

Well, the survey and symposium have come and gone, thank you for your participation and interest. You can see the multiple-choice answers for yourself in another attachment. This summary is a mix of all that data plus some of the long answers and symposium discussion results – as well as council’s recent survey results. Please also read on after this summary for some thoughts on ways forward and what we can take on as a community. These are intended as a starting point, to be discussed and improved on. We have some good ideas just waiting for their champions who will take them on. But without further ado, here is a snapshot of our results.

This is not likely to surprise, but music is *really* important to us, particularly in our youth. It shapes our identity, sense of self, connects us to a community, helps us navigate our emotions and life’s ups and downs. This was a consistent message across long answers, short answers, and at the symposium. We just bloody love it. Good news is this aligns with council’s findings that people in Newcastle unequivocally wish to see more live music. It seems we have no problems with the basis for our work. People want this.

Transport was listed as an issue which has affected gig attendance by 3 in every 5 responders. The most common mode of transport was driving one’s self. This aligns with council’s findings again, in their survey they found that night-time transport not being available was one of the most common reasons for not attending live music events.

Overall, we received mixed results on alcohol vs. no alcohol questions. This just means there is scope for gigs of all types across Newcastle. We did see a strong desire for more all-ages gigs in general. Again, this is in line with council’s findings that people want more all-ages gigs, and more family friendly gigs, in more accessible/ suitable spaces.

Musicians were largely grateful for friends and the community they were surrounded by when starting out. They were also grateful for having had spaces to play in, and venues

and promoters who would give youth and new bands a platform and a chance to play and improve – such as open mic nights. We also found that one of the most common things people enjoyed most about attending gigs was seeing local artists and bands develop over time. This type of nurturing and exposure is clearly a win-win for artists and audiences. **This suggests there is no miracle needed to foster live music. Musicians were grateful for other people and available space. These do not seem to be unachievable objectives.**

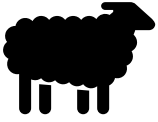
The most common asset musicians reported lacking when they started out in the industry was rehearsal space - we also saw that only around 1/3 of musicians have a rehearsal space they rated ‘tops’ available to them now. Musicians, although grateful for the spaces and chances they had, also listed a lack of such spaces as something that was lacking (now in particular). Money and business understanding were also flagged as issues when starting out.

The most unanimous aspect of the survey was that we are more likely to support a business with our patronage if they are supporters of live music.

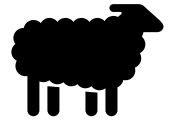
The issue of accessibility of venues and stages for wheelchairs was raised, and I think this is very important and capable of being addressed by us as a community.

We found that most artists do not have quality live recordings of their music. It was also discussed at the symposium that promotion of live music could be improved.

Read on for musings, ideas, and solutions



Musings, Ideas, Solutions



From all our data, some main issues stand out. I now wish to share some key ideas and potential solutions (whole or partial) floated at the symposium, especially those which do not require waiting on anybody else, but rather rely on us acting as a community. These ideas need champions, they need effort, they need enthusiasm. I promise to work on the organising of a follow-up event and/ or online presence for those interested in carrying on some of this work – and of course those who wish to add new and improved ideas with catchier titles.

Know that we are also taking this information to council, the Newcastle Live Music Taskforce, and adding our voice to a state parliamentary inquiry into Live Music.

1) **Rehearsal space** seems to be the most immediately solvable problem, providing an obvious and tangible benefit to the music community and culture of Newcastle. The symposium discussions were exciting – regarding the possibility of using council provided spaces, designated already for youth music use, as rehearsal spaces. This idea needs champions and further discussions. Which venues are available? When? How do we run it? How do people join? But this seems **very** doable.

2) Council found unequivocally that people want more music, and we found that artists want **more venues and spaces**. We need to work with council, state and federal government to make events feasible in more spaces. Largely, they know this already. The combination of issues regarding noise complaints, fire regulations, liquor license grey areas and so on, have affected the availability and viability of many music venues and spaces recently. This trend needs reversing, quickly, if we are to continue to see up and coming artists having chances to play. One interesting fact that came through in survey answers was that several muso respondents cited a food related event as the site of their first gig opportunity. Offering music at foodie events (like markets or gourmet fairs) and restaurants

provides a fantastic platform for emerging artists. This brought to mind a food-oriented space, largely available in the evenings, which Newcastle is absolutely saturated with – cafes! Can we work to simplify processes which could encourage the use of these spaces for events? These could be family friendly, all-ages events (with or without alcohol). It's a possible start or interim measure, given the lack of viable entry level venues currently.. Another idea raised at the symposium was utilising community rotundas. I am really looking forward to somebody taking the reins on a Newcastle Summer rotunda festival series 2018/19. Thunder under the Rotunda. Rock the rotunda. Do ya come from a land down under? Where women go and men rotunda. Just needs a champion and a better title. And perhaps council approvals.

3) Further to the above, the need for translation between all levels of government – particularly council – and the arts community more broadly seems clear. Our results suggest the creation of an office of the '**Night Mayor**' would be a good idea. This could promote the interests of artists and musicians, attract publicity, and act as an intermediary in disputes or difficulties regarding planning, alcohol licensing, building code standards etc. I am told by Cr Mackenzie this will be brought up at the next council meeting. Keep your eyes peeled.

4) **Transport** is largely an issue we are unable to 'solve' ourselves. There is no immediate end in sight for public transport issues - despite the light rail nearing completion, buses interchanging at the interchange will not occur until a long while after it is up and running. There were some interim and small-scale ideas though. We discussed the possibility of campaigning for a courtesy bus or special night bus route for youth/ all ages events. The idea of a bike club attending events together was also raised – I think this needs a facebook group or email list ASAP! A weekly route with music stops sounds great.

5) The issue of **accessibility** also seems like something we can work on. I have been in touch with the lovely people over at <http://stopgap.ca/> - check out their website to get a feel

for what we could do here in music venues as well as other spaces. This could drastically improve the experience of wheelchair/ mobility device users in our community.

6) **Promotion** of music and events was raised as an issue at the symposium, and at a similar council event held recently. We also saw in the survey that most musicians do not have quality live recordings (video or audio) of their music. Could we promote the idea of grants or funding to be put towards talented people with cameras and microphones going out and capturing quality live recordings of events? This would help bands to promote themselves locally, and further afield when booking tours, which would align with Newcastle's goals of promoting itself as an artistic hub. This may also help make Novocastrians aware of the variety of genres and event types already available to them.

7) Many issues raised throughout the survey and symposium could be, at least partially, addressed by **workshops**. For example, music business workshops, how-to guides for putting on events, how-to plan and execute a tour, how-to run live sound etc. If there are champions keen to run these, and demonstrable desire to attend them, this is something we could bring together as a community which would have obvious benefits for emerging artists. This is also something a Night Mayor and his or her team would be ideally placed to deliver.

I'd be happy to hear your feedback on this document, our findings, and this whole process. I will be in touch soon to keep momentum going. Thanks for your time and energy. Special thanks go also to Rachel and Jamie who did most of the work on the survey, the day of the event, and many other occasions, before I sign off in an attempt to get all of the credit.

Michael McDonagh

President – Softys Clubhouse

michael@softysclubhouse.club