

THE FINAL REPORT OF THE
LEICHHARDT AND MARRICKVILLE

OFF BROADWAY

LIVE MUSIC REFERENCE GROUP



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BACKGROUND

On 26 March 2013 Leichhardt Council considered a report about a Parramatta Road Live Music and Cultural Precinct. The report noted that the area was home to a number of live music venues and performance spaces, together with ancillary businesses such as musical instrument retailers, repair shops, teaching and recording studios.

In response Council resolved to:

1. Investigate policies and programs that could be implemented to support the development of Parramatta Road as a live music and cultural precinct
2. Investigate the establishment of a live music development control plan
3. Liaise with other organisations, including Marrickville Council, the City of Sydney and Brisbane City Council.

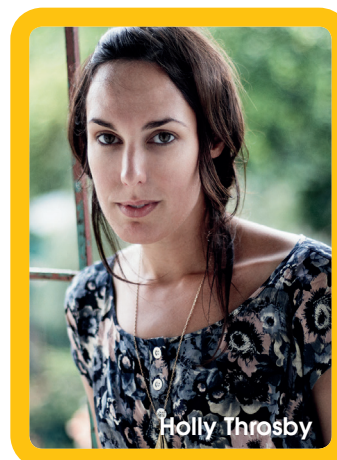
In October 2013 Council resolved to establish a Parramatta Road Live Music Zone Taskforce. The purpose of the Taskforce was to provide independent recommendations about how live music and live performance could be encouraged and promoted on Parramatta Road and throughout the inner west.

The establishment of the taskforce:

- was one of a series of Council initiatives aimed at reviving and promoting live music and performance on Parramatta Road
- also occurred in the context of the City of Sydney releasing its wide-ranging *2013 Live Music and Performance Action Plan*.

Ms Holly Throsby a nationally known local musician and performer accepted the offer to chair the Reference Group. Membership of the group was then finalised in consultation between the Chair - Holly Throsby and representatives of Leichhardt and Marrickville Councils. The Reference Group comprises:

- Holly Throsby – Chairperson – Musician and Performer
- John Wardle – National Live Music Office
- Alex Elliot-Howery – Cornersmith Café Marrickville
- Adam Lewis – Goodgod & FBI Radio
- Roderick Smith – Renew Australia
- Tom Scott – Blackwire Records
- Kerri Glasscock – Sydney Fringe and Venue 505
- Hugh Nichols – City of Sydney
- Cr. Jo Haylen – Mayor Marrickville Council
- Caroline McLeod – Marrickville Council
- Cr. Darcy Byrne – Mayor Leichhardt Council
- Peter Conroy – Leichhardt Council



REFERENCE GROUP REPORT

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Reference Group began its work in February 2014 with the following terms of reference:

- a) Consideration of the recommendations of the City of Sydney 2013 Live Music and Performance Action Plan
- b) Site inspections of Parramatta Road and Sydenham
- c) Identifying issues and opportunities and making recommendations to build on the work completed by the City of Sydney and enhance the potential of Parramatta Road and Sydenham as future cultural, live music and performance destinations, in particular:
 - i. The existing nature of the two study areas
 - ii. Impediments to operators and venues establishing in the two study areas
 - iii. Traffic, Transport and Compliance issues likely to affect the two study areas
 - iv. Making the areas recognisable and promoting the range of cultural, live music and performance experiences provided in the two study areas
 - v. Audience development opportunities
 - vi. Opportunities to assist potential venue operators in identifying locations and preparing applications.

MEETINGS

In commencing the project, the group initially considered the work of similar groups established by the City of Sydney and Wollongong City Council. Over time the group also considered work carried in Victoria, in particular by Yarra and Melbourne City Councils. Over the course of the project the group conducted site inspections of both the Parramatta Road and Sydenham areas.

