

Parliament of Victoria

‘No dancing whilst drinking’: Challenges and opportunities for Victoria’s live music venues

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No. 2 | May 2025

Research Paper

Parliamentary Library & Information Service

Table of Contents

List of abbreviations	iv
Executive summary	1
Introduction	2
1 State of the field	3
<i>Arts and music engagement</i>	3
<i>Value of the industry</i>	5
<i>Pandemic impacts</i>	6
<i>Policy</i>	9
2 Victoria's live music venues	19
<i>Decline</i>	20
3 Challenges	23
<i>'We'd need to start charging \$10 for a pot'—Insurance and other costs</i>	23
<i>'The kids aren't drinking anymore'—Changing audience behaviours</i>	25
<i>'Learning how to be in crowds again'—Young audiences</i>	28
<i>'Sugar hit to the market'—Business models</i>	30
<i>'We're lucky, we're iconic'—Community support and social value</i>	32
4 Proposed solutions	33
<i>'We need an intervention'—Reform the live music business model</i>	33
<i>'Shouldn't have to get drunk'—Adapt to changing audience expectations</i>	35
<i>Policy changes</i>	36
References	37

Figures

Figure 1	How Victorians engaged with the arts in 2022 (adapted from Creative Australia)	4
Figure 2	Types of live events attended by Victorians in 2022 (adapted from Creative Australia)	4
Figure 3	Index of Victorian payroll jobs, 4 January 2020–14 December 2024	8
Figure 4	Victorian contemporary music sector revenue, 2018–2023	9

Tables

Table 1	State and federal government funding provided for live music during and following the COVID-19 pandemic	15
Table 2	The 15 SA3s in Victoria with the highest count of live music venues, 2024	19
Table 3	Top five SA3s with the greatest increase/greatest decrease in number of music venues 2018–2024	21
Table 4	SA3s with the greatest percentage increase/decrease in music venues 2018–2024	21

Maps

Map 1	A count of live music venues per SA3	20
Map 2	Percentage changes in live music venue counts, 2018–2024	22

List of abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ALMBC	Australian Live Music Business Council
APRA AMCOS	Australasian Performing Right Association and Australasian Mechanical Copyright Owners Society
LPA	Live Performance Australia
PBO	Parliamentary Budget Office
RISE	Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand funding program
SA3	Statistical Area 3
VMIA	Victorian Managed Insurance Agency

Executive summary

Despite the removal of COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions and a strong economic recovery, live music venues in Victoria continue to struggle. New factors, partly exacerbated by the pandemic, have presented challenges to music venues' recovery across the state. These include recent inflationary pressures and their related effects on cost of living and discretionary spending, sharp increases in insurance premiums, shifts in audience behaviour and a new generation of punters coming of age.

As a consequence of these factors, Victoria has lost a significant number of live music venues since 2018, and the rate at which new venues are taking their place has not kept up. Data analysis indicates that 338 music venues have been lost between 2018–2024 statewide. The loss of these venues, including many pubs and clubs, has ramifications for emerging musicians, who often rely on smaller venues to launch their careers and grow a following, as well as related professions such as technicians. These losses risk Victoria's well-regarded standing as a hub for live music, which contributed to the approximate \$1.1 billion of gross value added to Victoria's gross state product in the 2022–23 financial year by the broader creative and performance arts sub-sector.

Several proposals have been floated to resolve some of the challenges that live music venues face, many of which involve government intervention. These include reforms to government funding, levies on major live music events as a revenue source for smaller venues, voucher programs for audiences and a government-underwritten insurance scheme. This paper sits alongside a quickly growing body of literature that has examined challenges facing live music venues nationwide, including a 2025 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts report inquiring into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry.

Introduction

Victoria's live music sector is one of the state's most celebrated cultural offerings, and its venues have fostered generations of Australian music's greatest exports, from Hunters and Collectors to Amyl and the Sniffers. However, the sector has faced numerous social and economic challenges in recent years that have resulted in some venues closing and many others struggling to remain viable. A federal inquiry in 2025 heard that 'this is the biggest crisis to hit the live music scene in a generation'.¹

Much reporting on the health of the live music industry in Victoria focused on the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. While these impacts were severe (see 'COVID impacts' section), there is evidence that live music venues were struggling before the pandemic in the face of rising costs and shifting audience behaviours. Across Australia, attendance at arts and cultural activities has more or less returned to pre-pandemic levels.²

However, cornerstone live music venues and major festivals continue to close. Pillars of Melbourne's live music scene—like The Bendigo Hotel, Whole Lotta Love, The Gasometer, The Reverence Hotel, and Ding Dong Lounge—have closed in the past decade, while other stalwarts like The Night Cat, The Tote Hotel, Cherry Bar, Yah Yabs and The John Curtin Hotel are facing closure or have only been saved by crowd funding.³ Similar closures have occurred in regional Victoria, with Ballarat's iconic venue Karova Lounge closing in 2019 and The Loft in Warrnambool closing in 2024.⁴ This report shows that the frequency of venue closures is outpacing the rate at which new venues are being established.

This research paper assesses the state of live music venues in Victoria and identifies the challenges they face. It draws from a comprehensive range of reports, written submissions and testimonies, and original data analysis to provide a comprehensive picture of venues' health and prospects. Overall, live music is still valued both in Victoria and beyond, but social, economic and pandemic-related factors have contributed to declining attendance rates in pubs and clubs, and increased costs for venue operators.

The paper begins with an assessment of the current state of affairs facing Victoria's venues, including economic figures, venue counts and attendance statistics. It then outlines the challenges faced by live music venues and their workers. Finally, it outlines proposed solutions to the challenges. The paper excludes live music festivals from its scope as much as possible, choosing to focus specifically on venues, as festivals can have different demands and conditions.

¹ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) *Am I Ever Gonna See You Live Again? Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry*, final report, March, Canberra, The Committee, p. 31.

² Creative Australia (2023) *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*, Canberra, Creative Australia; Live Performance Australia (2024) *Live Performance Industry in Australia: 2023 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Report*, 11 October, Melbourne, Live Performance Australia.

³ M. Cunningham (2024) 'Half of Melbourne's famous live music venues could soon be dead' *The Age*, 2 April.

⁴ Beat (2024) 'The iconic regional live music venues we deeply miss from the last 30 years', *Beat*, 4 November.

