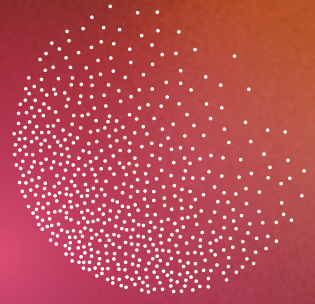




NIGHT-LIFE

Economy Commissioner

Moonside:

The Queensland Night-Life Economy Commissioner's Report 2026

An independent review to enhance Queensland's
nightlife economy for everyone, everywhere



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The Queensland Night-Life Economy Commissioner's Report 2026

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| BIGSOUND Fortitude Valley, Queensland



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Acknowledgement of Country

The Night-Life Economy Commissioner would like to acknowledge Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of this Country. I recognise their connection to land, sea, waterways and community and pay my respects to them, their cultures and their Elders past, present and emerging.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the original storytellers of the Dreaming and the custodians of Queensland's cultural heritage, which continues to inspire and enrich the state's nightlife.



| Woodford Folk Festival, Woodford, Queensland



Commissioner's foreword

It is with immense pride and excitement that I present my vision and recommendations to enhance Queensland's nightlife economy. As the state's inaugural Night-Life Economy Commissioner, I consider it a privilege to help drive this transformational effort to revitalise, strengthen, and future-proof our nightlife economy for everyone, everywhere across this remarkable state.

With more than 30 years in the music and entertainment industry, my journey has taken me from touring some of the world's great cities as a musician to opening and managing beloved venues across the country. Through this experience, I have witnessed firsthand the power of a thriving nightlife. It brings people together, fuels creativity, builds community, and injects a massive economic benefit to the state. It is also where we have fun.

Within days of commencing the role, I embarked on a statewide listening tour to hear directly from people who live and breathe our nightlife. From Cairns to Coolangatta, Brisbane to Mount Isa, consistent challenges emerged. Beyond the listening tour, I heard from our carers of the nightlife – the police, regulators, academics, urban planners and safety advocates. These insights have shaped the fundamentals of my recommendations.

Queensland's nightlife economy is already a major contributor to our cultural and economic prosperity, yet the opportunity ahead is even greater given Queensland is one of the fastest-growing states. People are voting with their feet, as seen in both domestic and international migration. As we look towards the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to showcase a world class nightlife to a global audience. But this report is about far more than the Games.

It is about shaping a nightlife that reflects who we are and who we want to be: vibrant, inclusive, creative, safe for women, and uniquely Queensland. Going out in Queensland after dark is not just about drinking – it is about enjoying everything the night offers. Queensland is not the same as it was 10 years ago.

As we prepare to invite the world to our house, we must ensure our place is in order. We have extraordinary natural advantages and a world renowned daytime economy. We must ensure our nightlife matches that reputation. When the flame is extinguished at the Los Angeles Games in July 2028, global attention will turn immediately to Brisbane and Queensland. We cannot switch on the lights in 2032 – change must start now.

I remain committed to genuine dialogue and evidence based change. Collaboration and a clear shared vision sit at the heart of this report.

This report marks the beginning of the journey. I look forward to hearing the response from community, industry and the government and working shoulder to shoulder with those responsible for the action required to make the most of this incredible opportunity. Let's raise the bar and showcase the very best Queensland has to offer – for people who call this beautiful state home and for those who are coming to visit with us.

John 'JC' Collins AM
Night-Life Economy Commissioner



Brisbane, Queensland

Executive summary

A state's nightlife is a strategic asset, contributing to economic growth and cultural life. With the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games fast approaching, Queensland has a significant opportunity to strengthen and evolve its nightlife offering.

The Queensland Night-Life Economy Commissioner (the Commissioner) is an independent statutory officer leading this work. The Commissioner advocates for the nightlife economy sector and works as a link between industry and government to address challenges and support the sector's long-term potential. This includes engaging with businesses such as live music venues, entertainment hubs, hospitality venues, and arts and cultural enterprises across Queensland.

Laying the foundations

Building a thriving nightlife economy begins with understanding the current state, establishing a clear vision, and advocating for strong partnerships across all levels of government and industry.

Reliable, consistent data is essential for developing effective policies and addressing challenges specific to the nightlife economy. A unified approach to data collection and sharing across government and business will ensure alignment and informed decision-making.

Collaboration is essential

There is much to learn from other jurisdictions and past reforms. Strong policy coordination and active collaboration across all levels of government are critical to creating a thriving nightlife economy. Everyone has a role to play.

Pillars for success

- **Vibrancy:** Bringing back the night to create dynamic, inclusive and accessible spaces that celebrate Queensland's lifestyle, while supporting placemaking and art.
- **Safety:** Ensuring a nightlife that is welcoming, safe and supportive of everyone's wellbeing, including women, diverse people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people with disability.
- **Business-friendly:** Supporting 'lively hoods' to innovate, attract investment and continue to grow and thrive.

Moonside: The Queensland Night-Life Economy Commissioner's Report 2026 (the Report) has been developed independently by the Commissioner

and informed by consultation with the Queensland nightlife sector. It reflects sector feedback and responds to the challenges faced by the sector.

Under the *Night-Life Economy Commissioner Act 2024* (the NLEC Act), the Commissioner is empowered to take actions necessary or convenient to perform their functions, which include:

- Serving as a central point of contact for matters affecting the nightlife economy.
- Providing information and advice to nightlife businesses and referring them to relevant advisory or support services.
- Raising awareness about:
 - issues impacting the nightlife economy
 - compliance with relevant legislation
 - best practices for the sector.
- Conducting inquiries into matters affecting the nightlife economy as directed by the Minister.
- Advocating on behalf of nightlife businesses to government entities at all levels and other relevant organisations.
- Collaborating with other state-appointed officials involved in administering matters related to nightlife businesses.
- Working with equivalent Commissioners in other states or the Commonwealth to improve conditions for nightlife businesses.
- Reporting to the Minister on specific issues or general matters related to the nightlife economy or the Commissioner's responsibilities.
- Performing any additional functions assigned under the NLEC Act or other legislation.

Have you seen this place by night? It shimmers. The sight of it. The feel of it. The way the stars and the temperature meet in the moonlight and form a kind of magic that only Queensland can conjure. Have you heard the story of this place at night? The surprise of it. How the night-time turns out to be the perfect time to luxuriate in the four seasons of the Sunshine State: spring and spring and summer and summer.

Sometimes I speak to tourists to my state, and they tell me how much fun they had in the daytime – the way this place shone for them, top to bottom, across parks and beaches and rainforests – and then I ask them what they did by night, and they speak of early nights to bed. That's something, I guess. A place where you can always be assured of a good night's sleep.

Then I can't help thinking how these beautiful, wide-eyed, up-for-anything tourists missed a whole half of the story of Queensland. The night side. The moon side. And then I think of what could be possible.

I think of what we are trying to achieve: a state that shines as much in the night as it does in the day. A place that pulses at night because it's alive. A place that thousands of friends from across the world can visit in 2032 and feel the kind of buzz they feel in London and Paris and New York and any other place across the world that knows there's more to the night than a hotel pillow.

There's romance in the night and music and art and community and connection and education and an endlessly thriving economy. Let's give them the other side of the story.

Trent Dalton

Author



Heritage Hotel Rockhampton, Queensland

Summary of recommendations

A nightlife for everyone, everywhere



Vibrancy recommendations

Objective: Bring back the night

Vibrancy comes from dynamic, accessible activities that foster social connection, celebrate Queensland's identity and drive economic growth. A vibrant nightlife is cohesive, authentic and unifying.

Short-term actions

To create immediate uplift in vibrancy:

- **Modernise the entertainment sound framework, including the noise complaint process and the way sound is measured** to better balance community expectations with venue operations.
- **Enable the sector to activate**, including through streamlined extended trading approvals, clearer protections for existing venues and simpler requirements for all-ages events.
- **Support councils and sector innovation**, including piloting vibrancy initiatives, incentives for late night dining and simplifying outdoor activations.

Medium-term actions

To build momentum:

- **Activate places and public spaces**, providing guidance for local government to activate, encouraging river activations and outdoor dining improvements.

- **Drive festivalisation and precinct vibrancy**, with declared special event days, targeted grants and simplified placemaking approvals.
- **Update liquor regulation settings**, including reconsidering bar licence categories, a strengthened risk-based approach to ID scanning and coordinated approvals within government.

Long-term actions

To embed vibrancy for the future:

- **Strengthen the live music ecosystem** through incentives for local artist exposure.
- **Consider flexible trading** for retail and supermarkets in appropriate Nightlife Zones.
- **Streamline and align regulatory frameworks**, including consolidated sound requirements and long-term licensing reforms.



Safety recommendations

Objective: A nightlife for everyone, everywhere

A safe nightlife is inclusive, accessible and connected, enabling all Queenslanders, particularly women, to enjoy their night with confidence.

Short-term actions

To improve immediate safety and accessibility:

- **Boost patron safety and wellbeing**, by delivering behaviour awareness resources, drink-spiking prevention measures and tools to support response to medical emergencies.
- **Improve late-night mobility**, with phone charging stations, increased awareness of public transport options, fairer taxi and rideshare practices and more wheelchair-accessible transport.
- **Enhance precinct amenity**, through nightlife specific grants and improvements to placemaking and public spaces.

- **Update Responsible Service of Alcohol training**, including national consistency and improved accessibility awareness.

Long-term action

To ensure safety is embedded into future precinct design:

- **Integrate safety and accessibility principles** into master planning for well-connected precincts ahead of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, avoiding the need for costly retrofitting.

