



**Submission to the House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Communications, the Arts and Sport
*Inquiry into Arts and Cultural Philanthropy***

**Australasian Music Publishers' Association Limited (AMPAL)
25 February 2026**

About AMPAL

The Australasian Music Publishers' Association Limited (**AMPAL**) is the music industry not-for-profit association (**NFP**) representing around 60 music publishing companies across Australia and New Zealand. Our members range from major global publishers to small independents, but they all share one purpose: to protect, promote and license the work of songwriters and composers. Music publishers invest in songwriters, both economically (including advances, royalties and other payments) and more holistically in the way they work with songwriters creatively, and are committed to developing their export potential. Collectively, our members help thousands of Australian creators earn a living and take their music to the world.

Introduction

AMPAL welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Standing Committee's inquiry into arts and cultural philanthropy.

From AMPAL's perspective, philanthropy operates very differently across the cultural ecosystem. For organisations involved in the so-called "higher arts", there is a long and storied tradition of philanthropy, which is built into their business model. Conversely, for music industry peak bodies and not-for-profit associations, and for contemporary music more generally, it is not.

Understanding why that difference exists, and how it might be addressed, is central to strengthening Australia's cultural landscape.

Art Music - Where Philanthropy Is Embedded

It is widely recognised that the higher arts - including orchestral music, ballet, opera and contemporary art music - operate within funding models that incorporate philanthropy as a structural component. Major performing arts organisations routinely integrate private giving, foundations and benefactor programs into their core financial frameworks.

This is also reflected in the so-called "art music" publishing sector. Music publishers such as Wise Music Australia represent composers whose work is commissioned by organisations including Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Dance Company, Bangarra Dance Theatre and The Australian Ballet, where philanthropic investment frequently underpins the commissioning of new Australian scores.

In this environment:

- philanthropy supports the creation of new work;
- development cycles are long;

- commissioning risk is high; and
- private support is understood as part of the ecosystem.

As noted by **Jane English, Managing Director, Wise Music Australia:**

“Many Australian composers earn their livelihood from the receipt of commissions to create musical compositions for ballet, dance, orchestra, theatre. These commissioners are primarily organisations that are privately funded (by, for example, the Judith Neilson Foundation – and hundreds more). These Australian composers are often not performers, nor does their music attract high streaming numbers, so these commission fees can be their principal income. The philanthropy to these organisations is frequently the genesis of the creation of Australian “high art” music, and the stage productions embodying it.”

Art music provides a clear example of philanthropy functioning as a foundational pillar within a cultural model. Without the initial philanthropy, the work in question would be unviable and they would never be created in the first place.

In the art music sector, philanthropy is not an optional supplement. It is embedded, expected and structurally integrated into the creation of new Australian works. This model demonstrates that where pathways are clear and cultural value is widely recognised, philanthropy can (and does) play a sustained and meaningful role.

Why Philanthropy Is Not Embedded in Music Industry NFPs

While philanthropy is built into art music structures, it is not a core feature of most music industry NFPs (or, for that matter, contemporary music players more generally). The reasons are practical rather than philosophical.

Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) Status

Many music industry bodies do not qualify for Deductible Gift Recipient (**DGR**) status.

Without DGR status:

- donations are not tax-deductible;
- philanthropic giving becomes less attractive; and
- potential donors may face adverse tax implications.

For philanthropists seeking to support cultural initiatives, this creates an immediate barrier. There is currently no clear, accessible pathway for donors wishing to support music industry NFPs in the same way they might support major higher arts organisations. As a result, these NFPs often fall into the “too hard” basket.

Capacity Constraints

AMPAL operates with minimal personnel. With limited resources, it is not feasible to:

- employ specialist philanthropy staff;
- develop structured donor programs;
- participate meaningfully in arts industry “giving days”; and
- build long-term philanthropic strategies.

When NFPs are operating at capacity simply to deliver core services to members, dedicating time and funds to philanthropic fundraising is not commercially viable.

If clearer pathways existed, including DGR eligibility and supportive policy settings, NFPs may be more likely to:

- incorporate philanthropy into their business models;
- invest in fundraising expertise;
- build teams capable of engaging donors professionally; and
- create stable employment opportunities within the cultural sector.

At present, the lack of structural incentives and limited organisational capacity make this unrealistic.

Perception and Clarity

For potential donors, there is limited clarity around:

- how to give;
- what the benefit is;
- what the structural mechanism would be; and
- whether donations align with recognised philanthropic categories.

Without policy clarity and recognised frameworks, philanthropic engagement remains underdeveloped.

Policy Considerations

AMPAL respectfully submits that the Standing Committee may wish to consider:

- reviewing DGR eligibility pathways for music industry and other cultural NFPs;
- exploring clearer mechanisms for philanthropic support of cultural sector infrastructure, including core contribution funding; and
- ensuring that smaller cultural organisations are not structurally excluded from philanthropic participation due to administrative or tax barriers.

Strengthening these pathways could increase philanthropic engagement in the broader music sector, not just in art music.

Conclusion

Art music demonstrates that philanthropy can be successfully embedded within a cultural model when pathways are clear and structurally supported.

In contrast, music industry NFPs face regulatory and capacity barriers that make philanthropic participation difficult. If those barriers were reduced, particularly in relation to DGR eligibility and structural clarity, philanthropic support for sector infrastructure may become more viable.

Such reform could strengthen the sustainability of Australia's cultural ecosystem by enabling the organisations that support creators to build capacity, create employment and contribute to long-term cultural development.

AMPAL would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with the Standing Committee.

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