

RE: A New National Cultural Policy

The Live Music Office appreciates the opportunity to participate in this consultation.

As background, established in 2013 by the Australian Government, in partnership with APRA AMCOS, the Live Music Office was set up to review the impact of policy frameworks on the Australian live music sector. Our scope includes planning, licensing and regulatory policies, as well as cultural, audience and market development strategies.

The Live Music Office is also a signatory to the Australian Contemporary Music Industry Joint Submission, which references many of the key themes included here.

Firstly, we recognise the 5 pillars which guide the policy development and provide the following to each of these.

1. First Nations: recognising and respecting the crucial place of these stories at the centre of our arts and culture.

We strongly support prioritising our First Nations artists, industry and culture, and also acknowledge the contributions of the Australia Council for the Arts and in particular, the National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Music Office as an Indigenous-led initiative of APRA AMCOS and peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music creators to support the growth and development of songwriters and composers and advocate for a thriving, self-determined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music industry. The Live Music Office supports the priorities developed by First Nations Performing Arts companies and organisations which are also relevant to the contemporary music industry.

2. A place for every story: reflecting the diversity of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture.

Music participation encompasses a great range. We are an art-form and an industry. Businesses small and large. Professionals and amateurs. Artists and industry. Live music and recorded. Venues and festivals. Local scenes and export programs. From young to old. Across 6 Federated States and 10 Federal Territories.

We should work to ensure that no Australians for whom our cultural policy should support are left out because of their age; gender; socio-economic status; where they live and work; their artists, venues, events and programs; or because of the type of music they play.

This place would encompass diverse contemporary music genres, including but not limited to (in alphabetical order); blues, cultural and linguistically diverse (CALD), country, dance, electronic, experimental, first nations, folk, funk, hip hop, indie, interfaith, jazz, metal, pop, and rock artists – to name just a few.

3. The centrality of the artist: supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture.

We support the centrality of the artists, and without which we don't have so much to operate with. We recognise them as workers, often small businesses, sustaining a wider industry of agents, managers, venues, events, the recording industry and beyond.

To support the centrality of the artist we should ensure they are included, not just represented. Just as we acknowledge that priority areas including gender representation for example should be required in programs and panels, so too looking around the room when we convene as a sector and ensuring artists are present and actually included equally.

Better understanding artists pay metrics is an area where there is still a great deal of work to do and should be prioritised to ensure there are structures and navigation points to sustain working musicians in our industry.

Building value recognition across our society of our creators of culture is of primary importance. If we value our artists then we will happily pay to see their shows, buy their artwork and music, and ensure they are paid like any other worker. And beyond these, we will support their businesses, venues, festivals and events when they face challenges such as overlapping regulations, land use conflict across town centres, festivals end events sites and night-time economy areas and other red tape showstoppers and problems.

4. Strong institutions: providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture.

Our sector needs an ecology of venues and organisations to sustain participation and experience across the different types of music and sector development reflected in our country. Therefore, Institutions that have representative structures, and where artists are appropriately included have an important role to play to sustain our culture.

We raise the importance of education institutions in this context and encourage better partnerships between the education and cultural sectors to support professional development and pathways for students and graduates to reach wider audiences.

New and sustainable growth requires a new and ambitious model of investment. Currently, there is no single government entity that is able to strategise, support and invest in the development of the industry at a national level. COVID highlighted the disparate, unsupported circumstances of many small, highly valuable music organisations and programs – all essentially surviving hand to mouth – from one grant round to the next and with no guarantee of continued support. A national contemporary music development agency – ‘Music Australia’ could oversee and support the investment in organisations and key strategic objectives.

5. Reaching the audience: ensuring our stories reach the right people at home and abroad.

To bring two examples of how our stories can be nurtured and pathways enabled to reach people at home and abroad, we speak to the Live Music Office flagship micro festival program Live and Local and also recognise the work of Sounds Australia.

Our Live and Local program provides financial, policy, regulatory and industry support through local councils to artists, venues and industry, and where funding is provided exclusively to artists, curators and production support for a series of localised music events in town centres or suitable locations. The program delivers micro festivals showcasing events, professional development opportunities, and a local industry forum, all of which builds capacity and connectivity of local communities. The program gives local artists a paid platform within their communities and connects councils across a range of operations including regulatory functions with venues as cultural spaces. Artists have access to industry support and councils are engaged in policy and regulatory discussions. Mapping through local music census work provides data on artists and venues, and councils are encouraged to develop live music action plans and strategies to solidify priorities and opportunities. Currently underwritten primarily by APRA AMCOS with \$100k project funding from the Australia Council for the Arts, this program aligns strongly with the key pillars shaping this cultural policy consultation, where artists are central to the program, there’s a place for every story in the community, and support provided for artists and those involved to reach greater and wider audiences.

Direct Government investment in the regulatory and program work of the Live Music Office would accelerate the development of local regions and economic centres to develop long-term plans for live music activity. Whether its metropolitan, regional or remote, this will have a lasting economic, cultural and social impact on these centres and the liveability of these areas.

We also provide our support for Sounds Australia and their submission to this consultation reflecting their internationally recognised work, supporting visa concessions for Australian artists particularly to the US, and also a matched investment program to assist in ensuring our stories are available overseas in international markets.

In addition:

The live music and performance sector has been hard hit by the global pandemic. APRA AMCOS data showed that at the height of the pandemic, live music activity was just 6 per cent of the pre-COVID period. The first next step is to stabilise our industry by maintaining existing programs of support, urgently investing in skills lost to the pandemic and set in place the structures to support new growth by ensuring our visibility and attracting investment:

- Traineeships and skills development to address urgent skills shortage
- Business Interruption Insurance
- Ongoing funding for Support Act for crisis relief and create sustainable change in mental health and safety at work issues
- Creation of a dedicated Commonwealth Music Export Development Fund

The Live Music Office advocates for a strong and robust IP framework that supports and encourages the creation of music including across digital platforms.

We also stand up for local content development and delivery ensuring the visibility and prominence of Australian music content. Australian music must remain easily accessible to all Australians and helps to develop and reflect a sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity that is loved locally and globally. Whether its live, digital, broadcast or on screen or digital games, local songs are a vital means of expressing our history, ideas, perspectives, values and identity and equally a means of projecting that voice to our fellow Australians and to the world.

In closing, in our view the single biggest incentive to increase the opportunity for live music activation across Australia is tax offsets for live music.

Building on previous research from EY, APRA AMCOS commissioned a report from Oxford Economics on how tax incentives for venues and artists could support live music.

- OE found a rebatable tax offset would incentivise existing live music venues to host more live performances and enable non-live music venues to host live music performances.
- Modelling shows that a tax offset would lift artist's venue-based performance incomes by up to 20%.
- More gigs directly translate into more musicians hired and paid to play. In total, artist incomes would be expected to lift by between \$85 to \$140 million depending on the scenario modelled. If tax offset were applied to both live and non-live venues the lift in income would be an estimated \$175m or more.
- A tax offset for artists based on associated touring travel expenses - transport (van/vehicle hire and airfares) and accommodations could return between \$4 and \$9 million per annum to Australian touring artists.
- Tax offsets favoured over a grants program as offsets are non-competitive and more sustainable long term.

We trust this submission is of value to the consultation and look forward to further supporting the work of the Australian Government through the delivery of the new National Cultural Policy.

Sincerely,
John Wardle
Live Music Office