

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the Cultural and Creative Industries in Victoria

Melbourne – Wednesday 12 March 2025

MEMBERS

Georgie Purcell – Chair

Richard Welch – Deputy Chair

John Berger

Katherine Copsey

Moira Deeming

Bev McArthur

Tom McIntosh

Evan Mulholland

Sonja Terpstra

PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Gaelle Broad

Georgie Crozier

David Davis

David Ettershank

Michael Galea

Renee Heath

Sarah Mansfield

Rachel Payne

WITNESSES (*via videoconference*)

Maggie Collins, Executive Director, Association of Artist Managers; and

Dale Packard, General Manager, Music Victoria.

The CHAIR: I declare open the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee's public hearing for the Inquiry into the Cultural and Creative Industries in Victoria. Please ensure that mobile phones have been switched to silent and that background noise is minimised.

I would like to begin this hearing by respectfully acknowledging the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of the various lands we are gathered on today, and pay my respects to their ancestors, elders and families. I particularly welcome any elders or community members who are here today to impart their knowledge of this issue to the committee or who are watching the broadcast of these proceedings. I also welcome any other members of the public watching via the live broadcast.

To kick off, we will get committee members to introduce themselves. We will start with Ms Broad on the screen.

Gaelle BROAD: Thanks very much. Hi. I am Gaelle Broad, Member for Northern Victoria.

Michael GALEA: Hi there. Michael Galea, Member for South-Eastern Metropolitan.

Katherine COPSEY: Katherine Copsey, Member for Southern Metropolitan.

The CHAIR: Georgie Purcell, Northern Victoria.

Richard WELCH: Richard Welch, North-Eastern Metro Region.

David DAVIS: David Davis.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you. Thanks so much for appearing before us today. All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during this hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded, and you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing. Transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

For the Hansard record, could you both please state your full name and the organisation you are appearing on behalf of.

Maggie COLLINS: Maggie Collins. I am from the Association of Artist Managers.

Dale PACKARD: Dale Packard, General Manager of Music Victoria.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you. We now welcome your opening comments but ask they are kept around 10 to 15 minutes to ensure plenty of time for discussion and questions.

Maggie COLLINS: Okay. I am going to be doing an opening statement on behalf of us, and it certainly will not be 10 to 15 minutes long, if that is okay.

The CHAIR: Of course.

Maggie COLLINS: I am just going to be speaking candidly, as that is how I feel most comfortable. Firstly, I would like to say thank you for allowing us to Zoom into you today, as I am coming to you from Brisbane/Meanjin and the land of the Turrbal and Yuggera people. I would like to pay my respects to the elders past and present and those that have looked after these lands for many thousands of years and acknowledge that

they have kept these lands safe for us to be creative and operate on after so many years, especially with weather events across all of those generations, which are similar to what we just had with cyclone Alfred, which is why I cannot make it down there today, so thank you for letting me Zoom in.

The Association of Artist Managers is the organisation for which I work – I am the Executive Director – and artist management is our world. Dale obviously works with Music Victoria. We work predominately in the contemporary music space. The AAM is a national organisation that looks after the interests of artist managers. We are a peak body, and we represent currently over 400 members across the country, all of whom are supporting artists to grow sustainable careers. These artist managers are the type of person who usually fall into the job because they love music and usually they cannot play. But they are passionate about it, they have a desire to grow something and to support art and they also are creative themselves, which they express through strategy and collaboration. The AAM works with our members to represent their needs to have a sustainable career through the commercial industry – that is the industry that we work in – by advocating for them, as we are doing today and in various other ways, and also by providing professional development opportunities for them. We have a large contingency of members who reside in Victoria. In fact I believe our largest portion of members reside in Victoria and look after some of the country's biggest artists and the country's most historically significant artists. Our managers look after their careers and have done so for many years.

The Association of Artist Managers exists to help protect those and support those who are supporting the artists. We just really thank you for giving us the opportunity to talk to you today and to make the submission and for letting us have Dale here as well from Music Victoria, who has always been such a big partner of ours and a colleague and a strong ally together as we try to navigate the contemporary music industry and try to support all of those who work through it to build sustainable careers.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you so much. We will move to questions, starting with Mr Davis.

