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Democratic and FREE

Giant Water Gum Edition

March 2019

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New coalition policy set to kill festivals

Mullum Music Festival could be in the government’s firing line under the state government’s draconian new festival licensing legislation.

Previously it was thought that so-called ‘high risk’ festivals were limited to those that include onsite camping and alcohol sales, such as Bluesfest, Splendour, Falls and Tropical Fruits. The proposed changes are far reaching and will take effect on March 1.

In a statement issued after a meeting with NSW premier Berejiklian last week, the Australian Festival Association (AFA) said it had been informed the government will not change its position on the implementation of new licensing rules.

“Despite the industry’s willingness to work constructively with government on these issues, the premier’s approach to the festival industry has been an uncooperative and heavy-handed ‘put up or shut down,’” the AFA added.

The new laws will see festival organisers now defined by a highly detailed “risk matrix”, which categorises different festivals and



exposes them to different types of mandatory charges for services deemed necessary to the new licences.

These new licences could cost festival organisers hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Two NSW festivals, Mountain Sounds and PSYFARI, have cancelled their 2019 events, citing a “war on festivals” by the state government. Mountain Sounds festival also cancelled, citing an unforeseen bill from police.

Byron Bay festival Bluesfest warned it would no longer be

able to continue its event if the government continued with its current licensing plans, however it seems to have dodged a bullet and not been included on the government’s list.

“This will cost us hundreds of thousands of dollars to comply with a policy where we and every other event in this State have had zero opportunity to have any consultation or input into a policy where we will need to spend significantly more money to put on the event this year with zero notice,” organiser Peter Noble said.

The changes are being implemented by Liquor and Gaming NSW after being rushed through state government with “no actual consultation”, from members of the music community, according to industry sources.

A Festival Organisers Crisis Meeting was hosted in NSW Parliament by Greens MP Cate Faehrmann and Independent MP for Sydney Alex Greenwich, and issued a statement calling on the Premier Gladys Berejikilian to halt plans to bring in the new festival licensing regime.

“We request the government to go back to the drawing board and undertake thorough consultation with the music industry before developing any new regulation. This should also be informed by the findings of the coronial inquest into deaths associated with festivals which is scheduled for June 2019,” the statement read.

The meeting also affirmed support for the Don’t Kill Live Music Petition, which has been signed by over 100,000 people, and calls on the NSW Government to:

1. Stop killing live music in NSW;
2. Form a music regulation roundtable to review all regulation impacting live music;
3. Immediately undertake a Regulatory Impact Statement for any regulation impacting music festivals;
4. Develop an industry standard with full transparency for user-pays policing and medical services; and
5. Work with the music industry to develop robust, effective and achievable safety protocols for festivals.



VOTE **1** FOR STRONG CLIMATE ACTION

SUE HIGGINSON



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- ▲ Strengthen environmental laws and protect forests, wildlife and water
- ▲ Promote affordable housing, improved aged care and public health
- ▲ Boost local jobs, sustainable businesses and innovative technology
- ▲ Increase funding for schools and abolish fees for universities and TAFE
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