‘I Tote and I Vote’: Australian Live Music and Cultural Policy

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Abstract
The live venue has always been an important part of the social, cultural and economic health of Australian music. In this paper I briefly assess live music’s conflicted role in contemporary creative industry policies at state and national government levels through policy developments in the cities of Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. These city case studies reveal the specific problems confronting live music as a part of the creative industries, and the need for greater attention to planning, liquor licensing and related government sectors as much as traditional arts policies of funding and subsidy. In each city, musicians and venue owners confronted significant challenges in governmental power relations (overlapping state-federal government jurisdictions and competing interests), conflicting notions of value; and questions about how cultural policy should best serve a wide diversity of arts constituencies.

Introduction
Introduced formally as a series of policy measures in the 1980s, conceptualizations and development of the ‘creative industries’ remains a strong point of debate in both the academy and the arts. The Blair Labour government’s policy directions for ‘the arts’ in 1998 (Smith 1998) is broadly understood as the foundational moment for cultural/creative industry policy. Yet this was preceded by the Australian Labor government’s Creative Nation, a policy blueprint that foreshadowed much of the rhetoric adopted by later governments in how to bind cultural, arts and media policies to a narrative of nation and economy (Department of Communications and the Arts 1994). Envisaged and funded by a Prime Minister who loved Mahler and was once a rock and roll band manager, popular music’s place in everyday Australian life was expressed in Creative Nation as one of a series of creative and cultural activities deemed important to Australian self-expression and identity. The ‘creative industries’ continue to be prominent in government strategies, with their policy muscle deriving from several quarters: as a set of industries revealing demonstrable growth in revenues and market share as a significant employer (Cunningham 2006); and as a major player in related ‘copyright industries’ (Australian Copyright Council 2001) and/or ‘knowledge economies’ (NZ Ministry of Economic Development 1999).

In similar fashion, earlier conceptions of and arguments for the ‘creative’ or ‘cultural’ city (e.g. Hall 1998, Landry and Bianchini 1995) are now an established part of city and government planning (Stevenson 2000), with ‘culture’ argued to be one of the drivers to revitalize cities suffering various forms of post-industrial malaise (Florida 2002, 2005). Popular music has subsequently played an important role in broader city policies that attach increasingly specific benefits and targets to cultural activity in terms of economic and social health. At the same time, why governments have responded to creative industries and ‘creative city’ or ‘cultural city’ arguments for increased support, and how the case has been made, has caused unease for some
artists, policymakers and academics, for several reasons. Criticisms include the difficulty in measuring economic impact; the limits of creative industries policy templates that do not account for local or regional difference (Gibson and Klocker 2005); the potential for exploitation of creative labour (McRobbie 2002; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011); and that understandings of ‘creativity’ and ‘culture’ are based increasingly upon discourses of economic benefit rather than artistic and public good (e.g. McGuigan 2005). Questions about the extent to which cultural labour and policy represent recent forms of neo-liberal capitalism remain.

These debates are relevant to contemporary popular music practice and policy; and live music is a useful sector through which to investigate how such economic, social and creative discourses are formulated and enacted. In keeping with its resurgence within global music markets, live music has changed industries’ preoccupation with the recording industry sector and intellectual property concerns, accompanied by greater policy weight given to city cultural policy, and not just national policies and infrastructure.

In this article I examine the development of the live music industries and cultural policy in Australia over the last decade. The three case studies here focus upon developments in the major cities on the eastern seaboard (Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne) as examples of significant policy shifts. The state’s changing attitude to live music activity was also part of a wider recognition of the role of music, and how it is related to cities’ cultural heritage. These case studies also provide the means of investigating how music is now examined for its potential to invite and promote capital, tourism and related infrastructure, where cities compete with each other for national audiences despite historical and ongoing inequities in cultural and economic capital. The ‘Florida effect’ has been keenly felt in Australia; even small towns have a creative/cultural city plan based to differing extents on the Florida model, while the larger capital cities construct theirs with an eye to regional and global competition.

