

From: Christina Gee
Sent: Wednesday, 7 April 2010 12:50 PM
To: Committees; Committees
Subject: to Ms Porter, submission to live events inquiry
7 April 2010

Ms Mary Porter AM MLA
Chair
Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works and
Territory and Municipal Services
Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
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Canberra, ACT 2600
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Dear Ms Porter,

As a long-term resident of this city I am writing to you to contribute my thoughts to your inquiry into live music and events in and around Canberra. Though I am not a musician, I am a great supporter of the live music scene in Canberra and have been attending gigs for many years.

I feel that a strong music scene is important in any city, but I feel that it is especially important that we nurture this scene in Canberra. I love living here and I think the city has a lot of offer, but people across the country see Canberra as boring and lacking in local culture. I have known swathes of intelligent young people who have grown up here, become extremely talented artist and musicians, only to move away to bigger cities with more “culture,” for example Melbourne and Sydney. Sadly this attitude works both ways, with young people from other cities uninterested and unwilling to move to Canberra for similar reasons.

Canberra has been said for many years to suffer from a lack of charisma: and now that the fireworks are gone, we are simply known as a town of politicians and porn. This view prevails despite our city being home to five universities and thousands upon thousands of students. Changing attitudes towards Canberra and encouraging the cultural growth of Canberra must take place at a grass-roots level. This is why I feel that supporting live music and events is so important to Canberra.

Venues which have done an excellent job of supporting live music in Canberra are the Phoenix, Bar 32, ANU Bar, and the Front Gallery, but to name a few. However, one of the best venues which has supported live music is Transit Bar, continuing its strong live-music tradition from when it was the Church Bar, and previously, Aree Bar. This bar has been a site of live music and a place for like-minded young Canberrans to gather for many years.

This is another reason that Transit Bar (and it its day, Toast) is such an important venue, being that it provides an alternative place for young Canberrans to go out and meet with their friends. A night on the town at some of the Sydney Building's

crowded and vomit-stained establishments does not hold universal appeal. I also feel that bars on the fringe of the city centre do an important job of spreading out punters and reducing density, which could lead to a reduction in anti-social behaviour such as fights, an issue which is extremely relevant in today's society.

Transit Bar has adhered to all laws concerning sound-proofing and has always been, from my view, respectful of noise complaints. Therefore, I am very concerned by allegations made by those living in the Waldorf and surrounding areas that Transit is responsible for “extreme” noise levels and public nuisance. I find this difficult to believe, as the people who choose to sit in the beer garden outside have no difficulties with the music noise levels whatsoever.

I believe that hotel and residential buildings have a duty to their inhabitants to sound-proof their own rooms from outside noise, especially when they are situated in the middle of the city. Of course, noise nuisances are upsetting, but I find it preposterous that people living in the centre of Canberra are surprised and angered by evidence of a vibrant nightlife. Surely one moves to the city centre in order to have easy access to cafes, bars, clubs, cinemas and restaurants? Surely the nightlife is supposed to be one of the perks of living in the city centre?

I also note that the Waldorf uses this aspect as a way of selling itself. Their website boasts that “we are within easy walking distance of exploring the myriads of shops, the main Canberra Shopping Centre, boutiques, restaurants pubs and bars, plus the culture and excitement of the Canberra Theatre Centre across the road.” How curious that they object to the noise which accompanies the “culture and excitement” of living in the city centre.

Both music venues and residential buildings should sound-proof their establishments in order for the best possible outcome. Placing further pressures and restrictions on music venues will discourage them from supporting live music, which will have a severely detrimental effect on the Canberra music and cultural scene.

I love Canberra and I love music, and I want to see the positive growth of our local culture. I believe our city is full of potential, but it needs our support in order to fulfil it.

Regards,
Christina Gee