1 | State of the field

Arts and music engagement

Evidence continues to show how live music is socially and culturally valued by audiences. Live performance is the most commonly attended arts and cultural experience for Australians, with 68 per cent of people having attended a live performance event in 2022.⁵ Music (47 per cent) and festivals (44 per cent) are the most commonly attended live events.⁶ Live Performance Australia (LPA) have argued that more Australians attend live music events than they do all major sporting code events combined; in 2024 there were 30.1 million ticketed attendances at live performance events, compared to 26.2 million at sports events.⁷

These results are echoed in Victoria, where Victorians are more likely to attend an arts or cultural event than the national average.⁸ The *Audience Atlas 2024* found that Victorians' engagement with the arts has actually increased since pre-pandemic years, and that live music and festivals remain the most attended cultural and arts events, returning to pre-pandemic levels.⁹

Almost half of the Victorians surveyed attended live music events in 2022 (46 per cent, down from 49 per cent in 2019), and 41 per cent attended an arts festival (consistent with 39 per cent in 2019), including music festivals (22 per cent).¹⁰ Live attendance is the third most common way Victorians experienced the arts in 2022 (Figure 1), and music is the second most common way Victorians attend live arts events (Figure 2).¹¹ However, Victorians are attending arts and cultural events less frequently and less than they'd like, suggesting that while demand remains high, there are significant barriers to attendance.¹²

⁵ Creative Australia (2023) *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*, op. cit.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Live Performance Australia (2024) '[Submission to the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts](#)', Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian Live Music industry, Canberra, The Committee, p. 2; Two Circles (2025) '[2024 Attendance Review - Australia Edition](#)' *Two Circles*, 12 March.

⁸ PatternMakers (2023) *Audience Outlook Monitor - How cultural audiences in VIC are impacted by rising inflation: Victoria Snapshot report - April 2023*, Melbourne, Creative Victoria and PatternMakers.

⁹ Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2024) *Audience Atlas Victoria 2024: Exploring the market for arts and culture in Victoria*, Melbourne, Creative Victoria.

¹⁰ Creative Australia (2023) *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*, op. cit.

¹¹ Creative Australia (2023) *Victoria Factsheet - Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*, September, Melbourne, Creative Australia.

¹² *ibid.*

Figure 1: How Victorians engaged with the arts in 2022 (adapted from Creative Australia)¹³

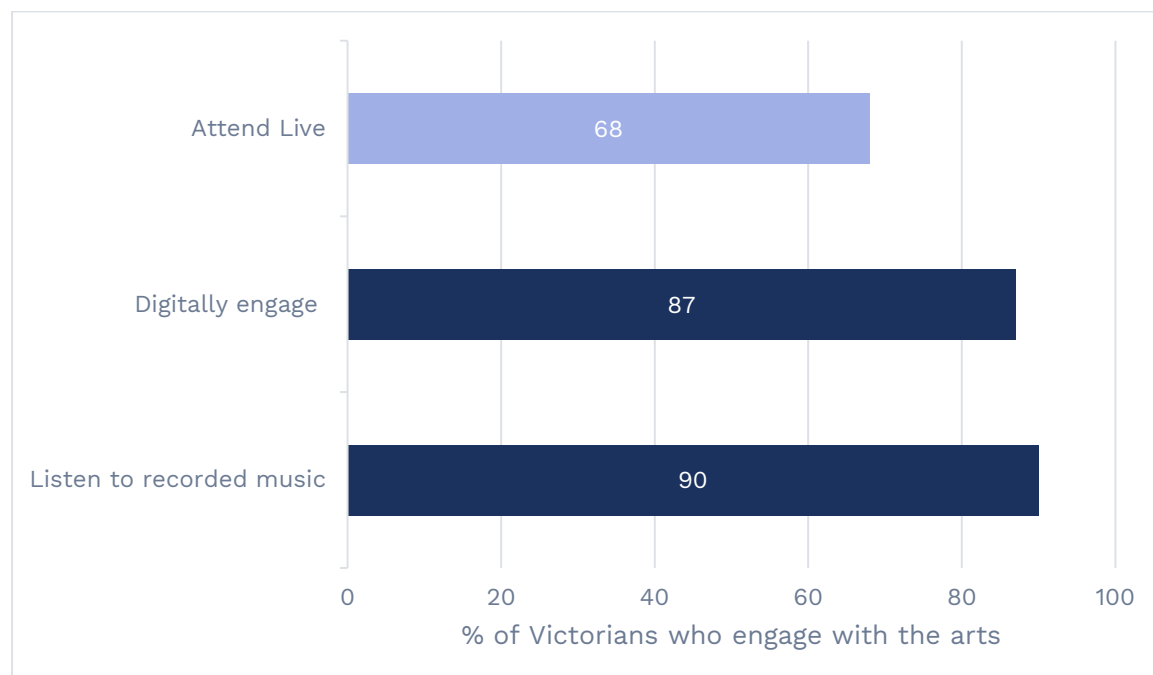
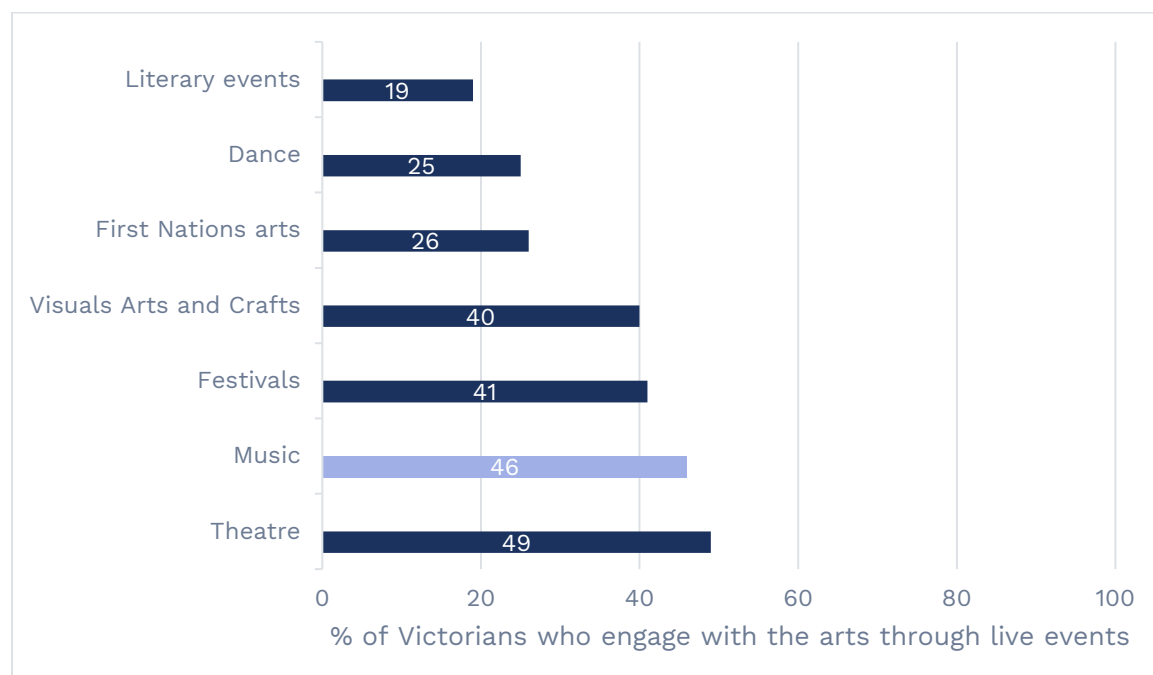


