



DR SOPHIE SCAMPS MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR MACKELLAR

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra
Canberra ACT 2600

by email: communications.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

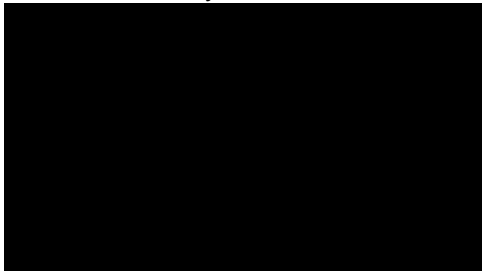
Re: Submission to the inquiry into challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Committee's inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry.

My submission addresses the challenges within the industry and suggests a number of measures to safeguard the industry's sustainability and growth.

My detailed submission is attached to this letter.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Sophie Scamps MP



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Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry

Submission of Dr Sophie Scamps MP, Independent for Mackellar

1. Introduction

Australia's live music industry is in crisis. Many live music events of varied size and scale have been presented with new challenges in the face of the cost of living and climate crises. These challenges have made their viability increasingly difficult or impossible.

This submission outlines the key issues and recommendations that could help ensure the sustainability and growth of the live music industry. It has been compiled based on consultation with peak live music bodies and reference to Music Australia research.

The live music industry adds significant social, cultural and economic value to Australia. It brings people together, provides an opportunity to unwind and can improve mental health. Live music also plays a pivotal role in cultivating the careers of emerging Australian artists.

We are home to some of the world's best musical talent, many of whom from my own electorate of Mackellar. Our musicians are valuable cultural exports, building our national identity and sharing our culture and perspectives with the world through music. Music is a way of exposing people to new ideas and tackling age old issues.

The economic benefits of the live music industry are undeniable. Research shows that for every dollar Australians spend on live music, three dollars circulate back into the economy¹.

However, the recent cancellations of major music events such as Splendour in the Grass and Groovin the Moo have sounded the alarm on an industry-wide crisis.

The case for protecting Australia's live music is clear and this submission supports the need for greater government intervention as a matter of priority.

2. Key issues

There are several key areas that should be considered when investigating the challenges facing the live music industry - the pressure of rising costs, the impact of extreme weather events, and state and local government regulations.

¹ University of Tasmania, The Economic and Cultural Value of Live Music in Australia, 2014.



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Rising operational costs are being felt across the spectrum, from smaller independent venues through to large multi-day festivals. At all levels, music events are finding it harder and harder to stay afloat. A recent landmark report revealed damning statistics that over a third of live music festivals are losing money². Meanwhile, over 1300 live music venues and stages across Australia have been permanently lost since 2020, shrinking the live music scene for smaller gigs nationwide by one-third³.

Rising insurance costs are another key pressure facing the industry. It has been reported that Australian live music venues have seen their public liability insurance policies increase tenfold from August 2022 to August 2023⁴.

Climate change is making extreme weather events more frequent and severe. The large-scale impact of these weather events has been felt in every corner of our society, and the live music industry is no exception to that. As extreme heat, heavy rainfall, record-breaking floods and extreme fire risk and drought become increasingly common, music festivals have been forced to make tough decisions. Many have been forced to cancel or postpone, usually at a late stage and at a significant financial cost.

An additional challenge facing live music events is the cost and navigation of complex and inconsistent regulatory requirements. The two key barriers are navigating police and security requirements, as well as navigating planning approvals with local governments. Policing and security are a vital part of ensuring the safety of attendants, however there are inconsistent rules across states and territories in relation to the level of policing required to ensure safety. NSW is the major outlier in terms of the additional cost of policing.

3. Recommendations

After consulting with peak bodies in the industry, I set out below a number of key areas to be considered in relation to the sustainability and growth of Australia's live music industry.

The rising cost of live music events is a significant issue. Additional public funding and/or grants, including extreme weather management support for outdoor festivals, is something that should be investigated.

² Music Australia, Soundcheck: Insights into Australia's music festival sector, 2024.

³ Apra Amcos, Annual Report, 2023.

⁴ Pickup J 2023, 'On the Brink: Why has music venue insurance gone through the roof?', *ArtsHub*, 8 August



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Tax offsets for live music venues are an affordable way to prop up smaller events and could operate in a similar way to the screen industry, where rebates are claimable if productions meet local content and employment quotas.

Insurance is a major issue at all levels. The safety of patrons at live music events is essential, but skyrocketing premiums have created a major barrier for events to go ahead at all. There is a role that the government can play in underwriting insurance for live music venues to support the increase in premiums.

Further, a reconsideration of the current approach to regulation is needed. The safety of attendees to live music events is paramount. However, there are tremendous disparities in regulations between states and territories, which brings into question whether the policing requirements of some areas outweigh reasonable safety standards. There is a need for greater collaboration at all levels of government on regulations and funding frameworks.

An additional area of focus should be on how we engage and encourage young people to experience live music. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, consumption attitudes have changed in the younger demographic who missed out on those crucial years of going to gigs and discovering live music after finishing school. This is compounded by the current cost of living crisis which is hitting young people the hardest and forcing them to be more selective about how they spend their discretionary income.