Medium-term actions

To build a safer and more inclusive nightlife, Queensland will:

- **Champion accessibility and inclusion**, ensuring government-supported events reflect all communities and strengthening inclusive training for venue staff.
- **Improve precinct safety and movement**, including reduced speed limits, better streetscapes, enhanced rideshare safety and adoption of best practice initiatives to enhance safety, particularly for women.



Melt Festival, Brisbane Powerhouse, Queensland



Iris Rooftop, Fortitude Valley, Queensland

Business-friendly recommendations

Objective: 'Lively hoods' that thrive

A business-friendly framework empowers venues to innovate, grow and contribute to a dynamic nightlife economy. Supporting operators with clearer regulation, modern tools and targeted assistance will help businesses thrive and create more lively, resilient precincts.

Short-term actions

To provide immediate support for operators:

- **Strengthen business capability**, through end-to-end concierge support, affordable training and a centralised licensing system.
- **Reduce regulatory and operating costs**, through enhanced licensing settings, licensing concessions for live music and modernise Good Friday and Christmas Day trading.
- **Activate underused spaces**, through simplified parklet activation, encouraging councils and government to unlock public assets and invest in infrastructure that supports business and precinct vibrancy.
- **Increase participation**, including young people, through targeted cultural and live-music incentives.
- **Enhance collaboration**, supported by the Nightlife Economy Advisory Panel, chaired by the Commissioner, and continued industry engagement.

Medium-term actions

To build long-term business confidence and sector growth:

- **Improve data and evidence**, including a public nightlife economy dashboard and advocate for consistent national definitions for better data collection.
- **Support investment in venues**, through grants for sound attenuation, lighting, accessibility and beautification.
- **Recognise and protect iconic venues**, using targeted support and concessions.
- **Strengthen risk-based licensing**, ensuring regulation reflects venue size, activity and risk.

Long-term actions

To secure ongoing sector sustainability and growth:

- **Pursue solutions to major sector challenges**, including insurance affordability and the impact of derelict buildings in Nightlife Zones.
- **Support precinct renewal**, ensuring business-friendly environments that foster long-term growth.

Queensland's hospitality scene is the heartbeat of our social life; it's vibrant, it's diverse, and it's worth protecting.

Reviving and growing our nighttime economy – with smart guardrails and not heavy-handed 'boom gates' will keep venues lively, yet safe.

We love our Queensland lifestyle and our weather – it sets the stage for us to be the alfresco dining, beer garden loving, festival hosting, live music capital of the country.

Queensland needs desperately to find the balance that we have lost so we can support and encourage small business, celebrate culture and community while ensuring responsibility, safety and a welcoming atmosphere for all – in a state that is maturing and taking its place on the world stage.

Sofie Formica

Media commentator



Brisbane, Queensland

Introduction

Background

Queensland's nightlife economy is a vital contributor to the state. It supports local jobs, strengthens community connection and enhances Queensland's appeal as a dynamic destination for residents and visitors alike.

However, nightlife businesses are navigating challenging economic conditions, including increasing operational costs, regulatory pressures and shifting consumer behaviours. Addressing these challenges requires a **collaborative, whole-of-government approach** in close partnership with industry.

To unlock the full potential of Queensland's nightlife economy, regulations must be streamlined, complexity reduced, and businesses supported to adapt to changing consumer expectations. This will position Queensland's nightlife to meet the global standards, particularly as the state prepares to host the **2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games**.

Internationally, more than 150 jurisdictions have recognised the social and economic importance of a thriving nightlife economy and have established formal governance mechanisms to support its development.

The Act

In August 2024, the Queensland Government enacted the *Night-Life Economy Commissioner Act 2024* (the Act), establishing the statutory role of the independent Night-Life Economy Commissioner. The role was created in response to the challenging economic environment, including cost-of-living and cost-of-doing-business pressures, and serves as a vital link between the nightlife economy sector and the Queensland Government to advocate on how best to support nightlife businesses to thrive.

The Act defines the nightlife economy as economic activities occurring at establishments that provide services primarily between **6 pm and 6 am** to people engaging in entertainment or leisure activities. Nightlife businesses are those that rely on these activities for their financial viability.

Issues affecting the nightlife economy sit across different levels of government and typically include economic development, business regulation, planning, licensing and safety settings therefore, a whole-of-government response is required.



Busby Marou, Mount Isa Mines Rotary Rodeo rock concert, Queensland

Statement of expectations

In addition to the responsibilities set out in the NLEC Act, the Commissioner operates as an independent statutory officer and seeks to act impartially and objectively when addressing the needs of the nightlife sector in line with the Statement of Expectations. This independence allows the Commissioner to advocate for the interests of nightlife businesses and the broader community.

By encouraging collaboration and alignment between stakeholders, government agencies, and industry representatives, the Commissioner aims to recognise the challenges facing the sector and identify practical opportunities to address them in a transparent and effective way.

The Commissioner's independent role is important in supporting open dialogue, building trust, and promoting evidence-based solutions that contribute to the long-term sustainability, safety, and vibrancy of Queensland's nightlife economy. This includes providing advice to the government, advocating for meaningful regulatory reforms, and representing the interests of businesses such as live music venues, entertainment hubs, hospitality establishments, and arts and cultural enterprises.

Through this independent and collaborative approach, the Commissioner plays a key role in shaping a thriving nightlife economy that benefits all Queenslanders everywhere.

The nightlife economy

A vibrant, safe and thriving nightlife economy is an important part of Queensland's culture, economy and community. Music venues, festivals, theatres, arts and entertainment venues, dining establishments, safe and well-connected precincts all contribute to making Queensland an enjoyable place to spend time after dark.

In the 2024 financial year, core nightlife economy businesses employed **238,525 workers** and generated **\$37.6 billion in turnover**. By 2030, this could grow to **\$47.7 billion***.

The Commissioner's Report mainly focuses on primary nightlife businesses, including entertainment venues, dining establishments, bars, pubs and clubs. It also considers secondary nightlife businesses that support the nightlife economy, including health services, supermarkets, retail and transport.

**Based on Queensland Treasury population growth projections and Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) target inflation rate.*

| The Empire Theatre, Toowoomba, Queensland



Consultation

Voice of the sector

The listening tour

The Commissioner undertook a comprehensive listening tour across Queensland to engage directly with nightlife economy businesses and stakeholders.

The tour spanned **12 Local Government Areas (LGAs)** and included meetings with nightlife economy business owners, academics, local councils, and chambers of commerce. Over **100 stakeholders** were consulted, with visits to Mount Isa, Cairns, Townsville, Airlie Beach, Rockhampton, the Sunshine Coast, Noosa, Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Ipswich, Logan, and Toowoomba.

These conversations provided valuable insights into the health of the sector. While many challenges were consistent across the state – such as inflation, over-regulation, public transport limitations, particularly in the regions, and changing consumer preferences – some were unique to specific regions.

Stakeholders consistently expressed that the nightlife economy is being constrained by regulatory settings that are difficult to navigate and burdensome to comply with. By acting on this feedback, the Queensland Government has an opportunity to grow the economy, create jobs, boost tourism, and foster a vibrant, inclusive nightlife that positions the state as a global leader in nightlife innovation ahead of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Issue	Impact
• Noise compliance requirements are onerous and costly. • Noise standards and measurement frameworks are not fit-for-purpose.	• Noise complaint processes restrict business operations and activations.
• The liquor licensing framework is complex and compliance-heavy. • Extended trading hour applications are onerous and unpredictable.	• Regulatory settings stifle innovation, reduce flexibility, and limit the ability to respond to changing consumer demand, including reduced 'festivalisation' opportunities.
• Poor placemaking, connectivity, streetscaping, lighting and accessible transport options around nightlife precincts.	• Women feel unsafe when moving through precincts or waiting for public or private transport, reducing nightlife participation and economic activity.
• Some liquor framework requirements (e.g. mandatory crowd-control certified security for ID scanning in Safe Night Precincts) are disproportionately costly.	• No legislative pathway exists to reward good behaviour or reduce regulatory burden.
• Changing patron behaviour, driven by post-COVID shifts, cost-of-living pressures, more people working from home, high alcohol prices and generational preferences.	• Lower participation in nightlife activities, reduced demand for grassroots live music, and declining patronage across the sector.
• Rising operational costs, including insurance, electricity and wages.	• Businesses face growing financial strain, reduced profitability and an increased risk of closures.

Consultation for a safe nightlife

Throughout the year, the Commissioner undertook extensive consultation with a range of community, safety and wellbeing stakeholders. These included women's safety experts and advocates, law enforcement and justice agencies, health and social service providers, violence and harm-reduction stakeholders, and groups working in substance-use prevention and harm reduction.

Insights from these consultations highlighted the importance of well-connected and safe precincts, particularly for women, and of fostering a nightlife environment where people feel a sense of belonging and can enjoy a safe and connected nightlife for everyone, everywhere.



Consultation with stakeholders. Clockwise L-R: Great Western Hotel, Rockhampton; Mount Isa Theatrical Society; The Beach Bars, Sunshine Coast; Mo's Desert Clubhouse, Burleigh Heads; Ipswich and Brisbane*, Queensland. Courtesy of Office of the Night-Life Economy Commissioner, Department of Housing and Public Works and *Claudia Baxter Photography

Voice of Queensland's youth

The Commissioner also sought feedback from young Queenslanders on two key questions on their experiences and perceptions of the nightlife economy. Youth were asked:

1. What is stopping you from engaging in nightlife in Queensland?

- Cost-of-living and safety were the two biggest barriers for young people participating in the nightlife economy.

2. What would make you more likely to go out at night?

- More affordable food, drinks and entry fees; more live music, arts and cultural events; better late-night transport options were the top three solutions that would encourage young Queenslanders to go out at night.



