

City of Fremantle Submission

Live Music Inquiry



Dedication

We dedicate this submission to Ngarluma artist, actress and jazz singer Lois Olney who was a much-loved Walyalup | Fremantle local. In her own words, *"Music helps heal the people that I love and the sorrow that we all have in common."* We hope that the outcomes of this Live Music Inquiry will result in more music for everyone to experience.

[Mantle Music - Lois Olney, "Last Sad Song" \(youtube.com\)](#)

Introduction

To prepare this submission a collective of diverse representatives from the WA Live Music community gathered (in person and online) in Walyalup | Fremantle to discuss the opportunities and challenges experienced in the Live Music industry.



Context

Walyalup | Fremantle is situated on Whadjuk Nyoongar Boodjar—a place celebrated for its culture and creativity—a gathering place for ceremonies, significant cultural practices, and trading that dates back tens of thousands of years. This place is widely acknowledged as the home of live music in Western Australia.

This unique music ecology includes musicians, venues and their staff and suppliers, promoters, bookers, producers, production companies and tech crew, recording studios, broadcasters, marketing companies, businesses, and a community of music lovers. Musically what happens here makes an impact contributing to state, national, and global creative economies.

Legendary musicians include AC/DC, Tame Impala, Stella Donnelly, John Butler, Eskimo Joe, Abbe May, The Kill Devil Hills, San Cisco, The Waifs, Spacey Jane, GLUE, Jack Davies and Dave Johnson.

Long-running local institutions for live music include Mojo's, Clancy's, Freo. Social, Metropolis, The Buffalo Club, and The Navy Club. Venues of the past whose legacy lives on include Kulcha, The Aardvark, Fly by Night and The Newport Hotel.

A wealth of music promoters, recording studios, and record labels create here including Envelope Audio, VAM Media, Rada Studios, Sundown Studios, Pen Cap Chew Studios, Elemental Sound, Jarrah Records, Mill Records, Junction Records, Phil Stevens Management and the original stomping grounds of Spinning Top.

Education facilities such John Curtin College of the Arts, Fremantle College, Seton Catholic College and many more nurture the next generation of musicians.

The range of venue offerings from small to large in one small geographical area is a key element that has allowed the industry to grow in its development and capacity to engage audiences at different scales. The extraordinary natural and built environment of Walyalup | Fremantle is a also platform for experimentation with music happening on the streets, in parks, laneways, shorelines, verandas, and backyards.

The role of music festivals such as Falls and Laneway, City of Fremantle programming including Hidden Treasures, Future Treasures, 10 Nights in Port, and Fremantle Art Centre South and Front Lawn concerts, and busking culture, all provide fertile ground for the industry.

There are generations of musicians who have contributed to this place with the children of musicians growing up jamming together. Artists are attracted to Fremantle's progressive and open culture which fosters independence in logistics, labels, artists, and musical genres, helping to build skills and cross-fertilizing talent naturally. Collaboration in the music community is a strong feature of this tight-knit music scene.

Audiences are attracted to Walyalup | Fremantle as an entertainment precinct and as a port city where international influences and local customs constantly mingle to create new forms of expression and ideas.

Recommendations

Walyalup | Fremantle (Freo) is a cultural hub with a genuinely authentic supportive live music scene. Investing and partnering in initiatives to ensure this grassroots economy is healthy and sustainable will have positive flow on effects to the rest of the industry.

As the tier of government closest to the community the City of Fremantle is committed to a whole-of-government and industry approach to exploring shared priorities, partnerships, and collaborations. If we can achieve a coordinated approach and a real sense of partnering, we can provide a stronger foundation for the live music industry.

Sustainability and growth of the industry

Within the following terms of reference, there is a range of opportunities and actions from a local perspective to help the industry become more sustainable and grow.

Hidden Treasures Tram – NikaMo



Suitability and location of venues for organisers, participants, and attendees.

