

**Submission
No 401**

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

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NSW Parliament

Re: The music and arts economy in New South Wales

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write as a professional musician of some 30 years experience performing jazz and contemporary music in Australia and overseas. I have several albums as a composer/leader to my credit, winning international awards for my 2009 release. I have also been highly active in music education at The Australian Institute of Music (13 years), witnessing this sector's amazing expansion. Additionally, I have been an active member the Freelance Musician's section of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, campaigning on musicians issues surrounding fair employment circumstances and standardising professional practices.

For around 20 years now, it has become increasingly difficult to make a living as a working musician in NSW. The reasons for this are many, and include legislation that has discouraged venue operators, musicians and audiences alike. However, the biggest hurdle that musicians face is this: the value of music in society has completely changed, diminished to the point of having zero value. Music, whether live or recorded, is no longer central to people's lives. The internet is largely responsible for this, alongside diminished leisure times and disposable incomes in one of the world's most expensive cities. As a result, venues either choose or are forced to pay very little for live music.

The path of the trained professional musician is a difficult one. Many hold at least one degree in performance, and yet can earn as little as \$50 for a 3-hour performance in one of Sydney's venues. The Live Music Award, while ancient and anachronistic, being impossible to enforce, is routinely ignored.

I urge the NSW Parliament to instigate a cultural program that is truly world class that supports musicians' abilities to earn a living wage. Small, one-off programs that are generally underfunded are not the way forward here - we've had too many of those. Other countries, such as France, treat their musicians with far more respect and provide much more support that enables them to get on with the creative process. In the page below, I have copied a large discussion thread that I instigated online. This shows the depth of frustration felt by musicians in Sydney's current anti-cultural environment.

Yours Sincerely,

Darren Heinrich

I know it's a well worn subject, but I feel the need to say that I'm pretty dismayed by the money being offered for gigs lately somewhere between a bad joke and gross insult. Kave Bar in Newport offered \$200 total for my trio that's just one example...another bar in Surry Hills offered a regular Thursday for a whopping 10% of the bar take. Of course, I will keep on keeping on, but it's a little hard to be enthusiastic under such circumstances.

Matthew Dennett Lunatics.

Peter Smetana DH, why not follow the AfroAmerican mo. Hire a cheap hall and do the marketing yourself?

Tom Irons As long as bands sell themselves cheap, this will continue.

Andy Cutting I made more money in 1997 than now. I'm lucky to get anything these days. I don't know how professional giggers do it now.

Joe Durso Its hard finding a good paying gig. Time for live bands to make a come back. Record spinners need to take a vacation.

Roger Gentile I take it you're playing jazz not pop right? If so that would explain it...

Lisa Budin Price Annoying

Di Bird No, Nope , not enough musicians are worthy keep repeating 😊

Marion Murphy In the US, patrons tip musicians

John Ah Mater yep. Buckets go around in Nashville.

Sean Wayland That's because the venues don't pay the bands a cent. That's not much of a win for musicians!

Robert Deal There are young musicians in Sydney arguing for a room that pays nothing other than \$5 per person you can prove you bought into the room...

Di Bird Okay well there's the problem , I know we all want to Play but it's stupid to put ourselves in a situation where WE might end up PAYING to play.

Di Bird Stupid not the appropriate word guys but we should have a line I think . It's tuff we are still being paid the same amount as 8 years ago for some gigs but it's still okay payment and conditions .

Warwick Alder If I don't work too often I might just break even

Wes Garland Just wait until somebody cuts your pay AFTER you've played the gig.

I almost got jail time for arson.

Robbie Macpherson That's not on, an agreed fee is an agreed fee

Frank Sablotny There's been no increase in gig pay since the mid 80's

Robbie Macpherson Sadly a lot of the venues that pay absolute peanuts are still losing money by having bands. For real change to take place we need to shift the culture we need far more bums on seats and dollars through the bar. We need to get out and support our scene(s) and alter the supply/demand for *quality* live music.

Yianni Adams Or you could move to Melbourne haha

Yianni Adams Nah jokes, sydney has to adopt Melbourne's nightlife culture though or something related to it if we want to get paid for gigs

Robert Deal This has to be done at a state government level. We need to organise and protest against lock out laws and other dodgy actions taken to keep people either at home or the casino!

Nigel Hearn I agree, better PR and marketing towards the LISTENERS. We can't rely on musicians to hold up their own industry. It's a mass numbers game.

Nigel Hearn Has anyone investigated into live streaming at venues ? It is a bold idea, but if you invest in the right technology live stream on a YouTube pay to watch station you create and charge a very small fee (\$5.00) You may get 100 curious people across the planet interested to see a jazz gig in Australia. Bingo \$500 bucks earned ?

Doug Jansen Don't accept low money, move on till it improves, go the hard road.

Robert Deal The problem is that kids out there now don't remember when we used to be paid a living wage for gigs so they think paying dues is playing for free til they get "discovered"...

Jason Bruer Totally right Robbie, but there is also an insane amount of greed associated with this and in general the fact that musicians are undervalued more and more. It's very hard to keep going sometimes

Robbie Macpherson There is simply no place for greed in a music economy this bad.

Jason Bruer But there is, venues in some cases are still in a position to pay proper money but they don't as the neo liberal attitude has seemingly gripped everyone..Anyway it is what it is and we have to keep positive

Robbie Macpherson Jason Bruer precisely my reason for chiming in. Let's put our heads together and make change..

Frank Sablotny Funny we are at the bottom of the food chain making the least amount of money yet without us that food chain wouldn't even exist .. we are the gold mine that keeps on giving

Stewart Gillies But I get all my music free on Spotify or YouTube and you're having fun playing a bit of organ and it's not like real work and it's not like you haven't put in the same number of hours/years as a surgeon and I don't care if you eat, so...

Wes Garland "I don't charge to play, I charge to move my gear."

Stewart Gillies Wes Garland I charge for both so I can put my money into a piggy bank to save for outrageously priced international acts.

Wes Garland I'm always just trying to sucker someone into moving my organ for me, LOL!

If it ever works, I'll be sure to hide the Roll or Karis.

Vanessa Simpson Read an anecdote about Picasso. Doodling on a serviette. Goes to throw it away. Lady asks if she can have it and offers to pay. He says the price is \$20,000. She is

aghast and says it only took you 2 minutes. He replies, no Madam, it has taken me 7...See more

Simon Andrews Have used that story when people ask how long did it take to make that painting, about 29 years.

Wes Garland Vanessa Simpson When I factor in fuel and the time it takes to remove the gear from my house and replace it after the show, it is very rare that I make as much as minimum wage these days.

Jay Stewart Also, the problem is that there are so many amateur musicians and bands..... particularly on the Northern Beaches that places like Kave Bar can get away with this because they will basically play for free. And here is the "kicker"..... the audience can't hear the difference!!!!

Wes Garland Kicker is not such a big surprise. It takes experience to know the difference.

Nigel Hearn I used to get \$100 a gig in the 80s. I'm still getting \$100 per gig. We as musicians can't save it by going to gigs there needs better marketing PR helps get some famous people "seen at a jazz gig" it helps shift perceptions with the much needed younger audience of LISTENERS (no musicians) some of the millennials don't know the existence of the Basement / 505 / Foundary, etc

Alison Penney Fucking over it! Music is not valued!!!

Nick Meredith Also these venues will be ones that double book you, cancel you the last minute because of some sport event.

Selina Mcgrath 200 for the trio?? That's appalling. People just don't value the arts here when it comes to local talent. There's an expectation that one should pay 200 for a single ticket to see Ed Sheeran, but nothing for a local. Honestly... venues need to get over themselves and start charging patrons for the privilege. Shocker.

Sean Wayland I get \$200 for a trio at the 55 bar. We pass the tip jar and usually everyone gets \$100. Such a fun gig. The venue is not getting rich with all the rents these days and the bar staff don't get much either. The sad thing about Australia is the insane wa...See more

Nick Meredith Yes the Sydney scene generally pays better than NYC. But this is across the board even someone working in a sandwich shop or on the bar. Australia has no tipping culture and it will not happen soon.

Of late here there is a definite drop in money on smaller bar gigs. On a \$100 gig after food and parking you walk away with maybe \$50. Sydney does not have the NYC subway.

Sean Wayland Yes it's very hard. You either fight for some sort of minimum wage or just out up with it. There are certainly more gigs around if venues can exploit you. You don't need an economics degree to figure that out. The big issue which I keep moaning about i...See more

Nick Meredith How does the French system work? Australia are a fair bit less militant.

Sean Wayland <http://bilbo.economicoutlook.net/blog/?p=35121>Manage

Performing artists bear the brunt of austerity under neo liberalism
bilbo.economicoutlook.net

Nigel Hearn Nick Meredith I always ask for a plate and a couple of drinks to be included on top of the pay. Never been knocked back on that

Nick Meredith Yes I have knocked back, and have been with some well known acts that have been too. Mostly RSLs or Clubs with separate private bistros.

Thomas Botting I've seen fairly decent tip jar culture recently in a few places in Sydney...as long as you make it clear that there is one and especially if you play well, have fun and engage the audience, it can turn a fairly meagre paying gig into a decentish one and you can have fun too which is nice

Rebecca Smith Exactly...but that's bars. They still utilise a lot of travellers to avoid the penalties...same in cafes.

Darren Heinrich No way am I ever working for tips.
I spent years trying to build up membership of MEAA with quite a bit of success. For reasons I still don't understand, the management of that union pulled the rug from under the freelance musicians section.

Sean Wayland Darren Heinrich you could try John Prior AIMA Facebook page and attempt to kick start a decent union.

Peter Head I was writing similar thoughts last week, to little support. There is just no "average" musicians wage anymore .It was \$100 back in the 80's, and now people are working for less .How many other professions are like that ?

Peter Head And I for one think that I've have equivalent training as a doctor. They do 6 years training .I've had 60 so far . And people still expect me to play for 'exposure' or the fun of it.

Clive Stephen Young In Los Angeles most bars & such don't pay musicians. It's a % of the bar or sell tickets at the door.

Mandy Langlois Holy crap!

Tim Bruer This general issue was discussed in great detail on a post by Benny O'Brien on Sydney Musicians Network only a week or so ago. Darren in fact made a good point about the change in the general public's attitude towards music there. If you didn't see the post I suggest you check it out.

Danny Carmichael don't forget in order to get paid you have to give the customer what they want. If you play dance covers there is a high chance of a bigger crowd and a bigger pay check. McDonalds is not making millions of salad and tofu

Nigel Hearn Has anyone investigated into live streaming at venues ? It is a bold idea, but if you invest in the right technology live stream on a YouTube pay to watch station you create and charge a very small fee (\$5.00) You may get 100 curious people across the planet interested to see a jazz gig in Australia. Bingo \$500 bucks earned ?

Clive Stephen Young I turned 18yrs in 1970. I was very fortunate to be living sth Bondi so close to the city. Sydney was saturated with live music & venues. A lot of very good players too. Technology may be wonderful however it's definitely screwed the music industry in this town. Guitarist Jim Kelly & some others moved into teaching positions at Southern Cross Uni Lismore late 80's. They could see it all coming & simply moved on.

Deyana Hirlian Corporate gigs is the way to go. Call me Darren 0409810913

Darren Heinrich Will do.

Luke Mcavenna I know people that are still accepting \$75 gigs. Just don't do it... that's a major part of the problem.

Warwick Alder If I'd have knocked back \$75 gigs I would've missed out on playing some of the best music I ever played . Sometimes the music is more important than the wage

Tony Azzopardi Warwick Alder unless you need to feed your kids!

Warwick Alder Tony Azzopardi been there mate.....thus I teach

Tony Azzopardi Warwick Alder I hear ya buddy

Chris Tuxford I tried existing with a covers band. I lasted 2 gigs and 5 practices before I wanted to unleash Sith lightning. Play what you love or suffer anguish like I did. If you are a muso, you are in the wrong country. Australia's music scene sucks.

John Stuart It's true. Young ones of today prefer a group chit chat in a pub until it's time to go home.

John Stuart In 1978 - 1980 era, the support band fee through agencies was a consistent \$150. Awesome to see that in 2018, it's now risen to a massive \$200.

Neil Higgins I had to take a real job unfortunately.
It's put us in a better position to have another go later in life (not lol).

Rebecca Smith I remember seeing a great band in Brooklyn where they might have had a small percentage of the bar and passed the bucket around...I liked them so much (and even if I hadn't) I put in twice. When I reached in to put in the second time the band leader pu...See more

Tom Lindner That's awesome. I feel it's never work here though. Americans have tipping ingrained in all facets of business. No one would cough up in bars here. There it would be so rude if you didn't.

Warwick Alder The band at the East Sydney Hotel (every Sunday) prop up the wage by passing the hat around . They're there to hear the music and they're loyal fans there most weeks and they always give

Clive Stephen Young That's right in the USA you don't just get paid to a gig in a bar. If you are good enough to pull a crowd then sell tickets on the door. Very different ball park

Chris Tuxford I pulled a crowd at Jose Jones in Thirroul but they cut me anyway because the staff hated my "jazz guitar strumming ". So much for the patrons there.

Clive Stephen Young Australian crowds can be difficult. Only a handful really appreciate what's going on

Shirley Smith You're right Sean . The Union here died through lack of support... I tried in vain to rebuild it, but members couldn't even get it together to vote. RIP MUA

Fiona Sweeting I am disgusted. How much is that per hour per person, considering they have to pay their own tax and super better money as a cleaner

Dave Goodman Hi Daz. Why does not one Australian musician I've ever talked to know about the Live Performance Act 2010, which outlines Minimum Award Wage and Conditions for musicians? I worked out once that, if everyone were onboard with it and replied to these shi...See moreManage
MA000081: Live Performance Award 2010
awardviewer.fwo.gov.au

Michael Wright No argument here! The pay has been terrible here for a long time here as well!
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Tony Azzopardi The biggest problem is there are people prepared to do the gigs at that price!

Sean Wayland I have never experienced anything like 616 here in New York. Even if it's a tips gig the deal is usually very explicit and you get what you expect at the end of the night. You don't wait around for months. The musos don't go home until cash is in their pocket usually.

Warwick Alder Indeed

