



**AUSTRALIAN
LIVE
MUSIC
BUSINESS
COUNCIL**

Submission to New South Wales
Parliamentary Inquiry into the State of
Live Music Industry
2026



NSW Parliamentary Inquiry

Submission

February 2026

About the Australian Live Music Business Council

The Australian Live Music Business Council (ALMBC)¹ proudly represents a wide spectrum of business owners and industry professionals who are essential to getting live music on stage, on tour and seen by domestic and international audiences.

Our membership includes artist managers, booking agents, promoters, venue owners, and the extensive technical teams responsible for lighting, sound, and rigging, among others. We champion the interconnected nature of our industry and advocate for strategies that support all facets of the live music ecosystem.

Executive Summary

The ALMBC wishes to commend the NSW Government for the most coordinated development and delivery of reforms that the live music industry has seen in Australia in decades.

The ALMBC emphasises the interconnected and symbiotic nature of the live music industry across regional and remote NSW and our submission proposes a number of further reforms that support robust commercial outcomes throughout the music ecosystem, benefiting both established talent and emerging artists and the regional and metro venues that are vital incubators of both artists, workers and audiences.

The ALMBC has summarised the fantastic work achieved so far by the NSW Government's actions and provides the following recommendations to assist the Live Music Businesses that are critical to the development of a healthy live music culture.

Recommendations Provided

- 1. Insurance reform**
- 2. Actions to Mitigate Declining Alcohol Sales**
- 3. Growing Regional Touring**
- 4. Support for remote music workers and businesses**
- 5. Building Transport Options**
- 6. Promote value of Entertainment Precincts**
- 7. Growing All Age / Underage Events and Laws**
- 8. Reducing Impact of Poker Machines**

¹ <https://almbc.org.au/>

Introduction

The ALMBC understands that this submission responds to the published terms of reference² that the Standing Committee on Social Issues inquire into and report on the state of live music in NSW, including in the regions, and in particular:

- A. progress on the implementation of the recommendations in, and the Government response to, the parliamentary inquiry into The music and arts economy in New South Wales³, established in 2017
- B. progress on the implementation of the 'NSW Contemporary Music Strategy'⁴, released in December 2024
- C. assessment of the impact of the NSW Government's 'Vibrancy Reforms'⁵, including relevant legislative, planning and other changes
- D. an analysis of policy options for how the NSW Government and music industry can support the long term sustainability of the live music sector, including but not limited to:
 - i) the establishment and protection of music venues
 - ii) driving audience demand
 - iii) supporting music careers
 - iv) funding mechanisms
 - v) reduction of red tape or other barriers limiting live music activity
- E. any other related matters.

Background

The ALMBC was born during COVID, following growing frustration from our membership base of sole traders and small businesses with federal decision-makers not taking key concerns into consideration. However the frustration and angst that this process caused, was already being fuelled in NSW by the negative impact on the live music industry of Lock Out Laws⁶ introduced by the NSW government in 2014.

Since the forming of the Minns Government in March 2023, the ALMBC has witnessed very significant improvements in government support for live music in NSW.

² <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=3147>

³ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2471>

⁴ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/noindex/2024-12/nsw-contemporary-music-strategy-2024.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/business-and-economy/office-of-24-hour-economy-commissioner/vibrancy-reforms>

⁶ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-19/figures-show-40-per-cent-drop-in-sydneys-live-music-revenue/7183024>

2017/8 NSW Parliamentary Inquiry

The key findings of the 2017/18 Inquiry were:

1. That there is massive potential for the contemporary music sector in New South Wales. The recorded music sector has grown rapidly over the last two years via online streaming. The majority of the industry is based in New South Wales.
2. That if New South Wales were to match Victorian funding for contemporary music per capita, it would require an expenditure in New South Wales of at least \$35 million over the four years of forward estimates.
3. That New South Wales has a music venue crisis, the causes of which are complex, but it is impacting negatively on the grassroots music scene in New South Wales, and on the national and regional touring circuits.
4. That the committee found no research available that suggested that music causes violence. In fact, the majority of the evidence the committee received suggested that music assists in preventing violence.