Schoolies 2024, Surfers Paradise, Gold Coast, Queensland



| The Tivoli, Brisbane, Queensland

Vision: A vibrant, safe and business-friendly nightlife for everyone, everywhere

The 3 pillars of vibrancy, safety, and business-friendliness are interconnected and mutually reinforcing:

- **Vibrancy supports safety:** More activity in public spaces increases passive surveillance, strengthens community connection and discourages anti-social behaviour. Busy, well-designed areas enhance perceptions of safety and encourage greater participation in the nightlife.
- **Safety supports business-friendliness:** A safe environment builds patron trust, engagement and a positive reputation for precincts, attracting more patrons and supporting businesses to thrive.
- **Business-friendliness supports vibrancy:** Reducing red tape and supporting businesses allows them to innovate and offer diverse experiences and activations, increasing the vibrancy of nightlife precincts.



Together, these pillars create a positive feedback loop that drives a dynamic, inclusive, and prosperous nightlife economy.

| Open Season Music Series, Brisbane, Queensland

Case study 1: A global perspective

New York City (NYC)

NYC's Nightlife Economy: Impacts, Assets, and Opportunities¹

New York City's (NYC's) nightlife is widely regarded as a global benchmark for cultural and economic vibrancy, reflected in its long-standing reputation as 'the city that never sleeps'.

Analysis commissioned by the NYC Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment shows that as early as 2016, NYC's nightlife included more than 25,000 establishments and generated \$35.1 billion in annual economic output. It supported around 299,000 jobs and contributed \$697 million in tax revenue.

By comparison, Queensland's nightlife economy generated over \$37.6 billion in turnover in 2023-24. While comparable in scale to the amount generated in NYC 8 years prior, it shows the longer-term growth potential for Queensland.

NYC's direct economic impact is driven by employment and output across 5 key subsectors: food service, bars, arts, venues, and sports. Indirect impacts arise from local businesses supplying goods and services to these subsectors, while induced impacts reflect spending by nightlife employees within the city. Additional benefits include spillover spending on transport and tourism, as well as substantial fiscal returns through taxation at city and state levels.

Beyond measurable effects, NYC's nightlife acts as a broader economic and cultural catalyst. It attracts talent, supports global competitiveness, and strengthens the city's appeal as a place to live, work, and socialise. The establishment of the NYC Office of the Nightlife provides a coordinated approach to managing this growth, supporting jobs and social cohesion while also addressing the challenges associated with a large and active night-time economy.



Savannah in the round, Mareeba, Queensland



The Tivoli, Fortitude Valley, Queensland

1. NYC's Nightlife Economy: Impact, Assets, and Opportunities. Commissioned by the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment. https://www.nyc.gov/assets/mome/pdf/NYC_Nightlife_Economic_Impact_Report_2019_digital.pdf

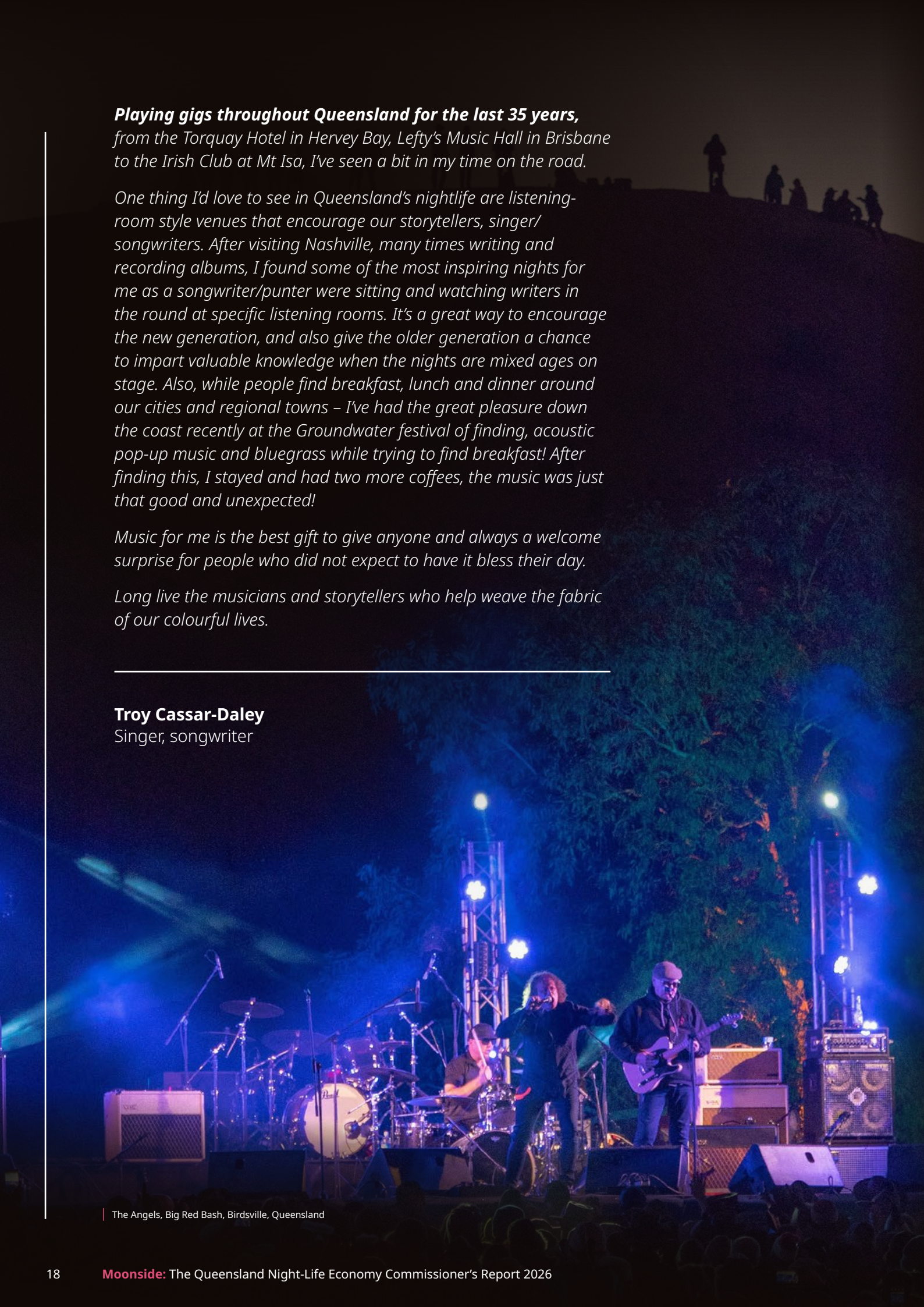
Playing gigs throughout Queensland for the last 35 years, from the Torquay Hotel in Hervey Bay, Lefty's Music Hall in Brisbane to the Irish Club at Mt Isa, I've seen a bit in my time on the road.

One thing I'd love to see in Queensland's nightlife are listening-room style venues that encourage our storytellers, singer/songwriters. After visiting Nashville, many times writing and recording albums, I found some of the most inspiring nights for me as a songwriter/punter were sitting and watching writers in the round at specific listening rooms. It's a great way to encourage the new generation, and also give the older generation a chance to impart valuable knowledge when the nights are mixed ages on stage. Also, while people find breakfast, lunch and dinner around our cities and regional towns – I've had the great pleasure down the coast recently at the Groundwater festival of finding, acoustic pop-up music and bluegrass while trying to find breakfast! After finding this, I stayed and had two more coffees, the music was just that good and unexpected!

Music for me is the best gift to give anyone and always a welcome surprise for people who did not expect to have it bless their day.

Long live the musicians and storytellers who help weave the fabric of our colourful lives.

Troy Cassar-Daley
Singer, songwriter



The Angels, Big Red Bash, Birdsville, Queensland

State of the State

Queensland's nightlife economy deserves recognition and value comparable to the state's thriving daytime economy. By building on the strengths of the daytime economy, there is an opportunity to lift the nightlife sector so that it is equally as vibrant, safe and dynamic, reflecting its role in Queensland's cultural and economic identity. A strong nightlife economy complements daytime activity and contributes to Queensland's reputation as a world-class destination for residents and visitors.

However, Queensland's nightlife economy is currently constrained by restrictive regulations that limit its vibrancy and competitiveness compared to other Australian states.

Night-time experiences vary significantly across Australia. The examples below highlight reforms and fit-for-purpose frameworks in other states that support more vibrant nightlife environments.

Queensland		
✗ No external advertising or promotion of drink prices. ✗ Single noise complaint may trigger compliance intervention and no mediation. ✗ No entry to licensed venues in Safe Night Precincts (SNP) without a scannable ID.	✗ Venues limited to 6 extended trading hours per year. ✗ Liquor restrictions on Good Friday and Christmas Day. ✗ Limited 'first-in' protections for venues.	
New South Wales	Victoria	South Australia
✓ External advertising of drink prices. Reduced prices restricted for undesirable promotion by exception only. ✓ 5 noise complaints from different households (mediation available). ✓ No mandatory ID scanning. ✓ Venues have 12 extended trading hours per year. ✓ Eyes Wide Open 'first-in' protections in place.	✓ External advertising of drink prices. Reduced prices restricted by exception for irresponsible consumption only. ✓ No mandatory ID scanning. ✓ Takeaway liquor permitted from most pubs and clubs on Good Friday and Christmas Day.	✓ External advertising of drink prices. Reduced prices too, excluding irresponsible consumption. ✓ 10 noise complaints from people who live, work or worship in the area. ✓ No mandatory ID scanning. ✓ No liquor restrictions on Good Friday or Christmas Day.

The Commissioner acknowledges that significant progress has already been made to support the nightlife sector and to strengthen Queensland's tourism and arts industries.

Moonside: The Queensland Night-Life Economy Commissioner's Report 2026 (the Report) sets out recommendations that build on these achievements, drawing on sector consultation as a foundation for continued growth and innovation.