The music venue is a handy signifier through which to sell the particularities of city culture, and emphasise its commitment to thriving artistic communities and a vibrant night-time economy. Live music is continually used in state campaigns to entice Australians to visit interstate capital cities on their holidays; and state leaders and arts ministers regularly pronounce their capital city as the most ‘liveable’ based upon external reports ranking the availability of culture and leisure. In this sense, live music policy is implicated in the marketing and branding of city cultures, and government and citizen attitudes to these.

Australia has a tripartite system of governance consisting of a federal government (national); the governments of the six states and territories (New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory); and local city councils. Arts ministers exist at both federal and state levels, with the federal minister providing funding for the nation’s principal arts body, the Australia Council. The election of a federal Labor government in 2007 and the (brief) tenure of Midnight Oil’s Peter Garrett as arts minister introduced a greater focus upon the live sector. Garrett called for discussions on establishing a national cultural policy; and one his first acts as arts minister was to investigate ways that live music venues could be sustained and increased. The attention to live music cultures was understandable from an arts minister who had previously enjoyed mythical status as lead singer in one of the country’s premier pub rock bands. This was supported by national research
that revealed that live performance had retained its popularity. Live Performance Australia (2010) estimated what it called ‘non-classical’ live performance (pop, rock, jazz, blues, country, etc) to be worth $405.8m to the Australian economy in 2009. A 2010 arts participation survey found that ‘nearly two in three (62 per cent) Australians participated in music in the past year, with over half attending live events (57 per cent) and 15 per cent creatively participating’; over one third (41 per cent) attended a performance in the mainstream categories of pop, rock, country etc at least once in the year (Australia Council 2010: 24-25).

Live music has also clearly re-emerged as a crucial revenue source as the recording industry confronts various threats to its revenue and copyright structures, with internet ‘radio’ and digital file sharing predominant among technological shifts away from traditional sales mechanisms. Traditional income streams are reinforced as recording sales decline. The two central copyright collection societies in Australia, APRA (Australasian Performing Rights Association) and the PPCA (Phonographic Performance Company of Australia) have successfully broadened their net in recent years, with federal court wins against hotels and nightclubs in 2007 (see Homan 2010), and fitness centres in 2010 (on appeal). Emboldened by substantial royalty increases in these areas, they have instigated federal court action against radio broadcasters in 2011 in attempts to remove older federal laws that cap radio station royalties at one per cent of station revenue (PPCA 2011).

I’ll now examine how three state governments, in concert with city councils, achieved significant changes in live music settings in their capital cities. In two of these cases (Sydney and Melbourne) I was involved directly as an academic and consultant.

‘A venue’s main business’: Sydney

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, the main sites for pop and rock performances for Australian musicians consisted of town halls, unlicensed cafes and club discotheques. The subsequent development of pub circuits and a national music media network of television programs and music press, along with a new set of promoters and agents, ensured the rock boom of the 1970s and 80s. By the late 1970s, Sydney enjoyed a healthy circuit of hotel and club venues as part of a new ‘Oz Rock’ mythology that privileged an act’s live performance abilities in terms of an enduring street credibility (Homan 2008). The substantial rise in local recording companies also played a role in bands achieving a more visible presence on radio as well as in the venues.