David DAVIS: One of the questions that I think is important for artists is the period of COVID. My first question is: what was the impact of COVID? The follow-up question is: how have you recovered from that? I think a lot of artists as sole traders, if you will, were especially impacted. The second thing I am interested to know is about national support. Is there any money or resources which you are able to access nationally? That is two batteries of questions, if you will.

Dale PACKARD: I am happy to speak to the COVID recovery element, Maggie, if you like, and feel free to jump in if there is any element that I am missing. We have done some preliminary research and a review into live music venue activity, comparing it from now to prepandemic times. The general theme is that the smaller venues have really suffered. We have seen about a 20 per cent drop-off from prepandemic times. Immediately after COVID I think it is fairly well documented that the music industry was decimated – massive drop-offs, a lot of suffering. In terms of the rebound, there was around about a 20 per cent drop-off, particularly in small venues. If you look at the larger music sector and ticket sales at arena shows and if you just look at the whole picture, it is a relatively small drop-off – a lot closer to 5 per cent. So I guess what we are seeing is the industry as a whole is strong, it is resilient, it is healthy but that recovery has not been uniform. Yes, the big stadium shows are doing well, but the small to mediums have really suffered.

David DAVIS: Do you have some figures on that – data that we could see?

Dale PACKARD: There is a venue audit that we have drafted but is not yet ready for public release.

David DAVIS: All right. Well, maybe you can keep in touch with the staff about when that is available. We are certainly interested in those bits of data. The other point, just picking up from your submission, is that you are advocating for more ABC and SBS programming for Victoria.

Maggie COLLINS: Yes. Is that a question, sorry?

David DAVIS: Yes. You would think that that would make a significant difference to artists in Victoria.

Maggie COLLINS: Absolutely. Any sort of platform that can give any opportunity to promote Victorian artists, to increase the opportunities for sustainability and outreach, especially nowadays with what we are noticing is the struggle or the decline in traditional media consumption with audiences, and it is within this audience area that we are really looking to focus on. That is an area that needs some development to ensure that

there is the demand there for the artists that still exist and the artists that are creating work across Victoria. Any opportunity for those to be able to get that reach through any platform, whether it is traditional media, broadcast media, analogue media, digital and new media as well, yes, absolutely. There are always more opportunities for more ears to be listening to these Australian artists.

David DAVIS: Do you think Victoria gets a fair shake of the national pie?

Maggie COLLINS: I would not have as much data on that, I would say, as other organisations, but I would say, as the peak body for artists' managers representing artists, what we are always looking for are more opportunities where they can exist.

David DAVIS: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Mr Davis. I will go next. In your submission you speak about whether or not Victoria is getting a fair share of funding, particularly regional Victoria. Could you talk from your perspective about where the arts are at from a regional Victorian perspective?

Maggie COLLINS: What we have experienced through the AAM specifically, and keeping in mind we are a national organisation, is what we have really benefited from has been through our partnerships and collaboration with organisations such as Music Victoria, VMDO and the work that has happened through Creative Victoria. In amongst those partnerships, we have been guided and steered by them and the needs of the Victorian state. In amongst those opportunities that we have worked through with them, we have tried to find as many opportunities as we can to activate regional opportunities for managers based in regional areas and of course their artists that are based in regional areas.

In terms of the regional funding that is available there, naturally once again I would refer to that point about there always being a demand for that because there are hotspots like Castlemaine where we have a manager called Jeremy Furze, who manages the Teskey Brothers, who has built a really strong community there. We want to be able to enrich those communities and support our managers who are still operating there and many other managers that are operating in regional areas. If there are more opportunities to activate those things – because unlike venues where there are lots of overheads and even with artists where there are various costs involved in running their business, like physical costs, a manager needs just a laptop and the internet, so we have always been able to just be agile and move and work wherever we can access those things. So if we are able to create these things and make them sustainable within regional areas and create those opportunities to do so, then the AAM definitely would love to try and amplify those opportunities.

