

Monday April 4, 2016

To the Hon. Ian Callinan and members of the Independent Liquor Law Review committee,

My name is Clare Holland and I am the Managing Director of FBI Radio, a Sydney based community broadcaster that launched in 2003. I'm writing to urge you to consider the detrimental impact that Sydney's lockout laws are having on our city's cultural vibrancy, particularly for the live music industry. I'd also like to share our first hand experience of operating a live music venue in Kings Cross and our experience of reduced industry spending to promote live music.

About FBI Radio

FBI (Free Broadcast Incorporated) is a unique part of Sydney's cultural landscape, being the only radio station dedicated to Sydney's emerging music, arts and culture. We play 50% Australian music, with half of that from Sydney.

We broadcast to 459,000 listeners each month, largely in the 18-35 cohort. FBI's geographical broadcast reach is at parity with major commercial stations such as Triple M or Nova, with FBI 94.5 heard across metropolitan and Greater Sydney as far as Wollongong, the Blue Mountains and Central Coast. Over any given month, FBI reaches approximately 10% of all Sydneysiders over the age of 15.

We have a broad, culturally engaged audience. 48% of our audience work in the creative industries. 72% of our audience attend a live music event more than once a month. 77%, 67% and 63% of our audience attended a show at the Sydney Opera House, Sydney Festival and Carriageworks in the last 12 months respectively.

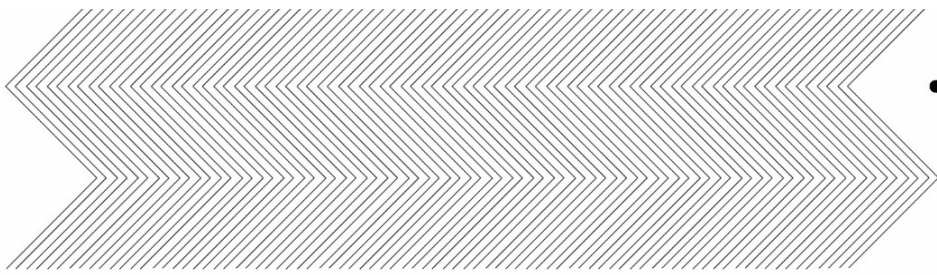
Source: FBI Online listener survey 2016

FBI is a largely volunteer-run organisation and we rely heavily on our 200-strong volunteer base. Volunteers perform roles ranging from reception right through to broadcasting and producing. These volunteers are passionate about Sydney music, arts and culture and are heavily engaged in the creative industries. Outside of FBI they are employed as designers, programmers, bookkeepers, curators, DJs, audio engineers, photographers, publicists, label representatives, music managers, bookers, copywriters and bar staff to name a few.

The lockouts and live music

Over the last 24 months, we've witnessed the detrimental impact the lockout laws have had on Sydney's already struggling live music culture.

The recent figures released via the Live Music Office are alarming and reflect a live music industry in decline. The following statistics relate to live music revenue for the period 1 February 2013 to 31 January 2015:



Venues with a Live Artist Performance licence – All premises

- 40% overall decline in the value of door charge receipts
- 15% overall decrease in the value of venue expenditure on live artist performers

Venues with a Live Artist Performance licence – Hotels, bars and nightclubs

- 32% decrease in the value of door charge receipts
- 17% decrease in the value of venue expenditure on live artist performers

Venues with a Recorded Music for Dance Use licence – All premises

- 19% decrease in attendance figures across all venues

Source: <http://livemusicoffice.com.au/drop-in-live-performance-revenue-and-nightclub-attendance-in-sydney-cbd-since-introduction-of-lockout-laws/>

The story told by these statistics is reflected in the personal stories of our broadcasters, volunteers and the artists which FBI exists to support. The thread that runs through them all is that opportunities are disappearing - there is less DJ work; bar-shifts are drying up; the designers, sound engineers and publicists among us are experiencing a drop-off in jobs and in some cases, are being squeezed out of the industry all together. This legislation's ripple effects are being felt keenly throughout our community.

FBI Social: A first-hand account of running a venue in the Cross

In April 2011, FBI Radio opened FBI Social - a live music venue on Level 2 of Kings Cross Hotel (in partnership with Solotel). This was a response to a need for more venues that could provide a space for emerging local bands and artists to play in front of a live audience, many for the first time.

