

Standing Committee on Communications and The Arts
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA
Canberra ACT 2600

30 May 2024

Submission to the Inquiry into the Australian Live Music Industry

As a big believer in the power of Australian music, I'm writing to express my full support for this Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities facing our live music industry. The Minister for the Arts, Tony Burke is to be commended for asking the committee to investigate these matters.

I was prompted to write my short submission because I believe the music industry is more than entertainment, it's part of the fabric of our society. It brings people together, it gives a voice to the voiceless, and it helps us connect with something bigger than ourselves.

Musicians are getting a raw deal. They're the heart and soul of live and recorded performances, but they're getting ripped off while management and corporations rake in the profits.

It's reported that the live music industry in Australia contributes billions to the economy every year¹. That's not just ticket sales, that's jobs at venues, roadies and sound techs keeping the shows running, and the countless other businesses that benefit from a thriving music scene. This industry is an economic powerhouse, and we need to start treating it like one.

But here's the flip side: the musicians themselves are barely scraping by. They're expected to pour their hearts and souls into their craft, but when it comes to paying the bills, they're struggling. This is simply not fair. We wouldn't accept this treatment for any other profession, and we shouldn't accept it for musicians either.

So, how do we start to build something better? No doubt, the committee will receive more sophisticated submissions than mine, but here are a few ideas:

- **Fair Pay:** We need standards for musicians. They deserve a living wage, not poverty wages, for the value they bring.
- **Music for All, Not Just the Privileged Few:** Music education shouldn't be a luxury. The cost of lessons is shutting out the next generation of Aussie music lovers. Let's offer free music lessons in all public schools (and pay the

¹ See for example, "The economic contribution of Australia's Live Entertainment Industry" Ernst & Young (2019) <https://www.vma.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Economic-contribution-of-the-Live-Entertainment-Industry-FINAL1.pdf>

educators properly). This isn't just about creating rockstars, it's about nurturing creativity and enriching our lives.

- **Listen:** Don't discard musicians after the crowds go home, listen to them, get their input into policy. There should be more representation of musicians on government boards that are making decisions about the industry.
- **Government, Step Up:** All levels of government need to invest in live music. That means supporting grassroots venues, funding music programs, and creating grants for artists, not just big corporation – making sure the money flows to the people who need it the most.

This Inquiry needs to move beyond a talkfest, we need action. Let's build a music industry that rewards its workers with musicians at its heart. With solidarity among musicians and support from governments and the public, we can create a vibrant live music scene that's the envy of the world.

I wish the Committee all the best in conducting its Inquiry and encourage all members to think big when considering the recommendations you make to Government.

In solidarity with musicians everywhere,

Matt Harris

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