Figure 2: Types of live events attended by Victorians in 2022 (adapted from Creative Australia)¹⁴



¹³ Creative Australia (2023) *Victoria Factsheet - Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*, op. cit.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

Value of the industry

Social value

As part of the arts and cultural sector, live music is widely considered as having social, cultural, and psychological benefits. The 2023 Arts Participation Survey from Creative Australia found most Australians agree that 'cultural and creative experiences make for a richer and more meaningful life' (69 per cent).¹⁵ The survey also found that following the social and cultural dislocation of the pandemic, a greater proportion are now attending arts and cultural events 'to improve their wellbeing' (32 per cent, up from 25 per cent in 2019).¹⁶

Live music attendance improves audience wellbeing and engagement with the community. A survey of music-engaged respondents found that attending live music has a 'big' or 'very big' impact on:

- their sense of wellbeing and happiness;
- a sense of community;
- a feeling of belonging;
- helping them deal with stress, anxiety or depression;
- cultivating new relationships and friendships; and
- deepening their existing relationships and friendships.¹⁷

These positive effects were more likely to be reported by women, First Nations respondents, and younger respondents.¹⁸

Live music has been found to be more important to Australians following the pandemic; a consumer insights survey found 37 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'music is my life, my number one passion' (up from 32 per cent in 2019).¹⁹

Live music venues, particularly small venues, are also highly valued as 'incubators' for Australia's musicians and artists seeking to learn the trade and attract an audience.²⁰ Many venues that have closed or nearly closed in recent years including The Tote, and interstate venues like The Zoo in Brisbane and The Great Club in Sydney were mourned particularly because they were a vital development space for Australian acts that went on to become internationally renowned.²¹ Music licensing agency APRA AMCOS chief executive Dean Ormson said:

Pubs and clubs are really where Australian bands get to cut their teeth, develop their own audiences, build their own profile and fan base and develop their own careers. With so many venues now lost, it's absolutely a crisis point. We need an intervention.²²

Owner of the Old Bar Christopher Windley added:

You could knock on the door of any live music venue in Melbourne, and they will be able to reel off bands that got their start with them. What happens to these musicians when there is nowhere for them to play?²³

¹⁵ Creative Australia (2023) *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Creative Australia (2025) *Listening In: Insights on live music attendance*, Canberra, Creative Australia, p. 12.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁹ Victorian Music Development Office (2022) *Consumer Insights Survey*, Melbourne, VMDO.

²⁰ Cunningham (2024) 'Half of Melbourne's famous live music venues could soon be dead' op. cit.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² K. Burke (2023) 'Australia's live music scene 'decimated' with 1,300 venues lost since pandemic' *Guardian*, 20 October.

²³ Cunningham (2024) 'Half of Melbourne's famous live music venues could soon be dead' op. cit.

This value is not easily replicated with new venues that spring up when older, established venues close down.²⁴ Venues are also often gathering spaces for marginalised communities or support particular communities or genres.²⁵ The closure of The Bendigo Hotel in Collingwood, for example, was particularly lamented because the hotel was one of the only venues dedicated to the hardcore and metal scene.²⁶

Economic value

Economic output of the live music sector is difficult to record and calculate given the variety of different factors one can include or exclude from the scope of a study.²⁷ It is generally agreed that revenue and economic output in the live music sector have returned to pre-pandemic levels. However, the sector's broader economic recovery does not mean venues are reaching the same levels of output or revenue they were prior to the pandemic, nor does it mean they are experiencing challenges of the same intensity, as demonstrated below.

Public performance revenue, which refers to revenue sourced from live performances of music, grew by \$40 million compared to 2019 figures, according to APRA AMCOS.²⁸ The \$132.4 million figure in 2024 is also more than double the 2021 figure of \$62.9 million, when the sector was largely affected by pandemic-related restrictions.

Live Performance Australia also recorded a significant rebound in revenue since pandemic restrictions were lifted. In 2023, LPA claimed Victoria generated a 44 per cent increase in revenue compared to the previous year, and that the average Victorian spent \$143 on live performance events throughout the year, compared to the national average of \$116 per person.²⁹ Contemporary music generated \$483.9 million and contributed to 49 per cent of Victoria's total live performance revenue.³⁰

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) show that the creative and performing activities sub-sector, which falls under the broader arts and recreation sector, generated \$3.5 billion in total value added to the national economy during the 2022–23 financial year.³¹ The complementary food and beverage services sub-industry, which includes hospitality staff working in music venues, generated an industry value-add of \$49.7 billion in the same financial year. Both sub-industries experienced a decline in value-add during the first two years of the pandemic, compared to earlier years, but have firmly surpassed them in the years since. The ABS does not provide these figures at a state level; however, the Victorian Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) estimates the creative and performing arts sub-sector was estimated to added approximately \$1.1 billion in gross value to Victoria's gross state product in the 2022–23 financial year.³²

Pandemic impacts

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent public health measures on the live music industry are well documented. An inquiry into the impacts of COVID-19 on

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ A. Darling (2024) 'Australian live music venues closing as cost of living hits businesses and patrons' ABC, 12 September.

²⁶ R. Dexter and M. Cunningham (2024) 'Can't go on': Collingwood's Bendigo Hotel calls last drinks' *The Age*, 16 March.

²⁷ This research paper is mostly excluding the downstream revenue generated because of live music activities, such as taxis/rideshare fares.

²⁸ APRA AMCOS (2024) '2023–2024 Year in Review', APRA AMCOS.

²⁹ Live Performance Australia (2024) *Live Performance Industry in 2023: Victoria*, Melbourne, Live Performance Australia.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (updated 2025) *Australian Industry 2022–2023*, Canberra, ABS.

³² Parliamentary Budget Office, (2025) 'Submission to the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee' Inquiry into the cultural and creative industries in Victoria, 7 March, Melbourne, The Committee, p. 12.

events found that a wariness of lockdowns prevented both organisations putting on gigs *and* audiences attending them.

While this has dissipated significantly due to the return to 'COVID normal', COVID-19 hesitancy was still the third most significant challenge faced by arts organisations in the 2023 Audience Outlook Monitor, suggesting a 'long COVID' effect of the pandemic on the industry.³³

Effects on workforce

The arts and recreation sector was one of the most negatively affected workforces during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first year of the pandemic, payroll jobs in the sector fell to their lowest point in the week ending 11 April 2020, when a loss of 28.1 per cent was recorded since the index was created.³⁴ At the same point in time, payroll jobs in the accommodation and food services sector, which includes hospitality workers in venues, had fallen by 34.3 per cent relative to 14 March 2020 (see Figure 3).

In the second year of the pandemic, in which the Delta variant emerged, the arts and recreation sector was impacted even further. At its lowest point, the week ending 4 September 2021, the sector had lost 41.8 per cent of jobs compared to 14 March 2020. At the same time, payroll jobs in the accommodation and food services sector had fallen by 26.1 per cent. This time period overlaps with Melbourne's final lockdown, which was lifted in October 2021 following the state's population reaching a series of vaccination milestones.

