

4 September 2009

Ms Mary Porter AM MLA,  
Chair,  
Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works,  
And Territory and Municipal Services,  
Civic Square,  
London Circuit,  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Madam,

I have only today been informed that there has been an "Inquiry into Live Community Events" undertaken by the legislative assembly through the Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works and Territory and Municipal Services.

Without going into the method by which the said committee elected to inform the community of this "Inquiry" and the subsequent response (?), I can only hope that my late submission will gain some hearing.

My wife and I (along with silent partners) purchased the George Harcourt in September 2006 and, at the time, the business had live music 3 nights a week (Thursday, Friday and Saturday).

Today, we have live music when a function requests it and we share the cost with the function as it allows the music to be shared with our general clientele.

I am not happy with our current dearth of live music but there are two reasons for this.

1. In the summer months, unless the music is outside in our large communal area, the musicians find themselves playing inside to themselves as everyone else is outside enjoying the night air. However, the minute I put the musicians outside, I get the EPA calling me in relation to a complaint from a specific individual who lives in the only small enclave of units in the whole of the area.

Apart from this small block of prestige units, The George has always enjoyed an unfettered music space in the Gold Creek area (a designated tourism and entertainment district).

This is obviously a classic case for a review of 'order of occupancy legislation'. The George has been here since 1980 and was a stand-alone facility for many years before any residential premises were established.

A couple of points here.

- Why have the newcomers got the right to shut our music down?
  - Why does it take only one complaint to close our music down?
2. When we looked at the cost of providing the live music compared with the return, we decided to cut live music completely and suffer, what we judged, would be a relatively small downturn in trade. If a music act costs us \$500 (which most decent acts charge as a minimum) and we assume that we make a net profit of 10% (which would be an

exceptional net profit figure), we would have to take an additional \$5000 in order just to pay for the music – let alone make it worthwhile to encourage it.

And here's the rub. The cessation of live music at The George made NO difference to our turnover!

SO – where is the encouragement to come from for establishments such as ours to engender live music?

We suffer no downturn in trade and we don't have the hassles of neighbours complaining about noise.

But the problem is, I (and most of my patrons and people I know) LOVE live music.

I think we need to take a step back and take a good look at what role our governments should play in relation to live entertainment. Whether it is made a priority or something which is always pushed into the background when other economic considerations come into play e.g. water saving incentives, budget deficits, etc.

And then we start looking at the philosophical principles relating to the arts and entertainment in society. I'd like to leave that argument to the philosophers among you – but it would be my guess that there are not too many politicians who would purport to be philosophers – and VOILA!!... maybe we start to see why, under some governments, arts and entertainment get a raw deal when it comes to recognition and funding.

There are a number of ways in which the support of live entertainment could be addressed and I am sure that those who have elected to be on this committee have a good idea of what they are e.g. zoning, funding options, legislation review, mediation, etc and I would be happy to assist in addressing these at a later time if it was deemed appropriate.

My attitude towards these sorts of issues is to get all the stakeholders together and listen to what they have to say.... residents committees, venue operators, legislators. Brainstorming, with a competent mediator, often achieves good results with a minimum of fuss.

Good luck,

Gil Miller  
Publican  
The George