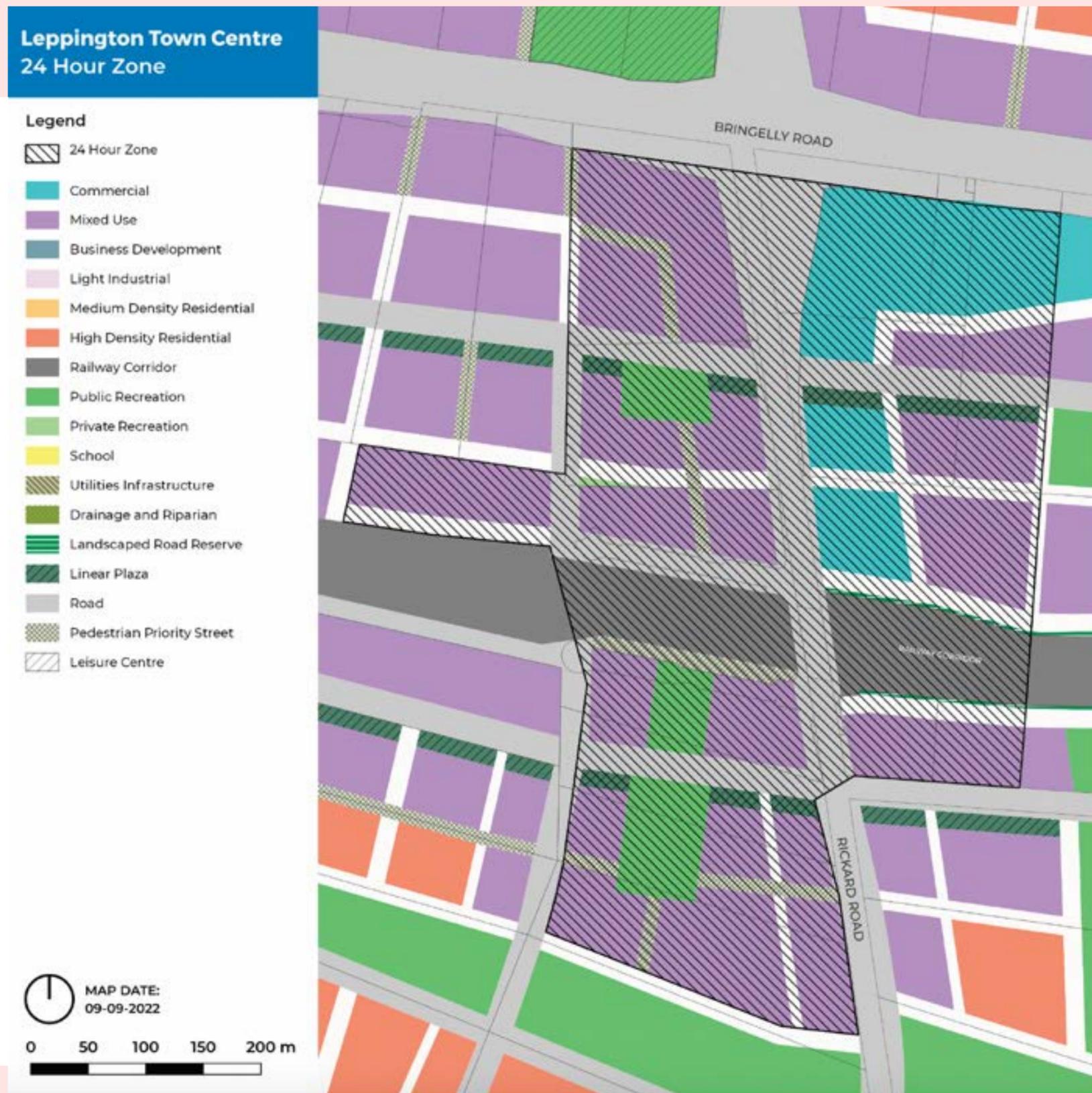
Leppington Town Centre is positioned to be a new 24-hour strategic centre by 2040, enabled by the round-the-clock operations of the Western Sydney Airport, the centre aims to deliver a world-class after-dark experience. The vision includes 18-24-hour venues, a variety of food services and other amenities to cater to residents, tourists and workers.

