

Emily Delves

Ms Mary Porter AM MLA

Chair

Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works and

Territory and Municipal Services

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Civic Square, London Circuit

Canberra ACT 2600

committees@act.gov.au

14th July 2010

Submission to the Inquiry into Live Community Events

Dear Ms Porter,

I make the following submission to the Inquiry into live community events as a Canberra resident, music fan, and a regular patron of music events, venues, and festivals in the ACT.

I have lived in Canberra for the past 3 years and have been happy to discover that it's reputation as a dull city with no nightlife or culture to speak of is, in my experience, incorrect. Several venues in the city such as Transit Bar, Hippo Bar, The Phoenix, and the ANU Bar are renowned for promoting a wide range of both local and international acts. Similarly, popular suburban venues including the Old Canberra Inn and The Front Bar and Gallery also contribute substantially to Canberra's live music scene. In this submission I will discuss why it is important that legislation protects these and other similar venues.

I would like to address the issue of music venues in the CBD. Although it lacks the more established music/arts scenes of bigger cities such as Melbourne and Sydney, Canberra has the potential to develop into a more vibrant city. Sadly, we are struggling even to maintain the city nightlife Canberra currently has to offer. One of the main threats to this is the conflict between residential buildings and music venues. We need to make space for residents and music lovers alike, but if the city is not the appropriate place for music venues, where is? A previous submission has already discussed the outcry that would arise if the situation were reversed, for example if I were to open a nightclub in the quiet, retirement suburb of Page. This would clearly be encroaching on residents' right to quiet surroundings. Why, then, do people move to the city expecting it to be quiet? At the risk of stating the obvious and simplifying the issue, if you want peace and quiet, don't move to the city.

The issue of soundproofing and where the onus lies has been rehashed over and over again. Order of occupancy has been discussed as one method to manage this debate. However, many music venues have already put much effort into soundproofing, being aware that some people are bothered by the noise. At least these venues are taking some responsibility in this matter, but this has to go both ways. Residential apartments in the city surely have to take into account the fact that they are immediately adjacent to

Canberra's nightlife hub. Noise is going to be an issue. Therefore, developers should be making inroads to addressing soundproofing problems before residents move in. One resident of the Waldorf Apartments has stated that the noise generated by people sitting in Transit Bar's outdoor area is problematic. Is this indicative of poor soundproofing on the part of the Waldorf? I believe that measures should be taken to ensure that residential buildings in the CBD are adequately soundproofed, as city noise is surely an unavoidable part of city life.

Music venues in the city also contribute substantially to industry, and provide wide-ranging employment for those of us who do not work 9 to 5 in the public service. Canberra attracts many students due to the excellent opportunities offered by our universities, and it is well known that a large proportion of our hospitality industry is comprised of university students. Having worked in hospitality as a university student for the past several years, there are few who would place more value on the flexible, exciting, enjoyable nature of café, restaurant, and bar work. Our nightlife supports our university students.

There are many benefits to having venues in the city which regularly showcase live music, and also provide music entertainment late into the night. The overall improvement on the city's atmosphere and nightlife is undeniable and something which Canberra desperately needs. If we are able to cast off the reputation as a boring city, we are more likely to attract people from interstate, which would not only benefit areas such as business but would also directly benefit our struggling music scene. A diverse, thriving music scene would attract diverse people, and our musicians and music lovers would not need to make the all-too-frequent move to Melbourne or Sydney for their culture/music fix.

I believe that appropriate legislation would address these issues, and I therefore endorse the following recommendations:

- Residential buildings in the CBD should be required to provide soundproofing. This should apply to both new buildings and existing buildings;
- The principal of order of occupancy should be applied in the CBD where residential buildings are planned near existing music venues.

If these, and other, recommendations are taken into consideration, we could avoid losing valuable music venues and events, such as Toast nightclub and Trinity's Block Party.

Thank you for giving members of the community the opportunity to voice their opinions and suggestions on this matter. Hopefully the legislation that arises from this Inquiry will pave the way for a more harmonious relationship between resident and music lover.

Yours sincerely,

Emily Delves