Opportunity

- Freo has a concentration of live music venues in the CBD in a short distance from each other. Available parking in the CBD is an issue, with good public transport available. The exception is Mojo's who are in North Fremantle (over the bridge) and who are exploring a shuttle bus system to move audiences from the CBD to their venue.

- Venue hire fees in WA compared to the East Coast are comparatively lower, with FOH included as standard practice and low overheads. A goal is to maintain this practice.
- Food and beverage are a key revenue for venues, however with less alcohol being consumed, venues need to innovate, and venues that don't offer a food service are exploring ways to implement this offering.
- Audiences are increasingly drawn to interesting places non-traditional venues and multi-disciplinary projects to experience.

Challenges

- The increase in rent, insurance, wages, and security is the greatest pressure facing venues, with some of these costs being passed onto the musicians.
- Costs of touring to Perth has increased substantially.
- Venues with capacity 800 – 4000 for touring artists for Fremantle dates during Winter. Many of the venues within the City of Fremantle can cater to these numbers but are outdoor venues.
- Venues with stages do not always have an option for wheelchair or handrail access.

Actions

- A Federal Government subsidy scheme including grants and tax offset for live music venues contributing to insurance, rent, wages, and security, accessibility costs. The scheme to ensure a high percentage of local musicians perform at these venues and are paid adequately." The Government subsidizes the fossil fuel industry, why can't it subsidize live music venues?" submission discussion participant.



Hidden Treasures 2021 - Buffalo Club, Fremantle. Photo by Tashi Hall.

- A Federal Government inquiry into the insurance industry and its impact on the Live Music industry.
- Federal Government and State Government grant programs that invest in venue infrastructure including transport e.g. buses, production, sound attenuation, and minor capital works including venue fit out e.g. kitchen, wheel chair access.
- Tax offset/ rebate for those that tour to WA or to rural areas.
- Perth/Fremantle needs a scalable venue 800 – 4000 venue during winter months.

Artist development and career pathways

Opportunity

- A strength in the WA live music community is the artistic knowledge and supportive and collaborative approach. There is a strong integration of musicians who play with each other, support across all musical genres, and venues supporting experimental music. There is a huge cross over of bands with different band member configurations. This is the legacy of an inter-generational close-knit community operating in geographical isolation. A key goal of the WA live music community is to tour Australia, particularly the East Coast, then internationally, resulting in collaboration amongst the WA industry to achieve these tours.
- There is strong leadership in the WA industry by musicians and venue operators who provide substantial support, advice, and advocacy.



*Mantle Music 2022 – Travis Green.
Photo by Luke Keatinge.*

- The Freo live music community has a strong practice of diversity on line-ups which is nurturing new talent by helping new bands perform and feel safe. This is unique to Fremantle.

Challenges

- There are not many venues in WA supporting diverse lines up outside of Freo.
- It is currently an unwritten diversity policy with venues, with a risk that staff who lead this practice leave the industry.
- Musicians are not receiving adequate payment including superannuation. All musicians work other jobs.
- Lack of artist compensation through streaming services such as Spotify.
- Ongoing piracy and copyright infringement for artists, with works pirated and shared without permission.
- Venues are unclear on how to pay superannuation to musicians, especially with varied band structures.

Actions

- Celebrate and showcase the social and economic impact of embracing diversity in the live music scene for ongoing education for the industry.
- Sharing of equity, access and inclusion policies and practices amongst venues and programmers for ongoing education and collaboration.
- Capacity building programs for leaders and emerging leaders in the live music industry to counter industry burnout, support skills development, and ensure ongoing collaboration.
- The whole of the industry including the government promotes industry bodies that advocate for industry payment rates, including superannuation, and general industry advice. "The more musicians that join the Australian Music Union, the

stronger the democratic voice, and stronger the industry.” Submission discussion participant.

