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House Of Representatives
Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts
Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry
Additional information from the Yuin Folk Club

During our appearance at the public hearing on 5 July we were asked two questions for which we would like to provide further information.

Ms Daniel asked *“what more could we be doing, particularly given the reliance on volunteers, with things like DGR status and such that might help support such festivals? Also, with the conversation around Australian stories, is it still necessary to have international artists as an anchor for these kinds of festivals to draw the people in, in order for people to then consume or interact with those Australian stories?”*

In response to the first question:

The Yuin Folk Club is exploring the possibility of obtaining DGR status as part of a strategic review of the organisation and its operations. We have not previously sought DGR status because of the increased obligations and responsibilities, which would add to the administrative burden of a volunteer-run organisation. However, lack of DGR status precludes us from applying for many private philanthropic grants. We are also aware that many people may choose to support folk festivals like ours if we had DGR status.

Secure multi-year funding will enable us to manage those additional responsibilities as well as build upon our diversified activities in a systematic manner. Our festival is a well-run event that supports the other activities we mentioned in our presentation but these other activities are currently managed on an ad hoc basis and depend on the time and energy that volunteers can expend outside of festival time. Multi-year funding will enable us to pay for a small team of admin, production and marketing staff who can maintain a portfolio of community focused activity throughout the year in a consistent and methodical manner. It would allow us to establish new income streams, increase the revenue coming into the organisation, and build our skills, capacity and reach as a regional arts organisation focused on folk and roots music and associated artistic activities.

In response to the second part of the question: Australia is an immigrant culture. Our musical roots stretch back to the traditional music of the many source countries from where we hail. The

international musicians that come to our folk festival are generally closely connected to those cultures, playing traditional music of the Celtic nations, USA, Canada and a wide range of European countries. Increasingly we are also encouraging musicians from India, Japan and other Asian nations. Their contribution enriches the musical knowledge of Australian musicians working in the genre, builds connections, networks and pathways for Australian artists aiming to undertake international tours and keeps us in touch with developments in traditional and folk music internationally. This work is grassroots cultural diplomacy that has built enduring people-to-people links between Australia and many other countries.

The Chair asked: “.. *how do we come up with a set of recommendations that support not only the perpetuation of live music but ideally the growth? Is that better served by supporting well-established, long-standing events such as yours, or—I guess I know the answer—by supporting the proliferation of new events and scattering the seeds widely and seeing what grows? How are the terms of reference of this inquiry, to support live music, supported by the proposition that we should provide multi-year funding to festivals such as yours?*”

To add to our response:

Post- Covid, governments have provided a lot of funding for the music sector which resulted in a proliferation of new events. The collapse of so many festivals in the past 12 months shows that many have already shown themselves to be unsustainable. The seeds have already been scattered broadly but few have grown into sturdy, enduring trees. The festivals and events that are still standing are those like ours, Port Fairy, Tamworth - events that have proven themselves year after year, including through these recent hard times.

Musicians flourish in creative communities. It is relatively easier for musicians living in urban areas to find communities of practice that help development and growth; it is much harder for those in regional areas to find the same opportunities. Folk Festivals place a high value on regional artists and regional stories and we actively support the development of our regional cultural sector. Investment in regional, values-based festivals, rather than profit-making concert events, will enable us to provide even more practical support to the regional cultural sector and to support the conditions that provide the creative stimulus for regional artists to write, record, and create original works.

Musicians also need spaces to perform if they are to grow. Cobargo Folk Festival is a regular event in the music calendar that provides a professional performance environment with high quality production values. Our festival is also used by other festival directors, from Australia and overseas, as a talent-spotting opportunity. In recent years, international directors/producers/associates who have attended our event or concerts include Belfast Tradfest; Blue Skies Festival, Canada; The Hoot in New York State, and the Orkney Folk Festival. National festival producers who are regular visitors include the National Folk Festival, the Peak Festival, the Illawarra Folk Festival and Blue Mountains Music Festival.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide additional material.

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9 July 2024