

National [Crime](#)

## OPINION

# *The criminal reason we should bring back blue light discos*

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When I was a teenager, my friends and I would go to underage nightclubs – every few months there would be a big event at QBH or Metro.

It wasn't just a few hours of entertainment on a Friday night, either. The anticipation in the lead-up was part of the experience. We'd buy physical tickets to the event from whomever at school was a promoter for the club. They would make \$2 off each ticket they hocked, while other kids sold glow sticks. It was our own busy little economy – practise for the adult world.



A blue light disco in 1984. THE AGE ARCHIVES

You'd go shopping with your friends for a "cool" outfit from Industrie or Supre and spend the week practising your dance moves in the mirror, hoping that on the night you could score a dance floor pash before the fluorescent lights came up to reveal the sweaty, teenage mess you truly were.

Decades on, my hair is still stiff from the amount of gel I lathered into my skull back then. I bet there are still particles of Lynx Gravity deodorant in my armpits.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show teen crime is on the rise, [up 6 per cent in a year](#), with the majority of it linked to thrill-seeking and social media fame, [according to senior police](#). It makes me wonder what activities we are providing for teens to keep their minds off pinching a Nissan Skyline or accosting strangers at a train station.

Scrolling through event listings in our city, there seems to be a deluge of activities for kids aged under 12 or for adults. It's baby bounce, binge-drinking and a big gap in the middle for anyone old enough to leave the house unsupervised but too young to vote. This gap creates nothing for teenagers to do and becomes a petri dish for minor crimes and shenanigans.

Social media is an added complication to the issue, where the perpetrators of these misdemeanours are now broadcasting their criminal behaviour in a bid to impress other kids. I saw a TikTok of a couple of teens in a high-speed car chase, showing off money they'd stolen from someone's house.

After liking and subscribing (just kidding), I learned there has been [a significant uptick in violent pranks](#), petty theft and dangerous urban exploration. There are hundreds of videos like this, from dumb pranks that border on harassment to outright breaking and entering. There's a terrifying one-upmanship that will only lead to some kid committing serious indictable offences just for the LOLs.

We as adults have to take responsibility for not providing enough thrills. It's up to the state and local councils to provide kids with things worthy of posting about; otherwise idle hands create the devil's TikTok account.

I'd much rather see those hands waving glow sticks as they head into a local blue light disco. Remember those? They're still around but could do with a boost. Events like that are a brilliant way of knowing exactly where all the teens in a suburb are on a Friday night (and come with the added bonus of police and adult supervision).



A blue light disco in 1993. THE AGE ARCHIVES

Blue Light Victoria spends the bulk of its time running other community engagement events such as Blue EDGE and Blue DASH, which they say has increased school attendance and community connectivity.

The Productivity Commission's 2024 annual report on government services tells us that it costs around \$5000 per day to keep a young person in custody. The blue light programs cost around \$820 or less per 16-session program. Now I only studied arts at uni but if my maths is correct, that's a better bargain than anything you'll find on Facebook marketplace.

Also, let's not leave teens out of adult events they're allowed into. The music festival scene has always been a wonderful transitional experience. I went to my first one with my older sister when I was 16. It was that day that I stopped feeling like an awkward teen and started feeling like the awkward adult I am today.

Although many are marketed to adults, many are 16+ and nearly all accept kids if they're accompanied by adults. Last year, we lost Falls Festival and already this year Groovin the Moo, ValleyWays, Vintage Vibes, Coastal Jam, Dark Mofo and [Splendour in the Grass](#) have been added to the growing list. This will have knock-on effects for teens with nothing major to look forward to, nothing exciting to prepare for and nothing much to keep them busy during school breaks. Cue the stolen cars for joyrides and shrinking garden hoses.

We've had the solution to the problem of what to do with ratbag teenagers for decades, we're just not implementing it: give the youth things to do. Because you know what kind of teenagers don't commit crimes? Tired ones.

**Simon Taylor is a Melbourne-born comedian.**

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**Simon Taylor** is a Melbourne-born comedian, who by the age of 24 became a writer for The Tonight Show with Jay Leno. Since then, he has appeared on Just for Laughs and became the first-ever Australian to perform stand-up on The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon.

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