

**Submission
No 219**

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

Name: Mr Sean Wayland

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The music and arts economy in New South Wales

This inquiry was established on 23 November 2017 to inquire into and report on the music and arts economy in New South Wales.

Submission by Sean Wayland
Feb 25th 2018

Dear Madam/Sir:

Thanks for this opportunity to submit to your enquiry.

At the outset I want to state that surely where the Australian government is concerned Australian musicians and Australian compositions should get the greatest benefit from government policy and from organisations like the Australia council and the ABC which were created to forge an Australian identity. I do not believe this is the case. Australians import most of their music and it is greatly supported by the Australian government through government grants to festivals and music organisations and through legislation.

My Background:

I am an Australian musician (born in Sydney in 1969) . I studied jazz at the Sydney Conservatorium of music. I have taught there and at the Australian institute of music. I have received various Australia council grants to study in the USA and also to record and tour music in Australia and internationally.

I relocated to the USA (1999-2002 and again 2005 till present). Between 2003 and 2005 I lived in Australia and completed a masters degree in music performance at the Australian institute of music. I presently live in Jersey City, New Jersey across the river from New York City. I continue to perform there and occasionally internationally. I have released over 25 albums , mostly of original compositions. I am a proud supporter of Australian music. I am one of few Australian musicians to release an album wholly made up of "covers" of Australian music. I was one of the founding members of the "Jazzgroove Association". I have also served on various committees including presently "AIMA Australian Independent Musicians Association " and in the past committees of the Sydney Improvised Music Association SIMA and the jazz coordination association of Australia. As a jazz musician I am pretty well known in Australia and internationally. More so than the average Australian jazz musician. I have worked with many of Australia's greatest musicians like Jim Moginie, Bernie McGann, Don Burrows, Virgil Donati etc. I have also worked for world famous non Australian musicians like Wayne Krantz, Allan Holdsworth and Madeleine Peyroux.

I have a unique interesting perspective of the Australian music industry because I grew up in the time of Countdown and Sounds when Australian music was prevalent in the Australian media. I also left home at a late age (30) and returned home briefly aged 34 for a few years. I continue to return to Australia regularly to perform and may well perform at jazz festivals in Australia later this year. I have an entrepreneurial spirit and am one of the few Australian jazz musicians to attempt to tour Australia with an international musician or 2 in tow.

In real dollar terms I estimate that Australians import over 90 percent of music they pay for in terms of recorded music and tickets to live shows.

I had dinner last night with some musician friends and I sat with a vocalist from Spain.

In Spain they listen to a majority of Spanish music on the radio and media growing up.

There is a circuit of music festivals there in towns of all sizes and it creates work for Spanish musicians. Spanish people are not waiting for people to come from overseas to entertain them and would happily pay to see Spanish musicians.

Similarly here in the USA most of the most successful artists are American. They are supported by local media including non-profit organisations like PBS. People listening to British people playing pop music is described as an "invasion". It is a very different mindset to the Australian one in my opinion.

In order to write this letter I did as much research as I could into the economics of the music "business" in Australia. If you dive into this data it is pretty clear how little Australians actually spend on "Australian" music.

http://apraamcos.com.au/media/1493/nationallivemusicresearch_sept2011.pdf

<http://reports.liveperformance.com.au/size-scope-2012/pdf/LPA-Size-Scope-2012-Full.pdf>

<http://www.digitalharmony.com.au/Vanishing%20Acts.pdf>

<http://reports.liveperformance.com.au/size-scope-2012/pdf/LPA-Size-Scope-2012-Full.pdf>

http://reports.liveperformance.com.au/past-reports/pdf/ticket_attendance_and_revenue_survey_2011.pdf

What's striking to me about this data is that it is compiled by organisations that support overseas music and musicians more than local music. The data makes little mention of the percentage of Australian performers or compositions. It is difficult to discuss these issues without having access to good data from APRA, the Australia Council, (The large government performing organisations), The ABC etc which properly estimates the level of Australian musicians and Australian content in programming.

At one point I tried to estimate the amount of Australian cultural content on one ABC program :

<http://seanwayland.blogspot.com/2012/12/a-review-of-cultural-content-on-730.html>

What I think is desperately needed is some transparency as to where government dollars go.

Is spending money flying Zubin Mehta or Branford Marsalis to Australia a good way to spend government dollars when Australia already imports such an extraordinary amount of music.

When Leigh Sales interviewed Paul McCartney did he get paid? If so why? Isn't that the job of a commercial television station?

In 2012, 11% of the top 100-selling singles were from Australian artists this has declined after reaching a peak of 25% in 2007.