The most recent update in this dataset, the week ending 14 December 2024, recorded an overall growth of 19.1 per cent in arts and recreation payroll jobs since the week ending 14 March 2020.³⁵ However, job growth in both sectors has largely plateaued in at least the last year of the data being recorded.

It is worth noting that many workers in the arts and recreation sector would not be included within the scope of this data, as they are self-employed or otherwise not paid through traditional payroll employment.³⁶

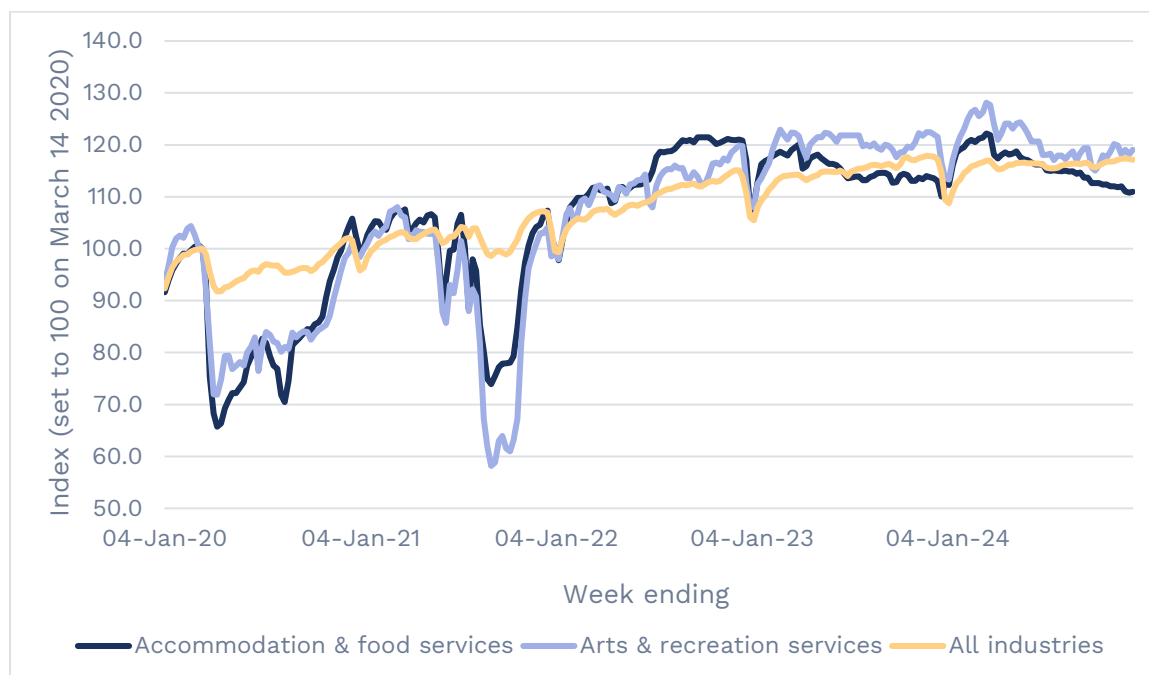
³³ PatternMakers (2023) *Audience Outlook Monitor: Audiences 2023+*, Melbourne, Creative Victoria and PatternMakers.

³⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (updated 2025) *Payroll jobs 2024*, Canberra, ABS.

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2025) *'Payroll Jobs methodology'*, Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Figure 3: Index of Victorian payroll jobs, 4 January 2020–14 December 2024³⁷



Effects on revenue

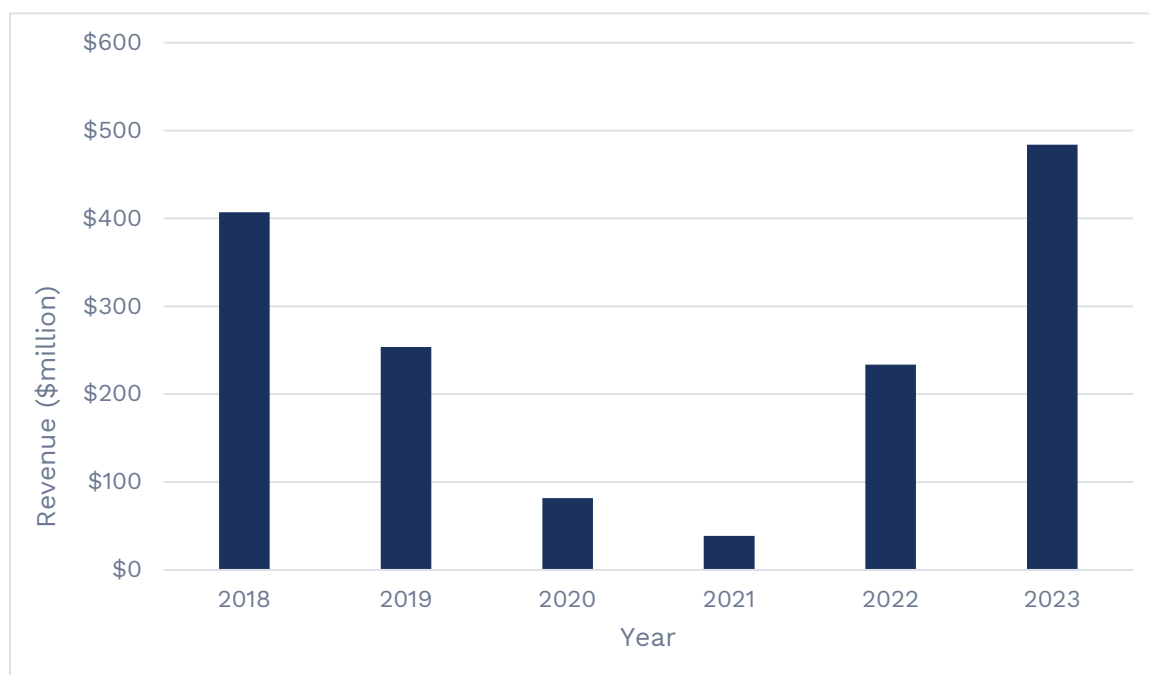
Revenue from contemporary music events in Victoria (excluding festivals) has returned to and surpassed pre-pandemic levels. However, the loss of revenue due to state lockdowns and border closures has had long-lasting effects on the viability of music venues, even after lockdown restrictions have been lifted.

Yearly reporting from LPA and EY details a substantial decline in revenue from contemporary music events in Victoria during 2020–2021.³⁸ During the second year of the pandemic, Victoria recorded \$38.9 million in revenue from contemporary music events. This figure is less than one-tenth of revenue recorded in 2018. Even though, as of 2023, revenue has surpassed pre-pandemic figures (see Figure 4), pandemic-related challenges persist, such as inflationary pressures and flow-on effects of revenue loss during lockdowns.

³⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (updated 2025) *Payroll jobs 2024*, op. cit.