In completing its work the group met five times:

- 24 February 2014
- 17 March 2014
- 7 April 2014
- 5 May 2014
- 19 May 2014



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The final recommendations of the group have been consolidated into nine priority topic areas:

- Topic 1: The City of Sydney, Marrickville and Leichhardt Councils continuing to work on broader State and Regional issues
- Topic 2: Determining "Off Broadway" as a framework for the proposed Parramatta Road Cultural, Entertainment, Performance and Live Music Precinct
- Topic 3: Expanding and supporting small bars and ancillary land uses
- Topic 4: Defining the initial activation area boundaries on Parramatta Road and in Sydenham
- Topic 5: Public domain improvements
- Topic 6: Working with existing businesses and landowners
- Topic 7: Activating vacant premises
- Topic 8: Marketing and promotion
- Topic 9: Developing partnerships

All of which will provide a foundation for larger, established operators with access to finance and infrastructure to move into the areas, further consolidating them as cultural, entertainment, performance and live music hubs.



PRIORITY TOPIC AREAS

Broader objectives to be pursued by all three Councils

1. The City of Sydney, Marrickville and Leichhardt Councils must continue to work together on the broader state and regional issues, in particular those identified in the City's 2013 Live Music and Performance Action Plan, including:

- Collaborating with the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing on research and amendments to legislation and regulations etc
- Defining offensive noise and its assessment
- Working on s149 Certificates to ensure appropriate notice is provided to prospective purchasers, in particular those buying in the vicinity of mixed use and late night trading areas
- Modifying building codes, LEPs and DCPs
- Providing guidance for creative start-ups and existing venues to make sure locations and/or premises are fit for purpose
- Making sure requirements and standards are geared towards nature and circumstances of pop-up and other more transient land uses
- Having consistency of compliance and enforcement action;
- Improving loading arrangements
- Aligning operations between the organisations to ensure consistency of documentation and advice
- Agreeing on the use of Council premises for rehearsals and performances.

Councils can also link up with other organisations such as the City of Wollongong and pursue common objectives from their respective reports.

Broader objectives to be pursued by Marrickville and Leichhardt Councils

2. Determining “Off Broadway” as the framework for the proposed Parramatta Road Cultural, Entertainment, Performance and Live Music Precinct

For a destination to be attractive to venue operators, artists and audiences it must offer something unique. There is no point in trying to replicate something that already exists and thrives elsewhere in Sydney. For a destination to succeed it must fulfil a need within the landscape of the city.

This unique angle will not only help in establishing a Performance and Live Music Precinct, it will also contribute to the overall vitality and attraction of Parramatta Road.

The reference group agrees Sydney's "Off Broadway" represents such an opportunity.

The term “Off Broadway” is often associated with the creation, development and testing of new works - often but not limited to theatre, musical theatre and cabaret, when scripts and works are refined before being taken to the main stage theatres of Broadway. Sydney currently has no such place for emerging artists to develop their careers or for professional artists to develop new work in small affordable venues.

The group believes that in the case of Sydney's "Off Broadway", it can be associated with low cost, flexible spaces that will facilitate the organic development and growth of new work for emerging artists and markets.

The location under consideration is also located “Off Broadway” - being located two kilometres to the west of Broadway in Glebe/Chippendale.

In addition to the various performance spaces that could be established within this framework, for example:

- Flexible, intimate performance spaces
- Theatre
- Cabaret
- Comedy
- Dance
- Live Music

A range of other ancillary and complimentary land uses could also sit comfortably within the “Off Broadway” framework, for example:

- Cafés
- Clothing retailing
- Tailors
- Graphic design
- Music
- Small bars
- Music, performance and event equipment
- Artist studio and gallery
- Marketing and publicity
- Social media
- Vintage clothing and furniture
- Props and prop hire
- Shopfront radio station.

Finally, a number of the above uses also sit comfortably with both Councils in terms of ‘sustainability’, as they involve the re-cycling and re-use of clothing, furniture and other goods.

The adoption of the “Off Broadway” framework would also inform work in relation to the other priority areas.

3. Expanding and supporting small bars and ancillary land uses

Small bars are one of the smaller scale activities that can contribute significantly to the diversity and vibrancy of an area.

The early work of the group noted the initiative taken by Leichhardt Council to call for a review of its parking controls in relation to small bars.

