



2022 National Cultural Policy Submission

Association of Artist Managers Australia

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Introduction

What is a music manager? The best way to describe it is to picture the artist as the Board of Directors, and the manager as their CEO. Managers are specialists in music career strategy, and are responsible for developing, mobilizing and executing that strategy in consultation with “the Board”. In this CEO position, the manager leads the company which could at any stage employ upwards of 20 staff on a contract or freelance basis (agents, publicists, media, brands, accountants, lawyers, record labels, publishers, etc) as well as negotiating with all existing partners investing in the artist’s start up. Managers often run numerous artist-run companies without corporate assistance, job security or professional development opportunities.

If anyone wants to support artists, there is no better voice for artist’s rights than their manager, because that is 100% the role. We are the voice of the artist.

The Association of Artist Managers is Australia’s peak body that develops, protects and promotes the reputation and interests of music managers, and their artists. We know that a well-supported, resourced, educated, and experienced manager will have much larger and long-lasting effects over multiple artists careers, and the music ecosystem as a whole. This has been proven in the peer-reviewed, research findings, recently commissioned by the AAM that shows a Social Return on Investment whereby every \$1 invested in Artist Managers, returns \$19.94 to stakeholders in quantified benefits. Now, that’s a lot of proven, peer-reviewed, bang for investors’ buck.

**PEER REVIEWED SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT:
\$1 : \$19.94, PER MANAGER, PER YEAR.**

[READ THE FULL REPORT HERE](#)

If this significant SROI is anything to go by, any threat to artist managers alone, is a threat to the wider industry nearly 20 times over. Unfortunately, this threat is very real, as music managers are facing a gargantuan crisis; one that’s been here before the pandemic even started.

“Australian managers are absolutely pivotal to the success of Australian artists internationally. The role of the artists manager has evolved more than any other position in the music ecosystem over the last decade, making Managers the most vital cog in the industry ecology, second only to the artists themselves.”

– **Millie Milgate, Sounds Australia**

“Artist managers play a pivotal role in realising the dreams of countless talented Australian recording artists on a daily basis. Beyond that, from event promotion to intellectual property, they require a diverse skillset that acts as a central touchpoint across all facets of a very broad industry. Providing the correct infrastructure, guidance and support for Australian artist managers, to equip them with the necessary business skills and resources, has a serious flow on effect for the rest of Australian music.”

– **Annabelle Herd, ARIA / PPCA**

Challenges

Despite proven value, Australian music managers at crisis point.

Professional music managers are leaving the industry in droves. This is happening because management financial structures have remained the same for decades, yet the responsibility, pressure and workload of modern managers is disproportionate to those of their industry colleagues. Scaling any business is hard enough at the best of times, but it is almost impossible in music management due to the intrinsic personal relationships necessary to do the job. However, 99% of the time, more artists are needed in order for the management company to remain financially viable. This puts an unsustainable workload onto music managers and their teams, from which burnout is inevitable. Most music managers in Australia are SMEs, so for those business owners, burnout has much deeper consequences than that of a job at a well-resourced company with access to support such as HR and stress-leave. Unsustainable workload and burnout is just the tip of the iceberg in this crisis facing managers.



Lack of First Nations Managers:

Part of moving towards having an Indigenous voice to parliament in the constitution, is abolishing colonial structures that create barriers to careers in our industry. The accessible nature of starting an artist management career is so clear an example of this, that there are hundreds of BIPOC family members and community who are artist managers and don't even know it. It's imperative for a First Nations-led industry that these managers are recognised, empowered and supported to pursue a long-term career.

Female Manager Retention:

An **AAM survey** found that retention and longevity for female managers decreases after age 35. It's difficult enough for women to have families and keep momentum in their careers when they have full-time employment, but many of these women are business-owners, making a career in music management even more difficult to sustain. An artist can't stop their plans and wait for their manager to get back from maternity leave. A female business-owner manager must take on more risk by investing in staff, or trusting that their artist won't leave them for another manager while on maternity leave. Aside from the challenges that have already existed for women in the Australian music industry (as demonstrated by the **Music Industry Review**), this explains the added pressure on female music managers and the need for critical support.

Myriad Issues:

Managers are on the front line of mental health within the music industry, given their closeness to artists, their role and responsibilities. Today's managers are working within outdated financial models that were established in the 1960's when managers had far less in their scope of work and responsibilities. The artist/manager relationship is extremely unique. The manager is the expert in the business field, but subservient to the artist. This can create friction and artist-to-manager bullying, contrary to Hollywood's stereotypical depiction of managers as the "villain". AAM members agree to a Code of Conduct, are nurturers and carers; there is too much risk and unpaid work to be motivated by anything unscrupulous. **Refer to this link for expanded report, including further details on these particular issues.**

"The role of the manager has also drastically changed in the last few years as the structural changes have required them to be more nimble in the face of huge pressures on the live sector which has traditionally been the main source of revenue for artists."

