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Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts  
Department of the House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

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**MusicSA Submission - Parliamentary Inquiry into the Australian Live Music Industry**

MusicSA commends The House Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts on initiating this new inquiry into the current challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry.

MusicSA is the peak body for the South Australian contemporary music industry. A not-for-profit organisation MusicSA exists to promote, support and develop the local industry by nurturing careers, creating pathways, delivering industry and professional development opportunities, and connecting artists, audiences, venues and businesses.

MusicSA, together with the coalition of state and territory peak bodies (QMusic, MusicNSW, MusicACT, MusicVIC, MusicTAS, MusicNT and WAM) forms AMIN, the Australian Music Industry Network, which recognises that a healthy national music industry is scaffolded by thriving and growing state industries.

It is widely acknowledged that the music industry was one of the hardest hit industries during the pandemic and is taking years longer than anticipated to rebuild. New challenges continue to disrupt the national live music industry:

- Audiences in general, and specifically young audiences, were impacted by COVID. Audience behaviour, expectation and demand has fundamentally changed.
- Professional artists continue to earn less than ever before at a time when costs of living are increasing.
- Labour and skills shortages exist across the whole industry and there is a need to focus on upskilling young people and developing future work forces.
- Lack of music education and music pathways in schools, tertiary and training make this industry invisible and impenetrable for young people.
- Regional audiences and touring frameworks need to be rebuilt in order for communities to engage with, make and participate in music.
- Supply chain issues continue and the costs of commercial artist fees, equipment, travel and business are prohibitive and continue to increase.
- The traditional live music bastions, venues and festivals, face closure and cancellation.

MusicSA believes South Australia's local music industry faces additional barriers:

- Limited state government funding and investment support compared to other states and jurisdictions.
- Lack of policy settings to elevate contemporary and live music.

- Lack of nuanced and structured pathways for, and investment in, emerging artists and businesses to transition to long-term sustainability in South Australia.
- The perception that artists and industry professionals need to leave South Australia in order to be 'successful'.
- Geographical distance from the eastern states significantly disadvantages artists, venues, festivals and music businesses.
- Lack of visibility and traction with national industry, and therefore lack of opportunities and exposure.
- Declining audience attendances and unpredictable audience numbers affect the ability and viability of live music in South Australia across all tiers.
- Identified gaps in the scale of venues in South Australia, especially at the larger scale capacity.

An inherent disadvantage exists for the states and territories that sit outside of the eastern seaboard where most national music hubs, organisations and business is located. This disadvantage was acknowledged during the formation of Music Australia, but has not yet been properly addressed in its programs and initiatives. This inherent disadvantage is further compounded by inequitable state and local government funding for state-based contemporary music sectors.

South Australia receives less state-based support for contemporary music than other jurisdictions and therefore has less capacity to invest in sustainability, artist development and career pathways. Local artists and music businesses are under-invested in and less primed to take advantage of national and global showcase and export opportunities, which simply increases the disadvantage. The flow-on impacts of under-investment prevents South Australia's contemporary music sector from reaching its full potential as a mature and thriving industry and we continually haemorrhage emerging artists and businesses to national and international business hubs. Grass roots artists and businesses don't consider it is viable to build sustainable careers in music from here.

Consequently, South Australia nurtures a constantly unrealised and emerging industry that falls short of becoming the established, independent and sustainable working industry we know it can be. Whilst MusicSA agrees in principle that federal funding for contemporary music in Australia should not be allocated to areas that state governments 'should' be funding, some states and territories are not funding grassroots industry development to adequate levels and federal funding policies must take this into account in order to support a more equitable, thriving national industry and to address the disproportionate geographical and investment disadvantages.

In order to bolster South Australia's contemporary music industry and to identify pathways and industry development opportunities, MusicSA has just run its first annual industry survey to assess the 'state of the sector'. In the absence of dedicated South Australian-based research on the industry since the end of the pandemic, MusicSA has also commissioned an independent report on the current economic impact of contemporary music in South Australia and has asked state government to invest in the development of a ten-year growth strategy for the industry as a mechanism to develop artists, audiences, pathways, local music businesses and leverage economic benefits. Current levels of investment are simply not

enough to bridge the gap between the local grassroots industry and national and global opportunities, or to rebuild those areas of the live music industry most fractured by today's complex cost and business pressures.

