

Submission to Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works
and Territory and Municipal Services

Inquiry into Live Community Events



As part of a fledgling organisation with a growing membership including many local performers, I feel that my experience might be useful to this inquiry into the performance of live music in Canberra.

I declare my interest as Vice President of the Canberra Musicians Club, but I make this submission independently of the other members of our club. However, I believe I would speak for all of our members when I say that I wholeheartedly agree with the statement made by the Standing Committee in their terms of reference, namely that:

live music and events are an integral part of our culture and essential for maintaining a vibrant, culturally diverse community.

It has been my experience that live music has the capacity to unite people in a way that is essential for a healthy community.

In recent years Canberra has been fortunate to experience a renaissance in the live music scene. We are truly blessed with some very talented, enthusiastic and co-operative musicians, who have extended the reach of original contemporary music beyond the usual boundaries of traditional audiences.

It is sad then to find that our membership are becoming increasingly limited in the choice of live music venues available.

While some licensed venues are supportive of local music, these venues have also been the victim of complaints about noise. The Gypsy Bar in Civic is a classic case in point. The Gypsy had an established clientèle and a thriving live music scene when noise complaints from a more recently opened business effectively closed down the Gypsy as a live music venue. Order of Occupancy issues like this one continue to plague venue operators.

I have read the argument in other submissions that the noise around Transit Bar

would not be tolerated were it in the suburbs, so it should not be tolerated anywhere that people are residing. I believe that this argument is specious; if quiet surroundings are what one craves, then perhaps the suburbs are a better place to live. Certainly the cultural vibrancy of our city should not be compromised by appealing to this argument alone.

And if not the city, then where else should these events be hosted? Setting aside the question of availability and suitability of already established, licensed premises, there is little capacity in Canberra to provide for musicians to explore the potential for more alternative, community-based events. There are several community halls around the inner north that have proved to be adequate as live music venues. Several groups have enjoyed great success using the Corroborree Park Hall, but have also encountered problems there due to one nearby resident making a noise complaint.

As a recent Stateline piece (which can be viewed [here](#)) about the Canberra live music scene revealed, musicians are employing alternative venues to attract audiences, and these have enjoyed some success. Unlike the almost exclusively 18 – 30 year old demographic which we traditionally see attending live music, many of these “alternative” gigs have attracted older people, families, and members of our community who are marginalised due to illness or other factors. These events have been a great triumph for Canberra, capturing and building on a sense of community that encourages a truly unique socio-cultural mix of participants.

My experience is that the current provisions for securing live music venues – especially in and around the inner-north – are stifling and unworkable.

In order to remedy this situation, and build on the great investment of talent and energy which drives our live, original, music scene, I would like to propose the following:

1. That your committee convene a task-force to identify community venues currently available, consulting widely with Canberra's musical fraternity.
2. Once a comprehensive audit is made, the most suitable locations can be identified, and costings made on the work necessary to bring the venues up to a suitable standard. This might mean slight improvements to catering facilities or an amount of sound-proofing.
3. That residential buildings erected near already functioning venues be required to provide adequate soundproofing, to avoid conflict of interest between occupants.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission.

Yours faithfully

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