

LONGYARD HOTEL – SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

What are the major barriers for putting on more all ages shows/festivals? Where do you see best practice in this space?

To the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response to the supplementary question regarding all ages live music events.

As a former owner and operator of The Pub Group venues in Tamworth, including the Longyard Hotel, The Pub, Family Hotel, Southgate Inn and Moonshiners Honky Tonk Bar, I have spent more than 25 years investing in, programming and supporting live entertainment in regional New South Wales. Based on that experience, I offer the following observations.

The major barrier to delivering more all ages events is commercial viability and understanding the revenue profile of each venue.

Throughout my time operating venues, we had to maximise the opportunity at every point of the day while ensuring that live entertainment remained financially sustainable. Every venue has different demographics, different audiences and different revenue drivers, meaning there is no one-size-fits-all approach to programming.

The Longyard Hotel provides a good example of this. During the Tamworth Country Music Festival, the entertainment offering would evolve throughout the day to suit changing audiences.

A typical day may commence with a Poets Breakfast at 7.30am, traditionally attracting an older demographic, generally between 50 and 80 years of age. From around 10.00am, programming would move into more family-friendly and bluegrass-style performances, attracting audiences ranging from children through to older patrons. As the day progressed through the afternoon and evening sessions, the style of music and atmosphere would evolve, attracting progressively younger and more vibrant audiences. By the end of the night, the crowd would generally be aged between 20 and 55 and looking for an unforgettable live music experience.

The programming changes because the audience changes, and as the audience changes, the revenue opportunities also change. That revenue ultimately allowed the business to continue investing heavily in live entertainment and employing artists.

All ages events are absolutely important and were catered for in specific ways and at specific times. However, they need to be matched to the right venue and the right audience.

It is also important to recognise that larger, high-capacity venues cannot realistically make all ages programming their primary focus.

Venues such as the Longyard Hotel and Moonshiners Honky Tonk operate on a scale that requires significant attendance and revenue to cover the costs associated with artists, production, staffing, security and venue operations. The commercial reality is that all ages programming generally does not generate the same level of patronage or revenue as traditional live entertainment offerings. If venues such as these were to make all ages programming their primary focus, they would simply not achieve the attendance or revenue required to sustain the level of investment currently being made into live music.

Conversely, The Pub attracted a different market. Located outside the main entertainment precinct, it tended to attract patrons who were prepared to travel specifically for a music experience. This audience was generally older or more music-focused and often sought a particular style of performance rather than a party atmosphere. As a result, programming there often leaned towards traditional country music, singer-songwriters and emerging artists that suited that demographic.

This demonstrates that each venue offering is unique. Successful live music venues understand their market and program accordingly. All ages events are best delivered where the venue, audience, scale and commercial model are aligned.

From my experience, best practice occurs when governments, venues, artists and communities work together to create opportunities that are commercially sustainable and accessible.

Tamworth provides one of Australia's best examples of this approach. The Tamworth Country Music Festival welcomes audiences of all ages, provides both free and ticketed performances, creates pathways from busking to professional stages and supports emerging artists alongside established performers.

Targeted support for all ages events, including transport solutions, infrastructure support and funding assistance, would assist venues to take greater risks in this space while ensuring that live music remains financially sustainable.

All ages live music events are essential for the long-term sustainability of the industry. They create future audiences, provide opportunities for emerging artists and strengthen community connections. However, the success of these events depends on matching the right entertainment to the right venue and ensuring the economics of live music remain viable for the operators who continue to invest in it.

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