Of the 60 recommendations made by the Inquiry report, most of these have now been implemented or significantly advanced, especially through:

- NSW Contemporary Music Strategy (2024–2034)⁷
- 24-Hour Economy Strategy (2024)⁸
- Vibrancy Reforms Acts (2023–2025)⁹
- Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025+¹⁰

The implementation of these recommendations is to be praised and the ALMBC commends the Minns Government for committing to achieving these. Key positive changes witnessed by the ALMBC since 2023 include:

- NSW now has a Minister for Music and the Night-Time Economy¹¹, overseeing statewide music and nightlife revitalisation efforts.
- The role sits alongside the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner¹², which has expanded to statewide operations and coordinates cross-government nightlife initiatives.

⁷ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/sound-nsw/contemporary-music-strategy>

⁸ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/business-and-economy/office-of-24-hour-economy-commissioner/24-hour-economy-strategy>

⁹ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/business-and-economy/office-of-24-hour-economy-commissioner/vibrancy-reforms>

¹⁰ https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-07/CIP_Accessible%201.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/Pages/member-details.aspx?pk=2224>

¹² <https://www.nsw.gov.au/business-and-economy/office-of-24-hour-economy-commissioner>



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- NSW released its first-ever 10-year Contemporary Music Strategy (2024–2034)¹³ including:
 - A long-term statewide plan
 - Statewide all ages live music program and support for young promoters
 - Workforce development
 - Industry capacity building
 - Fair pay standards
 - Venue and festival support
 - Regional development programs
 - Funding growth and reduced regulatory burden
- minimum \$250 payments for government-funded performances
- Red tape reduction and very positive planning developments through a ‘Vibrancy Reform’¹⁴ process including:
 - Scrapping “no entertainment” DA clauses, bans on genres, limits on instruments or performers
 - Liquor & Gaming NSW designated as the lead regulator for venue sound, consolidating complaints management for licensed venues
 - Order-of-occupancy principles implemented in noise disputes
 - “Eyes wide open” disclosure added to planning certificates warning new residents they are moving into an entertainment precinct, reducing venue–resident conflict
 - Special Entertainment Precincts (SEPs) expanded statewide, preventing the need for individual DAs and streamlining trading-hour extensions
 - Outdoor dining rules permanently relaxed, expanding activation and reducing venue costs.
- Ability for the government to intervene to prevent venue closures due to noise complaints, landlord disputes, or regulatory challenges.
- Automatic protections prevent a single complaint from triggering action against a venue.
- Support opportunities through SEPs, precinct planning, sound attenuation guidelines, and grants.
- Regional Night Time Economy Program, providing capacity building for after dark economies
- 24 Hour Economy Strategy now includes statewide regional focus.
- Festival licensing regimes have been reversed or softened, with a shift toward supportive regulation under the 10 year strategy.
- Major events are supported including easier approvals under the Major Events Act updates.

¹³ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/sound-nsw/contemporary-music-strategy>

¹⁴ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/business-and-economy/office-of-24-hour-economy-commissioner/vibrancy-reforms>

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- Outdoor activation permits streamlined through "Permit, Plug, Play" model.
- More fit for purpose cultural spaces, integration with planning systems, and partnership based funding.

The ALMBC understands that following initiatives are also planned to commence in 2026:

- Referral pathway to mediation for significant live music or performance venues involved in a dispute. The ALMBC is hopeful that this mediation will include issues such as liability claims.
- Live music incentive changes to number of performances for metropolitan venues, and early-evening and weekend daytime performances to be counted for eligibility (commences 15 March 2026).
- One-stop-shop venue sound complaint portal to be launched, including, we hope (as mentioned above) liability claims.
- Further licensing changes to commence:
 - Clubs may host events away from their main club location.
 - Liquor & Gaming NSW (L&GNSW) will begin proactively reviewing outdated licence conditions that require venues to use plastic drinkware after a specified time.
 - A new fee-free pathway will be introduced to allow licensees to apply for the removal or variation of certain licence conditions that impact late-night trading activities at licensed venues such as drink restrictions, security personnel conditions and curfew conditions.
- *Planning for Community Events guide* to be published.
- Explanation of Intended Effect of further enhancements to planning conditions for Special Entertainment Precincts to be publicly exhibited.

Recommendations that have not fully been implemented include:

- No formal single "live music one-stop shop," even though it could be argued that the combined functions of Sound NSW + 24-Hour Economy Commissioner + Liquor & Gaming effectively deliver this role.
- Music-specific regional programs (e.g., Music Crawl) have not been formally reintroduced but elements now appear under Sound NSW and 24 Hour economy precinct programs, as well as strong programmatic and staffing support through Music NSW's regional programs¹⁵.
- Specific playlist quotas on streaming services remain *voluntary*, not mandated.

