

**Submission
No 194**

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

Name: Ms Mariko Gray
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I'm a female musician in underground genres, mainly metal and industrial. Music in NSW is important to me, because it gives me a sense of purpose and community that helps me get through every day life. In fact, I have recently recovered from a very difficult two-year period of depression, and music has been a significant contributor to my mental well-being during that time, helping me to hold on to life, express my emotions, and actually get out of the house to reconnect with friends and society. If I hadn't had music to help me through those darkest of times, then despite the fantastic support of my family and medical professionals, I do believe that I would have been at a much higher risk for suicide attempts. And now that I have recovered, I strongly believe that I need to give back to this culture, to keep creating music in the hopes that I too can help others through their own dark moments. Given the high rates of conditions such as depression that currently exist, I feel that this goal is more important than ever.

There are some challenges to achieving this goal however. Music is a difficult path to take, given the high number of hours required to produce music, from learning to rehearsing to recording and performing, but which generally has a relatively low financial return that puts pressure on smaller artists to make compromises between honing their craft or making ends meet through a day job. This can be compounded by policies which reduce the number of venues available (eg. vexatious noise complaints), reduce the attractiveness of smaller local music events to punters (eg. poor late night public transport options), restrict the ability of small artists to promote particularly on the streets (eg. flyers and busking), and which otherwise brush off music as being unimportant or frivolous despite the good it does for people's psychological well-being.

Other challenges are faced by musicians in my particular niche - being in an underground genre often misunderstood by the mainstream, and being a female in an otherwise male-dominated scene. It is frustrating that in certain competitions or funding sources, underground genres are often overlooked despite playing an important role in the lives of its very loyal fans. And while women are gradually being given more support to close the gap in more mainstream styles of music, less support appears to be given to those in heavier genres that are perceived to be more masculine. I have been attacked for trying to promote women in metal previously, and while I made it through that, it concerns me that such attitudes could be preventing many more females from progressing through the genre.

Other things I wonder about when it comes to music in NSW include the difficulty of touring outside the major cities, the loss of up and coming local musicians to other countries where advancing in music is easier, and the excess of gambling machines in venues which may assist in producing revenue for them but does such great harm to its victims. On that last note, it was heartening to see the Bald Faced Stag remove its pokies, but other venues may need assistance and a resurgence in local music culture supported by government policies to be able to follow that example.

In summary, perhaps my main recommendations for change would include:

- recognising the role music plays in psychological well-being,
- implementing policies that support venues for live local music,
- improve late night public transport, particularly on Friday and Saturday,
- support the ability of local artists to promote their music and their events,
- amend programs or policies which ignore the existence of underground music,
- support programs which assist females and other minorities in music, particularly in underground and other more male-dominated genres,
- consider programs which support touring across NSW,
- consider assisting venues transition away from harmful gambling, and to increasingly offer live music instead.

Thank you for considering my submission. For my own part, I will continue trying to help others through my music, support the underground music scene, and particularly support females within it, both the musicians and the audio engineers who make it possible. I'm not anyone special, but I have already run small local gigs promoting women, created the all-female electronic/industrial metal band Rainbow Death Ray, and run the Facebook group Female Audio Engineers Australia. And now that I have recovered from my depression and have my energy back, I fully intend to continue supporting positive change where I can, and look forward to the positive outcomes of this inquiry.