

THE MUSIC AND ARTS ECONOMY IN NSW
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

26 MARCH 2018

MusicNSW

1. Of the programs and services you offer, how many are available in rural and regional areas?

MusicNSW's programs are predominantly Sydney-based. Our key public program, *Sound Advice – Talks, Panels and Masterclasses with Industry Experts*, is based in Sydney. For the first time we recently trialed a Wollongong Sound Advice event and it was a great success.

The Indent Tour (our all-ages, drug and alcohol-free tour of NSW) visits 5 regional locations annually, however this program is currently under review due to its high cost and fly-in-fly-out nature. We're looking to develop a cheaper program that allows us to have an ongoing relationship with musicians and industry based outside of metro-areas.

As a state-wide organisation with only 2 and a half staff and limited funding, it's a challenge to develop meaningful and on-going relationships with regional musicians and industry. We are seeking additional funding in our next funding round to assist with making all of our services available online (livestreaming and podcasting) to ensure that regional artists are not disadvantaged due to distance. However this is not a cheap undertaking and we're awaiting further funding allocations to see if this is possible.

Our services, including our website and phone line, are available to rural and regional areas. We often get contacted by people who live outside of metro areas who are seeking support, advice and referrals and looking for ways in which we can support them. However due to much of our activities being Sydney-based, we're usually only able to point them to our online resources.

2. Do you think that contemporary musicians and aspiring musicians in regional areas are currently receiving the support and opportunities the 'chain of support' you mention to develop?

No, they are definitely disadvantaged. We are trying to source the funds to make all of our Sydney events live-streamed, however this is only one piece of the 'chain of support'. Performance opportunities are limited in regional areas and the lack of a thriving regional touring circuit means it's tough for regional musicians to get enough gigs to hone their craft, or to find new audiences. Consequently, regional artists often leave their home towns to move to a larger city to get better access to audiences and performances opportunities.

In general, regional artists struggle with a lack of performance opportunities, a lack of industry connection and networking, a lack of skills development opportunities, and a lack of clarity around career pathways and career sustainability.

In recent conversations with artists based in Wagga Wagga, we were told how the town used to have a thriving live music scene. Many of the older artists lamented the lack of opportunities for young artists, saying they all move away to get access to better opportunities, particularly as it was nearly impossible to program all-ages or under 18s events. The older artists also commented on their own lack of opportunities to play, citing venues as unwilling to program original live music for a range of reasons, including a preference for covers bands.

3. You note that opportunities in the city are dwindling for contemporary musicians and that morale is low. Is the situation the same, or worse for those in the regions? a. How do you think a reinvigoration of the touring circuit in NSW would affect contemporary music in the regions?

We have recently been consulting with a range of regional musicians and industry and we'd assert that the low morale is not just Sydney-based. This is due to a range of factors – from the lack of a touring circuit and performance opportunities, to a feeling of isolation and lack of support for regional musicians. They feel on the outer – that they're not competitive in funding rounds, and don't have access to the caliber of industry that's present in Sydney.

Regional areas are in dire need of a touring circuit reinvigoration. This will not only allow more performance opportunities for artists who are living and working in regional areas, it will also entice and support artists from outside of those areas to tour there. With outside acts coming in, local audiences are developed and economies are stimulated.

Part of the reason why Sydney/Melbourne/Canberra bands don't tour regionally as much is the high cost and risk. Bands are unsure of venues, marketing avenues and audiences – which combined with being quite an expensive undertaking is often too much of a gamble. It seems that there is a disconnect between regional and metropolitan-based industry, and from region to region. Artists need information, support and on-the-ground assistance to travel regionally and there are several program options that could help facilitate this.

An incredible program run in Victoria that seeks to directly bridge the gap between regional, urban and suburban markets is the Victorian Music Crawl – which takes city-based booking agents, promoters, managers and other industry on a three-day tour of regional centres to showcase their venues, artists and local industry. This program has seen incredible returns for the regional towns, artists, and industry involved – with a 3:1 return on investment. (The program cost \$100k, and they reported over \$300k in business being done as a result of the program).

4. You mention venues tipping from offering live music as entertainment to poker machines as entertainment in your hearing. How have you seen poker machines and their instalment in pubs and clubs affect live music and opportunities for musicians?

The impact of pokies on live music has been a significant music industry issue since poker machines were first allowed in pubs in the 90s. Liquor licenses at the time were incredibly expensive (up to \$50k in some instances), so pokies were seen as a necessary part of the economic profile for local pubs. Many pubs closed their band rooms to make space for the machines. Aside from impacting the vibrancy and atmosphere of a local pub, they also meant there were less stages for bands to play on. The impact of pokies on live music was widely reported at the time (the 90s and early 2000s) – The Whitlams even released a song about called *Blow Up The Pokies*.

While this is an ‘old’ issue, the fact is that many local pubs still house pokies instead of live music, as it’s seen as more profitable. And when operating costs are so high in Sydney, it’s understandable. However some venues are still pushing for their removal – The Bald Faced Stag and The Lansdowne both got rid of their pokies in recent years, and venues like Oxford Art Factory are [Proudly Pokies Free](#).

There isn’t a great deal of specific research on this despite it being an issue since the mid-90s , however below are some relevant links and resources that might help paint the picture of the issue for the committee:

- [“Vanishing Acts: An Inquiry Into the State of Live Popular Music Opportunities in New South Wales”](#)
By Bruce Johnson and Shane Homan, 2003
 - [“How removing pokies could revive the live music scene”](#)
HACK, triple J, 8 September, 2017
 - [“CBD Exemptions Favour Pokies Over a Culturally Rich Sydney Nightlife”](#)
The Guardian, 4 December, 2015
 - [“Melbourne and Sydney's live music scenes are changing, researcher says”](#)
ABC News, 13 Feb, 2015
Excerpt:
*“Liquor licences in Sydney could cost \$50,000, she said, while a small Melbourne bar would pay just a few hundred dollars.
“It's absolutely unimaginable to pay \$50,000 a year for a liquor licence and then go 'I might just put some bands on',” Ms Taylor said. Instead, Sydney licensees looked to poker machines for guaranteed revenue.”*
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5. Does Music NSW have any data on the number of Women in the contemporary music industry in NSW?

No. We don't have any NSW-specific data on the number of women in the contemporary music industry. All figures we have on this matter are of a national scope.

MusicNSW has however been active in this space, having run the Women in Electronic Music Program since 2016. MusicNSW is currently developing a mentorship program for young women in the industry to work alongside established industry mentors. We also have an inventory of most of the NSW-based Women in Music programs currently being run, as well as all programs nationally, which can be found [here](#).

6. Could you point us to any research done on the subject in NSW or in other Australian jurisdictions?

Yes. See below:

- [“By the numbers 2018: The gender gap in the Australian music industry”](#)
Hack, triple j, 8 March, 2018
- [“Australian Women Screen Composers: Career Barriers and Pathways”](#)
Dr Catherine Strong and Dr Fabian Cannizzo
- [“Skipping a beat: Assessing the state of gender equality in the Australian music industry”](#) Associate Professor Rae Cooper, Dr Amanda Coles and Ms Sally Hanna-Osborne, 2017