We are not ready: We can't just turn the lights on in 2032.

Queensland has invited the world to its doorstep for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. But to deliver a world-class visitor experience, including world-class nightlife, we must be prepared. Significant work is required to meet national and global expectations.

We must act now to create a vibrant, safe, and thriving nightlife economy. Reforms that support vibrancy and reduce red tape are essential to ensure Queensland is ready to welcome both locals and visitors.

This Report positions the nightlife economy as a key driver of Queensland's cultural, social, and economic prosperity, while fostering a vibrant, safe, and inclusive community for all.

Purpose of this Report

This Report establishes a platform to:

- Set a clear vision for a vibrant, safe, and thriving nightlife economy that benefits Queensland's communities, businesses, and visitors.
- Advocate for a fit-for-purpose regulatory environment that fosters growth, attracts investment, and supports innovation across the nightlife sector.
- Promote best-practice governance and partnership between government and industry to ensure effective collaboration, accountability, and long-term sustainability for the nightlife economy.

Nightlife economy data limitations

A key challenge in understanding and supporting Queensland's nightlife economy is the **lack of comprehensive, publicly available data** for the Queensland context. While the cultural significance of the nightlife is well established, its economic value is harder to measure because of limited data.

Although many stakeholders use the definition of nightlife activities as those occurring between **6 pm and 6 am**, this is not applied consistently across data collection. Without a standardised approach, it is difficult to build coordinated, evidence-based policy, and the sector's capacity to respond to challenges and opportunities is limited.

To unlock the full potential of Queensland's nightlife economy, it is essential to establish a **comprehensive and consistent data dashboard**. This would allow policymakers, industry leaders, and stakeholders to make informed decisions, address barriers, and seize opportunities to drive sustained growth and innovation.



| Brisbane Festival 2025 – Afterglow

What we know today: It's not all bad news for the nightlife economy, but it still has room to grow and improve

Queensland's nightlife economy continues to make a strong contribution to the state's cultural life and economic activity. Live music venues, entertainment precincts and hospitality businesses play a central role in this contribution.

At the same time, the sector had identified ongoing challenges, including regulatory complexity, safety concerns, and changing consumer expectations. Addressing these issues, while building on existing strengths, presents opportunities for further growth and improvement. This can support a more inclusive, dynamic, and sustainable environment for businesses, patrons, and communities, and better align Queensland with global trends in night-time economies.

Key insights

Business growth

Employment and establishments (businesses)².

Sources:

- Estimated resident population (ERP) from ABS National, state and territory population <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/jun-2024>
- Sales turnover and employment figures from Measuring the Australian Night-Time Economy 2025 https://www.lordmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/CCCLM_NTE_2025_Report.pdf

Note: "Sales Turnover Per Capita" and "Employment Per 1,000 Residents" are calculated fields

- Retail trading hours, and business licensing and requirements figures from the Business Council of Australia (BCA) https://www.bca.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/BCA_Regulation-Rumble_2025_WEB-1.pdf

Findings

In 2023–24, Queensland's nightlife economy performed strongly, recording sales turnover of **\$37.6 billion**, or **\$6,731 per capita**. This compares favourably with **New South Wales**, which reported **\$6,649 per capita**. The sector is also a proportionally larger employer in Queensland, engaging **42.70 people per 1,000 residents**, compared with **37.36 people per 1,000 residents in New South Wales**.

This strong base provides a platform for further growth when benchmarked against national per-capita leaders. Matching the sales level of **Western Australia** (\$7,453 per capita) would require an increase **10.7%**, while reaching the level of the **Australian Capital Territory** (\$9,916 per capita) would require growth of **47.3%**. Closing this gap would unlock billions in additional annual sales turnover for Queensland's economy.

Despite this potential, **Queensland ranks seventh nationally for retail trading hours**, suggesting limited flexibility for nightlife businesses. In contrast, the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory lead nationally, largely due to fewer restrictions on trading hours. **Queensland also ranks third for business licensing and regulatory requirements**, behind the Northern Territory and South Australia. Complex and inconsistent regulatory settings increase administrative burden, delays, and costs, particularly for small businesses, and can limit opportunities for growth.

Overall, this analysis indicates that **Queensland's nightlife economy has the capacity to grow** further if regulatory settings are better aligned with its scale, performance and potential

2. Edwards, A., & License, A. (2025). Measuring the Australian Night-Time Economy 2025: A project for The Council of Capital City Lord Mayors (P24-10-02). Ingenium Research. https://www.lordmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/CCCLM_NTE_2025_Report.pdf

Key insights

Social benefits

Nightlife plays a crucial role in fostering social connection, inclusivity, and mental wellbeing, particularly for younger generations.³

Findings

- **51% of Australians** are looking to see friends, and **50% to unwind or relax at night**.
- **34% of Queenslanders** said night-time activities allow them to **try new experiences**.
- **27%** said nightlife enables them to **express their authentic selves**.
- Nightlife is especially valued by younger generations, with **47% of Gen Z** and **40% of Gen Y** considering it very important to their lifestyle.

Economic contribution

The nightlife economy is a significant economic driver, supporting a wide range of industries and contributing to Queensland's prosperity.⁴



The **Australian music industry** contributed **\$2.82 billion** in direct gross value added (GVA) in 2023–24.

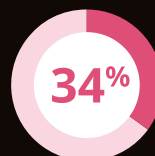
Live music performance generated **\$1.44 billion** of this total.

Adapting to societal change⁵

Younger generations (Gen Z and Gen Y) are driving demand for nightlife activities, with Gen Z leading the way:



Gen Z going out an average of **9.4 nights** per month



34% of **Gen Z** consider night-time activities **very important** to their lifestyle.

Safety and affordability remain the most significant barriers to participation:



47%



33%

47% women, compared to **33% of men** report safety concerns as a barrier.



66% of Australians say affordability limits their engagement in nightlife activities.

The Enchanted Gardens in Brisbane, Queensland

3. McCrindle. (2025). Visa Vibe Economy Report: Analysis of the Australian night-time economy. (September 2025). VISA.

4. Music Australia. (12 June 2025). The Bass line: Charting the economic contribution of Australia's music industry. Australian Government. <https://creative.gov.au/research/bass-line-charting-economic-contribution-australias-music-industry>

5. McCrindle. (2025). Visa Vibe Economy Report: Analysis of the Australian night-time economy. (September 2025). VISA.

G'day Steven Bradbury here, Australia's 1st Winter Olympic Gold Medallist.

Everyone knows the Olympics are coming to our town in 2032.

The Olympic Games are the biggest sporting event in the world and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a city.

It's our time to shine, to show off Brisbane all day and all night.

The nightlife and the after-hours economy play a significant role in an Olympic City.

Sydney 2000 was a raging success. The positivity was incredible; strangers smiled and said hello to each other in the street. Friendships were formed, and people partied all night long. The corporate dollar is coming, the celebrities are coming, the whole world is coming for 16 days. Danger associated with drug overdose and alcohol fuelled violence cannot compete with Olympic Fever – it is safer than normal. Throw the doors open 24/7, and everybody wins.

During the Torino Winter Olympics in 2006, I was in Italy for more than a month in a media role. Restaurants and bars were open all night, and they capitalised well on the nightlife economy. Most people stay up much later than normal during an Olympics, because the city is pumping.

To fully capitalise on 'Olympic Fever' after the games are gone Brisbane's after-hours economy will be remembered – if they had a good time they will come back. Let's show them a good time.

Never Give Up!

Steven Bradbury OAM
Winter Olympic Gold Medallist

| Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane, Queensland

Case study 2: A tale of two states

For music lovers, Crowbar is a beacon of live music, alternative culture and community. With venues in Sydney and Brisbane, the experiences are vastly different. In Sydney, progressive nightlife reforms have helped Crowbar become a thriving cultural hub. In Brisbane, restrictive regulations limit the venue's ability to deliver the same level of vibrancy. This case study explores how regulatory settings shape the energy, inclusivity and overall nightlife experience for patrons at these 2 iconic venues.



SYDNEY NEW SOUTH WALES



BRISBANE QUEENSLAND

Crowbar Sydney: where the night comes alive

At Crowbar Sydney, the vibe is electric, and the night feels endless. Regulatory settings in New South Wales (NSW) allow events to run late, giving patrons the freedom to enjoy live music and socialising without the pressure of early closing times. Simplified licensing arrangements – supported by an 80% reduction in licensing fees for live music venues – allow Crowbar to deliver standout performances and a diverse range of events, from headline acts to local showcases.

NSW's support for all-ages events fosters inclusivity, welcoming younger fans and building a community that spans generations. Policies that encourage outdoor activations and creative collaborations keep the venue fresh and dynamic. Crowbar Sydney demonstrates how well-designed reforms can empower venues to thrive and create vibrant, cultural spaces.

Crowbar Brisbane: a night cut short

In contrast, a night at Crowbar Fortitude Valley feels more constrained. Queensland's liquor licensing laws limit venues to just 6 extended trading nights per year, often forcing early closures, leaving patrons frustrated. Strict noise regulations reduce the intensity and energy of live performances. Meanwhile, complex licensing requirements discourage all-ages events, excluding younger audiences and weakening the sense of community. Innovation is often slowed by regulatory complexity, leaving the nightlife experience feeling static and constrained.

A call for change

Crowbar Sydney illustrates the potential of a supportive regulatory environment – vibrant, inclusive, and creatively rich. Crowbar Fortitude Valley highlights how restrictive settings can limit the energy and cultural value of a venue.

For Queensland to unlock its nightlife potential, reforms that extend trading hours, simplify licensing, and modernise sound regulations will be essential. Patrons deserve a nightlife experience that feels alive and welcoming, not one cut short by red tape.