The CHAIR: Okay. Thank you. I am just interested in your comments around investing in infrastructure. We heard from other witnesses at previous public hearings about the closure of venues and the impact that that is having more broadly on artists and creatives. From your perspective, what can the government do to ensure that the infrastructure is there to allow people in this industry to do their work and people to attend?

Maggie COLLINS: When we talk about infrastructure, is it limited exactly to the physical?

The CHAIR: No.

Maggie COLLINS: Yes, because this goes to the point that we have made about our recommendations on the investment in the structure that surrounds the music industry itself. Obviously I know this inquiry is looking into the wider creative and cultural industries throughout Victoria. We operate predominantly in the contemporary music industry, and from a manager's perspective, the best kind of infrastructure that can support these artists is the support network that you can put around them. We know that because there is so much work involved in sustaining an artist's career; there is so much to an artist's career for them to function. There is the touring, the recording, the songwriting, the publishing, the merch production, the branding, the legal work, the finance, the fan engagement et cetera et cetera. There are teams involved; there is so much to it. There is also a lot of skill involved in managing all of that. That is why, just referring to our submission, we referred to the need for the investment to go towards more of that being based around the infrastructure of the supporting of the delivery of that art, at least from our perspective.

The CHAIR: Yes.

Dale PACKARD: I might make a few infrastructure comments, Maggie. On the venue side, you said you have heard stories of venue closure and asked: how do we support that infrastructure? We are doing some work at Music Victoria at the moment around defining what we consider a foundational live music venue. There are upwards of 2000 'music' venues in Victoria, in that they may have a band play there at some point or they have a licence to present music in that way, but there is a big difference between that and a dedicated live music venue that is core to their business. We are currently working on a definition to be able to target investment to those venues that are vital infrastructure to the music industry. Then looking at their organisational infrastructure, we have got organisations like Music Victoria and the Victorian Music Development Office, and supporting those is crucial. I am sure a lot of artists, managers and organisations would see that as vital infrastructure.

Then there is the wider support that is needed on a state level, because while Music Victoria operates as an independent association and the VMDO as a government project that delivers music, what we really need to see is a statewide music strategy – they have got that in New South Wales at the moment – and accompanying investment. The reason why we would ask for a music strategy is because music connects to so many facets of life. You have got tourism, you have got education – it is embedded in the life of Victorians. And there is regulation, there is planning, there is licensing. It is a whole area that is really tied in with a lot of government infrastructure and government regulation. There is only so much an independent organisation like Music Victoria can do without that kind of state government backing and state government strategy.

The CHAIR: Great. Thank you so much for that. I will go to Mr Galea.

Michael GALEA: Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much, both, for joining us today. It has been a very interesting discussion. Ms Collins, you mentioned that a large proportion of your membership is in Victoria, which is quite interesting – good to know that we are once again punching above our weight when it comes to our neighbouring largest state. I note Mr Davis's questions too, particularly in relation to public broadcasters ABC and SBS. Would it be fair to say that you do feel that we do not get a fair share of exposure and coverage of local artists in Victoria through those organisations being based interstate?

Maggie COLLINS: As for the data to that, I would need to look further into the data. I think that is what our submission is referring to, looking into the data there and pursuing more opportunities for Victorian artists to get those opportunities.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. You also focus on the *Revive* funding and making sure that Victoria, especially regional Victoria, gets its fair share of that. It was a very interesting conversation just then about regional support. I am curious as well, though: we often bunch Melbourne and major cities into one group, but obviously there is a great big difference whether you are in Fitzroy or in Campbellfield. Can you tell me what sorts of issues, if any, are being faced in outer suburbs – any particular issues you are seeing with artists not getting exposure, not getting support, if there are any funding gaps, if there is a lack of venues and things like that that are affecting artists in outer-metropolitan areas, not just Melbourne but outer-metropolitan areas generally?

Maggie COLLINS: Dale, did you want to talk to that?

