

Live Performance Federal Insurance Guarantee Fund Bill 2021

Submission to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
on behalf of the Folk Federation of NSW

The Folk Federation of NSW (FFNSW) is a not-for-profit incorporated body run by volunteers. Its aim is to present, support, encourage and collect Australian folk music, folk dance, folklore and folk activities. FFNSW has a membership of approximately 300 and is responsible for communication of folk events including performances and activities at the many folk festivals and folk clubs in the state. In addition, FFNSW liaises with the corresponding bodies in other states and with the national body, Folk Alliance Australia.

In August 2019 FFNSW organised the inaugural Sydney Folk Festival (SFF) in the heart of the city a block away from Sydney Town Hall. It was an outstanding success with over 800 ticket holders, 200 performers and 120 volunteers. The budget was \$85,000 and a profit of \$20,000 went to FFNSW. Our plans to have a second festival in August last year were aborted in April 2020 due to the pandemic. Thankfully there had been little expenditure at that stage.

This year has been different as we were hopeful that the low incidence of COVID19 in Sydney earlier this year would allow a festival in August. Consequently, we committed funds to promotion of the festival and to paying those venues and performers who requested a deposit. The Delta strain outbreak in Sydney necessitated cancellation of the festival and we have lost approximately \$5000 in consequence. This is not a trivial sum for a small organisation of volunteers and we were fortunate that we did not have to cancel close to the event, which could have bankrupted our organisation.

We certainly intend to hold the SFF in August 2022, providing the pandemic is under control and lockdown restrictions are sufficiently relaxed to make it economically viable. Our major concern is that the rapidly-changing status of the pandemic might lead to another cancellation or to conditions that would result in a significant loss and perhaps financial ruin for FFNSW.

In this situation a government-underwritten insurance scheme for cancellation due to a pandemic would be most useful. Our organisation would be prepared to pay a premium of a percentage of our festival budget for the assurance that we would not be bankrupted by a recurrence of the pandemic next year. It is difficult to foresee how unscrupulous operators might try to exploit such a system as it could operate similar to rain insurance or sport and event insurance. In this case the defined event that would lead to cancellation or loss of income due to public health restrictions would be the pandemic.

To conclude, FFNSW is committed to promotion of the folk arts in NSW and through its activities provides income for folk performers, creatives and technical and support staff, all of whom have been terribly affected by the pandemic. FFNSW takes on considerable financial risk to run the SFF for no personal gain, only for the pleasure of seeing the folk arts flourishing. The pandemic has significantly impacted our activities already and it would be greatly reassuring to know that our expenditure on the next festival would be underwritten in case of financial loss.