- Secondary Curriculum Support - City of Fremantle advocates the importance of supporting values and skills development in young individuals through live music, collaboration and schools in promoting the value of the Arts and fostering original creativity. John Curtin College of Arts and Fremantle College in nurturing students' artistic talents and providing them with essential life skills through their arts programs.
- Local councils offer programs with a holistic approach to showcase local emerging Artists. Festival event - Future Treasures currently nurtures artists at the earliest stages of their careers with professional development workshops with leading industry reps, endeavouring to offer workshops to all emerging artists in the area and not just those participants of the showcase.

Capacity building in the facilitation and promotion of events and festivals

Challenges

- There is a need in WA for authentic information promoting live music events and initiatives. This is due to media moving online, algorithms leading to dilution of quality information and discovery of artists, and a lack of arts journalism in WA.
- There is a discrepancy in ticket pricing amongst promoters and venues, and no substantial increase in ticket sales, with venues citing tickets as a barrier for audience.
- Distribution and consumption of music are constantly changing with industry, especially early career, requiring support to adapt to changing environments and effective marketing and promotion.
- Some institutions delivering VET Curriculum delivery curriculum based on Theory rather than practical delivery.

Actions

- The local community develops a communal calendar to enhance programming opportunities.
- Local gigs and events are a platform to promote upcoming gigs – noticeboard, flyers etc e.g. Fremantle Art Centre Sunday Music Program.
- State Government funding program to support arts journalism including critical writing and initiatives for promotion of the local live music scene.
- Capacity building programs for audience development and marketing.
- Capacity building programs for production crew for event facilitation. (Note industry sustainability section links to this as well).
- Encourage Local Councils to adopt into financial policy encouraging booking original music acts. Currently Creative Arts and Community Development team all book only original live music acts.



*Fremantle International Street Arts Festival 2024 – Feel Estate on The National Hotel Stage.
Photo by Emma Smart.*

Local economic benefits

Opportunity

- Walyalup | Fremantle's arts, cultural and creative industries contribute significantly to the local, state and national economy. Creativity spearheads innovation which is the primary driver of economic growth in a knowledge-based economy. Investing in Fremantle's creative economy directly supports our ability to navigate the opportunities ahead. The jobs of the future include artists and creatives skillsets especially as creative and problem-solving-orientated jobs continue to grow in significance. As of 2021 it is estimated that Fremantle's Creative economy directly contributed 2,310 jobs and \$181.1 million into the State economy. These jobs included skilled professionals in creative industries and skilled creatives in non-creative industries. For perspective, the entire Southern Corridor creative economy directly contributed \$1 billion to the state economy. Screen production which includes motion picture production and post-production-related activities (42%), Performing Arts operation (50%), Sound and Music Publishing (100%) and Creative and Performing Arts Activities (53%) are all industries located within Fremantle that work with live music industry.¹

¹ City of Fremantle Arts, Culture and Creative Strategy 2024-2034 [Creative Strategy 2024-34 FINAL.pdf](#)
(fremantle.wa.gov.au)

Challenges

- State and Local Government initiatives which include subsidising major touring musicians, marketing campaigns, and tourism strategies need to work more with the local live music economy to identify and ensure opportunities for the local economy.

Actions

- A WA Live Music Industry Working Group with representatives from across the industry, that meets quarterly and is consulted by the whole of the government on a range of issues and opportunities.

Grant and support programs

Challenge

- There is acknowledgment of existing State and Federal grant programs for the live music industry, but the grants are extremely competitive, infrequent grant rounds, request unattainable information about touring, and some venues ineligible. There is concern that the pandemic recovery investment programs to promoters for cancellation of events were not passed to the local economy.



Hidden Treasures 2018 - Axe Girl.

Actions

- Federal and State Government review of grant programs to ensure investment into the local economy.
- Increase available investment to grant programs.
- Implement above-mentioned grant programs including artist development, capacity building, audience development, venue subsidy, tax offset, and infrastructure.
- Capacity building programs for grant applicants to ensure diversity in grant recipients.
- Adopt a model like France or Ireland where artists receive a wage from the government. Standard national criteria and receive taxable income.