Dale PACKARD: The short answer is yes. We see booming activity in the inner north of Melbourne, and as you move out, there is less and less. That is a case of amenity and access that you see across the board with outer-suburban and regional areas in general. I do not know if the music situation is any less relevant than other important infrastructure. I am not trying to diminish music's role here other than it is just that as you go further out, there is less access to these things and it becomes harder. That is why most government strategies involve additional investment in regional and outer-suburban areas, and for that reason we would support those investments.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. Is there anything in particular you think that state, federal or other forms of government should be doing to better invest and support outer-suburban artists?

Dale PACKARD: Not specifically, although I might just make a comment at this point around the importance of the government's role in regulation when it comes to venues but also the music industry more broadly. As I kind of hinted before, music touches all these different parts of government and the regulatory framework. For instance, in the City of Port Phillip, which I know is not outer suburban, they are developing a

live music precinct at the moment. There are a lot of discussions at the moment around how we set the conditions for music to be able to flourish – removing red tape, streamlining, and there have been multiple reviews into venue regulation. If we want to create the conditions for Victorians to have a thriving music economy in 10, 15, 20 years, it is about how you remove barriers and create incentives for people to be able to do that.

Noise regulation is a big part of it, and that does touch on the outer-suburban area. For instance, one thing that would be great to see is more actual localised control of noise regulations. This is a very complex area and I do not really want to get into it, but every area has its own needs, and we would argue that at a local level you are better positioned to understand what the amenity requirements are. In some cases that might be ‘Let’s bump up the noise levels’, ‘Let’s have open slather for more liquor licences and live music venues’ or non-licensed venues, but in other areas that may not be appropriate.’ But it seems like when it comes to noise regulations, a lot of the time that stuff is blanketed across the state, and that can create challenges.

Michael GALEA: That is a very interesting point too. Obviously we have seen even in the inner city some iconic music venues facing noise complaints from people that have just moved in. That has been well publicised over the years as well. But it is a very interesting idea that it could be the local communities and councils even in the outer suburbs and that if there is that sort of local drive and push, that could be an avenue to support that through noise regulation too. I will take you up; I am not going to push you too far into that topic.

Dale PACKARD: There is a there is a lot of detail on that topic, and it is probably not the time to get into it right now.

Michael GALEA: But more localised input is a very interesting idea, so thank you for that. I might also ask one for either of you, Mr Packard or Ms Collins. You spoke about the recovery from COVID and how big acts have been very successful, and we have all seen that in Victoria, whether it is with Kylie Minogue the other week or with Taylor Swift’s largest ever concert in Melbourne.

The CHAIR: I went to both.

Michael GALEA: I did not get to go to both, but I am sure the Chair was very excited about those. But you did say that the smaller acts have been struggling more. I would be curious to know as well – obviously the majority of music listening, I would imagine, these days is through apps like Spotify and Apple Music. At what point does an artist begin to become self-sufficient on those streaming services? Is it an extremely high threshold to get to before you can really fund yourself? Can you paint a picture of what that looks like?

Maggie COLLINS: Millions and millions and millions of streams. Dale, do you have the figure of how many millions?

Dale PACKARD: No, I do not, sorry.

Maggie COLLINS: I do not have the figure in front of me of how many hundreds of millions of streams you would need. Yes, there are instances where there are some artists who have been able to make some decent income from streaming alone, but the interesting thing about the streaming market and that new digital world that we are living in is that it is a disconnect from actual fandom, in that for the artists and the music makers who are making income through streaming, a lot of that time it is from passive listening – their song is getting picked up on playlists that are in cafes or for utility listening, as I call it, whether it is meditative music or classical, and the people who are listening to it do not actually know who the artist is, so there is that disconnect. Not that there is anything particularly wrong with that, but it almost falls within a different type of industry or just a different subset, I think.

Michael GALEA: With the modern age, does it make it all the more important for things like gigs, for them to be able to self-sustain those artists at that level?