Mecone's planning review of the precinct considered 24-hour activities, including live music, from the start. The planning proposal has a new consolidated precinct DCP (prepared with LFA and Turf Landscape Architects) to enable a 24-hour zone centred around Leppington train station.

The planning controls are designed to strike a balance between fostering a thriving, safe, and inclusive night-time economy, and mitigating potential adverse impacts on residential areas. This includes:

- A focus on sound in the 24-hour zone, with design and operational requirements for venues and nearby residential and serviced apartments – e.g. double-glazed and/or laminated windows, solid walls, air gaps sealed around doors and windows, appropriate insulating building elements for doors, walls, roofs and ceilings
- Potential for up to 24-hour trading, including on rooftops, with consideration for where venues provide indoor performance, creative or cultural use and how this increases the diversity of late-night activities in the area.

Source: Mecone / [Planning Portal](#)





3.2.4 Manage sound issues sensibly and fairly

Despite historic reforms, venues and residents still have to deal with up to seven different state and local government authorities on sound, and compliance with arbitrary and opaque controls is frustrating efforts to create great live music venues. While the latest reforms look to resolve these issues, sound will likely continue to be a source of conflict in contested urban areas making this an important focus for continued work.

Currently NSW has no consistent state policies or guidelines specific to entertainment sound. While a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be appropriate, guidance is needed regarding alternative regulatory models, because the status quo relies on criteria that are often not fit-for-purpose or do not support an area's strategic planning intent.

Frameworks for regulating sound in NSW are among the most stringent in the nation. Criteria are generally adopted irrespective of where venues are located, and relative to the prevailing background noise level of an area, which changes by time of day, day of week, and year by year.

Clear objective requirements would protect both venues and the community. Using set or fixed criteria, which could change by time and day, reduces uncertainty for venues and informs community expectations. This would let us set criteria that align with the current or future strategic intent of an area, considering sound from venues and activity in the public realm.

These frameworks can also help define requirements for development that may be sensitive to noise impacts, such as residential. State-supported guidance could also extend to best-practice for mitigating sound from venues and design of sensitive receiver development.

These should be backed with performance criteria, underpinned by standard statewide policies for assessment. Requirements may need to extend outside late night areas, as sounds generated will not always stop at the boundary, with buffer areas that identify graded impact.

These updated controls should be supported by a one stop shop for complaints or issues, with compliance authorities acting only on substantiated and significant complaints, as well as a program to support retrofitting sound mitigation measures for venues and affected residents.

Recommendations to address this area:

- Sensible sound controls.

3.2.5 Use public assets for live music

For so many reasons, now is the time for increased public support of the city's music scene through cultural institutions, universities, council facilities and others.

Live venues give communities an outlet, a place where people can meet and socialise, opportunities for creative expression and entrepreneurship. Also the shift away from alcohol consumption, changing nature of spaces required for performance, cultural and community cohesion role of music (particularly for recent migrant communities), and the disruption of music's business model.

Many institutions are already developing coherent programming and curation on music, for example the Art Gallery of NSW's phenomenal Volume program and its collaboration between visual artist Daniel Boyd and hip-hop group ONEFOUR, as well as the Powerhouse Museum's developing music strategy.

Key galleries in west and southwest Sydney, including Casula Powerhouse and Campbelltown Arts Centre, were excluded from Covid-19 support measures, and many still carry deficits that compromise their ability to take risks. Programming is highly dependent on motivated and knowledgeable staff, as well as administrations, and both can change.