¹⁵ <https://www.musiciensw.com/program/regional-nsw/>, ./

ALMBC Recommendations

1. Insurance Reform

The cost of Insurance continues to impact live music venues, festivals and businesses across the continent, including metro, regional and remote NSW. The ALMBC continues to play a leading role in creating positive change nationally and locally.

The ALMBC commends the NSW Government on the outcomes already delivered following the previous Parliamentary Inquiry and we recommend that NSW partners with the federal government to support live music venues and festivals to reduce insurance costs, through legislation and policy changes to allow the following proposals:

- a. Investigate the potential for combined federal, state and local government capped buy-in for amount insured for each insurance agreement for live music businesses, with state governments providing half the support offered by federal government and local government providing half the support provided by state government (e.g. 10% federal, 5% state and 2.5% local). This would reduce the risk for insurers and underwriters and encourage new players into the market, increasing competition and reducing prices further. The risk to governments could be capped in both financial terms and in the length of time for the arrangement to remain in place.
- b. Reduce the length of notification period for claimants, to allow live music businesses to respond to incidents asap after they occur and to ensure all evidence is maintained.
- c. Allow live music venues to include disclaimers for clients (including hirers and customers), and allow some risk reduction for businesses such as venues and festivals where clear warnings are provided and risks are clear to patrons.
- d. Cap Public Liability legal fees for Claimants so as to disincentivise law firms.
- e. Ban “claim farming” and/or advertising of ‘no win no fee’ practices
- f. Require all insurers and underwriters to publish de-identified data on all claims to enable better review and research on current insurance processes, claims outcomes and more so that small businesses can mitigate risk more appropriately.
- g. Require standard mediation processes for public liability claims.
- h. Ensure planned ‘one stop shop’ complaint process proposed by NSW Government includes complaints of injury and loss to reduce public liability claims.
- i. Partner / Fund the ALMBC to provide support to industry through:



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- i. a program to research the risks for live music businesses, backed with mitigation funding (e.g. replacing dangerous stairs, installing non-slip surfaces, safety improvements, etc);
- ii. Risk Management Accreditation training and risk management software to venues and festivals.
- iii. Educate patrons on risks in live music businesses, (e.g. dangers of slip and fall, informing venue staff of spillage, etc).

2. Mitigating Declining Alcohol Sales

Music venues have traditionally hosted live music that is supported by alcohol sales. The venues have to charge more for drinks as all costs continue to rise: insurance, rent, suppliers, licence fees etc. The high cost of drinks is seeing venues have less sales over the bar. The reliance on alcohol sales is further diminished by a shift to healthier living.

- a. Fund industry or the ALMBC to implement educational and development campaigns for live music business to reduce reliance on alcohol sales as the prominent income source.

3. Growing Regional Touring

A robust touring circuit established for the regional areas will build audiences for the future and allow bands better national exposure, whilst boosting the cultural fabric of country cities and towns.

- a. Further support for the development of all ages touring circuits across regional and remote NSW in partnership with Music NSW and the ALMBC.

NSW Contemporary Music Strategy 2025-2034

As at February 2026, the ALMBC considers that the NSW Contemporary Music Strategy has moved decisively from intent to delivery, with major early-phase reforms, funding programs and structural changes already in place.

The strategy is underpinned by three Strategic Pillars:

1. Building a better, more viable music industry
2. Growing audiences for NSW music
3. Strengthening communities with music

And eight Strategic Priorities

1. Prioritise and protect First Nations music
2. Strengthen the live and recorded music ecosystem
3. Future-proof the industry through upskilling and collaboration
4. Improve industry capacity, diversity, safety and standards
5. Champion NSW music
6. Build insights and knowledge
7. Expand international markets
8. Support music communities, including regional NSW

The strategy sets clear targets, including:

- Doubling dedicated live music venues (55 → 110)
- Growing live music employment from ~14,000 to 20,000 FTE
- Increasing contemporary music's economic contribution from \$2.7bn to \$3.5bn
- Investing \$103 million in contemporary music by 2027
- Increasing First Nations participation and regional activity year-on-year.