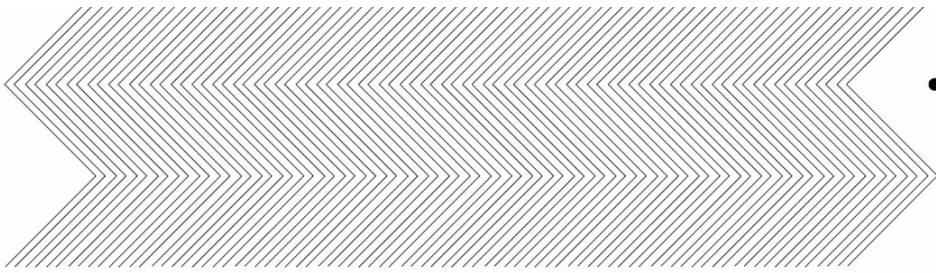
In the three years that FBI Social was open, more than 1000 local artists took to the stage, with over 40,000 audience members coming through its doors.

Artists that played at FBI Social and that have gone on to develop a significant national or international profile include The Preatures, RUFUS, Chet Faker, Flume, Courtney Barnett, and the Jezabels, amongst many.

Profit was never the motivating factor for FBI Social. It's objective was always to be a cost neutral exercise that allowed FBI Radio to develop stronger relationships with local talent and connect that talent with audiences.

With the introduction of the lockout laws in February 2014, audiences in the venue declined significantly. The diminished reputation of the Cross meant that our audience was less prepared to travel to the area and the venue, and reduced foot traffic meant less walk up business. In its final year of operation, FBI Social operated at a significant loss to FBI Radio after an already healthy subsidy from Solotel.

FBI Social closed its doors on November 1 2014.



Beyond FBI Social, FBI Radio has played a role in launching the careers of some of Australia’s largest musical exports - Flume, The Preatures, Cloud Control, Jagwar Ma and The Presets.

Integral for all these artists in breaking through has been the opportunity for them to play regularly in front of a live audience. It’s an essential part of being able to hone their craft, in understanding and building their audience and in building networks with other artists and industry.

Currently, many venues are either closing their doors earlier or permanently. That means fewer choices for audiences to engage with a range of artistic practice. It means fewer stages for emerging local talent to perform on and fewer opportunities to break through at home and abroad. It means less diversity in programming, and it means the already difficult task of earning a living as an artist in this city is made even harder.

Industry spends on FBI Radio pre- and post-lockouts

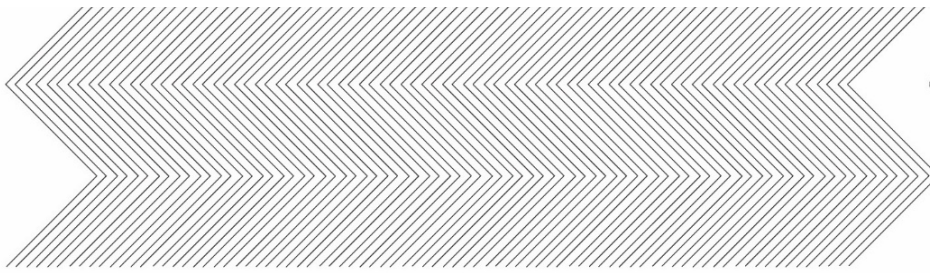
As a community broadcaster, FBI Radio relies on sponsorship as its primary revenue source. When looking at campaign spends pre and post lockouts, there is a significant decline in revenue from the live music industry.

The below figures and drastic reduction in live music bookings reflect the declining health of the live music industry. It has also had a significant impact on FBI Radio’s own financial health and demonstrates the knock on impact for associated industries, organisations and individuals.

Comparison pre and post lockouts of venues with live music programming who took out campaigns on FBI Radio

Date Range	Number of venues	Total value of campaigns
November 1 2013 - January 31 2014 (pre lockouts)	11	\$44,279
November 1 2015 - January 31 2016 (post lockouts)	6	\$20,666

Since January 2016 we have also lost the recurring business of 3 additional venues due to a decline in promotable live music events.



Comparison pre and post lockouts of artists or promoters promoting live music events through campaigns on FBI Radio

Date Range	Artists or promoters	Total value of campaigns
November 1 2013 - January 31 2014	37	\$56,918
November 1 2015 - January 31 2016	41	\$43,155

Conclusion

We understand that the burden of balancing the needs and safety of Sydney's many constituents is an unenviable one, and thankfully not one that we have to bear. We don't have the responsibility of regulating to ensure their safety and the human consequences to face should we get it wrong.

But the adverse impact of these laws on our cultural vibrancy and music industry are becoming alarmingly clear and I would urge the committee to keep in mind that cultural vibrancy and safety need not be mutually exclusive.

That may include considering exemptions for well managed premises and live music venues, removing the current blanket liquor freeze to consider the number and type of licensed premises in an area, increased public transport, and ongoing consultation with the creative industries.

Please don't hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or wish to discuss this submission or the issue any further.

Yours sincerely,

Clare Holland
Managing Director
FBI Radio