

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE AUSTRALIAN MUSIC INDUSTRY

BACKGROUND:

I am a professional musician, playing jazz and a range of dance music and original independent music. I have been working professionally in Sydney for about 30 years with the past four years spent on the Central Coast (NSW).

PERSPECTIVE:

This submission is concerned with the economy of sustaining a career as a musician over a long-term period, and briefly outlines the elements that hinder and help this employment.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK:

It takes about 10 years to learn to play an instrument and hone the skills to perform publicly at a professional level.

Learning to read music and having a thorough understanding of the theoretical concepts of music gives a musician the ability to pass on musical knowledge to others.

Being employed as an instrumental tutor is key to how my musical career is sustained. An optimal situation is to be employed by a school as a music tutor as there are studios and equipment, administration infrastructure, educational support, and a generous hourly rate for tutors.

A large component of my gig income comes from freelance work. This is where there is a network of musicians looking to book other musicians to complete an ensemble that is hired to work on a single occasion or (less often) on a regular basis, called a “residency”.

Work is also generated by a band that one is a member of, but one needs to be a member of a number of bands as a single band rarely generates enough work to fill a musician’s weekly schedule.

ISSUES:

A musician’s touring commitments and school timetabling so priorities can be a cause of conflict that can mean a teaching post is sacrificed to a touring schedule.

Musicians’ incomes originated the term “the gig economy”. Superannuation is never offered as part of a performance fee and frequently is not offered to music tutors by the school/s where they teach.

The rates to hire musicians varies widely. It is generally understood that paying a musician to set up their own equipment (in their own time), to perform music and entertain a gathering of people, is worth a considerable amount less than a tradesman.

There is heavy equipment to load into venues, so musicians need vehicular access and parking provisions. At festivals and public events these are offered. However, musicians are frequently doing one-off events, and need vehicular access and parking provisions.

SUGGESTIONS:

Music education is key to ensuring that music is valued in Australian society. Investment in music education takes the long-term view that music gives positive outcomes for practitioners and audiences. Primary school music education in the public sector is underfunded, for example, and school teachers without a knowledge of music are attempting to engage students in playing music. The programme of using musicians to go into public schools to teach this specialised subject could be more generously rolled out than current levels of funding.

Local councils could offer peppercorn rents on long running vacant buildings to use by musicians for rehearsal/creative spaces.

Local councils can also play a role in encouraging small venues to hire live music. Assistance can be through subsidised advertising, compact grant packages, and encouraging live music precincts that are not plagued by unreasonable residents' noise complaints.

Issuing a loading pass for musicians allowing use of loading zones and opening up designated parking places at venues.

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