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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

9th March 2010

Dear Ms. Porter,

I am writing in order to make a submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly's Inquiry into Live Community Events.

I am a lifelong Canberra resident, and have been attending musical and cultural events in this city as long as I can remember. I wish to address in particular the complaints that the owner of The Waldorf hotel, as well as several tenants and other members of the community, have engaged in.

As you well know, the popular nightclub Toast was often the target of these complaints until its closure. Despite the fact that the sound levels were not to my knowledge found to breach legal levels, these complaints and the constant worry they caused, nonetheless took a great toll on the venue's owner.

The target of these complaints is now Transit Bar, located across the street. I find it strange that a hotel could open in a CBD area and take issue with noise in this manner. The concept of staying in the city or staying in the suburbs is a fairly simple and obvious dichotomy in terms of possible pros and cons. The main one for this argument's sake being: the suburbs are quieter than the city, but further away from restaurants and entertainment. The city is noisier, but has close access to restaurants and entertainment. To want to be right in the middle of the city and expect no noise is not a reasonable way of thinking, but it is this thinking that has led to The Waldorf not easily preventing this problem.

I honestly can't imagine that The Waldorf's own soundproofing can be up to any kind of acceptable standards, given the amount of complaints and the relatively low level of noise that inspires them. I have stayed at The Waldorf several times, and the morning traffic very audible even with the windows closed, even more so than the noise coming from Transit Bar on a Saturday night for that matter . I support the proposal that residential development occurring within the vicinity of nightclubs, bars, restaurants or any other area that could reasonably be expected to have noise issues, should be required to provide quality soundproofing to their building and thus residents, merely by taking the location into account. I think this is a very reasonable thing to expect with such developments.

Lastly, I'd like to talk about the kind of place Canberra will be if these kinds of complaints are taken seriously. Canberra has a wealth of musical talent and music lovers, and scarcely enough venues to adequately accommodate them as it is. The more live venues are marginalised, the worse the music and arts scenes will be affected. Do we really want to live in a place where youth culture and the arts have to struggle so, just to have their own place? All this will lead to is a mass exodus of creative, music loving people (read: almost all young people, and many others) to greener pastures where they have the chance given to them to be able to express and enjoy themselves. This happens quite a lot as it is, and it is something we should try to decrease. Transit Bar is one of the very few places left in the city area that caters to alternative music, as opposed to the many other bars with a commercial or non-music focus. It would do tremendous damage to our city to lose it, as well as the Old Canberra Inn and many other venues that have ongoing residential going on around them.

I strongly believe we should be aiming to foster a stronger sense of culture and entertainment in our city, not discouraging it.

Respectfully Yours,

Nicholas Simon