



30th April 2024

Attention: To Whom It May Concern

Re: Parliamentary Inquiry into the Challenges and Opportunities within the Australian Live Music Industry

About The West Australian Music Industry Association (WAM)

As the peak body representing the music industry in Western Australia, The West Australian Music Industry Association (WAM), is pleased to make its submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Challenges and Opportunities within the Australian Live Music Industry. We are committed to nurturing and enhancing the significance of Western Australia's unique and diverse musical landscape. This overarching mission seeks to benefit both the art form and the broader community. WAM's pivotal presence is instrumental in sustaining, expanding, and promoting the well-being of our sector. The organisation's programs and services act as foundational elements for the growth and advancement of artists in Western Australia, serving as a crucial bridge between emerging talents and the wider industry.

Over the years, WAM has conducted extensive reviews of the industry across the broader music landscape to attain a comprehensive understanding of the requirements within the music sector. As we continue to enhance WAM's services to the industry, it is imperative to comprehend the current landscape and tailor programs and advocacy support based on feedback received from the Western Australian contemporary music industry. Additionally, we are actively assessing the progress of the industry's post-COVID recovery. Taking into consideration this research, we are responding to the terms of reference as laid out below:

Sustainability and Growth of the Industry

To achieve sustainable growth, the live music industry relies on a steadfast and expanding demand for its products and services. To achieve this, the industry as a whole must consistently meet the highest standards, positioning themselves competitively in both local and global markets. Increasing the awareness and demand for live music is essential.

- Audience Development - Increase the awareness and demand for live music with programs in schools, all ages events, increased presence in the digital spaces embracing new technologies, online hubs, expansion of performance spaces and more accessible live music venues.
- Workforce Development – A skilled and educated workforce is necessary for sustainability and growth. Targeting areas such as artist management, production, lighting, administration, and public relations will help support the industry effectively.
- Infrastructure Development – appropriate infrastructure not only supports the live music industry but also brings numerous benefits to cities and regional areas. It enhances cultural enrichment, economic impact, tourism appeal and social connectivity.
- Reaching Other Markets – The geographical remoteness of WA poses logistical hurdles and increased travel expenses for artists, unlike other Australian states. It is crucial for our artists to access these distant markets to unlock potential revenue streams, reach broader audiences and foster artistic growth.

Suitability and Location of Venues for Organisers, Participants and Attendees

The effectiveness of performances and events is heavily influenced by the suitability and location of venues. The availability and suitability of diverse venue options coupled with the closure of several key live music venues here in WA has had significant impact on live music.

- Limited accessibility – certain venues are encumbered by other art forms during certain times of the year, making it difficult for live contemporary music organisers to gain access.
- Lack of Infrastructure – parking facilities, access to public transportation or amenities for people with disabilities.
- Cost Prohibitive – high rental and staffing costs pose financial challenges the live music particularly for smaller scale events or community initiatives with limited budgets.
- Touring Circuits – touring artists often lack awareness of touring circuits. Creating an accessible national database to map these circuits could greatly benefit not only our WA artists but also visiting interstate and international artists.

Artist Development and Career Pathways

At the core of our live music ecosystem lies the artist. Without them, the supporting elements of live music lose their purpose. Establishing career pathways for artists is vital for cultivating a highly skilled and progressive live music sector. In Western Australia, providing resources, guidance, and opportunities for artists to develop their skills and networks has been essential for long-term success.

- Strengthening Music Peak Bodies – WAM holds the distinction of being the first state-based music peak body, established in 1984. Its inception arose from the imperative to bolster and sustain a thriving live music industry. Peak bodies indeed serve as crucial pillars in fostering collaboration, facilitating professional development, stimulating growth, and advocating for artists' interests. However, they often encounter challenges due to limited resources, hindering their ability to fully address the needs of artists.
- Building Networks – this is essential for career advancement, but the remoteness of our state poses challenges, particularly in face-to-face interactions. Artists need to establish and nurture connections to build careers.
- Professional Support – artists often lack access (financially, geographically) to much needed professional support whether that is legal advice, management, professional recording services, PR and marketing support and financial management. Most artists resort to a “DIY” approach diverting their focus from creating music.

Local Economic Benefits

Live music remains a cornerstone of Western Australia's economy, as highlighted by research showing an estimated Return on Investment for live music events of 6.77 times. Beyond its economic impact, live music drives tourism and contributes substantially to our state's economy, all while enhancing the cultural vibrancy of our cities and regions.