However, from the mid-1980s, Sydney music venues began closing for a number of interrelated reasons. State government changes to entertainment noise laws empowered residents to challenge the extent and frequency of hotel noise, and pub rock was the primary source of contention. This was not surprising, given the extent to which decibel levels became a source of macho competition between bands. The volume ‘philosophy’ of Rose Tattoo’s Pete Wells is representative of the 1980s bands: ‘Of course it’s too fucking loud for the room! … It’s supposed to be too fucking loud for the room’ (cited in Engleheart 2011: 192). Engleheart states that ‘at one point [Rose] Tattoo blew up so many PA systems that most Sydney sound-hire companies refused to deal with them’ (Engleheart 2011: 192). The stiffer noise laws, coupled with inner city gentrification, led to an increase in resident complaints, based
upon their right to ‘quiet and good order of the neighbourhood’ (NSW Liquor Act 1982). The ability of a single complainant to affect a pub’s entertainment was a source of bitter dispute. In addition, the ghost train fire at Sydney’s Luna Park in 1979 led to an eventual audit of the state’s fire laws, with dire implications for music venues. New regulations on the width of exit doors, fireproofing of internal décor, and the installation of exit panic doors (opening out rather in), and revised regulations for entertainment taking place above ground floors, left several venues with the need for expensive restructuring (Homan 2003).

Reform was needed in a sector that was until that point an unknown set of activities to governments, and many rock musicians of the time agree in hindsight that most venues were unsafe. In several areas, however, the revised fire and noise laws seemed out of all proportion to the public order risk. Live music – including acoustic solo or duo performers – required a Place of Public Entertainment licence, while other venue entertainment, such as gambling and television sports watching, did not. Live performance was thus singled out as a special ‘problem’ in terms of crowd safety, with no acknowledgement of the many levels of live performance below the larger, frenzied pub/club rock gig. The entertainment licensing system also required complex entanglement with the city council, state licensing authority, and fire and police departments. Publicans with no personal attachment to live bands sought entertainment alternatives. Given the massive costs of liquor licences that were tied to the worth of the buildings, the quickest and most conservative means to increase revenue was gambling. Poker (slot) machine gaming became a primary source of revenue in several music venues, in direct competition with bands, or displacing the band stage altogether.

After a four year lobbying process that began in 2002, the State government began addressing some of these concerns. Two studies confirmed the perilous state of live venues. A 1999 NSW Jazz Coordination survey found that 67 per cent of members surveyed had experienced a decline in live music work. A report by Bruce Johnson and I that included a survey of venue owners outlined the range of social and economic reasons for the decline of live performance (Johnson and Homan 2003). Regulation and administrative overload, including the processing of entertainment licences, was one of the central concerns. Several key figures – Victoria Owens at the Ministry of Arts, Richard Rhule at the Musicians’ Union and teacher/musician John Wardle – played crucial roles in supporting the recommendations of our report and engaging with the state government.

From 2006, the state Labor government instigated reform on several fronts. Planning amendments in 2006 created a live music category of liquor licence that took into account the nature of live performance activity; this normalised the licence process for music venue owners. The later provision of a small bar licence has also assisted in other music activity (DJs, duos, trios) at these sites. Two fictional case studies are provided in the state government’s Bringing back the music 2009 brochure to emphasise music as a ‘normal’ night-time activity:

The Side Entrance is a small restaurant bar in the Sydney CBD that serves snacks and cocktails late into the night. They want to engage a jazz trio to play on Friday and Saturday nights. This is part of the venue’s main business and would not require a development application.
The Dubliner is an Irish club located in the outer suburbs of a regional town. They want a Celtic folk band to play on some week nights and weekends in one of their four bars. This is part of the venue’s main business and would not require a development application (Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing 2009).

Noise law was also tweaked. In 2007, a revised Liquor Act stated that ‘order of occupancy’ must be considered in venue noise disputes, which in theory gave longstanding venues a fighting chance against resident complaints. This was the government’s response to industry complaints that new residents have always had the opportunity to adversely affect a live venue with a long history, and as a commercial enterprise that predates the resident.

Other reforms will continue to make an impact upon the decisions of owners. The liquor licence fees tied to annual revenue and building worth have been abolished in favour of a flat $2000 hotel licence fee (the small bar licence fee is $500). This may lead to more adventurous entertainment decisions as revenue is less tied to servicing large licence fees. In substituting much higher liquor licence fees for a flatter, cheaper structure, the government is seeking increased fee revenue through a greater volume and range of licences.