South Australia has a world-class talent pool and no shortage of emerging artists and bands. However, the state lacks a connected and thriving network of sustainable local businesses, roles and functions that support artists to grow careers and contribute to the robust ecology of music e.g. artist managers, labels, booking agents, marketing, PR & digital content, tour managers, festival coordinators and venue operators. We also experience a significant lack of capacity in engaging and supporting First Nations artists and music professionals. The sector-wide gap in industry professionals and experts arises from the lack of training and education pathways, our geographical distance from the eastern music hubs and the constantly 'emerging' cycle of our state-based industry. South Australia is in desperate need of hands-on mentoring programs across all facets of industry to skill up our industry professionals, leverage the success of our artists and the ecosystem, and build a thriving base of working professionals who chose to live in South Australia rather than relocate in order to achieve career stability.

South Australia has a warranted reputation for late ticket buying and is risky territory for a lot of national and international touring product. Altered audience behaviour since the pandemic continues to exacerbate the risk to promoters in tandem with the escalating costs of business and cost-of-living crisis, and it is common for many touring acts to pass us by. This has a detrimental and cumulative impact on both audience and industry development – South Australian audiences miss out on a significant amount of touring live music across all tiers and genres, and local artists miss out on local and touring supports and exposure. The limited regional touring network in South Australia that previously existed, disintegrated during the pandemic and has not been rebuilt. MusicSA's consultation with the sector highlights several regions that have a willingness to participate in a touring framework, which would benefit local acts learning to tour, viability for interstate touring acts and build audiences, but lack the expertise and capacity without tailored industry development support.

South Australia, as a smaller population state, is more vulnerable to the pressures impacting live music venues and festivals, has lost important venues and festivals recently and will experience further losses. MusicSA commends the South Australian Government for recent crisis funding allocated to venues but is concerned that temporary band-aid solutions are being offered, rather than more rigorous and policy-led investment that underpins industry transition and long-term sustainable change. Live music audiences have fundamentally changed, and technology and consumer trends have fundamentally changed artist discoverability and career pathways. Audiences and consumers will not revert back to previous patterns of behaviour and venues and festivals will need to continue to adapt to changing market conditions. That does not negate the very real need for increased audience development, creating young music audiences for the future or the critical need for grassroots venues and performance platforms for developing live artists and audiences, but it is time to acknowledge new audiences are demanding new environments and new ways to experience music, and the live music industry will need to recalibrate to consumer trends and tastes.

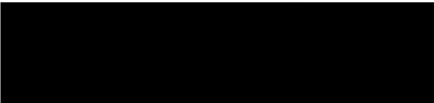
Despite the 'doom-and-gloom' forecasts over the future of our live music industry, MusicSA retains a strong sense of optimism. Precisely because the music industry globally is in a state of rapid transition, South Australia has a unique and once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform its local industry into a globally connected, globally relevant music hub that aligns with our strong cultural heritage and practice. Technology and the rise of a new global music community and audience presents new opportunities for local artist discoverability and the businesses that scaffold and represent them, all from a vibrant, liveable, affordable and creative state.

In summary, MusicSA considers the Australian live music industry must continue to be properly supported and invested in, and recognises that a healthy, thriving national industry is underpinned by strong and vibrant state-based grassroots industries. A robust and healthy Australian live music industry is achieved by:

- Valuing artists and placing them at the centre of the industry.
- Recognising that the live music sector and the music industry in general is in a state of transition.
- Acknowledging that audience and consumer trends have fundamentally changed, and that proactive and innovative audience development is central to the future of live music in Australia.
- The creation of new and visible pathways in music education and training, in schools and tertiary institutions, as a major contributor to future music audiences and workforces.
- Addressing the disadvantage that many urban and regional areas across Australia experience in the development and delivery of grassroots live music due to siloed jurisdictional funding and geographical distance from national music and business hubs.
- Nuanced and regional-specific industry development and investment opportunities to transition to, and build, sustainable and diverse business models for live music.
- Accelerated mentoring programs for artists, First Nations people, managers and small music businesses.
- Streamlined and positive regulation and legislation that supports live music, including the consideration of music/ cultural/ entertainment 'precincts' in development planning and approvals.
- Funding academically-framed and independent data gathering and reporting that is specific to state and national industry.

MusicSA appreciates the opportunity to make this submission and looks forward to the findings and outcomes of this Parliamentary Inquiry into the Australian Live Music Industry.

Sincerely,



Christine Schloithe  
CEO, MusicSA