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Supporting the Australian Live Music Industry: A Call for Action and Investment

Introduction

The live music industry in Australia is at a pivotal moment. The sector, comprising of festivals, venues, and a broad spectrum of supporting roles, contributes significantly to the national cultural landscape and economy. However, it currently faces unprecedented challenges that threaten its viability and future growth. The financial burdens of rising operational costs underscore the need for comprehensive support from the government alongside private investment. The benefit to local economies and artist development is clear and is at serious risk.

Sustainability and Growth of the Industry

The financial viability of live music venues and festivals is one of the greatest issues facing the industry today. In the last couple of years, the sector has experienced a dramatic escalation in costs, with increases of 30% to 40%, without a corresponding rise in income potential if they are expected to stand on sales alone. Ticket sales remain robust, yet the static pricing model means that increased revenue does not offset the surge in expenses. This untenable financial equation has already led to cancellations of numerous festivals across the country, each a blow to the cultural and economic vitality of their communities. There are many industries that require government investment to catalyse private investment and this is now the time to recognise the live music industry and festivals require this stimulus in the same way that many other industries receive such funds.

Suitability and Location of Venues

For organisers, participants, and attendees, the suitability and location of venues are crucial. Venues must be accessible, provide adequate infrastructure, and enhance the attendee experience while meeting logistical needs of performers and event staff. Strategic venue selection fosters better audience engagement and operational efficiency, which are vital for the long-term sustainability of festivals and live events.

Artist Development and Career Pathways

Live festivals and venues are integral to nurturing new talent. These platforms give musicians, artists, crew and technicians their start, enabling them to launch careers that can thrive both nationally and internationally. The health of this ecosystem directly influences the success of artists and the cultural richness of the music scene.

Capacity Building in Event Facilitation and Promotion

Enhancing the skills and capabilities of those who facilitate and promote live music events is essential. Capacity building through training programs, investment in technology, and sharing best practices can elevate the quality and financial success of festivals and venues, making them more resilient and adaptable to changing industry dynamics.

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Funding in the form of rebates needs to be made available to festivals and venues that provide on the job training for technicians and crew. There should be a system to claim funds for the training provided to the countless people who get their career started in this way.

Local Economic Benefits

The economic impact of live music extends beyond direct revenue from ticket sales. Festivals and live events contribute substantially to local economies through tourism, hospitality, and trade, generating employment and stimulating regional development. These events are catalysts for economic activity, with benefits that ripple through various sectors. In order to continue delivering billions to the economy the industry needs shoring up.

Grant and Support Programs

Recognising the significant economic and cultural contributions of the live music industry, it is clear that there is a need for targeted grant and support programs. We are at a very dangerous point with festivals cancelling and venues closing all over the country. Government investment can act as a catalyst, stimulating further private investment even in challenging times. This financial support should not be seen merely as a subsidy but as a strategic investment in the cultural and economic health of the nation.

The major events that do receive government funds, such as major sporting events, are in a much stronger position because they are not expected to stand on box office alone. Nor should major live music events and major arts events. For those who prove they can deliver there must be some funding available immediately.

Conclusion: A Call to Action

The live music industry including venues and festivals is a cornerstone of Australia's cultural identity and economic prosperity. The challenges it faces are significant but not insurmountable. With targeted government funding, which will constitute only a minor fraction of overall operational costs, we can provide a major incentive and confidence boost for industry stakeholders. This investment will safeguard the industry's future, supporting venues and festivals that are crucial for career development of artists and the economic and cultural enrichment of Australia. We urge the Government to commit to securing the future of live music venues and festivals, ensuring that this vibrant industry not only survives but thrives in the years to come.

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