

Submission from Harry Potter and the Cursed Child and Hamilton cast in support of the Live Performance Federal Insurance Guarantee Fund Bill 2021.

Summary

Representing contributing cast members and crew from Hamilton (Sydney) and Harry Potter and the Cursed Child (Melbourne), Equity Delegates from both shows write in support of the Live Performance Federal Insurance Guarantee Fund Bill 2021. The submission details the reality faced by arts workers now and into the future, in and out of lockdown, and the need for appropriate income support. It further suggests how the Fund needs to be structured to ensure that support reaches arts workers stood down and unable to work.

Submission

We write in favour of the Bill as arts workers in an industry that has been decimated by Covid 19 health restrictions through lockdowns and reduced capacity restrictions.

Although contracted full time workers, we are immediately stood down without pay during periods of lockdown and serious capacity restrictions. For example, since March 2020, the cast, crew, creative team and tech crew of Harry Potter and the Cursed Child have been stood-down for a cumulative 400+ days.

During 2020 JobKeeper kept us attached to our employer, but when the program concluded in March 2021, we were left without support for future lockdowns. Covid Disaster relief funding now covers full-time employees while we are in lockdown, but when lockdowns are lifted, income support stops. Reduced capacity / public gathering restrictions post lockdown dictate that we remain stood down for extended periods without income or income support after lockdowns are lifted. These periods between a lockdown ending and returning to work will continue to prove exceedingly stressful; financially and mentally.

Not only would this Bill provide insurance support for producers looking to reopen/start productions and enliven a flagging Live Performance industry, it will also support the livelihoods of those that work in this industry.

It is unlikely that 2021 will see the end of restrictions and lockdowns. While hopefully not as long or severe, even a 7 to 14 day lockdown followed by a period of easing of restrictions will find contracted arts workers suddenly faced with a month or more without income. Federal government has indicated there will be no more income support during future lockdowns. Without this Bill we are looking at an even more insecure and vulnerable future.

We hope this Bill will mean Federal Insurance can cover salaries of cast/crew/technical support staff and all those who will lose income during these periods and keep them connected to their employers. We would appreciate this being included in the wording of how Fund payouts are to be utilised and deployed.

Live Performance has been one of the hardest hit industries during the pandemic. It will continue to be the first to close and the last to open, even in a majority-vaccinated society. This Bill would be a targeted step forward out of insecurity and back to sustainability for arts workers via the support of a Federal Insurance Guarantee Fund.

Please let us know if there is any further comment or information required regarding our submission of support.

Sincerely,

Equity Delegates, on behalf of contributing cast members from Harry Potter and the Cursed Child (Melbourne) and Hamilton (Sydney).