

**Submission  
No 31**

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

**Name:** Dr Darren Heinrich

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**Dr. Darren Heinrich**  
PhD Jazz Organ Improvisation  
BMus (Hons) Jazz Piano  
Musician and Educator  
Newport, NSW

<http://dazzjazz.com>

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Public Accountability Committee

Inquiry into the integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs.

Dear Chair and Committee members,

I write to provide a working musician's perspective on the impact of public funding on the live music sector of NSW.

As a pianist and organist of 35 years' experience, the bulk of my professional activities consist of live performance across jazz and contemporary music genres. I have worked with many major artists within these genres and led my own award-winning jazz trio, performing at major festivals and clubs, both locally and internationally. I also have a significant body of work in recordings, including performing on 2 releases for ABC Jazz.

Additionally, I also have more than 15 years' experience in Music Education, teaching at The Australian Institute of Music for 13 years and the last 2 years at Sydney Conservatorium of Music, where I teach Jazz Ensemble, Hammond Organ and Soul Music Ensemble.

While the demographics are quite varied, the average professional musician in NSW will have many of the following qualities and pursue many of these activities:

- Perform both publicly and privately across a broad variety of situations
- One or more decades of performance experience
- One or more decades of formal study of their instrument
- An artistic approach to expanding their expressive capabilities on their instrument
- An Undergraduate or Postgraduate Music degree
- Lead a band or collective of professional musicians
- Run their own teaching studio practice
- Teach instrumental/ensemble classes to Primary/Secondary/Tertiary music students
- Compose for film or TV
- Produce and fund their own albums

The vast majority of the professional musicians described above operate as freelancers/sole traders. They do not apply for grants to fund their activities from:

- The Australia Council
- Create NSW
- Music NSW

In fact, the vast majority of professional musicians can spend their entire careers unsupported and indeed *unaware* of the abovementioned funding bodies. NSW contemporary music programs are only there for a very narrow subset of the wider music sector and there is little or no visibility of outcomes.

The reasons for the lack of engagement with formal music funding are as varied as the musicians themselves, but often fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Not pursuing an 'art music' line of musical activity (Australia Council)
- Not an artist from the identified priority areas; Western Sydney; Young People; regional NSW; first nations; artists with a disability (CreateNSW)
- Not performing in one of a limited number of genres (MusicNSW)
- Being an instrumentalist (not vocalist)

Collectively, these reasons have over time widely established a sense of great disillusionment for many of my peers and students, which only gets worse as each engagement and grant application receives a form rejection letter, usually late and well past any committed advisory date.

It is my considered opinion that public funding for music is deliberately funnelled to a very small number of genres and even smaller demographic of musicians. Specifically, the youth-centred genres of Indie Rock and Urban Hip-hop attract an enormous amount of support. While these artists may be worthy of support, the vast number of professional musicians do not fall into these or other predetermined categories benchmarking funding – their musical skills and artists expressions lie in areas that require a high degree of training, skill and dedication to craft that fall outside of the youth market.

Part of the reason for the above-mentioned disparity lies in the makeup of funding boards themselves. Very rarely do the panellists on funding allocation committees have any serious experience or training as a performing instrumentalist. This means they may be less able to also critically assess the musical and artistic abilities of the applicant, and support instrumental music and wider genre inclusivity.

I applied to sit on the Contemporary Music section of the Create NSW Artform Advisory Board, but was not successful in my application. The funding committees of both Create NSW and Music NSW are stacked with people from the record industry whose business model is aimed squarely at the youth market centred around JJJ and FBI radio audiences. Subsequently, most funding allocations have a bias towards supporting artists for the youth market – these artists are then funnelled into their own business situations.

It is important to understand that the term 'music industry' is somewhat of a misnomer. While it *can* be loosely applied to an ever decreasing number of record labels, publishers and the more recent appearance of streaming services, this 'industry' has extremely limited business relationships with the vast number of trained, professional contemporary musicians in NSW, who perform in the genres of jazz, blues, country, rock and related styles.

The question for this inquiry is how do musicians like myself access contemporary music funding in NSW and also support the shaping of contemporary music government programs and priority areas, because the situation is basically hopeless at this time – we are already suffering through lockouts, noise regulations, diminishing venues and audiences, and now COVID-19. Professional musicians, students, and graduates from secondary and tertiary programs need to be able to access state support more than ever.

Yours Sincerely,

Darren Heinrich