Fremantle Arts Centre – South Lawn Concerts. Photo by Jessica Wyld.

Audience development and consumer behaviors

Challenges

- The way Australian culture values musicians need to be improved, with the misconception that musicians don't need much payment to play gigs – whereas compared to other countries (e.g. Germany) who treats musicians like royalty.
- Revenue from alcohol has decreased for venues due to young people not drinking alcohol. This is a good movement from a health perspective, but a challenge for venues.
- Finding the balance of the right ticket price as ticket prices are a barrier.
- Music distribution and consumption patterns changing with the traditional pathway of local bands on Triple J catapulting careers not relevant anymore.
- A current gap in the WA industry is University taverns and Uni event opportunities which are not booking live music.
- Music audiences can be quite small and niche – resulting in issues of promoting to the same fan base.

Actions

- Audience development campaign promoting the value of the live music industry, spotlighting musicians, and venues, and encouraging people back to venues.
- Initiatives for major broadcasters to play a quota of local music. Note that in WA RTRFM an independent radio station supports local music incredibly well, and in Walyalup | Fremantle a new broadcaster Freocast is doing great work – however, if mainstream radio stations played more local music and promoted local gigs there would be a considerable positive effect.

- City of Fremantle to develop destination marketing and advertising campaign to target audience, and promotion gathering of all gigs in the local area.

Barriers to growing the Australian industry, both domestically and internationally, including those relating to export

Challenges

- For national and international acts touring to, and around WA, it is expensive and takes time out of their touring schedules, so it is harder to get the acts to WA resulting in lost opportunity for local industry to be support acts.
- Wider community value and understanding limited to Live Music as a hobby.
- Music Festivals and audience - Concept and audience attendance attached to Social Media trends/ Lifestyle projection rather than music content.

Actions

- Federal and State Government implement touring initiatives and ensure local acts have the opportunity to play support.
- Federal and State Government campaign in education and opportunities within the Arts – Music.



Hidden Treasures 2022 - Artemis Orchestra.

Photo by Adrian Thompson.

Building sustainability in the industry, domestically and internationally.

Opportunities

- Local suppliers and VET Education Institutions to take opportunities where highly regarded staff returning to Perth from world tour and offering skills/time to local industry.

Challenges

- International touring acts/ or acts about to tour internationally, there is not a dedicated Production Rehearsal space. It needs to be suitable in terms of space available (scalable staging) and the quality of production gear included.
- There is a workforce shortage of skilled event and production crews.
- Curriculum and staff in VET/ Tertiary Institutions approach work from a theoretical/ academic approach and not teaching live & practical skills to students.
- Long-term staff in VET/ Tertiary Institutions are working in teaching and have not updated their individual professional development.
- Travelling for work is costly versus the cost of living.

Actions

- Gov to devise subsidy/ program where Production suppliers diversify their business and offer training.

- Audit VET/ Tertiary Curriculum and staff delivering contemporary education.
- Long-term staff in VET/Tertiary Institutions prioritize updating their professional development. By doing so, they can enhance their teaching effectiveness, positively impact student learning, and contribute to the overall success of the institution/ college. Encouraging and supporting ongoing professional development for educators should be a priority to ensure the continual improvement of the education sector.
- Increase Tax offset for touring acts.
- Tax offsets/ rebates as incentives for touring to Perth and regional areas.
- Opportunity to support local businesses who provide practical skills training within their employment.
- Government to invest in a large-scale production rehearsal space in Fremantle.
- Tax offsets/ rebates as incentives for touring to Perth regional areas.



Sunday Music at Fremantle Arts Centre – Soukouss Internationale, 2018. Photo by Miles Noel.