Town halls, public libraries and other community spaces provide opportunities for live performance. Examples include opening up town halls (Inner West Council), and the upgraded library facilities, including podcast studios, green screens and mics (Liverpool City Council) and 'Tiny Desk' style acoustic music shows (Northern Beaches Council).

However, event organisers – in councils and out – report prohibitive security and too much red tape, including internal approvals, prohibitive public liability insurance, security requirements (even for quiet shows at libraries!) and out of proportion bonds.

We need to consider how best to make our community centres, town halls and other public venues more readily available.

Universities have long been key incubators for talent and audiences, as well as hosting an array of performance spaces and live music venues. As campus leaders grapple with the right post-covid settings, the opportunity for reengaging on live music offers clear benefits.

Recommendations to address this area:

- Venues Future Fund
- Live music toolkit for councils.

Opening public assets for live music

Café Noun, at Green Square Library, is a great example of a public or council venue supporting live music. They host regular live music events, including Salsa Sundays, that spill out onto the library forecourt.

Source: Café Noun



Source: Hatch RobertsDay



“Typically my friends and I decide what we're doing on a Wednesday for the weekend coming up. We've got quite a bit of choice, but we all wait to see how much \$\$ are in the bank for the weekend and then decide on an event that fits the budget (if at all). The pay cycle definitely plays into it. Dine and Discover was a really great initiative for this.” – project manager

Everyday Culture

The Committee has a series of papers that focus on creating more opportunities for culture in people's everyday lives across Greater Sydney.

Proposals to date include:

- Plug and play sites for live performance in plazas, parks and public spaces – three phase power, lighting, staging and blanket pre-approvals for event sites
- Town hall revival by auditing and upgrading existing spaces, rezoning where required and making it easier for the community to use them
- Parklets opening up more opportunities for alfresco eating, performance and other activities, including streamlining Traffic Committee approvals, fast tracking licensing boundary changes and removing clearways
- Open streets throughout the city for street festivals and community activity, with automatic bollards, and generic notification and traffic management plans.

Read more in [Everyday Culture](#).

3.3 Expand the audience's appetite and awareness of live music

Music stars rise out of a culture of thousands of people making, playing, watching, paying for and appreciating music. But while people are going out to shows in Sydney, turnout is volatile, with particularly low and late ticket sales for domestic acts.

We've heard it said, with a note of resignation, that tastes have shifted away from live music. But we can't seriously say 'live music isn't for them' about people who've had limited exposure after years characterised by lockdowns and lockouts.

Yes, turnout is volatile, but when people do find out about shows, music workers tell us they are backing things they like with an excitement that is encouraging. If we're serious about being a music city, we need to make it easier for audiences to find music they will love.

3.3.1 Create conditions that encourage people to get out and try things

Cities like Melbourne, New York and Tokyo benefit from a highly walkable urban area, making it easy to get out and stumble on things. Sydney's traditionally been more like LA in that key venues are in different parts of town, which means you need to know what's on and where to go, and if the show's no good, there's often no fallback.

When the options are so limited, it gives rise to conditions that exclude some participants – due to a lack of cultural diversity, accessibility issues, sexism – with more options, we need to also prioritise inclusive conditions that welcome people into the live music scene.

Programs to spur the creation of vibrant precincts in different parts of Greater Sydney offer the potential for more vibrant and walkable nightlife precincts, which would also reduce the risk for audiences. If one venue's no good, or full, there's always another.

Programs to spur the creation of vibrant precincts in different parts of Greater Sydney offer the potential for more vibrant and walkable nightlife precincts, which would also reduce the risk for audiences. If one venue's no good, or full, there's always another.

We need to back these models with incentives for venues to program live music, and for audiences to get out and try new things.

Recommendations to address this area:

- Reboot Dine & Discover to support live music
- Trial a new approach to safety in precincts.