Despite being one of the largest music markets in the world according to an International Federation of the Phonographic Industry report a few years back just 25%

of physical music sold in Australia is locally produced, placing the country in 34th position out of the 48 included nations. In the age of plummeting physical sales, Spotify playlists and YouTube channels dominated by American music companies I believe the Australian content in music listened to has plummeted.

The Australian government has done very little to regulate online music streaming in Australia. It is an unregulated monopoly dominated by a few enormously profitable companies. Royalties back to artists are pitifully low. A few years back copyright law at least guaranteed say \$1 per CD in royalties but Spotify, YouTube and Apple Music have recently eroded that to next to nothing.

APRA has say 15,000 Australian writer members who on average receive about \$300 a year each. APRA generates 100's of millions of dollars in royalties but a very small percentage of it stays in the country.

56 percent of all Australian musicians earn less than \$10,000 from their creative income, with only 16 percent earning more than \$50,000. My experience is that most of Australia's greatest musicians have left like I have or are now languishing teaching in music institutions.

Of music performed in Australia by Australian musicians I would estimate less than 20% is written by Australians. Most of the large government funded orchestras and opera companies are playing less than 10% Australian music. I think Australia is pretty unique and low down the ladder in the world in terms of performances of Australian music. Most Australian musicians I meet would find it impossible to play an Australian piece from memory (even Waltzing Matilda would be a struggle). Most Australian musicians or singers under the age of 40 couldn't possibly recite the lyrics to "I'd love to have a beer with Duncan" .

How can the the situation be improved ?

When government funding is involved at large festivals like the Sydney festival in real financial terms the lion's share of the money should go to local artists and Australian works. There should be complete financial transparency and auditing of how much money is being paid to overseas artists by government supported institutions.

Given Australia's unique cultural problem for local musicians this is extremely important in my opinion.

In NSW as I understand there is no music curriculum in schools and certainly no Australian music in the curriculum. Some tertiary institutions teach a small amount of Australian music but again there is very little data and certainly no quotas in place. If the government is pouring dollars into institutions like the Sydney Conservatorium of music doesn't it make sense to at least collect some data about how much of the music being taught is Australian.

I could fill a book with anecdotes of the disadvantages Australian musicians face in the media, at festivals, in venues etc where there is a general idea that music from overseas is “better”. A great deal of my friends left, quit, killed themselves or destroyed themselves with drugs and alcohol. It is purely anecdotal evidence but I think the failure rate for Australian musicians is one of the world’s highest. I believe that the better you are the worse it is. In my experience it has been the most talented and passionate that have blown themselves up so to speak in an environment that imports music largely from overseas often on the false idea that it is “better”.

With this background it makes sense to attempt to improve the Australian governments efforts to support local industry with legislation and funding.

First and foremost the education framework is the most important. Young Australians need to learn their own culture. Australian music and musicians need to be in schools and universities and there needs to be data collected about how much is Australian.

Better data needs to be collected that estimates the amount of local content performed and listened to. There needs to be financial transparency in monopolies like APRA and in government funded organisations like the ABC and APRA.

In terms of live music I think one thing that would help venues the most is a reduction of penalty rates between 8pm and 1am on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights in bars/restaurants which function as music venues. Anecdotally in Sydney venues I perform at like 505, foundry 616, The basement and Lazybones have little or no music on Sunday nights. It’s pretty obvious that the penalty rates are the reason why they close. When there are no neighbors to annoy those venues should have access to a license that lets them open late and serve music listeners alcohol until late. In NY where I live most music venues run till say 3am. Noise complaints are a factor for those venues and grants should be allocated to allow them to soundproof and where possible industrial areas without residents should be opened up to music venues. Similarly I believe industrial areas which in the long run will probably be less active due to falling industry activity should be given zoning which allows the creation of affordable housing for Australian musicians.

I am a believer in free trade but I think where government dollars are involved like the ABC, the Australia Council etc there should be a minimum of 25% Australian compositions. APRA/AMCOS should be regulated since it is a monopoly and its books should be opened up and audited to examine how local music and musicians are supported. I believe that the fees it charges venues are 10 times what is charged by similar performing rights associations in the USA. This works great for visiting artists but not for struggling local venues that present local musicians. I can certainly see a good argument for some sort of quota generally in the press and media for Australian music.

In summary for venues the government could ease liquor licensing regulations. Penalty rates could be lowered. Soundproofing grants could be given.

Where government funded media organisations like the ABC are presenting music a 25% quota of Australian performers and Australian music should be considered. Areas could be rezoned to allow for affordable housing and live/work areas for musicians. Australian music should be taught in Australian schools and universities by Australian musicians.

Yours Sincerely Sean Wayland