

**Submission
No 355**

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

Name: Ms Ilona Harker
Date received: 27 February 2018

Submission

Hello my name is Ilona Harker and I am a musician, music therapist and promoter and I live in Brunswick Heads NSW. See CV below

<https://www.ilonaharker.com/and-other-stuff-i-have-done>

I am an independent artist and have been for 20 years.

During this time I have never received a grant for my music and have worked in many and varied jobs to put out my albums on my own.

My main passion is in using music as a therapeutic and educational tool in the health care sector and I have been an Arts Health Therapist for 3 years through the Arts Health Institute who unfortunately no longer exist.

I have run programs such as

‘Music and Memory’ –an evidence based program in conjunction with APPLE using Ipods in aged care facilities with elders who have severe degenerative dementia,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnUSNbqtVJI>

‘Come Alive with Music’ - a live music program that involved playing music within aged care facilities to promote connection, bonding, musicality and joy,

‘Sing Out Loud’ - an intergenerational choir of school children 10-11yrs of age teamed with aged care residents.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/seniors-encouraged-to-play-up-at-future-of-ageing-convention-20160219-gmyfzv.html>

‘Ukuleles without borders’ – A program designed to teach basic ukulele to communities and groups in need, to help to foster independence and connection.

'Youth Guerrilla Busking Corps – No not a communist splinter group hidden in the wilds of Northern NSW but a group of kids between 5-12 who busked using ukuleles on the street of Byron Bay for various charities. Super cute.

<https://www.coffscoastadvocate.com.au/news/uke-can-busk-at-any-age/2665023/>

These programs were specifically created to engage the wider community and also to help neural pathway connection, quality of life and most importantly, joy for elders who have dementia.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qi7I4LbxwG8>

As I am sure you are aware in the last few years there has been much media that music not just reconnects neural pathways in elders with dementia but creates culture and joy within the aged care sector.

There has also been quite a few studies to support this.

https://www.dementiaresearch.org.au/index.php?option=com_dcrc&view=dcrc&layout=project&Itemid=&pid=47

It is my aim to be able to bring these programs to other sectors including FIFO workers, the correctional services, mental health and isolated rural communities to help promote positive mental health.

As I'm sure you are aware, there has been a change in age care policy nationwide and now the programs that we ran are to be paid for by residents under NDIS and not the facilities themselves. This creates a few issues of those in our community who are unable to afford these services and are not under the NDIS who are missing out, and it's usually these people who need it the most.

I have held hands and sang to our elders while they were dying because they had no family to be with them and the staff and I were the only ones to help them with their last minutes.

While I understand that this is a forum about the music scene yet I think we would be remiss if we just focused on large festivals or venues, it's about everyone in our community having access to music and culture.

It's a social commodity that we can't put a value dollar on.

We have a great opportunity to not just change the institutionalised culture of various facilities and sectors, but to also employ musicians who struggle to make a living wage.

Which brings me to my next point.

I myself was homeless because there was nowhere that was available to rent in my area due to the tsunami of Airbnb. I had a good income and references but there were no places for rent in the Byron Shire where I lived.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-06-18/airbnb-leaving-byron-bay-locals-homeless/8612784>

If we have an a rural community where rent is beyond most medium incomes then we have an issue of only those who can afford it living or holidaying there.

If this happens we not only lose musicians, artists and creative types but waiters, cleaners, nursing assistants, retail workers etc. all of whom make up a community and are essential for any tourism town to function.

The artists in Byron are the canaries in the mine and their mass exodus is a warning the bubble will break and the culture Byron is famous for will wither and die. It's happening now and we need to look immediately at affordable housing and the state government to allow a bed tax and/or limit for Airbnb in high tourism towns that don't have enough existing housing.

My final point is that there is a glaring issue of gender diversity within the contemporary music industry market.

<http://musicfeeds.com.au/news/women-chronically-disadvantaged-australian-music-industry-new-report-finds/>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2018/01/04/australian-music-festivals-have-a-gender-imbalance-problem_a_23323392/

We need to put more pressure on promoters to balance this out.

Maybe offer strong and enticing incentives like significant advertising discounts with NSW Tourism or Tourism Australia?

Because Chrissy Amphlett is gone and we need more strong powerful women like her to take that space for Australia, internationally.

(although Courtney Barnett and SIA are doing pretty good)

And to tie in with this issue of diversity, I believe a safe space for all is important to create within the music industry, from venues having staff trained to spot sexual assault and trained to act upon it, to safe places for the queer community in music venues with staff being trained to spot bullying and assault and again to act accordingly.

If you want me to help by starting the safe places incentive off in Byron Bay, I am more than happy to help spearhead that campaign.

Thank you for your time reading this and I appreciate the energy you are putting into my industry, I love it and it needs support to thrive.

Best wishes with all this work,

Ilona Harker