More listings than ever, it's a lot to stay across

- Media – FBi Radio Soundcheck, Time Out Sydney, Broadsheet, Concrete Playground, Weekend Notes, Hypebeast, Urban List, Acclaim, Vice listings, music podcasts
- Tech platforms – Bandsintown, Songkick, Sydneymusic.net
- Social channels – Instagram (e.g. Bondi Lines), Facebook events
- Niche scene websites – Resident Advisor
- Government sites – City of Sydney What's On, Sydney.com Events
- Email lists and social (following artists, promoters, venues)
- Music streamers – Spotify, Apple Music, Pandora, Amazon Music
- Search – Google, Bing
- Pole posters.

3.3.2 Harness the potential of digital channels to support live music

How you find out what's on is crucial, and the number of channels for discovery has ballooned. In fact, it can be overwhelming, making the idea of a central listings service seductive (and a reliable citywide listing would be useful, particularly for visitors), but a wide range of platforms serving mainstream, niche and in some cases overlapping audiences is unavoidable.

The big opportunity here is music streaming services ('digital service providers') like Spotify and Apple Music. Because of their granular data on individual tastes, they are almost uniquely positioned to serve up recommendations that listeners will be open to. But while services like these tend to support stronger local scenes in non-English speaking countries, that is much less the case here.

The idea of quotas is contested, but we mandate broadcast providers to profile and serve up local content, and we should do the same with streamers – including letting listeners know when these artists are playing nearby.

While central government listings are not a silver bullet, and won't be straightforward, it may be part of the solution, particularly for visitors or newcomers, to have a central source of truth on what's happening around the city.

Recommendations to address this area:

- Mandate support by music streamers.

Emergency Action Alliance

The Emergency Action Alliance was formed when Australia's top emergency fundraising organisations agreed to pool their combined email lists. With a focus on raising funds for those in need, the group comes together in major emergencies to reach their combined audience of Australians who donate to support people in need. Each individual organisation can continue its targeted fundraising year round, but when needed they can reach the largest possible group, quickly and efficiently, without creating noise in the market through competing fundraising campaigns.

Every operation in Sydney's live music scene has a contact database, and the ticketing agencies have the most complete and broad of all. Together they span hundreds of thousands, even millions of Sydneysiders – an expanded Venn diagram of music loving people across our city. Taking inspiration from those emergency fundraisers, is there a path to combining and using these many databases to build a more active and engaged audience for live music, and support the growth of the broader live music sector?

"Seeing people be interested, caring about what we're doing, that really motivates me. They've seen it grow in the culture, inspired me to get my hustle on – they want to come out, I want to make something they want to come out to." – DJ / promoter

3.4 Coordinate efforts across government to support live music

We need a concerted effort from governments to demonstrate, enable and support the live music sector. This aim should not simply be enabling and giving people permission to do things, we should be actively encouraging them.

We heard time and time again – from a diverse group of industry voices – that it doesn't feel like Sydney values music as part of the culture. When music's in the limelight, everyone's happy to be part of it, but at other times it's seen as a problem or a 'high risk' activity by government, rather than an opportunity. This is a feeling that's been exacerbated for many artists struggling through Covid-19.

Most we spoke to across government were passionate about the idea of Sydney as a music city, and when it all works together, as on notable occasions, it's magic.

However, the goodwill doesn't always translate to a cohesive response to the live music sector. Everyone reports mixed messages in DA and licensing conflicts, arts funding and other support, heavy-handed police and compliance operations, confusing sound regulation, and so much else.

3.4.1 Deliver the state's first contemporary music strategy

The NSW Government has committed to developing its first contemporary music strategy.

The focus should be on setting a framework spanning the many departments, agencies and authorities with jurisdiction. It will need senior buy-in across arms of government including Planning, Transport and Police, as well as Liquor & Gaming, Create NSW (Sound NSW) and Office of the 24 Hour Economy Commissioner.

Councils hold important local knowledge, relationships and programs across the state, particularly in Sydney's west where key councils do much of the heavy lifting, and should be deeply involved.

