

From: Maxwell Dowling
To: [Committee, Communications \(REPS\)](#)
Subject: Music industry inquiry
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To whom it may concern,

My name is Max Dowling, I am a professional musician living in Melbourne.

It is my belief that the biggest challenge the Australian music industry faces is one at a deep cultural level; a societal undervaluing of modern Australian music.

This issue is equally inherent in both musicians and the community at large, and is one that has to be tackled on a multi-faceted and long-term front.

From an academic perspective, there is a fundamental devaluing of new Australian music. Recent cuts to the Victorian College of the Arts, largely due to the University of Melbourne's corporate mentality, increasingly see the watering down of the country's only genuine Australian contemporary music institution. Most Australians couldn't name VCA alumni, yet if we look to the rich cultural institutions of Europe and the US, historically we see how it is the makers of avant garde and experimental music that champion cultural movements of significance. Think - Stockhausen to electronic music, Gill Scott-Heron to hip hop, Schoenberg to 20th century and New Music.

Conservatoriums churn out students and seek to conserve. They churn out alumni indoctrinated with the belief that dead white European men were music's zenith. And in their own way, the plethora of music schools offering tuition in popular music styles are conservatoriums - they systematically prioritise American and European performers rather than drawing on Australia's rich history.

But so much of Australian music has little to do with institutions, so how do we devalue ourselves across more accessible means?

Our streaming services are saturated with international music, as are our radios, our advertising, and of course any festival large enough to afford it prioritises international acts over Australian. There are already means in action to see Australians featured on these platforms, but they need to be greater, and they need to be such that they can't be avoided so easily - such as radio stations doing all that they can to just play the bare minimum of new Australian music.

We need to look directly at the things that make us uniquely Australian rather than cringing away from them; none moreso than our First Nations peoples. If we find more ways to celebrate and uphold Aboriginal cultures in our music industry we celebrate incredible and unique cultures, and hold a candle to ourselves. It is no coincidence that so many of our most exciting and interesting artists have been and continue to be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

We can culturally be aware of Aboriginal people in many ways in the music industry. One of which would be mandatory (or as close to mandatory as possible) Welcome to Country at any festival with more than 200 people. Acknowledgement of Country on all live music events, including signage at any live music venue as to the traditional owners of the land.

Further than this, by encouraging all forms of diversity in Australian music, we not only achieve social progression, we achieve musical and cultural progression. To be put frank,

we are hearing far too many white male voices, that we have heard over and over for an age, and the more opportunities we are given to hear the voices of other genders, other cultures and other perspectives of all kinds we are given more interesting stories. This contributes to the development of a unique Australian voice, one that is made up of an enormous array of ethnic backgrounds, as well as people from all walks of life.

The continued life of the Australian music - not as an 'industry' but as a cultural force - depends on the encouragement of the things that are Australian, and contemporary, in all their rich diversity.

Best,

Max