These reforms broke the historic understanding between NSW state governments (mainly Labor ones) and the Australian Hotels Association that any broadening of restaurant, bar and café licences amounted to being de facto hotel licences. The new mixture of drinking, dining and live music consumption on offer promises much greater flexibility and diversity. For the jazz community, regulatory change has produced growth in venues, including the conversion of a warehouse for music five nights a week, and the introduction of five new jazz festivals across Sydney (including the Difficult Music Festival hosted at a barber shop) (Fulton 2010). It has removed the monopoly of the large tied chain pubs as the only night-time source of alcohol and music. The government’s eventual agreement to look at live music and liquor deregulation was based partly on the realisation that other states had liberalised liquor regimes without serious economic consequences. In fact, these reforms partly derived from the belief that simplifying processes and fees would lead to greater revenue volumes overall.

Fortitude Valley

With few exceptions, Brisbane has suffered in Australian rock and pop history. The success of bands who have succeeded nationally and overseas (the Bee Gees, the Go-Betweens, Savage Garden, Powderfinger) has been overwhelmed by the historical narrative of a city beset by a lack of interest in arts and cultural policy, and by governments actively opposed to popular culture (see Stafford 2004). Brisbane from the 1960s to the 1990s was ‘a place once synonymous with political and societal parochialism, isolation, police brutality’ (Rogers 2008: 641). The conservative, coalition Queensland government coupled a lack of youth and arts policies with a corrupt liquor licensing system that ensured the stifling of popular music innovation.
The election of a Labor state government in 1989 renewed interest in creative industry policy, culminating in the ‘Smart State’ series of initiatives that began in 2005. This was accompanied by sustained government efforts to rebadge both the city and the state as sympathetic places for cultural work. A good example of the new impetus in state-industry-academy relations was the report commissioned by Brisbane City Council, *Music Industry Development and Brisbane’s Future as a Creative City* (Flew et al 2001). One of the key recommendations of the report was the establishment of a cluster of music activity in Fortitude Valley, building on the area’s existing strengths in recording, rehearsal and venue infrastructure, and a significant musician population (Flew et al 29-30).

Fortitude Valley is situated one kilometre northeast of Brisbane’s Central Business District. Driven by the city council’s ‘Principal Policy Officer, Pollution Prevention’ Frank Henry, local and state governments agreed to establish the Valley as a distinct entertainment precinct in 2004. This is an important experiment in foregrounding entertainment through rezoning. Where land use planning has often been brought utilised to remove troublesome venues, planning regulation privileges music here as the primary industrial activity, with existing and future residents told this explicitly. Apart from encouraging live music activity, the Valley has become a classic ‘cluster’ development of bars, clubs, restaurants, discos and pubs. Governments have been direct in their intentions, and in the education of businesses and residents:

The Special Entertainment Precinct Core Area will provide for and encourage a variety of live music, nightclub and other music venues into the Valley. Ambient noise levels will be relatively higher and new residential accommodation close to and within the Core Area must be designed to manage noise from existing and future entertainment venues. Noise from entertainment uses will still be heard beyond the Special Entertainment Precinct. Residents close to the Core Area can expect generally higher levels of noise, both inside and outside of residences, due to their proximity to entertainment venues (Queensland government 2000).

The subsequent Valley Harmony Music Plan has established some important precedents. New residential developments within the precinct have to invest in noise attenuation measures to ensure all residences can achieve a set noise level (90 decibels); music venues are allowed to emit a standard noise level at their boundary and volume levels are set and managed by Brisbane City Council (and not Liquor Licensing) (Burke and Schmidt 2009). This level of noise regulation removes much of the uncertainty (and hostility) concerning ‘order of occupancy’ issues and resident complaints. Educational devices help potential (and existing) residents to anticipate the dispersion of sounds in the precinct. Brisbane Council offers the Valley Sound Machine,

… an online tool that lets you experience simulated noise levels at different times and places in the Fortitude Valley Special Entertainment Precinct. If you plan to purchase, rent, renovate or design new apartments in the Valley Special Entertainment Precinct, the Valley Sound Machine may give you an idea of what you are likely to hear (Brisbane City Council 2011).
The Sound Machine attempts to offer approximations of the realities of living in the entertainment zones, including simulated street noise, venue noise and decibel levels from apartments.