Crowbar Sydney, New South Wales

*Imagine a Queensland where the night hums with possibility, where streets, riverfronts and precincts pulse with creativity, connection and culture. As we look to 2032 and beyond, we have the chance to redefine what our cities feel like after dark. More welcoming, more vibrant, more alive. Our entertainment precincts can become the canvas for this transformation, places where people gather to celebrate who we are and where we're going. The question isn't whether Queensland can lead the world in shaping the next great night-time economy, **it's how bold we're willing to be in creating it.***

Jess Caire

Executive Director Queensland
Property Council of Australia

Hastings Street, Noosa, Queensland

Report on a page

The right vibe for the nightlife



Vibrancy: Bring back the night



1. Fit-for-purpose sound



2. Enabling regulation



3. Diverse activations



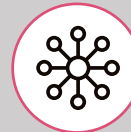
Safety: A nightlife for everyone



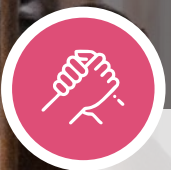
4. A place to belong



5. Accessible and safe



6. Connected



Business-friendly: 'Lively hoods' that thrive



7. Risk-based regulation



8. Sector support



9. Grants and concessions

The Commissioner's recommended actions in full

The following pages set out the Commissioner's recommended actions for the Queensland Government's consideration and explain their relevance to the growth and sustainability of Queensland's nightlife economy.

These recommendations are independent of government policy and reflect uncosted and unfunded initiatives identified to support the vibrancy, safety and business-friendliness of the sector. No indicative costs have been included, as funding and implementation decisions are a matter for Government.

Consistent with the Commissioner's Statement of Expectations, the recommended actions are grouped into short-, medium-, and long-term priorities, as under the relevant principles. The indicative timeframes for these priorities are:

- Short-term: by the end of 2026.
- Medium-term: by the end of 2028.
- Long-term: by the end of 2030.

These timeframes allow for a review in 2030, including consideration of any new or revised actions required ahead of 2032.



Mo's Desert Clubhouse, Burleigh Heads, Queensland





Vibrancy



1. Fit-for-purpose sound

Outdated and inconsistent sound regulations are limiting Queensland's nightlife economy and affecting the state's liveability and lifestyle. To support growing demand for a dynamic, vibrant nightlife, Queensland requires a fair, modern, and balanced approach to sound regulation, so we don't get left behind.

Short-term actions

1. Modernise the entertainment noise complaints framework to foster vibrancy.
 - 1.1 Require 5 separate household complaints before compliance action.
 - 1.2 Require the complainant to initially engage with the venue.
 - 1.3 Provide options for independent mediation when a complaint is made.

Why? Current frameworks unfairly penalise venues by applying residential-level amenity standards to entertainment precincts. This makes it difficult to create vibrant, thriving nightlife spaces that meet the expectations of businesses, patrons and visitors. Modernising the complaints process will support fairness, reduce unintended impacts and help balance liveability with vibrancy.

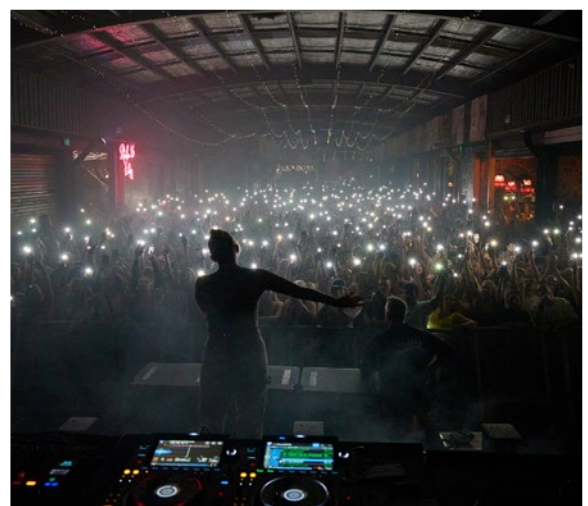
2. Engage acoustic experts to review entertainment sound limits, increasing the 75dB default based on land use zones, and standardise sound measurement for consistency across different precincts and licenses.
 - 2.1 Define the source for sound measurement for compliance purposes.
 - 2.2 Revisit requirements for background sound measurement for acoustic reports (e.g. time of day and day of week).
 - 2.3 Explore entertainment sound limits based on land-use zones.

Why? Standardised sound measurement and refined compliance requirements create consistency, fairness, and transparency across nightlife precincts and builds sector confidence. Updating limits based on land use zones enables businesses (outside Special Entertainment Precincts) to operate under sound standards that reflect their surrounding context, rather than being held to residential noise rules.

Long-term action

3. Produce a streamlined regulatory framework by consolidating the relevant sound requirements in the *Liquor Act 1992* and *Environmental Protection Act 1994*.

Why? Aligning entertainment sound requirements under the Liquor Act 1992 and Environmental Protection Act 1994 will simplify compliance and reduce compliance burden, while improving clarity for venues and regulators.



Miami Marketta, Gold Coast, Queensland



2. Enabling regulation

Outdated and overly complex regulations are limiting Queensland's nightlife economy and affecting the state's ability to foster a dynamic and inclusive entertainment scene. Current challenges include excessive regulation, inconsistent liquor licensing rules, restrictive trading hours, and insufficient protections for existing venues. These issues reduce business confidence, hinder innovation and investment, and constrain the development of lively, safe, and thriving nightlife precincts. Targeted reforms will reduce regulatory burden, support businesses and foster innovation, while driving economic growth and community engagement.

Short-term actions

4. Strengthen 'first-in' protections for venues within the liquor regulation framework to better support existing licensed venues and improve transparency when new developments occur, or when there is a change in ownership or tenancy.

***Why?** Entertainment venues and residential buildings both need certainty about their operating conditions. Clear and consistent 'first-in' protections help build confidence across the sector and support fair outcomes for all parties. While some protections already exist in legislation, strengthening these provisions would improve consistency and fairness. Providing clear notification to new residential and commercial owners and tenants would also support transparency and informed decision-making.*

5. Modernise the extended trading hours permit application process, including the number of late-night trading permits, removing 'special occasion' requirements, and enabling extended trading hours on consecutive days.

***Why?** Streamlining approvals reduces barriers associated with lengthy and complex requirements, increases certainty, builds business confidence, and supports vibrant 'festivalisation'.*

6. Support councils with guidance to explore opportunities to implement Special Entertainment Precincts (SEPs) to boost business confidence and enhance vibrancy.

***Why?** SEPs help protect entertainment venues as essential components of local economies, fostering vibrant cultural hubs, boosting local business activity, and managing community impacts effectively. Further for councils, guided consideration of SEPs will help manage entertainment sound expectations and attract investment.*

7. Select a pilot project from Tourism Events Queensland (TEQ) major events calendar to test and learn from vibrancy recommendations.

***Why?** A pilot project provides an opportunity to trial and refine vibrancy recommendations in a real-world setting. It can help identify what works, where adjustments are needed, and how implementation can be improved, while also allowing for feedback from industry, communities and other stakeholders.*

Medium-term actions

8. Develop a framework for 'declared special event days'.
 - 8.1 Allow local councils to approve additional extended trading hour days for special events (e.g. Mount Isa Rodeo or Beef Week in Rockhampton).
 - 8.2 Introduce a calendar of state and local government declared special events.



Ninajirachi, North Australian Festival of Arts, Townsville, Queensland

Why? *Declaring special event days enables more creative and organised nightlife activations. This removes the need for individual applications for extended trading hours or amended noise permits, reducing compliance burden and allowing businesses to focus on delivering festival-style experiences.*

9. Modernise bar liquor licence categories to review capacity requirements.

Why? *Updating bar liquor licence categories to allow patron numbers based on standing capacity can enhance flexibility, increase attendance, and support diverse activations that contribute to business viability.*

10. Strengthen ID scanning in line with new technological advances and explore a risk-based approach to streamline ID scanning rules for small/low-risk venues.

Why? *A risk-based approach to ID scanning improves efficiency and flexibility, reduces regulatory burden, and enhances patron experience while maintaining safety.*

11. Improve coordination between local councils and the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation to enable parallel application approvals.

Why? *Disconnected processing creates stress and uncertainty for businesses. Parallel processing will support compliance and reduce administrative burden.*

12. Review the *Liquor Act 1992* to identify unnecessary instances of over-regulation affecting vibrancy.

Why? *Outdated or unintended regulatory requirements can contribute to unsafe behaviours, such as rapid consumption practices. As short-term vibrancy measures are implemented, other parts of the legislative framework that may need amendment are likely to become clearer.*

Long-term actions

13. Consider extended trade for retail and supermarkets in appropriate 'Nightlife Zones'.

Why? *Enabling 24-hour retail in Safe Night Precincts (SNP) and Special Entertainment Precincts (SEP) supports the approximately 30 per cent of the workforce active between 6 pm and 6 am, drives economic activity, and enhances precinct vibrancy. It also expands access to healthier dining options for workers in these zones.*

14. Investigate a risk-based approach for venues in Safe Night Precincts (SNP), enabling staggered patron exits, to enhance safety.

Why? *Mass egress at fixed closing times can create crowd management and transport access issues. Allowing venues flexibility to stagger closures can improve safety and precinct flow.*



3. Diverse activations

Queensland's nightlife is constrained by complex regulations, costs for user-pays policing, and the underutilisation of assets such as outdoor dining and Brisbane's riverfront. With Queensland's enviable weather and lifestyle, the state is uniquely positioned to lead the way in creating world-class nightlife experiences. Developing a comprehensive 'Playbook' to support local governments with activation, and offering targeted incentives for late-night dining and touring, can unlock the potential for vibrant, safe, and inclusive nightlife economies across the state. Queensland has a natural advantage, and this Report seeks to capitalise on it.

