

Independent Liquor & Gaming Authority (ILGA)

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RE: NEWCASTLE CBD LIQUOR LICENCE CONDITIONS REVIEW

The Live Music Office appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback to the NSW Independent Liquor & Gaming Authority review of the range of special conditions that have applied to 14 hotels and bars in Newcastle's CBD since 2008. Given these measures have now been in place for 10 years, undertaking evaluation with a view to considering alternative approaches to the decade old conditions would be fair and reasonable.

Established in July 2013, the Live Music Office works to increase opportunities for live music in Australia by identifying and advocating for better policy, regulation and strategy. Our advocacy encompasses regulation, research, audience development initiatives and support for music industry development.

It was just last week that the Live Music Office was in Newcastle meeting with Council, the music sector and elected federal, state and local representatives hearing about the issues being experienced by musicians and venues in the city.

Many of the challenges being experienced by the music sector in Newcastle can be experienced more widely, and these relate to land use conflict with encroaching residential development in the CBD in particular, as well as management of amenity complaints more widely in the greater city, sustaining audiences and promoting local artists, however the reputational context from the lockouts adds an additional layer as well as the inflexibility of the restrictions on trading conditions.

With many performing opportunities being provided by licensed premises, and hotels in particular, blanket conditions that impact on hours of operation without regard to responsible management and operation of these businesses have associated implications for the live music and cultural development and sustainability of the city. Where other centres and communities have voluntarily adopted their own tailored lockouts conditions, what is from our understanding unique to Newcastle and the Sydney CBD is the application and management of these conditions.

The Newcastle solution has been widely referenced as a silver bullet answer to addressing alcohol related violence however there have been good results achieved without the associated implications for reputation, business confidence and narrative that the government decreed conditions have also brought with them.

This was recognised in a [30 December 2013 Media Release](#) from then Minister George Souris, NSW GOVERNMENT'S ALCOHOL CRACKDOWN WORKING

Other local communities have achieved significant reductions in alcohol-related violence using tailored measures – not by adopting the Newcastle model.

“While there was a 26 per cent reduction in violent incidents in Newcastle’s licensed premises between 2008 and 2012, there was a 28 per cent reduction State-wide over the same period.

“During this period there were greater reductions in violent incidents for other parts of NSW according the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) – without the Newcastle conditions.

Looking to the current review, there have been a series of constructive recommendations put forward by Council, the community and the hospitality sector to guide a way forward that would recognise well run venues, the concerns of the music industry and shift the overarching reputational

implications of lockouts, whilst still ensuring venues are well managed and public safety and amenity remain prioritised.

- The Live Music Office has advocated for exemptions to the lockouts in Sydney for dedicated live venues which have been endorsed by the NSW Government, and this modest concession has been successfully implemented, showing a way forward for diverse offer and supporting jobs and opportunities for artists.
- The hospitality sector is seeking further parity with Sydney conditions around removing some restrictions on types of drinks being sold as well as exemptions.
- Newcastle City Council are on the record as saying “We need laws that incentivise licensed venues to strive to make our CBD safer” and “It’s council’s view that venues who consistently demonstrate outstanding responsible service of alcohol should be allowed to trade longer than those that occasionally don’t”.

Importantly, we would argue that this review provides an opportunity to shift the narrative for the wider cultural and economic development of the City of Newcastle. Whilst the blanket lockouts are applied to 14 Hotels and bars from an individual venue perspective, by association there are very real implications for the perception of the greater city that it could be argued are out of date.

Once again, we appreciate the opportunity to provide a constructive contribution to this timely review, and hope that there can be more nuance and responsiveness from the regulatory framework subsequent to this process in line with the points raised by Council and the hospitality sector above, to also reframe the narrative and support the wider cultural and economic development of the city.

Yours sincerely,

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