This proactive approach also extends to licensing, with the design of a Valley Liquor Accord that is more thoughtful than most about venue alcohol management. The Valley Chamber of Commerce has stated that ‘the combination of these [strong networks, infrastructure, interface between business and residents] is rare, if not unique’ (Fortitude Valley of Commerce 2008), but have baulked at proposals to achieve a greater diversity of venues through the introduction of boutique/wine bars as Victoria and NSW governments have done. The deep meshing here of licensing, planning, noise and related laws requires vigilant oversight of the network of industries, governments and residents involved. The utopian rhetoric from both local and state government has been upset recently by ongoing transport problems (moving people out after closing times); complaints about the sameness of activity (large discos and pubs dominating entertainment options); and a recent campaign by police to reduce closing times from 3 a.m. to midnight. Further, this extensive quarantining of live music does not address traditional venue problems in the rest of the city (or state); and the concentration (monopoly?) of entertainment in the Valley may lead to less diversity in Brisbane overall, as owners look more to having a stake in a precinct that remains much more favourable than sites elsewhere (Burke and Schmidt 2009). Nonetheless, the Valley remains an interesting cluster experiment. In reversing the usual planning discrimination against the live music venue, it has undoubtedly played an important role in ensuring that Brisbane enjoys ‘a commercially successful, professional present’ (Rogers 2008: 639).

Melbourne

While Brisbane has struggled in the past to be recognised as a live music city, Melbourne, 900 kilometres south of Sydney in the state of Victoria, has always enjoyed its reputation as the culture capital, with innovative licensing, planning and arts policies. It is particularly known for its venue diversity including concert halls, music theatre, live rock pubs and jazz bars. This hard earned reputation has been threatened with an intensive debate by politicians and the mainstream media that the city’s Central Business District is ‘out of control’ on the weekends due to alcohol-fuelled violence. From late 2009, an increasing number of venues were informed by the Director of Liquor Licensing to provide security personnel (‘crowd controllers’). Crowd controllers were be hired at a ratio of two for the first 100 patrons, with one additional controller for every further 100 patrons, in addition to the installation of CCTV cameras if a venue provided live or recorded music that wasn’t simply background music. This extended the usual security conditions imposed upon larger venues that traded beyond 1 a.m. to many smaller venues that closed at midnight or earlier. The implications ranged from the serious to the absurd: a Greek taverna with two men playing rebetika music; small blues and jazz venues with audiences of under 100 people: all required two security guards. Venues with no or little history of trading, police or licence breaches found themselves categorised as ‘high risk’ sites.

The centrepiece of frustration was the closure of the Tote hotel in Collingwood, a north Melbourne suburb, in January 2010. Licensee Bruce Milne cited the new crowd controller costs as a dominant factor, coupled with the Liquor Control Commission’s
refusal to grant trading beyond 1 a.m. The closure of a nationally respected venue of twenty-five years standing unified the different sectors of the local industry, and confirmed that the ‘high risk’ category was continuing to claim venues. A rally outside the Tote on 17 January 2010 provided a national media profile for the ‘high risk’ debate. Two lobby groups consisting of musicians, lawyers, venue owners, academics, students and fans emerged as significant protest organisations. FG4M (FairGo4Live Music) re-formed from its earlier campaigns, while SLAM (Save Live Australian Music) began organizing a public rally to protest the ‘high risk’ licence conditions.

