

[REDACTED]

Sent: Wednesday, 3 April 2024 6:48 PM
To: Committee, Communications (REPS)
Subject: Sub 1 - Damien Johnson - Live music inquiry

To whom it may concern,

My name is Damien Johnson, I am an Australian musician who performs under the name 'DAMIEN'.

I am writing to submit my experience and observations in relation to the challenges I face as a semi-professional musician in the Australian Music Industry.

Like many musical artists in Australia, creating **original** music has become an unsustainable venture, and one that requires me to work a full-time job in another sector in order to pursue.

Over the course of the past four years, my expenditure in relation to music has exceeded \$30,000 whilst the income I have generated from it would be no greater than \$5,000, with performance royalties, ticket sales and streaming royalties making up the majority of that revenue.

From my position, the factors that are making it most difficult to build a sustainable career as a musician, performing original works, are as follows:

1. **Market Saturation:** There is currently an abundance of people making original music, and basic laws of 'supply and demand' dictate that the value of something, in this case music, decreases, when the supply increases. It has been published that Spotify has in excess of 80,000 new songs submitted every day, which therefore makes the likelihood of one of my songs being consumed by an audience large enough to sustain me through streaming royalties or music purchases very slim.
2. **Marketing Costs:** To counter the over-saturated market, musicians are often advised to spend more on marketing costs. This makes surface level sense, as the psychology of music dictates that people like songs that they are familiar with, and that people become familiar with songs that they hear repeatedly. Therefore, in order to become an artist that someone will like enough to want to stream or purchase tickets to see, one needs to have their music repeatedly heard by the consumer. This is a basic principal of advertising. However, given the aforementioned magnitude of competition within the market, the cost of marketing increases, and becomes an expense that cannot be sustained by most musicians, and does not pay dividends in most cases.
3. **Lack of Public Exposure:** Of course, aside from marketing, music has traditionally relied on mass media platforms, particularly radio, to build familiarity amongst listeners which translates to those listeners buying tickets to live shows. However, with the exception of Community Radio Stations, such as 4ZZZ in Brisbane, local musicians are finding it increasingly difficult to get access to repeated airplay on popular stations such as Triple J or Commercial Radio, as these platforms are heavily curated and are largely dominated by overseas or already established acts. Furthermore, the reach of those stations seems to be decreasing and more and more audiences move to streaming and social media as their priority platform for music consumption.
4. **Disparity of Australia's population and cost of living:** Australia is in somewhat of a unique situation in that it is geographically large, whilst scare in population. This makes it difficult for local

artists, particularly artists with small to medium sized fan bases to tour, without going into significant financial loss.

5. International Pressures and Cultural Influences: I don't think the dominance of overseas artists, particularly from the USA and UK can be overstated. Australia seemingly consumes a far greater proportion of content produced from the USA and UK than locally produced content, which is possibly related to the money and promotion invested from those countries in order to infiltrate the Australian market. As such, the demand for locally produced content weakens, due to the psychological factors mentioned earlier. As demonstrated in current sales trends, the average Australian sees greater value in spending \$200 to see a US touring artist that they are familiar with than spend \$20 to see a local artist they do not know.

From my perspective, local musicians have become the 'mum and dad owned burger shop' competing against the behemoth that is McDonalds.

We simply do not have the capacity to provide music cheaply enough or to promote ourselves intensely enough to compete in the current market at an economic level.

However, I do not see this as simply an issue facing Australian musicians, but rather an indication of the growing cracks within capitalism as a whole, and a need for structural changes across society as a whole, not just within the music industry.

Sincerely,

Damien Johnson,

www.damiencreates.com