Recent experience in Sydney has confirmed that small bars are one of the main facilitators of creative and interesting new land uses.



Small bars are also able to:

- Evolve out of existing businesses - eg a bookstore that be expanded to include a small bar and visa-versa
- Cater for all ages
- Operate both day and night.

Venues that provide live performance for the benefit of patrons often operate quite differently to those that serve food and alcohol with or without recorded background music.

Bar service in a live performance or similar venue is significantly lower to that of other licensed premises. Bar sales tend to drop off or cease completely throughout performance times. Upon completion of the performance, patrons then resume using the bar service.

The income earned either side of the actual performance allows the operator to engage the performers and cover the other costs associated with operating the business. It is imperative that this is taken into consideration when the hours of operation are addressed. These hours of operation need to recognise/reflect the somewhat unique circumstances that underpin live performance venues.

As stated previously, small bars often evolve out of existing land uses or occupy quirky spaces and locations which are part of their attraction. However, these circumstances and locations do not always comply with current standards – eg toilet facilities. The challenge for Councils is to determine how they can facilitate these new creative small businesses without exposing them to a range of upgrade costs that will render them unviable before they even start.

It is the view of the group that Marrickville and Leichhardt need to either build on the work already undertaken by the City of Sydney or collaborate with the City to advocate and provide services and guidance about:

- Submissions to the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing in relation to small bars, in particular ensuring that fees and limits on the number of patrons are appropriate



- Determining standards that are both compulsory and discretionary, depending on the size, nature and location of the business and/or the existing building
- Identifying potential sites
- Establishing appropriate trading hours for each area
- Publishing fact sheets, guidelines and requirements for lodging applications
- Coordinating activities across the many departments that often exist within Councils. Eg. coordinating advice provided by cultural, health, building, planning and engineering staff.

In relation to Parramatta Road, Marrickville and Leichhardt Councils should continue to work together to ensure consistency of controls and guidelines for small bars and associated land uses.

4. Define initial activation area boundaries – Parramatta Road and Sydenham

The two areas assessed by the Reference Group are quite different in terms of location and character. However both provide genuine opportunities for focusing action and support for live music and associated activities.

Parramatta Road may not require any change in zoning in the short term. However, Marrickville and Leichhardt Councils will need to collaborate in the longer term to ensure that their respective actions – on either side of Parramatta Road - support the proposed “Off Broadway” framework.

In relation to Sydenham, there may be a more immediate need to review the current zoning, however this should not be at the expense of the:

- Current Industrial Economy
- Industrial nature of the area. The Reference group views the current Industrial Character as an asset.



Parramatta Road

The group agrees that while in the longer term the Precinct could extend from Johnston Street to Pyrmont Bridge Road, the immediate focus of action should be a smaller area incorporating both sides of Parramatta Road between Johnston Street, Annandale and Bridge Road, Camperdown.

Leichhardt and Marrickville Council’s will need to work together to ensure that over time there is a steady alignment between the nature and character of both sides of Parramatta Road.

Sydenham

The group noted that Sydenham already has a number of live music venues such as Camelot Lounge, Lazy Bones and Gasoline Pony. Likewise Sydenham’s more affordable warehouse style buildings also assist in its evolution as a live music hub.

The group also understands that:

- Over the coming year, Marrickville Council will be specifically investigating the Sydenham area, in terms of employment growth and accommodating live music and the arts
- These investigations may result in a further refinement of Marrickville Council's direction and planning controls relating to Sydenham.

5. Public domain improvements

A key element of the project as it progresses will be to make some improvements to the public domain. However, any public domain improvements should:

- Complement the “Off Broadway” framework that is being proposed
- Be attractive to proprietors, emerging artists and their patrons.

The basis for these improvements is to:

- Transform the nature of the area to complement increased pedestrian traffic associated with the establishment of the Cultural, Entertainment, Performance and Live Music Precinct
- Improve access and safety for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users, with improved signage, illumination of pedestrian crossings etc.
- Make sure the people who currently pass through the area by public transport and car, are aware of the changing nature of the area.