Short-term actions

15. Review application requirements for all-ages events.

***Why?** Reducing regulatory burden and boosting business confidence to safely host all-ages events – while protecting liquor licences – supports more inclusive activities. This helps engage young people to participate in the nightlife, strengthens community connection, and contributes to local economic growth.*

16. Expand Queensland on Tour to bring music venues, national tour promoters and agents together to showcase the potential of touring one of Australia's largest and most dynamic states.

***Why?** Queensland on Tour highlights the state's dynamic venues and the unique opportunity to build a strong touring circuit across the state.*

Medium-term actions

17. Create a 'Playbook' to help foster accessible activations and boost their local nightlife economy, supported by shared local and state grants for activation.

***Why?** The Playbook will support councils to plan, activate and strengthen their local nightlife economies. It will provide practical guidance, case studies, and resources that highlight ways to encourage safe, vibrant, and sustainable evening activities that benefit both communities and businesses.*



Mount Isa Mines Rotary Rodeo, Queensland

18. Enhance Brisbane's river city potential by embedding vibrancy, safety and business-friendly principles within river activations.

***Why?** Enhancing the Brisbane River's appeal as a dynamic and secure destination, through initiatives that activate the river and its banks, will foster social connection and attract more visitors. Supporting a range of accessible and well-connected activities along the river and riverbanks will help achieve this.*

19. Consider incentives for late-night dining to stimulate spending at eligible venues by encouraging locals and visitors to dine later than usual.

***Why?** To assist the community to adjust to late-night dining, short-term incentives are required to encourage late-night dining habits and stimulate the nightlife economy.*

20. Investigate opportunities to reduce user-pays policing costs for diverse nightlife activations and festivals.

***Why?** Reducing the cost of user-pays policing encourages more events and music festivals, boosting economic activity, supporting local businesses, and enhancing nightlife vibrancy.*

21. Review the requirement to seek local government approval for outdoor dining and introduce self-assessment capability.

***Why?** Reducing restrictions and enabling self-assessment will make it easier for businesses to operate outdoors and reduce the compliance burden and approval uncertainty.*

Long-term action

22. Explore the appropriateness of 'Michael's Rule' for the Queensland context for major touring artists to open with local acts, in line with the Federal Government's inquiry into live music recommendations.

***Why?** This will provide exposure for local acts and ensure emerging acts have opportunities to grow.*

Case study 3: Outdoor activation in the nightlife

Queensland is home to vast open spaces and exceptional beauty, supported by some of the best weather year-round. From activations along the Brisbane River to coastal events up and down the state, to rainforest settings and the outback, Queensland is uniquely positioned to offer world-class outdoor nightlife experiences.

However, organising an outdoor event in Queensland currently requires navigating a complex matrix of regulatory approvals. These may include a local council event permit, State Government temporary entertainment event approval, traffic management approvals and public liability insurance. Coordination between the approving agencies is often time-consuming and costly.

In addition to the initial approvals, organisers must also prepare noise management plans, safety management plans (including crowd controller requirements) and ensure all temporary structures meet a complex set of regulatory standards.

These cumulative requirements create compliance anxiety, unexpected cost overruns and uncertainty for organisers, preventing effective event promotion.

To fully unlock Queensland's outdoor nightlife potential, activators need support through an end-to-end concierge service and a regulatory framework that is streamlined and consolidated. This will allow organisers to deliver diverse events that showcase Queensland's great outdoors and enhance the vibrancy of our nightlife economy.



Woodford Folk Festival, Woodford, Queensland



Safety



4. A place to belong

Safety underpins every aspect of a successful nightlife. Queensland's nightlife must prioritise inclusivity and create a welcoming environment for community, families, women, diverse people, people with disability and the original storytellers – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Challenges such as poor behaviour, lack of diversity, and limited empowerment for 'Guardians of the Nightlife' can undermine this vision. Addressing these issues requires targeted solutions, including campaigns to promote inclusivity, and resources that empower staff to foster safe spaces and amplify the voices of women, diverse communities and marginalised people in shaping vibrant, inclusive nightlife experiences for all.

Short-term actions

23. Develop a campaign and resources promoting the message of 'A nightlife for everyone, everywhere'.

***Why?** The nightlife should be accessible to all Queenslanders and visitors. This campaign will encourage participation in the nightlife while increasing awareness of acceptable behaviour for patrons and staff. Promoting self-regulation, shared accountability, responsible decision-making and understanding the consequences of poor behaviour helps foster a culture of respect and inclusivity.*

24. Facilitate flexible parking for community wellness service delivery partners operating in Safe Night Precincts (SNPs) between 9 pm and 4 am.



Valley Fiesta, Fortitude Valley, Queensland
Melt Festival, Brisbane Powerhouse, Queensland

***Why?** Providing flexible parking permits can reduce financial pressure on community wellbeing operators and allow them to focus on delivering essential services that support safety and wellbeing in nightlife precincts.*

Medium-term actions

25. Champion diverse viewpoints for Queensland Government-sponsored nightlife events and festivals.

***Why?** Championing diverse viewpoints in Queensland Government-sponsored nightlife events and festivals promotes inclusivity, attracts broader audiences, and fosters a vibrant, culturally rich nightlife that reflects and celebrates community diversity.*

26. Develop optional training and support resources to empower venue staff as 'Guardians of the Nightlife' to recognise poor behaviour and escalate concerns appropriately. The approach could draw on international best-practice models, such as Good Night Out Vancouver resources in training in prevention and safety.

***Why?** Providing staff with training and guidance helps identify poor behaviour. It ensures they can respond appropriately, whether by escalating issues to management or crowd control, or by contacting emergency services where required. This initiative does not place an expectation on staff to directly intervene in unsafe situations.*

6. Good Night Out. Vancouver. (2025).
<https://www.goodnightoutvancouver.com/>



5. Accessible and safe

Challenges such as drink spiking, limited inclusivity, and traffic conditions in 'Nightlife Zones' can create barriers to safety and accessibility. Solutions such as drink spiking test kits, updated Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) training to support inclusivity, and reduced speed limits can help create a nightlife that is welcoming, safe, and accessible for all. The nightlife offering must meet the needs of people with disability. With the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games approaching, Queensland has an opportunity to be world-leading and genuinely inclusive by creating welcoming and accessible spaces for everyone.

Short-term actions

27. Explore equipping venues with resources to assist people with medical emergencies.

***Why?** Equipping venues with resources to respond to overdose emergencies enables timely intervention, enhances patron safety, and demonstrates a commitment to harm minimisation, fostering a safer and more responsible nightlife environment.*

28. Incentivise venues to provide drink spiking test kits to increase patron safety.

***Why?** Incentivising venues to provide drink spiking test kits enhances patron safety and builds trust in nightlife spaces. It also enables early identification of spiking incidents, allowing medical professionals to provide appropriate treatment.*



Howard Smith Wharves, Brisbane, Queensland

Medium-term actions

29. Explore reducing speed limits for 'Nightlife Zones' at designated high activity times.

***Why?** Lower late-night speed limits in 'Nightlife Zones' improve pedestrian safety, minimise risk of harm in high-traffic areas, and foster a safer environment for all patrons.*

30. Modernise the Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) training to set new national standards incorporating additions made at state levels for a uniform certificate, removing current barriers for interstate workers.

***Why?** In the lead-up to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, there is an opportunity to uplift RSA training to modernise standards in a nationally consistent way. This will ensure consistency across states and enhance workforce mobility.*

31. Improve the RSA training focused on accessibility and inclusion, to enhance service for patrons with disability.

***Why?** Expanding RSA training to raise awareness of how to support patrons with disability, including hidden disabilities, ensures a more inclusive and accessible nightlife experience.*



Ipswich, Queensland



6. Connected

Queensland's nightlife is impacted by poor connectivity, limited public transport awareness, and insufficient placemaking. Solutions such as grants to enhance vibrant streetscapes, and 'Purple Flag' accreditation can improve the night-time journey. Embedding nightlife principles into precinct planning, particularly for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, is essential, as retrofitting these features later is often cost-prohibitive and impractical. Importantly, the journey to and from an event is just as critical as the event itself, with the final moments of a night out often shaping the overall experience of a good night out.

Short-term actions

- 32.** Introduce free mobile phone charging stations in Safe Night Precincts (SNPs).

***Why?** Introducing free mobile phone charging stations in SNPs enhances patron safety, supports connectivity, and improves the overall nightlife experience by ensuring access to communication and transport services. This is increasingly important as patrons rely more heavily on mobile phones for identification, payments and travel.*

- 33.** Increase awareness of existing public transport services and explore opportunities to enhance accessible and expanded transport options across South East and regional Queensland, with a particular focus on improving services in regional areas.

- 33.1** Conduct a pilot program to extend train services from Fortitude Valley on weekends, targeting the 1 am to 4 am period to address the current gap in services during peak egress from the Valley SNP.

***Why?** Limited and inaccessible public transport options are restricting night-time activation and mobility. Expanding and improving transport services is essential to ensure all Queenslanders and visitors can safely and conveniently travel, fostering greater participation in the nightlife economy.*

- 34.** Deliver grants for nightlife economy-specific amenities and placemaking enhancements, and explore shared funding opportunities between state and local government.

***Why?** Nightlife-specific grants support amenities and placemaking initiatives that enhance infrastructure, create vibrant and inclusive spaces, attract patrons, strengthen social connections, and support local businesses.*

Medium-term actions

- 35.** Advocate for fairer taxi and rideshare practices to ensure safe, reasonable, and reliable passage home.

***Why?** Unsafe practices can prevent patrons from getting home safely. Improved standards are needed to ensure safe passage, particularly for women.*

- 36.** Support taxi service providers to increase wheelchair accessible taxis.