³⁸ Live Performance Australia (2019) *Live Performance Industry in Australia: 2018 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Report*, 2 December, Melbourne, Live Performance Australia, p. 69; Live Performance Australia (2021) *Live Performance Industry in Australia: 2019 and 2020 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Report*, 7 October, Melbourne, Live Performance Australia, p. 75; Live Performance Australia (2023) *Live Performance Industry in Australia: 2021 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Report Final Report*, 27 March, Melbourne, Live Performance Australia, p. 70; Live Performance Australia (2023) *Live Performance Industry in Australia: 2022 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Report Final Report*, 11 December, Melbourne, Live Performance Australia, p. 71; Live Performance Australia (2024) *Live Performance Industry in Australia: 2023 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Report* op. cit., p. 71.

Figure 4: Victorian contemporary music sector revenue, 2018–2023



The substantial loss of revenue during the first three years of the pandemic was extensively reported through news, research and social media. Music Victoria's 2022 Live Music Census, for example, reported a sharp decline in ticketing and onsite ancillary revenue among Melbourne live music venues in 2020–2021.³⁹ Jon Perring, former co-owner of The Tote Hotel, submitted to a parliamentary inquiry in 2021 that pandemic-related density quotients and consequential delays in music programming negatively affected venues' income.⁴⁰ Research from Music Australia and Nielsen also found that, despite a consistent attendance rate at major venues, fewer people were attending live music at pubs and clubs between 2019 and 2024.⁴¹ This decreased attendance rate may come at the expense of smaller music venues' income through food and beverage sales.

Policy

State policy

Government

The Victorian Government's cultural industries policies have long included live music venues as key sites of the arts sector. Victoria's cultural policies have often emphasised the economic benefits derived from the arts, focusing on growth and opportunity for businesses and the state economy.⁴² Live music policies have also often included planning regulations and licensing schemes, including noise complaint legislation under the Coalition government in 2013, and changes to venue licences in 2014.⁴³

³⁹ Music Victoria (2022) *Victorian Live Music Census: Executive Summary*, Music Victoria, p. 6.

⁴⁰ Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee, (2021) *Inquiry into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism and events sectors*, final report, August, Melbourne, The Committee, p. 130.

⁴¹ Creative Australia (2025) op. cit., p. 19.

⁴² M. Seares (2024) 'Sports policy focuses on the grassroots - is this missing from arts policies?' *The Conversation*, 18 July; Creative Victoria (2021) *Creative State 2025*, July, Melbourne, Creative Victoria.

⁴³ Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2015) *2015 Briefing Book: Key issues from the 57th Parliament*, Melbourne, Parliamentary Library & Information Service, Parliament of Victoria, pp. 11-12.

In 2014 the government implemented an 'agent of change' principle to its planning scheme to improve relations between residential property developers and live music venues.⁴⁴ This followed a spike in tensions surrounding noise levels and residential development, exemplified by the Save Live Australia's Music rally in 2010 in response to the closure of The Tote Hotel (which was able to reopen two months later) due to more strict liquor licensing regulations and noise requirements.⁴⁵

The Baillieu/Napthine government also established the Live Music Round Table in 2012, through which the government and music industry representatives could negotiate on policies impacting the sector.⁴⁶

Following its election in 2014, the Labor government implemented the state's first-ever dedicated cultural strategy in 2016, which included establishing Creative Victoria (to replace Arts Victoria).⁴⁷ It also established the Music Works Grants in 2015, under which the Live Music Attenuation Assistance Program provided grants to live music venues.⁴⁸

The creative industries strategy *Creative State 2025* was launched in 2021 and is due to be renewed. In the strategy, the government identified a sector that was struggling even before the pandemic:

Creative enterprises and workers have long struggled to establish sustainable business models or practices. Volatile revenue sources, high investment risks and inadequate capacity and capabilities prevent many from operating sustainably, growing financially, up-skilling or investing in business development and planning. In addition, the sector is populated by workers who are under-employed or in insecure work, with many being sole traders, working from project to project and supplementing their income via casualised industries such as hospitality.⁴⁹

Creative State 2025 is broad and overarching, and while it does not specifically identify the challenges and opportunities facing the live music industry or venues, many of its visions, objectives, and actions relate directly to issues facing venues, including maintaining and expanding audience markets, more stable business conditions, diversity and accessibility, and better infrastructure (see 'Challenges' and 'Proposed solutions' sections).

As seen in Table 1, much of the government's recent support for live music venues came in the form of support measures both during and after the pandemic, and each budget since 2020 has included funding for the live music industry to recover from the pandemic, such as the Victorian Live Music Recovery Program, Live Music Restart package, Live Performance Support Program and Support Act, a charity established in 1997 to support live music workers and artists.⁵⁰

Other than funding, a significant government policy contribution was the introduction of an event interruption insurance product from the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority during the pandemic. Major events were protected if they were cancelled due to public health measures. The government also ended the freeze on late-night liquor licensing in several inner Melbourne local government areas in 2022 as part of its COVID-19 recovery

⁴⁴ In practice, the principle requires the party responsible for development or expansion to be responsible for noise attenuation measures. If a live music venue wants to move to a neighbourhood or expand its premises, it is responsible for reducing the impact of noise effects on nearby residential properties. If a new residential development is established near a live music venue, the developers will be responsible for protecting residents from noise from the venue.

⁴⁵ N. Carson (2020) 'It's been ten years since Melbourne's pivotal SLAM Rally, here's what's changed since then' *Beat*, 21 February.

⁴⁶ Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2015) op. cit., p. 11.

⁴⁷ Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2019) *2019 Briefing e-Book: key issues from the 58th Parliament*, Melbourne, Parliamentary Library & Information Service, Parliament of Victoria, p. 19.

⁴⁸ Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2019) op. cit., p. 20; J. Garrett, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation (2015) *Music To The Ears Of Victoria's Live Venues*, media release, 5 June.

⁴⁹ Creative Victoria (2021) *Creative State 2025*, op. cit., p. 8.

⁵⁰ Support Act 'About Support Act' Support Act.

policy, after live music stakeholders had reported the freeze was negatively affecting music venues in the affected area.⁵¹

The launch of the Always Live program in 2022 marked a significant milestone in the government's policy on live music scene recovery. The program was an initiative of the late Michael Gudinski, founder of Mushroom Group, a record label turned booking agency, talent management agency, and rights company.⁵² The program was initially earmarked to be launched in 2020 but was delayed by the pandemic and eventually became a keystone of the government's COVID-19 recovery efforts.⁵³ Always Live facilitates gigs and events throughout Victoria through direct government funding, with Gudinski's vision being an umbrella statewide festival under which smaller events could be promoted and funded, much like the Melbourne International Comedy Festival model.⁵⁴

Since its launch, the program has been both praised and criticised. Always Live was credited with bringing large, 'blockbuster' gigs to the state to compete with similar-scale sports events such as the Formula 1 Grand Prix and football finals.⁵⁵ However, live music stakeholders have pointed out that the massive amounts of funding had not trickled down to small and medium venues 'who need it most', and on whom the next generation of Australian musicians depend to get their start (see 'Government funding' section).⁵⁶ Others said the program would in effect create competition within the industry, forcing festivals without government funding to compete with the government-funded gigs.⁵⁷

2024 saw the launch of the 10,000 Gigs program, which directly funded venues' artist fees and required each artist be paid at least \$250 for a performance.