I was invited to join FairGo4LiveMusic, and in successive meetings with the minister for consumer affairs (whose portfolio included liquor licensing) and the state premier, our concerns were:

(i) The new security conditions automatically placed a venue as ‘high risk’ irrespective of the venue’s history of trading;

(ii) The larger discoteques, strip clubs and nightclubs concentrated within two streets of the CBD were over-represented in night-time violence statistics;

(iii) No evidence had been presented that music venues were the central public order problem. Indeed, the Department of Justice’s Liquor Control Reform Regulations: Regulatory Impact Statement of 2009 stated that insufficient data prevented any firm, evidence-based conclusions about live music as a risk factor; and that

(iv) Many of the city’s famous small venues would cease providing music and switch to other leisure forms and income sources.

Both the minister and premier stated that, firstly, entertainment venues were generally a problem, and that the government had to act as part of a crackdown on all CBD venues (this included a short 2 a.m. lockdown of bars that was abandoned after two months). Secondly, they argued that Ministers could not direct the Licensing Director on liquor regulations (entering Yes, Minister territory). Thirdly, that licence conditions stipulating security personnel reflected the implementation of a new liquor licence fee structure based on notions of risk. From 2001, fees were now to be calculated on a base category fee (licence type); an additional risk fee derived from the premise’s compliance history; and multiplied by venue capacity.

With discussions ongoing, the game-changer was the Save Live Music rally on 23 February 2010 with a range of celebrity speeches before Parliament House. After the rally, several promising developments occurred. The Licensing Director Sue MacLelland’s contract was not renewed, removing a significant source of friction between musicians/owners and the government. The Tote re-opened with new owners (including the head of FG4LM, Jon Perring). A petition of 22 000 signatures was tabled in Victoria’s Legislative Council by the Greens Party for debate, calling upon the government to ‘institute a proper investigation into the causes of violence and drunkenness … [to] remove all references to ‘live and amplified’ from the licence amenity clause on liquor licences’; and to ‘formulate a cultural policy that promotes and maintains Melbourne as Australia's capital for live music’ (Parliament of Victoria 2010).
More was also done to increase knowledge and representation of industry views. The state Labor government allocated $250 000 for the establishment of Music Victoria as the central advocacy/policy body for the Victorian music industries. It also commissioned an independent consultancy firm to produce an evaluation of the economic value of music to the state, to be published in late 2010. With folk musician Dobe Newton (The Bushwackers), I was commissioned by Melbourne City Council to provide a music industry strategy for the city (Homan and Newton 2010). Yet questions remain about the outcomes to this flurry of activity and largesse in the election year of 2010. In 2011, the state has a new conservative government, and the fate of the live music economic report and its recommendations is not known. Many of the recommendations of our city council report, relating to state-city partnerships across many areas of funding and policy, will also not be actioned by the new Liberal-National Party government (although it has secured and increased the funding for Music Victoria over the next three years).

While funding and cultural policies inevitably change with the new government (and a premier who has also taken the arts portfolio), musicians and venue owners achieved some satisfaction in the previous Labor government unequivocally stating that music venues were not the cause of inner city violence during the election campaign. The fairer ‘risk’ structure of liquor licence fees has been retained by the new government, with lower fees for restaurants, and higher fees for larger venues with late trading. Smaller music venues now mostly fit within the ‘low risk’ category, a sensible decision recognising their scale of activity, structure and capacities (see Homan 2011).

Conclusion: ‘I Tote and I Vote’

All three case studies I’ve presented here could be regarded as distinctly local responses to various issues (contingent upon their place in the cultural pecking order – for example, the Fortitude Valley ‘solution’ went some way to restoring Brisbane’s previous national reputation for a lack of live scenes). However, some common threads can be discerned. All three cases to different extents represent examples of a shift from prior ‘anti-social’ regulation and policies to those more aligned with recognition (if not always celebration) of night-time music cultures. They also show that previous views of live music as a threat to nightly order, and as an insignificant part of cultural economies, stemmed from an astonishing ignorance of cultural activities (and an astonishing preparedness to act without knowledge). Repeated calls from the music industries to engage in substantial research of the cultural and economic worth of live music are being heeded. The gradual abandonment of ad hoc governance, and the beginnings of proper cultural planning for live music, are encouraging in the face of cultural stereotyping of some music genres, and the continuing capacity for venues to be snared within law and order auctions at election time.