Maggie COLLINS: This is a great opportunity to talk about a national initiative that the AAM has put in over the past year, which you may have heard about, called Michael’s Rule. This is in dedication to Michael McMartin, who was the long-term manager of the Hoodoo Gurus and who passed away early last year. There used to be a rule where every international act that came out to Australia would have a local opening support,

and that rule fizzled away over the years. Michael called for it to be returned, so we called it ‘Michael’s Rule’ when he passed away. We have been fighting for that to be returned ever since. One of the reasons for that is because the 18- to 24-year-old market has been buying tickets to your Taylor Swifts, your Dua Lipas and Olivia Rodrigos by the spades, and that opportunity in the live arena and stadium shows has become the IRL recommendation station for that generation. It cuts right through all of the volume of the noise and media that you are competing with. I think it is 120,000 songs uploaded per day on digital service providers. So when you have an artist that is supporting a headline artist like that, it gives that supporting artist, a local artist, a tick of approval from that headliner and it creates actual genuine fans in the audience. That is why we are trying to get Michael’s Rule happening across the country.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. Very quickly – I am sure I am well over my time – is that something that is a federal regulation that needs to be done? Is it done by industry? How does that happen? How do we bring that into effect?

Maggie COLLINS: We are working on it from a few different angles. There have been a lot of promoters who are really in favour of it and would love for it to happen. Of course there are some instances where they just cannot control the situation, like there is Paul McCartney – you cannot tell Paul McCartney what to do. He is going to choose whether he is going to have a support or not and who it will be, so you cannot always make people do it. We are also talking about pursuing the visa angle as well, so trying to find a way that it can be either compelled or incentivised to happen for the international teams that come out.

Michael GALEA: Very interesting. I very much wish you all the best with that. Thank you very much for your time. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you, Mr Galea.

Dale PACKARD: Sorry, I might just briefly add that in general, because you mentioned the number of streams that are required to become a sustainable artist, I would say across the board that threshold, whether it is live or streams, has gone up and up. The level you need to be at to have a sustainable career in music I feel like – I do not have the data on hand, but let us say, for argument’s sake, that 20 years ago if you were able to draw 300 people to a show in every city, you could kind of make that your living. Now maybe you need 800 at each show to make that your living. Look, I am not saying those are necessarily the figures, but you have definitely seen that you really need to be a larger act and reaching a larger audience before you can get over that threshold to make it your career. Would you agree with that, Maggie?

Maggie COLLINS: Yes.

Michael GALEA: Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thanks so much. Thanks, Mr Galea. We will go to Ms Copsey.

Katherine COPSEY: Thank you. Thanks so much for being here and for a fascinating submission. You speak in your submission about the importance of radio and the national broadcaster Triple J and that being a platform where people can access local acts. I want to also delve into your views on local and independent community radio, the role that that still plays in the ecosystem, helping acts that are coming up, and whether there is more that the state government should be doing to support those stations.

Maggie COLLINS: I mean, where do we start? Just for context, I was brought up with a community radio station. I was a presenter and volunteer for many years and music director of 4ZZZ up here in Brisbane. Then I crossed over from that to Triple J, so community radio is where I cut my teeth and got my experience to actually pursue a nine-year career at Triple J, at the ABC. I also pursued a 14-year career in artist management, which was helped by that work at Triple J and by community radio. So yes, the community radio work, it is not just the radio itself in developing audiences, but it is developing careers. It is developing communities. It is the fabric of music communities essentially. I do not know how much more to say.

Dale PACKARD: I do not think it could be overstated how important community radio is. Even just looking at streaming platforms and the various issues that have been raised with the algorithms, you have got these large companies like Spotify that provide an amazing service, I would argue, for people to find and consume music. What it does not do well is local content, and community radio just fills that gap perfectly. I

guess in the Victorian context, you have got your PBS and your RRR, and Victoria would not be the same without them. It is as simple as that.

Katherine COPSEY: I just finished rereading *Pig City*, which is about the Brisbane music scene and talks a lot about 4ZZZ, which I did not understand the history of before, so it is really on my mind. Do you think that there is work to be done to assist those radio platforms to expand into areas where young audiences in particular are finding their content these days? I am thinking: is there capacity, with those skill sets, to help the community radio stations make sure that their offerings are reaching young people through social media, through streaming platforms, through forums like podcasts and so on? Do you think there is work there to help generate the audience for community radio as well?

