

INQUIRY INTO THE MUSIC AND ARTS ECONOMY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 6 – PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

The music and arts economy in New South Wales

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Please accept the following information describing music and broader arts activity we facilitate and support in the Bathurst Region which we hope might be of use in your deliberations.

The Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre (BMEC) is a professionally managed and staffed performing arts centre and is a business unit of Bathurst Regional Council. Like most regional performing arts centres we are the main performing arts venue in our region and employ the majority of people working professionally in the performing arts. These resources are used to support other emerging and established artists in various ways.

There are multiple ways we connect with music and broader performing arts activity:

- For the past ten years we have managed a Local Stages program, dedicated to the development of performing arts practice in our region. Local Stage manages the Local Emerging Artists Program (LEAP) which supports young musicians playing in local cafes, at the Inland Sea of Sound Festival, as supports to established local bands, in collaborative theatre projects and in the development of skills such as original song writing.
- Over the past ten years the Local Stages program has supported local cabarets which have provided a diverse range of regional artists a supporting framework in which to present new material.
- Each year we present the Inland Sea of Sound festival which has grown in recent years to become a major regional event. The festival gives us an opportunity to present established and emerging regional musicians alongside leading Australian and international artists. The festival is situated at the summit of Wahluu – Mount Panorama and also provides a significant opportunity to support Wiradyuri (local spelling) and other first nations cultural expression.
- In 2018 we have established Monthly Band Nights which provide a venue for local bands to play in a setting where the focus is on the music. Preference is given to musicians playing original material and the nights provide an opportunity for us to profile young, up-coming musicians as supports for established bands. The nights are aimed at an over 18 year old audience with the provision of food and bar services.

- Music, both contemporary and classical, forms an essential part of the BMEC Annual Season, heavily subsidised by Bathurst Regional Council. It also provides an opportunity for us to collaborate with our local Conservatorium of music and to build connections between them and artists from outside the region. In 2018 we will present the rap artist of Indian origin, L-Fresh the Lion with the Mitchell Chamber Orchestra.
- Sometimes our support for live music is in a theatrical context. Over the past three years we have been supporting a commission of a new play called *The Climbing Tree* which explores the experience of being a young person in Bathurst over more than 200 years of history. Original music has been commissioned by leading contemporary composer Guy Webster and one of five cast members will be a live musician.
- BMEC is also, of course a venue for hire and many leading Australian and occasionally international musicians touring the country book the venue to perform. The existence of a fully equipped, professionally staffed venue is a great asset for the community in this context.

The majority of financial and other support allowing BMEC to undertake these activities comes from Bathurst Regional Council and this is the same in local council areas across the State. The net investment provided by Council is approximately one million dollars a year.

Funding from other sources would only amount to between 10% to 20% that of Council.

BMEC does receive multi-year Annual Program Funding from Create NSW, for which it is extremely grateful, and also applies each year for project funding from various sources. Local commercial sponsorship is also important.

We always try to pay young emerging artists but it does still seem that many people expect them to play for nothing. A pool of funds specifically dedicated to the support of emerging artists would be of great benefit.

The response to the State Governments current Regional Capital Infrastructure Fund has demonstrated considerable unmet demand. There is a distinct lack of small scale, flexible venues which are affordable to hire for regional artists. Concentrated support to create such facilities would be of enormous benefit.

Programs which allow young artists to be mentored by established artists are a wonderful way to support the development of young regionally based musicians.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Champion
Manager