The potential of the 'Neon-Grid' – first put forward in the Committee's 2018 paper 'Sydney as a 24-hour City,' and a key action of the 24-Hour Economy Strategy (NSW Treasury 2020) – has not yet borne fruit. This is an important missing link to set the framework for integrated land use and transport planning, ensuring key precincts are supported by safe, efficient and accessible late-night transport, and set direction to councils to consider live music in precinct planning and ensure development controls support live music operations and late-night trading. To have weight in a planning context, it will need to be developed in close collaboration with NSW Department of Planning as part of an endorsed strategic plan.

As part of this strategy, a 'live music toolkit for councils' could provide the tools councils need to respond to the strategy, including revising planning and development controls. This should be prepared in collaboration with Liquor & Gaming NSW, and include the proposed overhaul of sound controls on live venues.

The strategy should set out practical steps to deliver on the vision of Sydney as a music city. Government doesn't produce live music, that's something the music sector does. So the strategy should be guided by an advisory council of people from across the sector, including in unsalaried positions, and an engagement first model that is deeply and continually informed by broader industry insights and trends.



Source: Richard Dobson/News

Transport can be a major enabler

Transport network improvements including Metro West and light rail in Parramatta will encourage people to travel across town to shows, supporting career development, cross-pollination and growth. But they must be matched by a nimbler approach to scheduling services that responds to changing user behaviour. For low-income workers in the night time economy, this is make or break, and it will support attendance too.



Neon Grid

The concept of the Neon Grid, put forward in the Committee’s 2018 ‘Sydney as a 24 hour city’ report, includes a series of identified entertainment precincts across Sydney, connected by an efficient and accessible late-night transport system. The idea is to encourage greater movement across Sydney, activating more of the city rather than intensifying activity in a few locations.

Source: Committee for Sydney/Ethos Urban

Big Sound

Spotify's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander project lead, Dr Alethea Beetson, gave a keynote at this year's Big Sound. The long-running Brisbane event is a great example of government working strategically to showcase local talent, supported by good live music precinct infrastructure. Industry development organisation QMusic brings musicians, industry, brands, media and music lovers together in Fortitude Valley for a major showcase of the local scene. The deliberate approach led to Brisbane being showcased in Billboard as one of the top three music scenes in the world, with Pete Murray songs on Scrubs, The Veronicas breaking in the US, and other Queensland artists connecting into markets in the USA, UK and China.

Source: QMusic / Big Sound

Live music census

NSW's first census of live music venues will provide insights into the current landscape of the industry, establishing a database of venues across the state, and expanding to include events and festivals, as well as broader research to understand the size and shape of the industry (including intensity of activity), the needs and barriers within the industry, the economic impact as well as the social and cultural impact.

3.4.2 A new paradigm for safety in live music settings

When people head out for a fantastic night in one of the great cities of the world, they are met by what many music workers describe as an assumption from NSW Police that something is bound to go wrong. Of course, safety is a priority in live music settings, but how you achieve that is a matter of debate.

Police have an important job maintaining community safety, but their impact on culture can't be underestimated. While there is goodwill and change afoot at senior levels, as well as proactive, informed policing in specific Police Area Commands and stations, it's inconsistent and many reported:

- Profiling of music genres (and by inference cultural groups), particularly in the west where communities still resent their treatment as 'LGAs of concern'

- Punitive compliance measures and heavy-handed treatment of audiences, including sniffer dogs and strip searches
- Prohibitive costs and the perception of a conflict of interest created by 'user pays' policing
- A worst-case scenario approach that considers live music as a 'high risk' activity
- Fears of going on the record due to concern about reprisals.

Positive moves are underway. The rollout of Purple Flag accreditation (Harris Park, Parramatta and Sydney CBD's YCK precinct), successful trial of the Special Entertainment Precinct model (Enmore Road), and local success stories with liquor accords and other representative groups. This offers the potential for a new paradigm when it comes to ensuring safety in the nightlife.

