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7 May, 2004

Brenton Holmes
Secretary
Senate Select Committee on the Free Trade Agreement between Australia and
The United States of America
Parliament House
Canberra

Dear Mr Holmes,

Re: The Australia – USA Free Trade Agreement

AMIN is the Australian Music Industry Network Inc. It is a federally constituted organisation made up of the state music industry association from Western Australian, The Northern Territory, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia.

AMIN's role is to provide a federal platform to represent the interests of the state based music industry associations and their constituencies to the government of Australia, other relevant organizations, individuals and the public within Australia, and the world.

AMIN is a member of Music Council of Australia. AMIN supports the issues and positions represented by the MCA submission.

This submission should be read in light of the MCA submission.

AMIN does not support the proposed free trade agreement, specifically in relation to those parts of the agreement that deal with cultural industries, of which contemporary music is one.

AMIN is not in a position to comment on aspects of the agreement that fall outside this scope. We concede that the agreement may benefit many Australians, however we believe that few Australians would be interested in "buying" these concessions with our culture.

Culturally, contemporary music defines Australia for more people than any other creative industry. From Johnny O'Keefe, Men At Work, INXS and Midnight Oil, to The John Butler Trio, Jet, Savage Garden and Powderfinger, contemporary music practitioners light the flame of patriotism and pride in Australians everywhere.

The contemporary music industry is still not an area of our cultural industries of which we have a clear picture, in economic and participation terms. Engagement between the industry and government is still at an infant stage. Work is currently being initiated through the Cultural Ministers' Council that will lead to this statistical analysis being carried out for the first time. Currently available statistical reports do not capture the complete industry, given the highly decentralised and independent nature of the developmental end of the industry. This is an industry with high aspirations for export market

development, as well as one that is being embraced in education, training, welfare, indigenous, regional and community development circles as an effective tool in achieving their own broad based objectives. The local cultural and role model element of Australian music industry practitioners is a critical element in these areas. Further, the contemporary music industry is based on a modern paradigm, with the global exploitation of intellectual property by micro businesses being the basis for it.

In AMIN's opinion it makes no sense for our country to compromise this industry at this critical point in time. Rather, our government should improve support through subsidy, regulation and tax concessions, and seek to maximise the contemporary music industry's achievement against its potential.

The contemporary music industry in Australia is already substantially dominated by American product. The major commercial players in the industry, as represented by ARIA (The Australian Record Industry Association) and CRA (Commercial Radio Australia), represent predominantly foreign interests, and in AMIN's opinion should not be considered to have Australian interests at heart. It is already a considerable struggle to promote Australian contemporary music product within Australia.

It is hard to imagine our airwaves, television screens, and other media delivery formats (current or future) available having a more American flavour than they already have.

There is no doubt that content quotas for commercial radio are a specific issue with enormous power in determining the success or otherwise of the Australian contemporary music industry. AMIN strongly supports the MCA's position on this - ie, that any cap on such quotas is regrettable, but that should such a cap be imposed then that 60% is a reasonable and acceptable level.

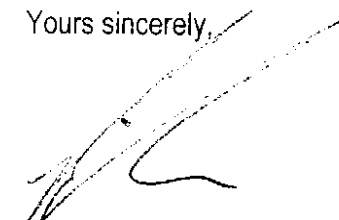
Australian governments should always retain the right to regulate similarly in any future media formats that may be considered to supercede the current commercial radio format.

AMIN concurs specifically with the other areas of content quota specification raised by the MCA (community radio, cable TV, general audiovisual, interactive media), and again wishes to emphasise the point that all current and anticipated media formats will at some point be superceded, and that Australia should always be in a position to regulate content quotas appropriately to ensure the preservation and advancement of our national identity.

AMIN also concurs specifically with the MCA's position on Quangos, Government procurement and intellectual property.

AMIN is disappointed that the Australian Government negotiators on the free trade agreement have compromised Australia's previous position of seeking to preserve our cultural identity through exclusion of cultural activities from FTA negotiations. This precedent, should this Australia/ USA Free Trade Agreement proceed in its current form, could have far reaching and dire effects not just here but internationally as well through the erosion of cultural diversity.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Bodlovich
Chair