The Victorian Government also made a detailed submission to the Federal Government's inquiry into Australia's live music scene, outlining several opportunities for improvement, including more research on audience expectations and engagement, better insurance and business models, and improving accessibility and discoverability of local and small artists.⁵⁸ It also stated it had 'recently undertaken internal reviews into live music venue regulatory and compliance requirements, and approval processes for festivals and events' and that both reviews had 'generated workstreams with the intent of significantly reducing the time and costs that music venues and music festivals incur'.⁵⁹

⁵¹ A. Carbines, Acting Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation (2023) *New guidelines to boost our night-time economy*, media release, 3 July; Department of Justice and Community Safety (2023) *Ending the freeze on late-night liquor licences - Consultation: Engage Victoria survey results summary*, Department of Justice and Community Safety.

⁵² L. Brandle (2022) 'Victoria's 'Always Live' festival of music was Michael Gudinski's 'passion project'' *The Music Network*, 24 February.

⁵³ Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, (2022) 'Tourism, Sport and Major Events portfolio: Questions taken on notice and further information agreed to be supplied at the hearings' supplementary evidence, Into the Inquiry of 2022-23 Budget Estimates, 17 May, Melbourne, The Committee.

⁵⁴ C. Le Grand (2022) 'New music festival to fuel rock'n'roll recovery in Victoria with 100 events' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 July.

⁵⁵ C. Le Grand (2022) op. cit.

⁵⁶ Cunningham (2024) 'Half of Melbourne's famous live music venues could soon be dead' op. cit.

⁵⁷ D. Cribb (2024) "Complete Disaster": Former Vic Music industry member blasts ALWAYS LIVE' *The Music*, 23 August.

⁵⁸ Victorian Government, (2024) 'Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communication and the Arts', Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music scene, 14 May, Canberra, The Committee.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 5.

Opposition

The Liberal-National coalition took a 'Community Arts Event and Festival Promotion Fund' to the 2018 election, and pushed for more financial support for Victoria's local events, including during the pandemic.⁶⁰ Ahead of the 2022 election the Opposition committed to a range of measures to assist the ailing live music and events industry, including:

- conducting a review of insurance arrangements for creative spaces;
- reviewing planning and liquor licensing relations;
- auditing the state's live music capabilities; and
- establishing an annual Victorian music showcase and industry conference.⁶¹

It also announced a \$150 million Home Grown Events Victoria Fund for the sector's recovery and \$1 million in grants for venue upgrades.⁶²

The Coalition criticised a proposed increase in liquor licensing fees, stating 'Melbourne and Victoria are known for our culture, our nightlife and our live music scene, and these licence fee increases simply put another burden onto our entertainment industry'.⁶³ It also made several commitments to improving community arts and performance centres and festivals in the run-up to the 2022 election, and opposed funding cuts to several arts organisations.⁶⁴

Crossbench

The Victorian Greens have been vocal about the declining health of the live music venue industry, particularly since the impacts of the pandemic became apparent. Early in the pandemic they launched a dedicated live music recovery policy, and have advocated for a government insurer to underwrite venues' public liability insurance.⁶⁵

In 2025 the federal Greens announced a policy of 'Live Performance Tax Offsets' through which live music venues would receive a 10 per cent tax offset for the costs of hosting live music.⁶⁶ The Greens said costing of the policy from the federal PBO estimated an 18 per cent increase in live performances in the first year and a 35 per cent ongoing increase.⁶⁷

Federal policy

Federal funding for public institutions often directly impacts public arts organisations such as Creative Australia (formerly the Australia Council for the Arts) and the ABC, which has flow-on effects for live music venues.

The federal Coalition government dramatically changed arts funding structures in 2015. Following the Liberal-National Coalition's win at the 2014 election, more than \$100 million was reallocated from the Australia Council budget to a new scheme, the National

⁶⁰ C. McLeish, Shadow Minister for Arts and Culture (2018) *Community arts event & festivals promotion fund*, media release, 10 October; D. Southwick, Shadow Minister for the Events Industry (2021) *Certainty needed for Melbourne's iconic events*, media release, 28 November.

⁶¹ D. Davis, Shadow Minister for the Arts and Creative Industries (2022) *Real solutions to revitalize Victoria's live music industry*, media release, 19 November.

⁶² Davis (2022) op. cit.

⁶³ D. O'Brien, Shadow Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation (2023) *Another Labor tax hike slugs a night out*, media release, 10 May.

⁶⁴ T. Bull, Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs (2022) *Upgrades for Heathcote's RSL hall*, media release, 23 October; D. Davis, Shadow Minister for the Arts and Creative Industries (2024) *Young Victorians punished for Labor's financial mismanagement*, media release, 17 January; Liberal Victoria, (2022) *Celebrating multicultural communities in Knox*, media release, 13 October; Liberal Victoria, (2022) *More events for Lardner Park under a Liberals and Nations government*, media release, 28 September.

⁶⁵ G. de Vietri (2024) *Government insurer should step in to save live music venues from exorbitant insurance hikes*, media release, 18 April; E. Sandell, Deputy Leader of the Victorian Greens (2020) *Greens launch campaign to save live music in Victoria*, media release, 28 May.

⁶⁶ Australian Greens, (2025) *Greens launch plan for live performance tax offsets for touring artists, live performance venues and theatre productions*, media release, 11 April.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

Program for Excellence in the Arts. This new scheme gave then Minister for the Arts George Brandis direct control over the funding of some arts projects, instead of through merit-based applications assessed by the Australia Council.⁶⁸ The scheme was abolished in 2017.⁶⁹

With no dedicated national arts policy or strategy, funding during this time was largely directed to ongoing public institutions and organisations, such as the Australia Council, the National Gallery of Australia and Screen Australia, rather than directly to live music venues like pubs and clubs. In 2020, the arts portfolio was absorbed into the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications and was no longer its own department.⁷⁰

The \$200 million Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) funding program was included in the Federal Government's COVID-19 recovery package, announced in June 2020, and has been funded each budget.⁷¹ The funding scheme was designed to assist the sector in running activities that were disrupted by the pandemic or activities that have been developed in response to pandemic-related restrictions.