Recommendations to address this area:

- Sensible sound controls
- Trial music liaison in police, and a new approach to safety in precincts.



Newtown Vibe

The Newtown Vibe Roundtable includes local police, councils, advocacy groups, the liquor accord and local businesses, and takes a collaborative approach to maintaining a safe and vibrant nightlife. Despite increasing numbers in the precinct, the statistics show:

- 1.Reduced non-domestic, alcohol related reports of violence
- 2.Halved assault reports within licensed venues
- 3.Increased street activations.

With measures being trialled or rolled out across the state – including Purple Flag accreditation, Special Entertainment Precincts, Uptown consortia and Business Improvement Districts – there's plenty of space for testing out new governance frameworks, and we should be looking to do this in a systematic and evidence-based way.

Section 4

Recommendations



Actions to make Sydney a great city for live music

Prioritise and promote domestic talent	Key actor/s
<p>Reinstate a quota for domestic performers at government-supported events, and update government procurement policies to favour local music. The policies will encompass festivals, sports events, touring artists, hold music, advertising, and so on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create NSW / Sound NSW • Office of Local Government • NSW Treasury • Councils
<p>Mandate support by music streamers / digital service providers (e.g. Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music) to leverage data to target relevant audiences with music and nearby live dates by domestic artists. This could include plugging 'live in your area' content into high volume playlists.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music Australia
Deliver industry-led training to build the pipeline of talent	Key actor/s
<p>Significant investments in industry-led traineeships, skills development and mentorship programs for music workers, emerging entrepreneurs and venue operators. Partner with vocational educational institutions like TAFE NSW, as well as specific programs, for training in sound and AV, marketing, and business management. Include specialised tracks for venue operations and an alumni network to sustain growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills NSW • Create NSW / Sound NSW
<p>Review employment conditions. Set clear expectations on safety, with frameworks to support employment of skilled staff across multiple institutions or businesses. Given the high proportion of unsalaried workers, they should be engaged throughout this process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Workplaces





Better targeted funding mechanisms	Key actor/s
<p>Tax offsets for artists and venues. Implement tax offsets for touring artists meeting minimum performance and expense criteria, and for live music venues based on operational expenses, particularly noting the impact of rising insurance costs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music Australia • Australian Taxation Office
<p>Establish Venues Future Fund. Allocate dedicated funding to embed music into the long-term programming of cultural institutions and to upgrade underutilised public venues. This two-pronged approach will enhance the role of music in cultural settings and revitalise existing spaces for music performances, benefiting heritage, sustainability and community engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create NSW / Sound NSW • Music Australia
<p>Reboot Dine & Discover to support live music. Implement via Service NSW app, keeping administration costs low compared to other schemes, and empowering audiences rather than bureaucrats. Could target households underrepresented in live audiences, or socioeconomically disadvantaged. Alternately a rebate scheme could transform the way we fund live music and creative culture in NSW.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Treasury • Create NSW • Councils
Make it easier to work with government	Key actors
<p>Expand Hospitality Concierge. This model provides a single front door for dealing with government, which could be expanded to more proactively support live music venues and emerging formats (e.g. microbreweries) to navigate government processes (e.g. planning, licensing or simply getting a loading zone out front).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liquor & Gaming NSW
<p>Trial a live music liaison program in key Police Area Commands, modelled on the successful GLLO/ LGBTQ+ Liaison Officers program in stations around NSW. Specialist officers who work with the music sector to develop and deliver an effective response to keeping live music venues and audiences safe, while supporting a vibrant and globally recognised nightlife.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Police



