

Submission  
No 286

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

**Organisation:** Electronic Music Conference

**Date received:** 28 February 2018

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To: The Honorable Paul Green, MLC, Chair

Re: Submission to the inquiry into the music and arts economy in New South Wales

28 February, 2018

Dear Mr. Green,

I am very pleased that this Parliamentary Inquiry is taking place.

As Executive Producer of Electronic Music Conference, and having worked in the electronic music sector in Australia for over two decades, I know too well how Sydney and NSW in the past has provided a place that is abundant in creativity. We are seeing today numerous international success stories about electronic music artists, who started and developed their careers in Sydney. Flume, Alison Wonderland, Rufus, What So Not, Anna Lunoe and Flight Facilities are just a handful of the NSW born and bred artists successfully exporting to many of the biggest international music markets in the world. Between these handful of artists we see achievements such as Grammy Awards, headline performances at some of the biggest international music and arts festivals, sold out headline tours in large capacity venues all over the world, Gold and Platinum sales levels of their recordings and placements of their songs on international advertising campaigns, films and television shows around the world. These artists started their careers and for many years developed their craft and their art here in NSW. It is a testament to the positive and nurturing creative environment that NSW once provided. Over the past four years, we have steadily experienced an alarming decline of venues and opportunities for young emerging artists just like those mentioned above once were, to flourish in NSW.

To give my submission and recommendations context on the value of contemporary music in NSW, below are summary points from the Live Performance Australia 2016 Attendance and Revenue Report, undertaken by Ernst & Young, published in September 2017.

- Annual ticket revenue across all art forms in Australia in 2016 was over \$1.43 billion
- Annual attendance in Australia across all art forms was 18.78 million
- Top revenue category was contemporary music at over \$440 million in 2016
- Contemporary music represented 30.8% of the total national revenue in 2016 and a -7.9% decrease in this category from 2015
- Top attendance category was contemporary music at over 5.6 million attendees
- Contemporary music represented 30.1% of the total national attendance in 2016 and a 1.9% increase from 2015 attendance in this category
- Contemporary music in NSW was the leading state in terms of revenue for this category, at \$157,626,354. This represents over 35% of the national revenue for this category.
- Contemporary music in NSW was the leading state in terms of attendance for this category, at over 1.9 million attendees. This represents over 33% of the national attendance of this category.

Should you wish to review the full report, please refer to it here: <http://reports.liveperformance.com.au/pdf/2016/LPA-Ticket-Survey-2016.pdf>

It is clear that contemporary music is an asset to NSW, an asset that needs to be nurtured so it can grow, be realised to its full potential and have a sustainable future.

As you would be aware, there is no contemporary music strategic plan in place in NSW at present. This is unfathomable, considering the above context. In addition, NSW has no dedicated contemporary music funding and support program. The contemporary music sector is experiencing significant changes and has been for years, and these changes will continue at an exponential rate. Endless technological advancements, the beginnings of the block chain era, a strained and unregulated ticketing industry, strict legislations, overly complex approval processes to present art forms in a way that maximises performance spaces that *are* available, a significant shrinking of music venues in NSW in the past four years, more international artists coming into Australia and booking the low number of venues we do have available for performances. These are just a few of the challenges our sector is facing.

The Victorian governments' 'Music Works' four-year funding and support currently in place has a commitment of over \$22 million for contemporary music. In contrast to this, in the 2015 – 2016 Create NSW successful grant recipients, there were only three organisations specific to contemporary music that received funding. These were:

1. Music NSW - \$455,000 for multi year funding 2016-2018 (of which \$100,000 is devolved funding, meaning that Music NSW administer this funding pool for individual artist grants)
2. Australia Performing Rights Association - \$150,000 for 'Live and Local' the Western Sydney strategic initiative. (Although it is debatable that this program is 100% contemporary music)
3. Heaps Decent - \$40,000 for their regional music production workshops.

This represents a total of \$645,000 funding from Create NSW for contemporary music in NSW in 2015 – 2016. In other words, the NSW government provides funding to it's contemporary music sector that is just

under 3% of the funding that the Victorian government allocates to its contemporary music sector.

By further comparison within NSW, Opera Australia was granted over \$3.4 million by Create NSW in the same funding year. That funding represents year 1 of their multi year funding 2016 – 2018. In other words, the entire contemporary music art in NSW received less than 20% of the funding that one organisation received.

For further context, referring to Live Performance Australia's 2016 Annual Revenue and Attendance Report:

- Opera is the second lowest revenue category at under \$47 million in 2016
- Opera represented 3.2% of the total national revenue in 2016
- Opera was the second lowest attendance category at under 408,000 attendees
- Opera represented 2.2% of the total national attendance in 2016
- Opera in NSW was the leading state in terms of revenue for this category, at \$ \$30,404,441. This represents less than 20% of the revenue contemporary music generates in NSW
- Opera attendance in NSW in 2016 was 233,000. This represents less than 5% of the attendance in the contemporary music category in NSW.

Don't get me wrong – I'm by no means an Opera hater. I have an appreciation for this art form. I have even in my younger years had a contract with Lyric Opera of Queensland as a lead dancer in their production of 'Carmen', which I thoroughly enjoyed and it gave me a deeper appreciation for opera. But it is very hard to grasp the significant gap between the funding allocated to this art form versus the funding allocated to an art form

(contemporary music) that clearly generates significantly higher revenue and is enjoyed by a significantly higher number of people in our state.

Within our sector, there is a huge lack of confidence in the state governments support for contemporary music. The time is now for the government to make a very big statement about its support for our sector, and its commitment to nurturing contemporary music as a valuable asset in NSW.

Recommendations:

- A high priority is the development of a NSW contemporary music strategic plan for 2019 – 2022 and dedicated funding and support for this sector. This strategic plan should be developed between the NSW government in collaboration with LGAs and the sector's stakeholders
- A high priority on repealing the lock out laws for venues which have proven track records and present contemporary music as its primary source of entertainment
- A high priority on creative space options for the creation of new work and the presentation of music from NSW artists
- A significant allocation of funding for contemporary music inline with a strategic plan for 2019 – 2022
- The property development of a "music hub" - a multi faceted space to house contemporary music organisations and businesses, rehearsal and performance space, writing and recording studios
- A high priority on amending planning controls so that the process is more streamlined and allows for the maximisation of presenting art in a variety of spaces during various times of the day and night
- An urgent review of the Liquor & Gaming Night Time Economy Roundtable 25 point action plan - for accountability and to ensure that the points agreed on in 2016 are still relevant to 2018 and beyond

I thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss my submission in further detail or have any questions.

Sincerely,

Executive Producer – Electronic Music Conference