These cases also reinforce what is a global reality: that attempts to include live music as part of wider cultural policy must always engage in the politics of risk. For Brisbane, the risks associated with live music venues have been effectively quarantined through zoning (in one sense, the opposite of the Florida approach of a mixture of cultural activities and land uses, even while the Queensland government
adopted much of the Florida rhetoric in its cultural policy documents). At the same time, a hyper-music cluster has created some problems in relation to adequate late night transport, sameness of music activity and staggering of venue closure times.

For Sydney, the removal of regulations that exaggerated the risk of public assembly related to music performance has also removed the inclination of venue owners to consider any form of night-time income sources other than live music. It shifted the music licensing process from one based upon a series of management strategies predicated upon fearing the worst to providing a structural floor that allows for a greater potential diversity of venues, genres and performers. Where Social Impact Assessment reports are required of new premises, the state government has accepted that a thriving music venue can be considered a benefit to its local community, rather than solely as a public order ‘problem’. The inclusion of a ‘first occupancy’ clause in the noise complaints process, if implemented in the spirit intended, also redresses the considerable regulatory power invested in residents and councils since the 1980s.

For Melbourne, the music industries’ success regarding ‘high risk’ venues derived partly from the absurdity of increasing surveillance of venues that were not visible on the state’s list of troublesome alcohol sites. As I’ve stated elsewhere, ‘the government’s inability to focus upon the CBD’s real sites of alcohol-related violence produced a classic Foucaultian response: a failure in regulation and policing that inevitably led to greater regulation and policing’ (Homan 2011: 117). It’s important to note that both NSW and Victoria have reverted to a ‘risk-based’ categorisation of venues, based upon perceived costs to public order and perceived costs to governance (policing and regulatory costs). This has been accompanied by rolling back the liberalisation policies of the 1990s and longer trading (for example, there has been an unspoken freeze in Melbourne on all licence applications seeking to trade after 1 a.m.).

Finally, live music has figured prominently in recent ‘creative industry’ strategies produced by all three state governments. The usual claims to music’s distinctive role are made; a 2008 cultural plan for Sydney advocated the need for activity clusters based upon existing local cultural strengths, including live music. These strategies contain some evidence that policy extends beyond mere funding or subsidy considerations and the need to engage in the harder reform of licensing and planning that is part of a whole of government approach. Here, the manic competition between premiers and arts ministers for cultural dominance is visible (and very useful in negotiations). The irony is not lost on musicians reading glossy state documents proclaiming a ‘cultural and creative city’ (City of Sydney 2008) that continues to ignore the adverse effects of gentrification, for example. Noise laws remain unresolved, satisfying neither musician or resident communities; while ‘liveability’ indexes are produced without dealing with the continued flight of musicians from Australian Central Business Districts and surrounding suburbs due to rising home purchase and rental costs.

Debates continue about the creative industries’ need to both measure and promote their importance (Craik 2007: 2). Like other creative industry sectors, live music’s positive social affects must be demonstrated, alongside the continual claims to its economic power. In Brisbane and Sydney, evidence-based research provoked
government strategies (although the direct intervention of key state figures can never be under-estimated). In Melbourne, direct appeals to music communities and the public (‘I [go to the] tote [hotel] and I vote’) were extremely successful, which led to the government acknowledging its lack of knowledge about the sector. Live music’s place in the ‘cultural’ or ‘creative’ city requires constant negotiation with governments who are finding it increasingly difficult to reconcile conflicting cultural, economic and urban policies.

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