To date, key achievements already include:

- Establishment of Sound NSW as the lead specialist agency for contemporary music policy and delivery
- Appointment of a Minister for Music and the Night-Time Economy, embedding music within economic, tourism and jobs portfolios
- Dedicated First Nations funding streams, touring and travel support, and First Nations-led resources introduced
- Commitment to ICIP protection and best-practice engagement guides in delivery

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- Programs to support world-class venues and festivals, including accreditation models linked to reduced government costs and licensing incentives
- Introduction of an all-ages live music program and a young promoter fund
- Implementation of a \$250 minimum fee for artists performing at government-funded commercial events
- Development of industry-led safety, accessibility and best-practice toolkits underway
- Launch of the NSW Music Prize (\$80k main prize plus First Nations and Breakthrough awards)
- Commitment to using NSW music in government campaigns and supporting industry-led marketing initiatives
- Commissioning of State of the Scene (2024), establishing baseline data on venues, workforce and economic contribution.
- Ongoing collaboration with state and federal agencies to expand audience and industry datasets
- Support for inbound and outbound trade missions and export activity, including collaboration with Sounds Australia
- Early-stage work to attract international artists and producers to record in NSW
- Investment in regional organisations (e.g. CMAA, Western Sydney programs)
- Commitments to contemporary music in schools, music tourism initiatives, and community-led event delivery.

The ALMBC commends the NSW government on the delivery of the NSW Contemporary Music Strategy 2025-2034, and offers our support to maintain the delivery.

We note the significant impact of the strategy across regional NSW, although still limited outcomes in remote communities, especially remote Indigenous communities.

Following advocacy from regional and remote NSW members, the ALMBC understands the need to support capacity building and development support for regional and remote live music workers.

4. **Support for Music Workers and music businesses.**

The ALMBC recommends increased funding to Music NSW to provide professional development support for music businesses and workers in regional and remote NSW cities and towns.

NSW Vibrancy Reforms

The NSW Government's *Vibrancy Reforms* are a multi-year, cross-portfolio reform agenda introduced from 2023 onwards to rebuild the state's 24-hour economy, following a decade of restrictive nightlife regulation and the COVID-19 downturn. The reforms aim to:

- Revitalise nightlife, live music and cultural activity
- Reduce regulatory friction for venues, artists and councils
- Rebalance planning and noise laws away from single-complainant shutdowns
- Provide certainty for investment while maintaining public safety

The ALMBC believes that the NSW Vibrancy Reforms have already produced tangible regulatory, planning and cultural impacts, including a clear reduction in red tape for live music and events; a structural shift in noise and planning governance; measurable growth in live performance participation and improved investment certainty for nightlife businesses.

While full economic and cultural benefits will take several years to materialise, the reforms do represent a systemic recalibration of NSW's approach to nightlife and culture, moving from risk-avoidance strategy to a managed activation.

Positive impacts identified anecdotally by the ALMBC are very significant and include:

- Licensed venues have indicated greater operational certainty, particularly small bars, hotels and regional venues
- Venues can trade later during events without needing repeated approvals
- Reported improved confidence to program live music
- Liquor & Gaming NSW data shows that live music and performance venue registrations more than doubled¹⁶ after the first reform tranche, indicating a measurable regulatory response from industry.
- Significant reduction in the risk of single-complaint venue shutdowns due to changes in policy and funding for noise attenuation
- Greater certainty for venues operating lawfully within accepted parameters
- Shift from punitive enforcement to negotiated resolution
- Faster and cheaper event delivery for councils, venues and community groups
- Lower planning risk for pop-up and experimental cultural uses
- Increased use of public space for cultural and hospitality activity
- Expansion of the Special Entertainment Precinct model into new local government areas

¹⁶ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=102422>

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- Reduced conflict between venues and new residential developments
- Clearer expectations for residents moving into entertainment areas
- Reduction in the risk of single complaint venue shutdowns
- Improved economic outcomes for smaller venues as well as large operators
- Decreased costs due to removal of stamp duties from insurance premiums.

Community concerns around late-night noise persist in some locations and communities and the success of the vibrancy reforms depends on council capacity and political will.

Transport and safety infrastructure must keep pace with increased activity.

Changes in youth culture globally indicate that young people are drinking less¹⁷, which the ALMBC believes is an excellent outcome for public health in general. The long term separation, or at least minimisation, of live music and alcohol, will be good for the community in general, and is to be encouraged.