Conclusion

The City of Fremantle will actively work with the local live music industry to explore the delivery of the above actions and looks forward to helping to implement recommendations that arise from the Live Music Inquiry, in collaboration with industry, Federal and State Governments.

Participants Names

Name	Role	Group, business, org
Charlie Bray	Musician	Friends of Friends
Scarlett Graham	Musician	The Stamps
Dave Johnson	Musician	
Yann Vissac	Musician	Mayatrix and the Psychics
Abbe May	Musician	
Jamie Searle	Musician	Grace Barbe/ Tina Zando & The Situation/ Soukouss Internationale
George Siciliano	Musician/ Creative Producer	Happenings Band/ Perth Festival
Ayo Busari	Musician/ Creative Producer	TAB Family / Blue Room Theatre
Emily Barker	Musician	
Tony Papa-Adams	Musician/ Venue Owner	Old Blood & Papa Peet/ Mojos Bar
Tom Fisher	Musician/ Venue Owner & General Manager	Tom Fisher and the Layabouts/ Clancy's Fish Pub
Lewis Ryan	Production Company Supplier General Manager	Audiotechnik
Hayley Jane Ayers	Musician/ Artist Manager/ Production Company Co-Owner	Melody Pool/ 360 Artists Logistics
Danni Colgan	Senior Producer	City of Fremantle
Billy Bowen	Ex Member of Venue Committee Group	Buffalo Club
Emma Adams	Musician/ Venue Booking Agent	Big Orange/ The William St Bird & Mojos Bar
Alli Doherty	Snr Arts Officer	City of Fremantle
'Ofa Fotu	Festivals Coordinator	City of Fremantle
Sarah Wilkinson	Creative Arts Manager	City of Fremantle
Pete Stone	Director of Creative Arts and Community Development	City of Fremantle



Summary of actions

Note there is duplication of some actions for different owners due to the need for a co-ordinated approach.

Federal Government

- Federal Government subsidy scheme including grants and tax offset for live music venues contributing to insurance, rent, wages, and security, accessibility costs. The scheme to ensure a high percentage of local musicians perform at these venues and are paid adequately." *The Government subsidizes the fossil fuel industry, why can't it subsidize live music venues?*" submission discussion participant.
- A Federal Government inquiry into the insurance industry and its impact on the Live Music industry.
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- Celebrate and showcase the social and economic impact of embracing diversity in the live music scene for ongoing education for the industry.
- Capacity building programs for leaders and emerging leaders in the live music industry to counter industry burnout, support skills development, and ensure ongoing collaboration.
- The whole of the industry including the government promotes industry bodies that advocate for industry payment rates, including superannuation, and general industry advice. *"The more musicians that join the Australian Music Union, the stronger the democratic voice, and stronger the industry."* Submission discussion participant.
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- Initiatives for major broadcasters to play a quota of local music.
- Federal and State Government implement touring initiatives and ensure local acts have the opportunity to play support.
- Federal and State Government campaign in education and opportunities within the Arts – Music
- Gov to devise subsidy/ program where Production suppliers diversify their business and offer training.
- Audit VET/ Tertiary Curriculum and staff delivering contemporary education.
- It's imperative for long-term staff in VET/Tertiary Institutions to prioritize updating their professional development. By doing so, they can enhance their teaching effectiveness, positively impact student learning, and contribute to the overall success of the institution/ college. Encouraging and supporting ongoing professional development for educators should be a priority to ensure the continual improvement of the education sector.
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State Government

- Federal Government and State Government grant programs that invest in venue infrastructure including transport e.g. buses, production, sound attenuation, and minor capital works including venue fit out e.g. kitchen, wheelchair access.
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- Sharing of equity, access and inclusion policies and practices amongst venues and programmers for ongoing education and collaboration.
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- Opportunity to support local businesses who provide practical skills training within their employment.
- Perth/ Fremantle needs a scalable venue 800 – 4000 venue during winter months.
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Local Government

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Industry

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Document end.

Date 30 April 2024.