Maggie COLLINS: I believe so. As always with these things, I would refer to my wonderful colleagues at the CBAA in regard to this because we work with them quite a lot. We are in constant meetings about how we can work with one another, like we are with multiple peak bodies across the music industry, Dale and I, with Music Victoria and AAM, about what they actually need. I do not want to speak too directly about what would be the best investment for them, but as someone who has been through that – I am a bit old now – I think that sounds really interesting and something that a lot of young people would find compelling, to get those skills.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Ms Copsey. Mr Welch.

Richard WELCH: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, both of you, for coming in. I want to narrow down and maybe drag you back a little bit to the issue of venues, particularly small venues. My anecdotal experience in Melbourne is we have got vanishingly few live venues now. It is very hard. If you are an artist, you actually do not have the outlets to go and ply your craft, develop your craft. I think that lack of supply of venues is stopping artists chancing their arm coming through and doing anything live. You said that noise regulations were one of the obstacles. But I would be interested to know: are there other obstacles that the government could remove that would make it more viable or give greater incentive to more venues to have live music?

Dale PACKARD: The big one starts with the letter ‘i’ – insurance. We have been told time and time again by these music venues that insurance costs are their biggest hurdle. We are limited with what we can do here at Music Victoria. It is a national issue. It is not even just a music issue as well; it is a very big problem. We have had music venues citing increases of eight times, nine times what they were paying a few years ago, and it has got to the point where a lot of them just cannot operate. That is probably the biggest issue, I would say. Then on top of that you have got the various kinds of licensing fees, liquor tax and that kind of thing, although I do not want to align music just with liquor sales; there are lots of ways you can consume music. But I would say noise regulation, insurance, taxation – probably all the other elements that are affecting it. Also young people are drinking less, which is good. I think it is creating a healthier state. But that does mean some of these music venues might need to pivot their business models to adjust to different spending habits from young people.

Richard WELCH: Dale, could I just ask you: when you said insurance, you do not mean insurance that is specific to music, it is just their public liability insurance in the venues?

Dale PACKARD: Correct. However, the fact that they have live music is part of the contributing factor that makes it large.

Richard WELCH: It increases their risk?

Dale PACKARD: Yes.

Richard WELCH: In terms of pivoting your business models, because there is more digital music and young people are consuming their music enjoyment in different ways, are you seeing new emergent ways that this is coming through in the market? Are there new kinds of venues or new outlets that we could lean into?

Dale PACKARD: Yes, it is a good question. I think there is some more work that needs to be done in looking at the venues that are successful and the reasons for that. I do not really have much more to say on it at this time other than that I am interested in doing that work as well. There are a handful of venues we know are doing well, so it is diving into: why is that? What have they changed? So, yes, it is a good question.

Richard WELCH: Okay. Thank you, Dale. Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Great. Thanks, Mr Welch. That is all the members. I think Ms Copsey has a couple more questions, though.

Katherine COPSEY: Yes, I am just interested in your thoughts – it is obviously a really quickly evolving space and not one that anyone has all the answers about yet. But are there any particular initiatives that you are looking at in terms of enabling local artists to have better access on digital platforms, particular initiatives or projects that you are looking into that you would like to see funded? Your submission talks about innovation and supporting artists to reach audiences through those platforms. I am just interested if there is anything that you would like to highlight for the committee.

Maggie COLLINS: One thing that we lacked in highlighting that absolutely should have been highlighted in our submission, because it just was a given in my mind, is that the work that Music Victoria and VMDO do already does all of those things. The investment in those things that we put in that submission is essentially an investment in the VMDO and in Music Victoria to deliver those things, because that is the work that they do – investment in that infrastructure and in the actual delivery and the support of getting that music out there and supporting the artists – and not just the artists but the entire industry.