A new cultural policy

Federal Labor's *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place* was the first federal cultural policy since the Rudd-Gillard government's *Creative Australia*.⁷² As part of the policy's implementation, the Australia Council was rebranded as Creative Australia, and a new music-specific entity, Music Australia, was established in 2023 and funded with \$64 million.⁷³ The policy was referred to the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee for review.⁷⁴ In its interim report in May 2024, the committee recommended that the Federal Government provide immediate support for festivals and 'lead coordination' with the sector to reduce insurance premiums.⁷⁵

Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry

In March 2024 the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts began an inquiry ('the federal inquiry') into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry.⁷⁶ The inquiry received over 100 submissions and held 18 public hearings both in Canberra and the major capitals. The committee heard from stakeholders including venue owners, promoters and ticket agencies, local and state governments, artists and artist peak bodies, business representatives for insurance companies and licensing groups, and others including academics and commentators.

The final report of the inquiry *Am I Ever Gonna See You Live Again? Yes way! You bet! Oh yeah!* ('the federal inquiry report') was tabled in March 2025 and is yet to receive a government response. The report's findings on the challenges facing venues by and large

⁶⁸ D. Cuthbertson and J. Meares (2015) 'George Brandis turns arts into 'political football' with \$104.7m Australia Council cuts', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 May.

⁶⁹ Guardian staff (2017) 'Coalition to axe Abbott-era arts fund Catalyst after it was labelled 'a slush fund' *Guardian*, 19 March.

⁷⁰ B. Eltham et al. (2022) 'How to the major parties compare on arts and cultural policy? We asked 5 experts', *The Conversation*, 18 May.

⁷¹ A. Banfield and P. Hamilton (2022) 'Budget review article, April 2022-23: Arts and culture', Parliament of Australia.

⁷² Australian Government (2023) *Revive: A place for every story, a story for every place - Australia's cultural policy for the next five years*, Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia; Australian Government (2013) *Creative Australia: National Cultural Policy*, Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia.

⁷³ J. Caust (2023) "'Arts are meant to be at the heart of our life': what the new national cultural policy could mean for Australia – if it all comes together", *The Conversation*, 30 January.

⁷⁴ Parliament of Australia 'National Cultural Policy', Parliamentary Business.

⁷⁵ Senate Environment and Communications References Committee (2024) *National Cultural Policy: Interim Report*, 24 March, Canberra, The Committee.

⁷⁶ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2024) 'Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry', Parliament of Australia.

reflected those raised by various stakeholders elsewhere and are detailed below. The committee made 20 recommendations, including that the Federal Government:

- investigate the potential benefits of **a tax offset** for the live music industry;
- add a small **levy** to the price of tickets to large music events and direct the funds raised to support for small venues and grassroots live music;
- consider designating 'special entertainment precincts', including **concessional liquor excise rates**;
- assess the viability of **a rebate or voucher scheme** to incentivise younger audiences to attend live music;
- research the viability of **a self-insurance or mutual insurance** model for the music industry;
- research changes in **audience behaviour and generational attitudes** and behaviours that have affected demand for live music; and
- research **business models** for live music that do not require dependence on the sale of alcohol.⁷⁷

Funding

Even prior to the pandemic, both the federal and Victorian governments had made significant policy and funding commitments to the arts industry, and specifically to the live music scene, including venues. However, the Australia Institute has documented that state and federal funding for the arts declined in the lead-up to the pandemic, supporting many stakeholders' arguments that the live music industry was in trouble before the devastating impacts of COVID-19 and lockdowns.⁷⁸

The Australia Institute has also found that the majority of funding for culture, recreation and religion comes from local government, with councils far outpacing federal and state government expenditure.⁷⁹ The Australian Local Government Association has developed a policy position paper on arts and culture, and the Municipal Association of Victoria has a position statement for the arts, culture and creative industries.⁸⁰ Where state and federal policies tend to focus on economic benefits and audience participation in large-scale venues and projects, local government policy tends to impact community and grassroots arts and culture, with a focus on participation over engagement and economic growth.⁸¹

Table 1 shows the state and federal government funding provided for live music during and following the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁷⁷ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit.

⁷⁸ A. Pennington and B. Eltham (2021) *Creativity in Crisis: Rebooking Australia's Arts and Entertainment Sector After COVID*, July, The Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Municipal Association of Victoria (2020) *Position Statement for the Arts, Our Culture & the Creative Industries*, June, Melbourne, MAV; Australian Local Government Association (2020) *Arts and Culture: Policy Position*, September, Deakin, Australian Local Government Association.

⁸¹ M. Seares (2024) 'Sports policy focuses on the grassroots – is this missing from arts policies?' *The Conversation*, 18 July.

Table 1: State and federal government funding provided for live music during and following the COVID-19 pandemic⁸²

Date announced	Government	Scheme and amount
April 2020	Commonwealth	\$10m to Support Act ⁸³
June 2020	Commonwealth	\$75m to the RISE Program, 'to help production and event businesses put on new festivals, concerts, tours, and events'; \$35m to commonwealth-funded arts organisations; \$90m to concessional loans backed by government guarantee ⁸⁴
July 2020	Victoria	\$15m for Victorian Live Music Venues Program, for venues with capacity from 50–1200 ⁸⁵
August 2020	Commonwealth	Live Music Australia program begins (announced in Budget 2019–20): \$20m over four years ⁸⁶
September 2020	Victoria	\$13m in grants to 106 live music venues and arts sector jobs; \$3m in grants for artists and entertainment workers; \$1.2m to 10 arts organisations for professional development ⁸⁷
October 2020 (Budget 2020–21)	Commonwealth	\$22.9m for major arts institutions ⁸⁸
November 2020 (Budget 2020–21)	Victoria	\$7.9m to state-owned arts entities for public productions and events, including \$5m to deliver a new series of live music events across regional and peri-urban communities; \$9.3m to support 16 festivals and new live music events ⁸⁹
January 2021	Victoria	\$3m for Victorian Music Industry Recovery Program ⁹⁰

⁸² Adapted from Pennington and Eltham (2021) op. cit.

⁸³ M. McCorkmack and P. Fletcher, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development; Minister for Cyber Safety and the Arts (2020) *Targeted support for Indigenous Arts, Regional Arts and respected charity Support Act*, media release, 9 April.

⁸⁴ S. Morrison and P. Fletcher, Prime Minister; Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts (2020) *\$250 million Jobmaker plan to restart Australia's creative economy*, media release, 25 June.

⁸⁵ M. Foley, Minister for Creative Industries (2020) *Lifeline for Victoria's famous live music venues*, media release, 4 July.

⁸⁶ P. Fletcher, Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts (2020) *Funding to help Australian venues bring back the music*, media release, 11 August.

⁸⁷ D. Andrews, Premier (2020) *Supporting our world-famous music scene and workers*, media release, 20 September.

⁸⁸ Australian Government (2020) *Budget Measures: Budget Paper No. 2: 2020–2021*, Canberra, Treasury, p. 128.

⁸⁹ Creative Victoria (2020) *'Taking the best in creativity to the great outdoors'*, Creative Victoria.

⁹⁰ D. Pearson, Minister for Creative Industries (2021) *Supporting our music industry now and into the future*, media release, 13 January.