***Why?** A shortage of wheelchair accessible taxis prevents people with disability and those using mobility aids from enjoying the nightlife, reducing accessibility and inclusivity.*

- 37.** Advocate to improve rideshare safety by reducing unreasonable cancellations and expanding well-designed designated pick-up zones for safe passage home.

***Why?** Unsafe rideshare practices, such as booking cancellations, often after a long wait time, leave patrons stranded late at night. Advocating for stronger, safer measures will support safer, more reliable access home, particularly for women.*

- 38.** Investigate support to fund streetscapes and street art for welcoming and safe placemaking and explore shared funding opportunities between state and local government.



KC's Bar and Grill, Airlie Beach, Queensland

Why? *Placemaking through improved streetscapes and street art supports vibrancy, proven safety enhancement through increased passive surveillance, and showcases Queensland's character.*

39. Adopt the internationally recognised 'Purple Flag' accreditation program for 'Nightlife Zones' based on the 5 core principles of wellbeing, movement, appeal, place and strategic alignment.

- 39.1 Pilot gaining 'Purple Flag' accreditation for an identified precinct.

Why? *Purple Flag accreditation reflects international best practice. Jurisdictions with accredited precincts have achieved positive outcomes for safety, vibrancy and nightlife management.*

40. Explore best practice initiatives from other jurisdictions to promote women's safety in nightlife settings.

Why? *Research and anecdotal evidence point to a range of international best practice initiatives that aim to improve safety for women and gender-diverse*



Caxton Street, Brisbane, Queensland

people enjoying a night out, such as London's Women's Night Safety Charter. Exploring these approaches can help identify elements that may be adapted or applied in the Queensland context.

Long-term action

41. Ensure strong coordination and master planning for well-connected precincts, incorporating vibrancy and safety principles ahead of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Why? *Safe and welcoming transitional spaces are crucial for seamless nightlife experiences, and including principles of accessibility, safety and connectedness in early master planning is essential to avoid costly retrofitting.*



Noosa Christmas tree, Hastings Street, Noosa, Queensland

7. Mayor of London. Women's Night Safety Charter. London Assembly. <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/arts-and-culture/24-hour-london/womens-night-safety-charter#list-of-signatories-50878-title>



Stilts Restaurant and Kangaroo Point Green Bridge, Brisbane, Queensland

Case study 4: Purple Flag

Purple Flag is an international accreditation program that recognises precincts that demonstrate high standards of excellence in managing their night-time economy.

There are 5 core principles required to be delivered to achieve Purple Flag accreditation:

1. Be welcoming, clean and safe
2. A secure pattern of movement
3. A vibrant choice and mix of entertainment activity
4. A stimulating destination and a vibrant place
5. A clear aim and common purpose fostering strategic alignment.

Purple Flag is the first of its kind in Australia, with Sydney joining over 100 global destinations that have the Purple Flag accreditation.

Earning the Purple Flag signals to locals and visitors alike that a precinct is a safe, welcoming, and vibrant place to enjoy after dark.

Purple Flag is administered by the NSW Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner, in partnership with the UK Association of Town and City Management (ATCM). The program also works closely with other state government agencies, local government, police, healthcare professionals, business, industry groups and consumers.

Sydney currently has four accredited Purple Flag areas which are:

- YCK (York, Clarence, and Kent Streets) in the CBD
- Parramatta CBD
- Haldon Street, Lakemba
- Illawarra Road and Marrickville Road, Marrickville.

When you see the Purple Flag sign, you'll know the area meets standards of excellence in vibrancy, diversity and safety at night. This includes good access to public transport, street lighting and great food and beverages.





Business-friendly



7. Risk-based regulation

Queensland's liquor licensing framework is outdated, creating unnecessary barriers that hinder venues and the growth of the nightlife economy. High fees and burdensome operating conditions, such as meal requirements for alcohol sales on Good Friday and Christmas Day, impact tourism and restrict innovation and business viability. A strengthened risk-based approach that considers the unique characteristics of businesses, such as the lower risk profile of small bars compared to larger nightclubs, would incentivise good behaviour, encourage innovation, promote accessible activations and support a thriving, modern nightlife economy. Reforming how venues are regulated based on their risk profile is essential to ensuring fairer, more effective, and future-focused licensing.

Short-term actions

42. Discount liquor licence fees for grassroots live music venues.

Why? Live music venues are a critical part of Queensland's social and artistic landscape. The high number of venue closures demonstrates the pressures they face. A liquor licensing concession could help offset these costs.

43. Enable external advertising of on-premises liquor prices and promotions.

Why? Restrictions in regulations for external advertising is currently not permitted for licensed venues, limiting business opportunities and patron enjoyment.

44. Continue enhancing liquor licensing regulations to better support and strengthen the sector.

44.1 Streamline additional premises application processes.

44.2 Streamline the application process for alterations and renovations.

44.3 Provide the ability to apply for short-term licences, with reduced documentation requirements for low-risk venues or events.

Why? Streamlining liquor licensing processes simplifies compliance, reduces administrative delays, and lowers costs. This allows businesses to focus on growth and innovation while supporting a vibrant and sustainable nightlife sector.

45. Modernise restrictions under the *Liquor Act 1992*, regarding the sale and supply of alcohol on Good Friday and Christmas Day.

Why? Current restrictions significantly disadvantage businesses and can be disruptive to Brand Queensland, particularly during periods of high tourist visitation.

46. Develop a publicly available Queensland nightlife economy data dashboard with insights on consumer and sector trends to inform policy development and business activations.

Why? Publicly available data supports evidence-based policymaking in the future and enables businesses to be responsive to consumer and behavioural trends.



Ipswich, Queensland



Big Rock Brewery, Rockhampton, Queensland

Medium-term actions

- 47.** Advocate in partnership with other jurisdictions to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for a consistent definition of the nightlife economy for consistent data gathering.

***Why?** A lack of a consistent definition makes data collection and comparison difficult. Advocacy to the ABS can address this challenge.*

- 48.** Work with other jurisdictions within Australia to move to a national nightlife economy data dashboard.

***Why?** In the lead-up to global events, Australia must enhance its nightlife consistently across jurisdictions. Shared definitions and national platforms will support this effort.*

- 49.** Enhance the risk-based approach to liquor licensing framework so it is modern and fit-for-purpose.
- 49.1** Update the categorisation of licensed premises by introducing a medium category (e.g. low, medium and high).
 - 49.2** Explore a risk-based fee structure where application and annual fees are based on the size and risk profile of the venue.
 - 49.3** Fast-track approvals for applicants with a good compliance history.

- 49.4** Fast-track approvals for repeat events, such as annual activations.

- 49.5** Fast-track approvals for low-risk venues, such as restaurants.

- 49.6** Simplify liquor licence transfers and provide the ability for Interim Authority to operate for existing licensees.

***Why?** A strengthened risk-based approach aligns licensing requirements with risk levels, reduces compliance burdens, enhances business productivity, and recognises good behaviour amongst licensees.*



Mad Cow Tavern, Townsville, Queensland



8. Sector support

Queensland's nightlife sector faces significant regulatory burden, and limited support holds back its potential. A centralised, transparent licensing system; a dedicated industry concierge; recognition for iconic venues; opening underutilised public spaces; and targeted training will simplify processes and reduce barriers. Activating public spaces, addressing derelict buildings and fostering collaboration through the Commissioner's Nightlife Economy Advisory Panel will energise and empower the sector to thrive.

Short-term actions

- 50.** Deliver a sector concierge with end-to-end support.

- 50.1** Offering tailored advice based on the licensee's business model or event type.
- 50.2** Assist with temporary licences, permits, and approvals for one-off or recurring events.
- 50.3** Provide clear step-by-step guidance for licensees and new applicants.
- 50.4** Provide pre-lodgement help to guide applicants in understanding the requirements and preparing their applications.

Why? *A concierge service will provide nightlife businesses with tailored support to ensure compliance, address challenges, and unlock growth opportunities, strengthening the nightlife economy.*

- 51.** Encourage councils to invest in infrastructure and utilities to foster and enhance vibrant activations.

Why? *Investment in infrastructure and utilities supports vibrant and more frequent activations, attracts visitors, and strengthens economic and cultural growth.*

- 52.** Simplify the parklet application process to support business activation.

Why? *Queensland has a significant opportunity to activate outdoor spaces, such as parklets or parking spots, into vibrant zones with seating and greenery, helping businesses attract customers and revitalise local communities.*

- 53.** The Commissioner's Nightlife Economy Advisory Panel (the Advisory Panel) will continue to foster industry collaboration, innovation and promote best practice.

Why? *Chaired by the Commissioner and made up of sector experts, the Advisory Panel is well placed to share best practice and support collective learning and innovation across the nightlife industry.*

- 54.** State and local government to unlock the potential of underutilised public assets to support vibrant and dynamic temporary activations.

Why? *Opening underutilised public assets for temporary activations fosters vibrant community engagement, supports local businesses, enables the entertainment sector to deliver diverse activations, and maximises the value of public spaces.*

- 55.** Offer free or low-cost training to empower licensees with the knowledge to meet their obligations and confidently manage compliance, including insurance requirements.

Why? *Lack of awareness can result in costly compliance issues. Training will help licensees meet obligations confidently and avoid preventable mistakes.*

- 56.** Create a centralised online system for liquor licence applications to improve transparency, efficiency and the ability for licensees to track application progress.

Why? *Current processing timeframes and limited visibility over application progress create uncertainty. A centralised system will improve transparency and help businesses plan efficiently.*



Brisbane International Film Festival Performance

Medium-term actions

57. Provide government recognition of culturally and/or architecturally significant venues through targeted funding or concessions.