Get planning and regulation working in concert with live music	Key actors
<p>Precinct and region planning to deliver the Neon Grid. Set controls to deliver on the Neon Grid vision for Greater Sydney, considering where and what infrastructure is required. An integrated approach to land use and transport planning helps with alignment to other strategic planning objectives and guiding other government agencies such as Transport for NSW, as well as local councils, to provide integrated and place-based interventions. This will help set expectations with councils for live music and related infrastructure in precinct planning, and ensure development controls support live music operations and late-night trading. Allow public precincts and spaces to be utilised for live music without need for further planning approval, by providing deemed-to-comply provisions within the Codes SEPP or a simplified permit system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create NSW / Sound NSW • NSW Department of Planning / Greater Cities Commission • Office of the 24 Hour Economy Commissioner
<p>Development incentives to deliver cultural infrastructure. Set clear floor space and height incentives for developments to deliver priority cultural infrastructure, as well as a transferrable development rights system for trading heritage and airspace rights to support the viability of historic venues. Cultural infrastructure may also deliver social benefits that can help support social impact assessments, particularly in SSDA projects, build to rent or other large-scale projects. Ensure development contribution schemes include live performance and music infrastructure as being eligible for contributions and developer levies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Department of Planning • Councils
<p>Sensible sound controls. Establish clear and consistent controls for sound in existing and new venues, including statewide guidelines to avoid the current patchwork of variable local requirements. Practices for sound control and monitoring should be simple and cost-effective to implement, easy to understand for venues and community, and able to be regulated in a fair and efficient manner. They should be backed by a fund for sound attenuating infrastructure to support the transition. Explore community-based incentives to encourage cohesion in venues and community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liquor & Gaming NSW • NSW Department of Planning • Create NSW / Sound NSW • Office of the 24 Hour Economy Commissioner • NSW Environment Protection Authority



Get planning and regulation working in concert with live music (cont.)

Key actor/s

Music hubs. Establish centres for music ventures to co-locate, including rehearsal and recording space, performance and social space, and co-working/office space. Locations should consider public transport and airport access, as well as demographic mix and availability of appropriate space – most likely Liverpool, Parramatta or Campbelltown in the west, Central in the east.

- Create NSW / Sound NSW

Trial a new approach to safety in precincts. Responsible nightlife precincts with a coordinated approach to safety across all venues (backed by markers including Special Entertainment Precinct status, Purple Flag accreditation, and programs like Red Frogs and Ask Angela) should be able to take more responsibility for overseeing and setting the roles of operators, security and police in maintaining public safety. Plans of management may need to be altered, requiring DCP updates to match these reforms.

- Liquor & Gaming NSW
- NSW Department of Planning
- Office of the 24 Hour Economy Commissioner

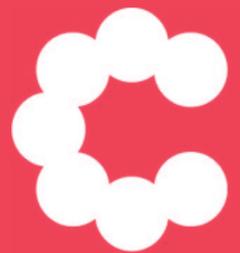


Bring reforms to life	Key actor/s
<p>Live music toolkit for councils. Provides objective, well communicated guidelines with streamlined regulatory and compliance measures. Best practice provisions to update development control plans, with principles to manage land use conflict and guidance to plan for and support venues, including waiving requirements for small business to prepare acoustic assessments, and liaison with councils to remove local planning panel requirement for applications with more than 25 objections where the use is providing live music (lift to 50 objections). Measures to protect and support existing venues (e.g. identifying in controls, and removing or relaxing historical restrictions such as hours of use). Support for Special Entertainment Precincts to ensure new venues emerge with a presumption of approval. Expectation that new developments mitigate against local amenity impacts. Resources to help councils develop local live music action plans, including in public places (amphitheatres, bandstands, public plazas and parklets), public facilities (town halls, public libraries and community centres), and live performance, rehearsal and recording. Streamlined booking, blanket approvals, shared infrastructure, including security and insurance. Council exemptions/bonuses for venues that program live music.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liquor & Gaming NSW • NSW Department of Planning • Office of the 24 Hour Economy Commissioner • Create NSW / Sound NSW
<p>Awareness campaign on reforms. Campaign focused on councils, music industry and audiences to drive uptake of reforms, including Fun SEPP provisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Department of Planning • Office of the 24 Hour Economy Commissioner • Create NSW / Sound NSW

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