

Response to Supplementary Questions

TEG feels strongly about continuing to expose 16 and 17-year-olds to incredible live music in a safe and welcoming setting. We consider this important for future audience development and brand loyalty, and for ensuring a sustainable business model for years to come. In respect of our major touring festival, Laneway, we consistently wear the additional costs associated with 16+ access year on year because we believe our events should be accessible to this age group.

For the majority of other festivals, however, it is clear that the additional risk and cost is not considered worth bearing, which is a significant part of why broader uptake of all-ages access remains limited across the sector. For example, it is not feasible to contemplate these additional costs for our inaugural Longhaul Country Music Festival at Sydney Showground on 23 January 2027, which is disappointing to many fans but simply unaffordable.

Laneway Festival has shown a demonstrable pathway for U18 attendance does already exist for festivals and can be operated safely and successfully. In practice, however, these pathways come with compounding barriers that make them difficult to replicate more broadly, or in a sustainable way.

Biggest barriers to under-18 events

Higher risk classification and its cost consequences. Events that admit patrons under 18 are typically classified as a higher risk category by police, regulators, and medical / welfare providers than an equivalent event that is 18+ only. This classification, which is not often explicitly stated, is not a formality: it results in a materially different, and materially more expensive, compliance, infrastructure, and staffing profile, generally requiring additional police presence, additional accredited medical providers, additional licensed security personnel, and dedicated welfare or youth support staffing beyond what would otherwise be required for the same event at the same capacity.

This additional cost sits directly on top of the user-pays cost structures TEG has already outlined to the Committee regarding policing, medical, and infrastructure costs in New South Wales more generally - illustrated by the comparison of Laneway Sydney, Gold Coast and Melbourne costs given in oral evidence. For an event that already carries a higher NSW-specific cost base, an under-18 risk loading is a second, compounding cost pressure and a significant disincentive for promoters and venues, particularly at the smaller end of the market.

The parent/guardian accompaniment requirement is itself a barrier. Perhaps counterintuitively, the requirement for 16 and 17 year-old patrons to be accompanied by a parent or guardian works against the access it is intended to protect. The policy intent - to ensure appropriate supervision of younger patrons - is reasonable on its face, but the practical effect is that attendance becomes conditional on the availability and willingness of a parent or guardian to commit to attending the entire event alongside the young person, as well as the cost outlay of buying two tickets rather than one. Many prospective attendees do not have a parent or guardian able or willing to do this, particularly for events that run into the evening or that do not otherwise appeal to that adult. The result is that a measure designed to widen safe access in practice narrows the pool of young people who can attend at all.

While slightly more nuanced for smaller venues, these barriers are potentially felt more acutely. As the Committee has already heard, this segment already faces structural challenges independent of age restrictions. Yet it is precisely where emerging and mid-tier artists build live audiences, and

where U18 fans seek out artists discovered online. While larger events like Laneway Festival can, if absolutely necessary, absorb the added risk-based costs of U18 access within a broader operating budget, small venues operating on thin margins cannot.

Regulatory, financial or cultural?

The barriers are primarily regulatory and financial, and the two reinforce one another. Cultural resistance is not, in our experience, the primary constraint.

Regulatory: The two most consequential settings are the heightened risk profile classification of under-18-inclusive events and the parent/guardian accompaniment requirement for 16- and 17-year-olds. Both are administrative and licensing settings rather than market outcomes, and both can, in principle, be reviewed and adjusted by the government without requiring any change in venue or promoter behaviour.

Financial: The additional police, medical, security and welfare staffing, plus additional infrastructure requirements that flow from that regulatory classification represent a direct, quantifiable cost. This is not a market-driven cost reflecting genuine additional risk exposure; it is a cost imposed by the classification itself. Where those increases are not clearly supported by comparative evidence, it is difficult to characterise the resulting cost as proportionate.

Cultural: We do not consider reluctance on the part of venues, promoters or artists to be a significant factor. To the contrary, the engagement already seen in models such as Laneway's 16+ general admission, together with the evidence the Committee has received from other witnesses about unmet demand for all-ages and youth-accessible events, points to a willingness across the industry to program for this audience. The blockage sits upstream of that willingness, in the regulatory and cost settings that determine whether doing so is operationally and financially feasible.

A relevant comparative data point is Queensland, which does not impose an equivalent parent or guardian accompaniment requirement on 16- and 17-year-old attendees. Laneway has multiple years of incident data from Queensland events operating without this requirement, and that data does not show any measurable increase in medical, security or licensing incidents relative to comparable New South Wales events. Laneway would be glad to provide this data to the Committee on notice, and respectfully submits that it supports a conclusion that the New South Wales accompaniment requirement is imposing a real barrier to access without a demonstrated corresponding safety benefit.

Suggestions

1. Review the parent/guardian accompaniment requirement for 16- and 17-year-old attendees, having regard to the Queensland comparison and the incident data referred to above.
2. Trial a lower minimum age (for example, 15+) at a limited number of nominated venues, structured so that the trial does not restrict the venue's existing capacity to serve alcohol, and does not require the venue to physically segregate patrons into over-18 and under-18 areas.
3. Target any such trial at venues in the small to mid-tier capacity range, as this is where the gap between audience demand and current access settings is most acute, and where emerging and touring artists most need to build a live audience.
4. Frame any reform in this area explicitly as an audience-development and artist-pathway measure, informed by the demand data already before the Committee, rather than treating it solely as a licensing or child-safety question - recognising that the two objectives of safety and access are not in tension where the evidence does not support the current settings as necessary for safety.