Why? Supporting culturally and architecturally significant venues preserves Queensland's heritage, strengthens the unique character of its nightlife, and attracts diverse audiences and tourism.

58. Investigate options for the use or upgrade of derelict buildings in 'Nightlife Zones'.

Why? Derelict buildings reduce vibrancy and create safety risks. They may attract anti-social gatherings, limit passive surveillance and impact business confidence to invest in the area. Addressing these spaces will improve precinct appeal and strengthen community safety.

59. Investigate insurance challenges for nightlife economy sector businesses, partnering with other jurisdictions to seek solutions.

Why? High insurance costs and limited options are significant issues for nightlife operators. Cross-jurisdictional collaboration could help identify practical solutions.



Tanks Arts Centre, Cairns, Queensland



Noosa Boathouse, Queensland



QPAC, Brisbane, Queensland



The Royal Theatre, Winton, Queensland



9. Grants and concessions

Queensland's nightlife economy is held back by high operating costs, rigid grant requirements, and limited affordability for young people. Businesses face financial hurdles for upgrades such as soundproofing, lighting, and accessibility improvements, while strict co-contribution rules can block funding opportunities, particularly for small and family businesses. Young people also face affordability barriers that limit their availability to engage with live music and cultural activities. Targeted grants, incentives to boost patron attendance at live music and theatre, and more flexible funding arrangements will empower businesses, activate public spaces, and create a vibrant, inclusive nightlife economy for everyone, everywhere.

Short-term action

- 60.** Explore incentives encouraging young people aged 16–25 to attend live music in grassroots music venues and cultural entertainment in small theatres.

***Why?** Making live music and cultural performances more accessible for young people increases engagement with local culture, nurtures emerging talent, and supports grassroots venues within Queensland's nightlife economy. This initiative will help rebuild the connections between young people and grassroots live music that were disrupted by Covid-19 and further affected by cost-of-living pressures.*



Brisbane, Queensland
Salt House, Cairns, Queensland

Medium-term actions

- 61.** Review requirements for co-contribution for grants to ensure equity for small and family businesses.

***Why?** Reviewing co-contribution requirements will support equitable access, ensuring small businesses can apply for funding based on eligibility rather than financial capacity alone.*

- 62.** Provide grants for sector businesses for sound attenuation, lighting, accessibility and beautification.

***Why?** Grants for sound attenuation, lighting, and beautification reduce operational costs, improve customer experiences, and foster more vibrant, sustainable nightlife venues.*



Banshees Bar and Art Space, Ipswich, Queensland

Case study 5: Dining in regional Queensland

Restaurants across Queensland are wide-ranging, diverse and internationally celebrated. From Cairns to Coolangatta and into Central Queensland, the state boasts a thriving dining scene.

However, more can be done to support restaurateurs and encourage Queenslanders and visitors to enjoy local talent and the state's exceptional produce.

One of the biggest challenges affecting regional restaurants is staffing and labour costs. Dining businesses often struggle to compete with higher-paying FIFO roles, at a time when patronage is declining. Combined with penalty rates, many regional owners choose to close their doors to avoid operating at a loss.

These challenges are compounded by burdensome compliance requirements within the liquor regulation framework, particularly when restaurants want to stay open in connection with local events. During major events, such as the Mount Isa Rodeo or the Rockhampton Beef Week, hotel beds may be full while restaurant doors remain closed, limiting economic opportunities.

There is strong potential for businesses to collaborate on demand generation, including partnerships with accommodation providers or hosting complementary entertainment offerings.

Government support is needed to bring regional dining to life. Some costs could be offset through targeted relief such as licensing concessions or grants for eligible businesses.



Salt House, Cairns, Queensland

Next steps for the Report

Moonside: The Queensland Night-Life Economy Commissioner's Report 2026 sets out the Commissioner's recommended actions for the Queensland Government's consideration. Developed in line with the Statement of Expectations, this report provides a framework to help guide the future of Queensland's nightlife economy. It aims to support Queensland in making the most of its nightlife economy for residents and visitors.



Miami Marketta, Gold Coast, Queensland

Appendix

Acknowledgements

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Nightlife Economy Advisory Panel:

- Andrew Baturo, Head of Hospitality, Dap & Co
- Lindsay Carroll, Interim CEO, National Retail Association
- Jackie Cross, Director, Cross Promotions and Experience Gold Coast
- Charlie Cush, CEO, Brisbane Festival
- Blair Davies, CEO, Taxi Council of Queensland and Australian Taxi Industry Association
- Dr Dominique De Andrade, Researcher, Griffith Criminology Institute, Griffith University
- Aunty Bridget Garay, Arts and Cultural Consultant, Journey Ahead
- Bernie Hogan, CEO, QLD Hotels Association
- Peter McAloney, CEO, Chaplain Watch
- Max McBride, President, Taxi Council Queensland
- Daniel Nipperess, General Manager, Clubs Queensland
- Naomi Price, Co-Founder, The Little Red Company
- Jacinta Reddan, CEO, Advance Cairns
- Tim Richardson, CEO, The Ville, Townsville
- Kris Stewart, CEO, QMusic
- Sharynne Wilson, Co-Owner, Moffat Beach Brewing.

Special guests who presented to the Advisory Panel:

- Luke Fraser – Chief Executive Officer, Artemus Group
- Dominique Lamb – former Queensland Small Business Commissioner
- Rebecca (Bec Mac) McIntosh – Churchill Fellow, and Director of POPSART, CHRYSALIS PROJECTS, Creative Brisbane Collab
- Joelle Wong – Creative Producer, Vast Yonder.

NSW 24-Hour Economy Commissioner Office:

- The Hon. John Graham MLC – Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy
- Michael Rodrigues – 24-Hour Economy Commissioner.

Queensland Government agencies:

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Testimonial contributors:

The following individuals contributed testimonials included in the Report:

- Trent Dalton – Author
- Sofie Formica – Media Commentator
- Troy Cassar-Daley – Singer, Songwriter
- Steven Bradbury – OAM, Winter Olympic Gold Medallist
- Jess Caire – Executive Director Queensland Property Council of Australia.

Contributors to initiatives referenced in the report:

- Jane Slingo – Director, VibeLab Asia Pacific
- Anthony Ryan – Chief Executive Officer, Brisbane Economic Development Agency
- McCrindle Research – Visa Vibe
- Michael Gibb – Chief Executive Officer, Night Time Industries Association
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- Service and Creative Skills Australia.

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Stakeholders

Primary nightlife businesses include entertainment, dining, bars, pubs and clubs.

Entertainment	• 900 Creative and Performing Arts Activities • 9113 Sports and Physical Recreation Venues, Grounds and Facilities Operation
Dining	• 451 Cafes, Restaurants and Takeaway Food Services
Bars, Pubs and Clubs	• 4520 Pubs, Taverns and Bars • 453 Clubs (Hospitality)

Secondary nightlife businesses include health, consumer food and beverage, shopping, and accommodation and pubs.

Health	• 4271 Pharmaceutical, Cosmetic and Toiletry Goods Retailing • 9111: Health and Fitness Centres and Gymnasia Operation
Consumer Food and Beverage	• 4110 Supermarket and Grocery Store • 4123 Liquor Retailing
Shopping and Accommodation	• 4400: Accommodation • 5513: Motion Picture Exhibition • 422 Electrical and Electronic Goods Retailing • 424 Recreational Goods Retailing • 425 Clothing, Footwear and Personal Accessory Retailing • 426 Department Stores • 4279 Other Store-Based Retailing n.e.c.
Transport	• 462: Road Passenger Transport • 472: Rail Passenger Transport • 482 Water Passenger Transport

The Report also considers the key stakeholders who interact with Queensland's nightlife economy.

- Women
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Multicultural communities
- LGBTQIA+ people
- People with disability or hidden disability
- Young people
- Night people – People enjoying the night
- Workforce of the nightlife – Approximately 30 per cent of the working population who are employed in jobs requiring work between the hours of 6 pm and 6 am
- Activators of the nightlife – Stakeholders in the nightlife not covered by Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZIC) dining, entertainment or retail categorisations (e.g. community groups)

Glossary

Nightlife Zones – Includes Safe Night Precincts (SNPs), Special Entertainment Precincts (SEPs), and may also include undeclared entertainment precincts or places of work associated with the workforce of the nightlife.

Special Entertainment Precincts (SEPs) – Under section 264 of the *Local Government Act 2009* (Qld), a Special Entertainment Precinct is an area in which:

- (a) amplified music played at premises in the area is regulated by local law rather than by the *Liquor Act 1992*; and
- (b) noise attenuation requirements under the *Planning Act* apply to certain types of development in the area.

Safe Night Precincts (SNP) – Under the *Liquor Act 1992* (Qld), a Safe Night Precinct (SNP) is a designated area prescribed by regulation where measures are implemented to manage alcohol-related violence and promote community safety. These precincts are typically located in established nightlife areas and aim to support a safe environment for patrons, businesses, and the broader community.

Nightlife economy – Refers to economic activities occurring at establishments that primarily provide services between 6pm to 6am to people engaging in entertainment or leisure activities, as defined under the *Night-Life Economy Commissioner Act 2024*.

Nightlife businesses – Means a business that relies on the nightlife economy in Queensland for its financial viability, as defined under the *Night-Life Economy Commissioner Act 2024*. Examples include entertainment venues, festival, hospitality venues, live music venues, theatres, and venues promoting the arts.

Commissioner – Means the Night-Life Economy Commissioner appointed under the *Night-Life Economy Commissioner Act 2024*.

Michael's rule – An industry-led initiative named after the late artist manager Michael McMartin, aimed at increasing Australian artist representation on international tours that visit Australia.

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NIGHT-LIFE
Economy Commissioner