Recent announcement of new legislation to make it easier for venues to host all ages shows, will build new opportunities for all ages touring circuit development.

It is also important to note that NSW is globally unusual in the scale and accessibility of poker machines, with tens of thousands located in suburban pubs and clubs rather than confined to casinos. While pokies have generated large and reliable revenue streams for venues and governments, extensive evidence shows they have systematically undermined live music ecosystems, particularly at the grassroots level. The impacts are long-term, cumulative, and difficult to reverse.

As pokies became more profitable from the 1980s onward, many NSW pubs and clubs replaced band rooms with gaming floors, because gambling delivered a higher and more reliable return per square metre of floor space.

The ALMBC believes that there needs to be a re-balance, reducing the impacts of pokies on live music, encouraging venues to allocate pokie income to live music costs, encouraging venues to allocate space for live music.

An excellent recent example is the Lord Gladstone Hotel in inner suburban Sydney, which has removed all pokies and focuses purely on live music, which has been

¹⁷ <https://theconversation.com/the-rise-of-sober-curiosity-why-gen-zers-are-reducing-their-alcohol-consumption-243775>

financially costly, but provided significant benefits to the venue and to the local community.¹⁸

The NSW Government could implement changes to make the process of removing pokie machines simpler, whilst also providing financial support to live music venues to remove pokie machines. This would fall in line with community expectations, as well as recent state-wide changes implemented to minimise overnight gambling.

Although public transport and late night transport is fairly well provided in busy, inner urban areas, the car is still too often utilised as the first choice of transport from suburb to suburb to attend gigs. The introduction of fifty cent fares in Brisbane has caused an almost 20 percent increase in public transport use in the city. Also exciting is the much larger take up in regional areas, including 41 per cent in Cairns, 91 per cent in Townsville and 42 per cent in the Whitsunday's.¹⁹

The positive momentum in developing entertainment precincts across regional NSW will very likely be supported by cheap and accessible public transport across regional areas.

The ALMBC commends the NSW Government on the implementation of the vibrancy reforms and recommends the following:

5. Growing Transport Options

Introduce very cheap (eg 50cents fares) for night time public transport in urban areas all across NSW to further develop safety and community engagement around entertainment precincts

6. Promote value of Entertainment Precincts

Continue to partner with local governments to build capacity and knowledge of the benefits of Entertainment Precincts, across Council teams including creative, planning, economic development and the general public.

7. Growing All Age / Underage Events and Laws

Improve All Age and Underage event policy and law for music venues and create incentives and training for venues across regional NSW to safely and viably run all ages shows.

¹⁸ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-01-23/lord-gladstone-removes-pokies-calls-for-more-to-support-venues/106258678>

¹⁹ <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/103254#>



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8. Reducing Impact of Poker Machines

Specific incentives or buy back scheme for music venues to remove or reduce the number of pokie machines.

Conclusion

The ALMBC commends the NSW Government for the work undertaken since 2023, mitigating the losses of previous regulation and creating excellent support for a thriving live music ecosystem.

The ALMBC encourages the NSW Government to maintain the current impetus, whilst building opportunities to meet some or all of our recommendations outlined above.

We invite the state government to collaborate with us in these strategic investments, which promise to enrich our cultural landscape and bolster economic growth within the sector.

Thank you for considering our recommendations

Yours In Music,

Howard Adams
Chairperson, on behalf of the ALMBC Board and members

ALMBC Board Members

Name	Board Role	Company	Sector
Howard Adams	Chair & Secretary	Corner Soul	Legal
Angie Dunbavan	Deputy Chair	Red Chair	Promoter
Kylie Thompson	Treasurer	Sorrento Strategic	Accounting
Sharlene Harris	Director	ALH Group	Venues
Brian Chladil	Director	Oztix Good Things Festival	Ticketing & Promoters
Stephen Wade	Director	Select Music	Booking Agents
Jarrad Thessman	Director	Midnight Assembly	Events & Production
Andrew Bassingthwaighte	Director	Xcelerate	Insurance & Risk
Hayley Ayres	Director	360 Artist Logistics	Promoters & Events
Larissa Jane Ryan	Director	Hutch Collective	Artist Development
Rod Smith	Director	Corner Group	Venues
Ben Tillman	Director	Yours & Owls	Agents & Promoters