

**Submission
No 186**

**INQUIRY INTO THE MUSIC AND ARTS ECONOMY IN
NEW SOUTH WALES**

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My name is Chris Richter and I am a musician and music mentor in northern NSW Australia.

When I first finished school I toured Australia with a contemporary band for 12 months and have been involved in the music industry ever since. I taught private music lesson in a small town in Inverell NSW for 10 years, have recorded many albums and singles with many local artists, songwriting and performing at festivals and 100's of rural music events. I now take rural musicians on tours to Europe and organise events for local performers, especially singer/songwriters.

I do this because I am passionate about music but more passionate about seeing people experience life through music. Music performing and writing builds self confidence, builds community, provides a platform for people to travel and experience their own country and other countries.

The biggest question I am asked all the time by aspiring musicians and singers is 'how to I become a full time musicians'. I tell them to study classical music as it is the only music in Australia with a career path, a proper wage and superannuation for musicians and composers, even though very few ever make it to the paid orchestra level. Or I suggest they take a career in another industry to fund their career in music.

The biggest challenge is that it is virtually impossible in Australia to give even a remote guarantee that a person can have a full time career in music because music in Australia is not designed to support full time musicians.

There are many reasons for this. One is because the classical industry takes the lion's share of the government funding (See every report on music finding in Australia.) but it is more because Australia does not value contemporary music and chooses to support predominantly the United States music industry instead of it's own talent and industry.

Radio stations have a very small requirement to play Australian content. Whereas it should be the other way round. The attitude in Australian radio seems to be that it is unfair they 'HAVE' to play 10% to 25% minimum of Australian music. We have so much lost our pride of our own country. We should have quotas define requirements to play at least 25% of non-Australian music because we can't get enough Australian music. Does the US have a quote to make sure they play at least 25% US music as a minimum? Crazy right....?

Under the provisions of the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement (Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement, Annex II, Schedule of Australia we are basically saying we agree that we should play 75% US/other music and only 25% Australian music for Australians to listen too. This means songwriting, composers and musicians in the US/other siphon out 75% of the money collected by music collection agencies to non-Australian composers and record companies.

The fundamental issue is not about quotas but about the lack of guts to put in systems that support Australian music because we are too tied to other countries as being 'better'.

If the argument is that Australia doesn't have enough good musicians and composers then that's where we need to start.

(Disclaimer: We actually already have amazing performers and musicians, they just can't afford to be performers and musicians in the current Australian environment.)

Funding school music teachers to teach music beyond the 'music appreciation' level, support large music and creative writing camps and events at a much greater scale will give an influx of quality music creators and performers, which will then require a more serious look at contemporary (non-pub) venues as the larger portion of arts infrastructure funding goes to a very small collection mainly classical arts venues. In turn this will mean a more serious look at exporting Australian music in a properly supported format.

If Australia wants to be in a position to have full time musicians beyond the classical scene then we need to put the ground work in and really develop people's skills.

Education and opportunity are the two key elements that will provide the basis for a real Australian music industry. But on top of this, massive changes in policies that stop the media and major labels from dominating the industry with overseas based music and musicians.

How many Australian bands fill Australian stadiums compared to the number of overseas bands that fill stadiums? Very few. This is because as a country we are really poor at promoting and supporting our own musicians. They can barely afford to live let alone organise a major tour because Australians and Australian media seem to think that imported music is way better than what we make locally. As we know, we have more talent than what you can poke a stick at, we just suck at supporting them and promoting these artists.

To make it easier for me to do what I do is to make it actually possible for musicians to have a career. To do this, massive policy change is needed not just in the music industry but in the media industry. Massive amounts of support and funding need to be directed to build, promote and support Australian artists to give an actual career path that has a guaranteed minimum wage that is at least equal to the actual minimum wage.

I am available 24/7 to discuss specific ideas, to implement change in policy from a musicians point of view and to start the slow process of making Australian music great - like it should be.

The key changes that need to happen are:

- **Better education for musicians** that want a career in music.
- **Changes to how media promotes Australian music** so that people start to want to go to Australian music performances. For example, if radio plays Taylor Swift once every hour, then of course people will support and want to go to a Taylor Swift concert. If Australian radio play a Melanie Dyer song every hour then they would support a Melanie Dyer concert. It is not rocket science really. But to do this will mean taking a vested interest back in the media by the Australian government. This goes for all the arts areas and for film and TV.
- **More government supported venues that encourage local music** and I think critical to all of this is providing **a network of funded events managers to make these activities happen**. Without a stage, real or virtual for performers to be on, they have nowhere to go and the audiences don't have the opportunities to really experience original Australian music outside of a pub.
- **A digital media team** in this day and age would also provide a critical path in assisting contemporary artists to get out virtually for both Australian and global audiences. Developing their websites, their videos, their digital footprint which in turn builds the digital footprint of Australia.

- **A fully supported education program** that takes those with the potential to have a full time career and give them the opportunity to write, record and perform with the best in Australia and travel overseas to promote Australian Music would both support the existing professional musicians and build the next generation to be ready to take Australia to the world.

Australian music 'could' be a powerful force and provide an invaluable connection between Australia and other countries if we start respecting and supporting our own creative people and giving contemporary (this includes Jazz, R&B, country and many other flavours) music a real future then will not lose what we already have but will be able to make it grow here and globally. At this stage we are risking losing it.

Thank you for your consideration.