

There are some limited but very good guides for promoters to use when organising events. The 'Pop' guide, whilst not exhaustive in its information, provides a sound foundations for organisers. The Australian Standard AS:4360 of 1999 sets out what is required for proper 'risk assessments'.

Mr West & Mr Lees have been promoters for many years. They have a wealth of experience in concert and festival production. It is obvious, however, they need to be assisted by industry experts when addressing issues such as crowd control and 'risk assessment'.

The indicators were there, Roskilde and Auckland. Now this terrible tragedy involving 15 year old Jessica must stand as a warning that the industry must be regulated and crowd safety given the priority it deserves.

The 'Jessica' Recommendations

1. That a 'working party' be established under the auspices of the WorkCover Authority of NSW, to review current 'entertainment' industry standards and practices and develop guidelines to ensure the safety and comfort of patrons attending large scale events. This working party should comprise of representatives from the police, ambulance, fire brigade, local government, promoters, security, entertainers and any other appropriate 'stakeholders'.

Given the changing dynamics of rock and pop festivals and the alarming number of deaths at outdoor venues, the working party should be established forthwith.

The 'working party' to devise guidelines for promoters to be adopted at events such as the Big Day Out and other large scale entertainment events.

The guidelines should be developed with the intention that they be adopted as a 'National Code of Conduct'. Australian Standard AS:4360 of 1999, should be used when considering the issues of 'risk assessment'

The working party should have regard to (but not limited to):
crowd numbers generally and at individual venues
the compulsory preparation of comprehensive 'risk assessments'
emergency protocols for stopping artists during performance
age restrictions
the accessibility of water, shade and first aid
the suitability of crowd activity such as moshing, slam dancing,
crowd surfing etc
barrier configurations

2. That the State Government establish a regulatory authority responsible for the licensing, regulating and policing of large scale entertainment events. This body should have enforcement powers to ensure compliance.

3. That Local Councils and the Sydney Olympic Park Authority request and review a comprehensive 'risk assessment' for all large scale entertainment events before granting permission.

4. That a National Code of Conduct be adopted by each state and territory, to ensure uniformity of approach to safety issues for large scale events.

5. That anyone promoting or conducting a large scale event prepare a comprehensive 'risk assessment' after consultation with all stakeholders and service providers.

6. That the Minister for Education encourage all schools to educate teenage students of the dangers of moshing, crowd surfing and the possibility of heat and stress exhaustion when attending concerts and festivals.

7. That promoters ensure that protocols for stopping artists in emergency situations are clearly documented and agreed to by all parties affected.

8. *That promoters of large scale events give consideration to devising an effective and immediate 'alert' to artists in an emergency situation.*

9. *All performance artists must adhere strictly to emergency procedure protocols once they are invoked. The laborious 'chain of command' where one person speaks to another, who speaks to another, is too time consuming.*

A coloured card or coloured light would be the fastest way to communicate a problem.

10. *That 'user pays' services ie Fire Brigade, Ambulance and Police, insist on, and sight, a comprehensive 'risk assessment' prior to agreeing to supply their services.*

The reason I have not specifically suggested physical changes to the Festival is that a holistic approach must be taken when considering the type of event, the artists and the intended audience.

Many experienced industry workers and indeed concert attendees have made a number of suggestions during the course of the hearing.

Some suggest higher stages so people have to stand back, single stages, rotating stages, wider stages to spread out the patrons at the front of the stage. Stop the music, don't stop the music and so on.

In fact, at one stage after Jessica was removed, Inspector Ashton directed the band to play, concerned that there may be a riot.

Because there are so many variables, what is needed is a co-ordinated response drawing on experts in the field to devise guidelines for all large scale events.

Jacqueline M. Milledge
Senior Deputy State Coroner
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