



28 MAR, 2026

Funding will up the fun factor for venue

Daily Advertiser, Wagga Wagga

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Kabel Dawes

WAGGA'S after-dark economy is set for a massive boost with a popular venue securing funding from the state government.

Underground speakeasy Olivette will welcome regular live music, comedy, and burlesque after it won a highly sought-after \$80,000 NSW government grant.

The 1920s-inspired venue on Fitzmaurice Street, known for its intimate atmosphere and its whisky offering, was named a recipient in the second round of funding for the Live Performance Venue Program.

Venue owner Nick King said the lengthy application process was heavily focused on stimulating local nightlife and creating paid opportunities for regional artists.

"The plan was to do some things we had always conceptually wanted to do but never had the funding for," Mr King said.

"We are going to be starting weekly Thursday night live music ... and expanding our regular Saturday offerings with things like burlesque and comedians."

Mr King said the \$80,000 grant came with strict operational guidelines designed to directly benefit performers rather than just boosting the venue's bottom line.

"You can't do general renovations or go and buy furniture," he said.

"It's very much around the implementation of your strategy-paying the artists, paying for travel, and marketing."

The venue had previously trialed live music, but the initiative was paused when economic pressures made it unviable to continue doing so.

Now, armed with the new funding, Olivette is preparing to roll out a four-week rotat-

ing entertainment calendar.

The roster will heavily feature local talent, including musicians from the Riverina Conservatorium of Music, members of the Kapooka Army Band, and a pool of emerging Riverina artists seeking exposure.

The grant coincides with a broader push to revitalise the city's nightlife.

Wagga is one of 10 regional towns sharing in a separate \$2 million pilot pool under the NSW Government's regional night-time economy program.

Supported by the Office of the 24-hour Economy Commissioner, the funding streams are designed to transition regional agricultural hubs into vibrant, inclusive cultural destinations after the sun goes down.

Business NSW regional director Serena Hardwick welcomed the investment.

She noted the flow-on effects a thriving nightlife has on the broader local economy.

"We are seeing a collective of businesses work together to increase commerce in the local nightlife," Ms Hardwick said.

"This model has worked well in metro areas so it should be able to work regionally as well."

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Nick King



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Olivette owner Nick King is thrilled to have secured a government grant. Picture by Bernard Humphreys