Any changes to the public domain will need to be developed and implemented in association with land owners and representatives of the Performance and Live Music Sector.

The following is a sample of initiatives that could be considered by Marrickville Council, Leichhardt Council and other stakeholders:

- Installation of location lighting
- The painting of shop fronts
- Landscaping with pots and plants
- Installation of bicycle parking
- Improving street lighting
- Permitting/encouraging food trucks, buskers etc
- Encouraging landlords to reinvigorate shopfronts, remove or modify security shutters etc
- Introducing banner poles, banners and signage
- Ensuring that the establishment and operation of the area is safe for patrons, in particular regarding the proximity of Parramatta Road. The reintroduction of kerbside parking and/or other barriers may assist
- Utilising the existing Public Art Programs – run by the two Councils, to develop and locate new installations – temporary or permanent at key locations.

Activation of the public domain could even extend to initiatives such as painting vacant shop fronts with “black board” paint and supplying chalk to encourage public participation.

Initially any actions could be quite minimal, however over time, it is expected that public domain improvements could evolve organically – in response to the ideas of the emerging artists and markets attracted to the area.

Marrickville and Leichhardt Council will also need to work together on a range of way finding signage to encourage easier pedestrian access and movements. Over time this could extend to a broader catchment such as Newtown via Missenden Road.

By increasing pedestrian movements, the Councils will increase activity on the streets. The Reference Group believes that any increase in pedestrian traffic will improve perceptions of safety and create a sense of interest in the community, thereby increasing visitations.

6. Working with existing businesses and land owners

Working with existing businesses and property owners will be critical to the success of the project. The reference group believes that the Councils should formally engage with all owners and/or businesses associated with properties:

- that currently operate within the umbrella of culture, entertainment, performance and live music – as they will be the foundations upon which the future is built
- the use of which could be to provide a range of complementary activities. Eg properties used as cafés during the day could be expanded to become a small bar and performance venue at night
- that are currently vacant
- that are currently used for purposes that are in no way associated with performance and live music.

All of these groups need to be targeted to ensure that they understand what is being proposed and how they could benefit from the proposal. These targeted discussions will not only assist property owners in understanding what is being proposed but will also be a rich source of ideas and opportunities.



In addition to those properties located within the identified precincts, Councils will also need to communicate with businesses outside the areas to advise them of the details of the project and how:

- over time it could benefit them
- they can participate in the short term, regardless of their location outside the initial areas.

Discussions with stakeholders have the potential to cover a wide range of issues, for example:

- The value of increasing commercial activity across the day, by having retail activity during the day and performance activity at night. Some land uses can also operate in both time zones, all creating a sense of activity throughout the day and into the night
- The value of smaller scale activities and businesses which have a record of contributing to the dynamics of an area. Differences in the nature of entertainment being provided, differences in the size and fit-out of venues, differences in the relationship and physical distance between performers and patrons etc. all create greater diversity and interest for both prospective performers and patrons
- The potential for grants programs to encourage land owners to activate their shop fronts
- The use of shop fronts for short term uses such as exhibition space and galleries
- The potential for “pop up” businesses to invigorate an area
- The value of existing “quirky” elements
- The potential for density bonuses to encourage particular development outcomes
- The experience of other areas in amending noise and building controls to facilitate residential and entertainment land uses in close proximity to each other.

7. Activating vacant premises

During the site inspection, the Reference Group members noticed a number of vacant premises along Parramatta Road.

The Reference Group is also aware of Leichhardt’s recent success at the Italian Forum through introducing “Renew Leichhardt” based on Renew Newcastle. These programs have a number of important attributes, one of which is quality control.

This program could be extended to Parramatta Road and be used as a catalyst for introducing short-term land use activities that could contribute to:

- The establishment of the “Off Broadway” framework for the Parramatta Road precinct
- The uniqueness and vibrancy of the area, as has happened at the Italian Forum and Newcastle
- Improving the longer term prospects of properties along Parramatta Road.