– **Stu Watters, Australian Live Music Business Council**

"To put it simply, it is the artist manager who needs to develop the artist from nothing to a marketable entity so that the labels, publishers and promoters can begin their work and do what they do best... Managers have more influence, responsibility, are higher skilled and harder working than they have ever been in human history. Why are they paid the same rate, and in some cases less, than they have ever been paid?"

– **Luke Girgis, The Music Network**

Lack of Representation & Support:

The AAM sits at the same tables as its peers from APRA AMCOS, ARIA, PCCA, AFA, LPA, and all of the state peak bodies (AMIN), yet we are the only one that doesn't have enough core funding (or revenue sources) to fund a full-time Executive Director (ED) position. Currently, the AAM can only afford 15 hours/week for the current ED. We have punched well above our weight in our representation and advocacy efforts throughout the pandemic and well before, thanks to the dedication of the voluntary board and passionate succession of EDs. But managers are too essential to the ecosystem to not have full-time representation at the AAM.

Proposed Solutions



CORE FUNDING

FOR THE AAM



OFFSET STAFF

FOR SME EMPLOYERS
VIA PAID INTERNSHIP
PROGRAM



FUNDING

THAT ALLOWS FOR
INVESTMENT IN
MANAGERS AND THEIR
BUSINESSES DIRECTLY

1. Core Funding for the AAM:

In the 2019 Federal Election, Tony Burke promised the AAM \$250,000 in core funding if Labor won.

We call upon the Albanese government to revisit this previous dedication, recognise its importance, and ultimately provide core-funding to the AAM. It is one of the fastest and easiest ways to initially address the urgent crisis facing Australian managers, and thus the entire industry. Through core funding the AAM can do more outreach work to source and develop First Nations managers, of which there is a critical shortage. Funding of support-organisations such as ours, that represent non-performing arts workers and service-businesses, would display a true understanding of the contemporary music industry ecosystem. This proposed solution directly addresses the pillars of First Nations First, and Strong Institutions.

The AAM supports all of the points provided in the Australian Contemporary Music Industry's Joint Submission, including its ask for the establishment of 'Music Australia'; an overarching body to represent our industry. In the absence of core funding directly to our organisation, we ask that the Charter of such a body, would ensure the core funding of the AAM, so we can continue to support one of the most pivotal and at-risk roles in the industry.

2. Offset Staff for SME Employers via Paid Internship Program

Despite being music-focussed, the entry to a music management career has more in common with a trade profession or small-business enterprise than it does with the other traditional areas of the Arts, that require more academic excellence. Much like a tradesperson, a music manager requires advanced or specialized skills that are gained primarily through experience, on-the-job training and professional development or vocational courses. **5**

The AAM specialises in running Professional Development Programs for its members, many of which focus around mentorship, including Co-Pilot (funded by Spotify), Passport (funded by Creative Victoria, Sounds Australia and DFAT), Revive (funded by Australia Council) and Walk This Way (funded by Gold Coast City Council). We have a proven record and reputation amongst our funding partners for delivering high quality programs that enhance the skills of managers. To create culture is to provide access to the process. This proposed paid internship program would create affordable access for every Australian to the industry and relieve burnt out managers of their workloads. It would also create a safety net for female managers looking to take maternity leave. It's win-win-win.

More support for managers = less burnout = more stories reaching audiences, once again addressing two core pillars of the Cultural Policy.

3. Funding That Allows For Investment In Managers & Their Businesses Directly

This directly addresses the pillar 'Centrality of the Artist as Worker', as it recognises the cultural creation of the creative team around the artist, as well as the economic impact they contribute. As became abundantly clear in the pandemic, the music industry is made up of a rich ecosystem of B2B contractors; a workforce that contributes meaningfully to Australia's economy and produces more jobs than mining. But even before the pandemic, this ecosystem was under threat with the burn-out crisis facing music managers. Considering their outdated, unsustainable financial structures, and many challenges mentioned above, it should be recognised that managers sit between arts and business. As such they should have access to specialised funding directly, rather than competing with their artists for funding designed for the creation of the product, rather than to enhance the imperative work of delivering it. Peer assessment panellists for business/enterprise-based creative grants should reflect the business-owners that are applying for them. This is a brilliant opportunity to work across portfolios, and ensure a culture rich in diversity, access, innovation and most importantly, creativity.

Conclusion

It's in the interest of the industry to have a strong management force, supported by a strong and reputable peak body like the AAM, because the artist is like a tree. It stands out, it's beautiful, it interacts with the public, there are different kinds, and some are bigger than others. The manager is the roots. It's hidden behind the scenes, buried under weight, busy at work, absorbing all nutrients to help support the growth and beauty of its tree. So where will you direct the water?

The Association of Artist Managers Australia is a signatory to the Australian Contemporary Music Industry's Joint Submission to this consultation. We endorse this submission and refer to it for the key priorities we believe must be considered within the renewed National Cultural Policy.