- Updated Research – Further research is necessary to comprehensively understand the economic impact of live music in both our major cities and regional areas. However, there are currently gaps in the funding available to undertake this vital work.

Grant and Support Programs

Grant and support programs not only provide financial assistance but also promote accessibility, inclusivity, cultural enrichment, and economic impact. They should be accessible to a diverse range of practitioners to foster creativity, diversity, and innovation.

- Access for First Nations Peoples – Numerous barriers hinder First Nations peoples in WA from applying for grants and support, including language barriers, accessibility issues, limited technology access, and remote locations. Often, WA First Nations individuals may struggle to comprehend the grant processes. Filtering these grants through peak bodies or organisations that can champion First Nations artists has proven beneficial in overcoming these obstacles.

- Grant Panels – In the past, there has been a noticeable absence of adequate West Australian representation on grant panels for federal funding. Additionally, instances have occurred where WA representatives were requested to step down, leaving our state without an advocate or representation in crucial decision-making processes.
- Other Industry Practitioners – Our industry thrives on diversity, and the necessity for professional development in supporting areas is clear. While building robust support structures for artists is crucial, it seems that grants predominantly target artists themselves rather than the structures that support them. Allocating additional funding to bolster these support networks can significantly enhance the quality and sustainability of live music.

Barriers to Growing the Australian Industry

Working together with all industry stakeholders fosters a more equitable, sustainable, and supportive environment for artists to flourish. While national discussions are important, it's vital to include representation from each state, who recognise the uniqueness of their challenges. State-based organisations, being intimately familiar with their local landscapes, are best positioned to address these barriers effectively. Unfortunately, WA is often overlooked, assuming that representation by other is enough. It is essential to ensure that WA's perspectives and challenges are adequately included and addressed in these discussions to foster a more inclusive and equitable approach.

In our most recent survey of the WA music sector, we aimed to pinpoint the barriers specific to our state, which are distinct from those encountered elsewhere. These included:

- Increased costs of touring (regional, interstate and international) for artists and crew.
- Lack of professional development opportunities within our local and regional areas, making accessibility a challenge.
- Challenges in extending networks beyond our WA borders due to our remote location and cost of travel.
- Paid performance opportunities locally, nationally and internationally.
- Absence of growth or change in salary and wage levels for workers in the music industry which also impacts the ability to attract and retain skilled workers and talent.
- Baseline rates or standard payments for musicians and fair compensation for their work.
- Gaps in skills training and the absence of paid mentorships/internships.
- Low ticket sales at local and regional events impacting financial viability of the industry.
- Low revenue from streaming necessitates that artists explore alternative avenues to supplement their income.
- Cost of recording to achieve professional-quality product.
- Rising costs such as travel and accommodation, insurance, security and production for live music venues and event producers.
- Understanding and administration of superannuation requirements.

Audience Development and Consumer Behaviours

Since the onset of COVID-19, there has been a noticeable shift in audience and consumer behaviours, reflected in ticket purchase trends and reduced attendance at live music events. It's imperative to develop and implement new strategies that address these changes throughout the live music landscape, particularly for live music venues. Temporary fixes like monetary handouts aren't enough; we need to focus on creating long-term strategies that establish sustainable business models.

- The Next Generation of Music Lovers – additional funding and support for all ages shows and music education programs in schools to introduce young people to live music and establish audiences of the future.
- Diversified Offerings – development of programs that expand beyond traditional live music performances to cater to varied consumer interests.
- Collaborations – encourage more cross artform collaboration and partnerships with live music to create unique experiences and reach new audiences.

- Innovative Marketing – In today's market, capturing audience attention demands both innovation and authenticity. To stand out, organisations must think outside the box and offer unique experiences that resonate with their audience. However, conducting research to understand audience preferences thoroughly can be costly, especially for small organisations lacking resources. As such, finding creative and cost-effective ways to gather insights into audience preferences is essential for staying competitive in the industry.

Building Sustainability in the Industry

Overall, there can't be a cookie cutter approach to addressing sustainability in the live music industry, especially where WA is concerned. Building and maintaining sustainability requires a tailored approach in each of our unique states. While addressing the elements discussed in this submission is crucial, it's just the starting point. Building and maintaining stability in the live music industry requires ongoing support, effort, and collaboration among all stakeholders to navigate the ever-changing landscape and ensure a vibrant and thriving live music scene for years to come.

We are thankful for the chance to present this submission representing the West Australian music sector and strongly urge the Government to carefully consider the essential points highlighted.

The West Australian Music Industry Association Incorporated