The Reference Group believes that quality control will be critical to the activation of vacant premises to achieve Sydney’s “Off Broadway” within the Parramatta Road Cultural, Entertainment, Performance and Live Music Precinct.

Both Councils must make sure vacant property owners are one of the groups that are specifically targeted when working with existing businesses and property owners.

8. Marketing and promotion

All of the preceding activities need to occur within the context of a well-planned and programmed marketing and promotion strategy. All must be aligned to achieve Sydney's "Off Broadway" precinct.

Any marketing and promotions strategy should therefore be consistent with the evolution of a low cost, flexible space that will facilitate the organic development and growth of new work from emerging artists.

The following is a sample of marketing and promotion initiatives that could be considered by Marrickville Council, Leichhardt Council and other stakeholders:

- Establishing branding that is consistent with Sydney's "Off Broadway" precinct theme - the look and feel of which could identify it as an area providing low cost, flexible space that will facilitate the growth of new work from emerging artists for their markets.
- Planning and programming related activities in a way that supports both the evolution of Sydney's "Off Broadway" and its identification by people passing through it
- Utilising social media and other contemporary marketing and promotion tools
- Utilising opportunistic marketing and promotion tools eg buses and cars stopped at traffic lights, the occupants of which are a captive audience
- Making sure the public domain and shopfronts are consistent with the evolution of a low cost, flexible space that will facilitate the growth of new work from emerging artists.

The marketing and promotion strategy could provide for:

- A "kick off" event
- The coordination of activities across the area and extend to events such as opening pops ups or changing public art at key dates or at regular intervals. Changing key elements within the areas could build anticipation and a sense of something new and exciting
- Coordination with existing activities such as the Fringe Festival, Marrickville Open Studio Trail and Leichhardt Open Studio Trail
- Include annual activities such as the Beaurepair Record Fair.

9. Developing partnerships

An important element in the delivery of the strategy will be building the interest and capacity of younger people:

- currently studying at a range of private and tertiary institutions
- recently graduated and looking for opportunities to utilise their recently acquired knowledge and skills
- self-trained and looking for opportunities to develop their skills.

Young people are not only a significant source of creativity and new ideas; many also have a feel for emerging genres, performers and markets.

Existing young venue operators also require support and guidance in their business dealings.

The Reference Group therefore believes it would be beneficial to establish relationships with one or more organisations, and formalise opportunities for:

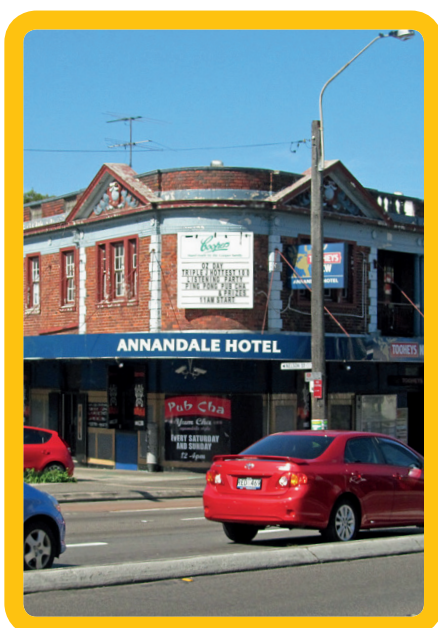
- Work experience in the industry sector
- Accessing training opportunities
- Accessing short term use of equipment and other support services to facilitate start ups
- Accessing mentoring in business planning, venue establishment, venue operation, audience development etc.

Some examples of organisations that may be willing to develop formal relationships with the two Councils include:

- Performance organisations such as FBI Radio and Sydney Fringe
- Tertiary institutions such as Sydney University and UTS
- Private institutions such as the Actors College of Theatre and Television and JMC Academy of Creative Industries.

The Councils may be able to further assist this program by facilitating pop ups, leasing strategic sites for short term activities and /or developing additional programs with Renew Australia.

Finally, the development of these strategic partnerships could also assist in the establishment of an Implementation Group to participate in the ongoing implementation of the Reference Group recommendations by Marrickville and Leichhardt Councils.



AUGUST 2014



WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY