

**INQUIRY INTO INTEGRITY, EFFICACY AND VALUE FOR  
MONEY OF NSW GOVERNMENT GRANT PROGRAMS**

**Organisation:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

Friday, 21 August 2020

**David Shoebridge MLC,**  
**Chair, Public Accountability Committee**  
**Integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs Inquiry**

Dear Chair,

Firstly, [redacted] is a Goulburn, NSW-based business working across two sectors of the entertainment industry. I have operated the business, in partnership with my wife Catherine for 20 years.

Our business has 2 main areas,

1. Entertainment Agency – working predominately in the Country and Americana genres Laing Entertainment book tours and festival & corporate appearances for our exclusive roster of artists. That roster currently includes winners of five ARIA's and 53 Golden Guitars.
2. International artist touring – We also tour a small number of international performers from various genres including a two-time Grammy nominated US artist who we represent in Australia, New Zealand, Asia and North and South America.

I appreciate the opportunity to be able to present my concerns on a number of areas around the funding process for contemporary music in NSW.

Talking to artists in the country, blues, roots and jazz scene, many are disillusioned with music grants and funded programs and organisations as they feel that the music that they play just isn't going to get a look in. Artists are told me that when their grant is rejected that either there wasn't enough money in the funding round, or that you put in a really good application but it just didn't make the cut off, and we encourage you to apply again next year, but many people suspect that any time spent writing a grant would be wasted as there are there no country musicians or real working artists actually involved in the decision-making process and that, in the main, it's only a certain type of music that gets funded anyway.

In recent years I've also put up my hand to get involved in shaping the music industry in NSW by applying to last year's advisory board process. I was unsuccessful. I've also supported the contemporary music research Create NSW carried out in 2018 and was part of the Contemporary Music Strategy working group in 2019, but it appears nothing has ever come from any of the time and effort that I have put into these critically important areas, which really should be the required structural components that should provide a sound basis for investment by the New South Wales Government in our our sector. In the absence of this what do we have?

**Artform Advisory Board membership** – The issue here is makeup of the Create NSW Artform Advisory Boards. Do they reflect the broader industry across NSW and what is the ratio of metropolitan-based membership compared to regional and rural-based members for example? The 2019 Contemporary Music Board has nine members including a chairman. Only two of the board members are from regional or rural NSW. Are the various genres represented i.e. country music, jazz, blues? Currently in my reading there is definitely no representation from the country music industry and appears to be a similar situation for jazz and blues. How is it then that a broad cross section of the NSW music sector is being represented here, and how many of them are performing artists in their own right? Maybe the inquiry can find out.

**Decision making and funding outcomes** – There are many within our industry that feel that they are not being included and that much of the money from funding programs is being directed to a very

narrow section of our industry. I will use the recent Create NSW Independent Arts & Cultural Organisations (Multi-year) funding decision for Contemporary Music as a case-in-point.

In that funding round no organisations employing artists were successful, with MusicNSW receiving 91% of the allocated funding - \$420,000 from a pool of \$460,000 – with the remainder going to APRA's Sounds Australia. With over 90% of the funding going to a single organisation, many in the industry have no clear idea how MusicNSW programs benefit the wider industry or are evaluated. Is there an annual report on the website? Is the organisation subject to broad sector oversight and/or evaluation of its operations and business practices? Further, it also appears the General Manager of MusicNSW was also a member of the relevant Advisory Board that oversaw the assessment process and decided on the funding distribution. While there is no suggestion of any impropriety, and I am sure that meeting minutes will bear that out and show that the relevant person excused themselves from the discussions, it could elicit a level of cynicism from the casual observer, particularly without a broader delivery of support for a more diverse footprint.

**Conclusion** - At present it is extremely difficult for many, particularly for those of us in the regions, to participate in NSW government contemporary music support programs. It could even be argued that people such as regional and rural-based agents and bookers and the music communities that they work with are not looked on favourably by some of the industry organisations that have become conduits for government support.

So If there was a way to enable some type of structure under which contemporary music funded programs in NSW could be more transparent and where people like myself can actually have some faith in the makeup and process that it is fair and genuinely reflects the broader music making community in the state, that would be a great outcome from this inquiry.