

Andrew Mottram

Ms Mary Porter AM MLA
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Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works and
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Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
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SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO LIVE COMMUNITY EVENTS

Dear Ms Porter,

As a lifelong Canberra resident and avid music fan, I wish to make the following submission to the Inquiry into Live Community Events before the Legislative Assembly.

These are interesting times for live music across Australia. Just yesterday some 20,000 individuals took to the streets of Melbourne to protest the Victorian government's new liquor licensing laws which, in an effort to curb alcohol-fuelled violence, placed strict security requirements on venues throughout the city and forced higher licensing fees onto the venue holders. These lopsided laws lead to the closure of the iconic Melbourne venue the Tote, mass protests, and ultimately, the relaxation of the introduced laws.

Here in Canberra, our live music venues - and the cultural value they hold - face a different challenge. Residential development which occurs in close proximity to existing live music venues currently poses a threat to the day-to-day operation of these longstanding entertainment sites. Existing legislation does not favour established venues when noise complaints are ultimately generated by the tenants of newer residential developments.

A well-known source of noise complaints is The Waldorf Hotel in Canberra's CBD. In the past, noise complaints from its tenants were directed at the nearby Toast Nightclub until its closure. In more recent months they have been aimed at Transit Bar (the site of which, as a bar and music venue, predates The Waldorf by many years).

The Manager of the Waldorf and some of its tenants, as well as some other individuals across Canberra, hold the view that venues which emit noise must take steps to ensure they are completely soundproofed so that their noise does not affect nearby residences – even when the residences have been newly erected next to pre-existing venues.

I feel that such a position is unreasonable. Venues such as Transit exist in the heart of the city precisely because the city is an area *distinct from* the suburban environment where most Canberrans choose to reside. Nevertheless, Canberra's CBD is increasingly home to many people alongside its various commercial and entertainment establishments. At the very least, the residential blocks that Canberra's city dwellers occupy should cater to their needs in the context of their location. Adequate soundproofing should be provided by the residential development just as it must also provide adequate protection from the rain or cold.

Developers who choose to build residential blocks in the thick of Canberra's commercial and entertainment districts must be mandated to construct their buildings to a quality that protects their tenants from the outside environment. The surrounding and pre-existing establishments – be they bars, restaurants, night clubs, noisy streets, taxi ranks, bus interchanges or whatever may exist – must not be forced to wither and change in response to poor forethought or poor design and construction on the part of developers.

This issue affects many venues across Canberra – Transit Bar at Civic, The Old Canberra Inn at Lyneham, Lot 33 at Kingston, the National Press Club at Barton and Corroboree Park Community Hall at Ainslie are just some of the venues that are close to ongoing residential development and which are presently left unprotected by legislation in the ACT.

Cities will always be noisy places, as will music venues. As Canberra grows and expands, noise and light pollution in its metropolitan centres will grow with it. Residential development close to these centres will also continue to grow. Canberra's noise legislation must be changed to anticipate this growth.

I strongly feel that the current legislation be reviewed with a view to safeguarding our existing music venues. My recommendations are as follows:

- Firstly, I support the recommendation that Order of Occupancy principles be considered when reviewing complaints regarding Canberra's entertainment venues.
- Secondly, I support the recommendation that all new residential development which occurs near existing music and entertainment venues – be they night clubs, bars, restaurants, community halls, outdoor entertainment sites, or stadiums – be mandated to provide high quality soundproofing, to avoid future conflicts over noise and to avoid future threats to Canberra's music venues and music culture.
- Lastly, I support the ACT Democrats' recommendation that the ACT Government contribute funding for the retrofitting of existing residential buildings to provide soundproofing that is adequate for the building's location. Residential buildings that are within the CBD or close to entertainment districts should take priority for such funding.

Yesterday's protests in Melbourne show that Australia's music culture and the venues which house it are important to many Australians. Here in Canberra the complaint is often made that our city lacks culture and nightlife, but we are now presented with a unique opportunity to safeguard that culture for the enjoyment of all Canberra's residents. I thank you for your consideration of my submission.

Sincerely,

Andrew Mottram