That is the thing about this: it is not just art, it is business. I think it was Mr Davis who asked, of the artists, which of those are sole traders, but actually every single artist is a business. They are either a sole trader, partnership, proprietary limited or trust, or whatever it is; they all file a tax return. They are all businesses and they all interact with other businesses – like a manager who is a sole trader or partnership or proprietary limited, or a publicist who is that, or an agent who is booking their shows, or a graphic designer who is doing their work, or anyone else – and in this ecosystem all of these businesses are trying to interact with one another and lift each other's work and businesses up. In amongst all of that you need a steady hand and you need someone who is going to be the leader and provide those opportunities, essentially with the expert hat on. That is the work that the VMDO and Music Victoria have been doing so well over the years and that AAM specifically and our Victorian managers have benefited so well from. I have a list here of all the programs that we have done with them and their managers who have benefited from it, whose artists have then gone overseas to export. Simone Ubaldi and Andrew Parisi who won manager of the year at our awards, they were based in Melbourne a few years ago. I mean, Amyl and the Sniffers, who they manage, obviously speak for themselves. There are countless other examples with Victorian managers. I think that is the bottom line for us at the moment.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Ms Copsey. I just realised that Ms Broad was on the screen. Sorry, I could not see you there.

Gaelle BROAD: That is fine.

The CHAIR: Over to you for questions.

Gaelle BROAD: Thanks, Chair. This inquiry looks at COVID and the impact of COVID, but I would also be interested in your thoughts about the impact of the rising cost of living, because I know Groovin the Moo – I am based in Bendigo – was cancelled last year, and they are not looking at returning. What impact has that pressure on the hip pocket had on music festivals as well?

Maggie COLLINS: The festival story is a bit of the headline story at the moment. That is the result that we have seen in the media a lot. In my opinion and from what we have been hearing from all of our members – and all of this feeds back from their artists as well – is that this is now the new normal in which we have landed after the pandemic. When we were going through the pandemic, everyone wanted it to go back to normal, and when the pandemic ended it never really did go back to normal. It was not because we were still in the pandemic, obviously, but because this was just a whole new world. And it was not just because of the event of the pandemic but because of so many other events that happened, also a lot of other things that were leading up to it before that. The effects of climate change have been one thing. I truly believe as well that that was bubbling up to large effects on insurance, which bubbled over with the pandemic and then all of the things that happened with Splendour in the Grass, for one example, after that. That had a ripple effect on the punters and their experience – and the young punters who were cooped up inside for all those years and then went outside and experienced a really horrible outdoors environment because of that weather and therefore did not want to buy tickets immediately the next year. Therefore at least in Splendour in the Grass's experience, that is

probably just one of the many facets of it, but that is one theory of what the struggles were there. So it is a whole ecosystem of issues, and in amongst a lot of those, the bottom layer is the cost of everything going up because of all of these factors. Dale, any more thoughts?

Dale PACKARD: I might just add a few more comments. It is almost self-evident that the cost of living would be impacting the music sector. I do not want to get too doom and gloom. I mean, lots of people are visiting and going to music gigs and festivals. We are not crumbling. We have seen a decline, but there is still a lot of music activity going on. But yes, patrons have less disposable income, which is impacting ticket sales. We are also seeing people less likely to potentially take up a career in music because it seems a bit more financially risky at this time, with rising rents and all the usual suspects. So yes, it is definitely having an impact.

Gaelle BROAD: It is interesting, and I know there was a music festival in Donald recently that was cancelled at the last minute, and there seemed to be red tape connected with that, but you did talk about some of the costs and the impact. I guess just so it is not all doom and gloom, Dale, do you want to talk about who is doing well in this environment and with your members what are you seeing? What are the ingredients that really are working well for people?

Maggie COLLINS: Well, Laneway Festival is doing very well. I think of them because they have just finished up their run of shows across the country. Look at anything Destroy All Lines are doing. They are absolutely smashing it. In fact a lot of genre-specific things are doing quite well at the moment. Destroy All Lines do not just work in heavy music but they do a lot of work in that field as promoters. They just finished Knotfest – or maybe it is still going, but I think most of it is sold out or definitely on the way to doing it. That is in the promoter space in terms of festivals and touring festivals.

Then in terms of managers and their artists kicking goals, I mean, a lot of the success is happening internationally. If you talk to Sounds Australia, they will definitely echo that and support this pattern, which is that there is a need to export in order to have a functioning career if you are an Australian artist – you know, Amyl and the Sniffers with their managers Simone and Andrew, Dom Dolla with his manager James Fava, Royel Otis and Genesis Owusu with their manager Andrew Klippel. They are all doing huge things, and their managers are at the cutting edge of artist management in the world. Australian managers punch way above our weight, just like our artists. Going back to your question, according to stats, Australian electronic music at the moment is really kicking it. I do not have actual stats in front of me right now, but there are some out there, and Dom Dolla and Cyril are right at the top at the moment.

Gaelle BROAD: I do not want to take too much time, Chair, but because we are looking at the social and economic elements of the creative industry, what impact is AI having? What are the risks and what are the opportunities?

Maggie COLLINS: Dale, do you have any conversations around Music Victoria?

Dale PACKARD: Yes. Look, on the opportunity side it is changing the game of music production. I am not sure how many people here have dabbled in music production, but now you could sing a dry vocal into a recorder and tell it to sound like whoever you want it to sound like. You can make yourself sound like a fairy or Nick Cave or whoever it might be, and then you can put in different guitar sounds and make them sound completely different. From a production point of view, it is absolutely incredible. I know music producers who are just mind-blown with what you can do now. The biggest issues around it are the rights of artists and the songwriters, and APRA AMCOS have done a lot of detailed work looking into what the impact of AI will be over the next five years or so.

Maggie COLLINS: When it comes to artist managers, to be honest, we are cautious as well on behalf of the artist and the rights of the people who actually create the copyright, but on a productivity level AI has been pretty helpful for a lot of managers when it has been used for full productivity. It is worth it to look at it from the two sides of the coin in that regard so that it is looked at holistically, I think.

Gaelle BROAD: That is great. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thanks, Mrs Broad. We have time for one more question from Mr Davis, if you still wanted to.

David DAVIS: I just want to return briefly to this issue of federal support, Commonwealth support. You have recommended that there be some assessment of *Revive* funding and that there be advocacy for federal funding specifically for contemporary music groups and also some recognition by the big national broadcasters ABC and the SBS. I am just interested to get to your sense of things. Are there examples that you could point to where you think something might have made a significant difference there, or is it just a more general comment? We are obviously looking to see what we can do to press for these things.

Maggie COLLINS: I would say it is a more general comment based on the AAM being focused more on artist managers and representing those managers who support the careers of artists and looking for as many opportunities as we can to simply create more sustainable careers, no matter what that looks like. In terms of the federal funding, the creation of Music Australia federally has been the greatest thing that has happened for contemporary music in Australia's history as far as I am concerned.

David DAVIS: Do you think we are getting our share of that, though?

Maggie COLLINS: Do you mean Victoria?

David DAVIS: Anecdotally I hear that we are not, but I am interested in your –

Maggie COLLINS: I cannot talk to it, because I do not know the facts. I would need to know more of the data on that.

David DAVIS: Do you think we get a quarter, for example? I am a Victorian taxpayer. We pay about a quarter of the tax of any jurisdiction in the country. The sense I get from a number of bodies and individuals is that we do not get that 25 per cent back, if I could put it that way. A lot of it is concentrated in New South Wales.

Maggie COLLINS: For the AAM and the investment that we have received as a national body – getting core funding, for example, through Music Australia – we have been able to put that back into grant funding, say, for example, for the Music Australia international conference contribution, which has gone back to Victorian managers and has been able to get them to international conferences such as the Great Escape, SXSW, Amsterdam Dance Event et cetera. These are all market showcase events where they can network with buyers in those markets to get their artists overseas and playing at those events. If you want, I can provide you with some figures – it is very minute – on how many Victorian managers have benefited from that national investment.

David DAVIS: What I am interested in is the share especially.

Maggie COLLINS: Well, in terms of the share, I would not have the exact data.

David DAVIS: All right. Thank you. That is okay.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you, Mr Davis. That is all we have time for. Thank you very much for appearing before us today, for your submission and for answering our questions. That concludes the public hearing.

Witnesses withdrew.