Date announced	Government	Scheme and amount
May 2021 (Budget 2021–22)	Commonwealth	\$125.6m (over two years from 2020–21) to RISE; \$10m to Support Act; \$5m for Playing Australia touring programs ⁹¹
May 2021 (Budget 2021–22)	Victoria	Music Works gets a further \$10.8m (over 4 years) ⁹²
June 2021	Victoria	\$20m Victorian Events Support Package ⁹³ includes Live Performance Support Program ⁹⁴
November 2021	Victoria	\$20m for Live Music Restart package. Includes: \$8m for music venues; \$8m for music festivals; \$4m for bringing performances to CBD and inner city; also introduced an 'Australian-first event interruption insurance product ... delivered by the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority, [to] insure up to \$230 million of events against cancellation due to public health measures, or where events have reduced capacity due to restrictions'. ⁹⁵
December 2021	Victoria	\$5m for On the Road Again, taking live music to regional and outer-metropolitan venues ⁹⁶
February 2022	Victoria	Another \$1.7m for Music Works ⁹⁷
February 2022	Victoria	Launch of Always Live program (funded through Budget 2019–20 with \$14 million) ⁹⁸
March 2022 (Budget 2022–23)	Commonwealth	\$20m to RISE ⁹⁹
April 2022	Commonwealth	Further \$2.5m to Live Music Australia program for festivals and events ¹⁰⁰

⁹¹ Australian Government (2021) *Budget Measures: Budget Paper No. 2: 2021–22*, Canberra, The Treasury.

⁹² Victorian Government (2021) *Service Delivery: budget paper No. 3: 2021–2022*, Melbourne, Department of Treasury and Finance.

⁹³ M. Pakula, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Martin Pakula (2021) *Organisers, venues, cinemas, singers – backing out events sector*, media release, 15 June.

⁹⁴ D. Pearson, Minister for Creative Industries (2021) *Supporting Victorian live performance events*, media release, 18 August.

⁹⁵ D. Pearson, Minister for Creative Industries (2021) *Setting the scene for a summer of live music*, media release, 14 November.

⁹⁶ D. Pearson, Minister for Creative Industries (2021) *Live music gets on the road again*, media release, 8 December.

⁹⁷ D. Pearson, Minister for Creative Industries (2022) *More funding for music as performers hit city streets*, media release, 17 February.

⁹⁸ Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (2022) op. cit.

⁹⁹ Australian Government (2022) *Budget measures: Budget Paper No. 2: 2022–2023*, Canberra, Treasury.

¹⁰⁰ P. Fletcher, Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts (2022) *\$2.5 million to get Australian live music back on stage*, media release, 6 April.

Date announced	Government	Scheme and amount
Change of government—Federal Labor elected May 2022		
May 2022 (Budget 2022–23)	Victoria	\$17.5m to small and medium creative organisations for Creative Infrastructure Program; \$2.4m to Go West Festivals Fund; \$1.1m to First Peoples Touring and Engagement program; \$2.9m to tourism and live music to create regional touring circuits ¹⁰¹
July 2022	Victoria	\$8m addition to Live Music Restart Program – Festivals & Events ¹⁰²
September 2022	Commonwealth	\$22m to Live Performance Support Fund ¹⁰³
October 2022	Commonwealth	\$20m Live Music Australia fund opens ¹⁰⁴
May 2023 (Budget 2023–24)	Commonwealth	Revive Cultural Policy (announced January 2023) funding: \$286m total over five years; \$69.4m for Music Australia (funded through Creative Australia) ¹⁰⁵
May 2023 (Budget 2023–24)	Victoria	\$20m for Always Live, plus 'a \$2.5 million boost to Victoria's renowned music festival scene'; \$7.5m for Live Music Performers Fund; \$2m for Support Act and to establish Victorian Music Industry Advisory Council; \$2m for the Victorian Music Development Office and the Music Market; \$23m for Major Events Fund; \$21.7m for state-owned creative institutions; \$405k to Creative Experiences Package; ¹⁰⁶ \$1m for Live Music Flood Recovery Program ¹⁰⁷
June 2023	Victoria	\$3m for Small and Medium Events Program; \$50,000 for Reclink Community Cup ¹⁰⁸
February 2024	Victoria	\$500,000 for Making Space, to upgrade creative spaces to make them accessible to deaf and disabled artists and audiences ¹⁰⁹
March 2024	Commonwealth	First round of Festivals Australia grants: \$1.4m each year over two rounds ¹¹⁰

¹⁰¹ D. Pearson, Minister for Creative Industries (2022) *Creative economy builds community, grows jobs*, media release, 3 May.

¹⁰² S. Dimopoulos, Minister for Creative Industries (2022) *Supporting a strong return for Victoria's music festivals*, media release, 23 July.

¹⁰³ Australian Government (2022) op. cit. p. 167.

¹⁰⁴ T. Burke, Minister for the Arts (2022) *Support for live Australian music festivals*, media release, 19 October.

¹⁰⁵ Australian Government (2023) *Budget measures: Budget Paper No. 2: 2023–24*, Canberra, Treasury.

¹⁰⁶ S. Dimopoulos et al., Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events and Creative Industries; Minister for Community Sport and Suburban Development; Minister for Regional Development; Minister for Outdoor Recreation (2023) *Backing local jobs with more music, sport and events*, media release, 23 May.

¹⁰⁷ Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry, and Regions, (2024) *Annual report*, Melbourne, DJSIR, p. 21.

¹⁰⁸ S. Dimopoulos, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events (2023) *Big boost bringing more events to life across Melbourne*, media release, 18 June.

¹⁰⁹ C. Brooks, Minister for Creative Industries (2024) *Making creative spaces across Victoria more accessible*, media release, 6 February.

¹¹⁰ T. Burke, Minister for the Arts (2024) *Festival projects come to life across the country*, media release, 13 March.

Date announced	Government	Scheme and amount
April 2024	Victoria	\$10m for gigs, festivals, and artists: \$3.9m for <i>10,000 Gigs: The Victorian Gig Fund</i> , including \$1m of Music Works funds; \$2.7m for Victorian Music Festivals Funds ¹¹¹
May 2024 (Budget 2024–25)	Commonwealth	\$8.6m for <i>Revive Live</i> ¹¹²
September 2024	Victoria	\$10m for Her Majesty's Theatre Ballarat restorations ¹¹³
March 2025 (Budget 2025–26)	Commonwealth	\$8.6m to extend <i>Revive Live</i> ¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ C. Brooks, Minister for Creative Industries (2024) *New grants amp up our live music venues and festivals*, media release, 14 April.

¹¹² Office for the Arts '[Live Music Australia](#)', Office for the Arts.

¹¹³ G. Tierney, Minister for Regional Development (2024) *Stage set for Her Majesty's Theatre refresh*, media release, 4 September.

¹¹⁴ Australian Government (2025) *Budget Measures: Budget Paper No. 2: 2025-26*, Canberra, Treasury, p. 68.

2 | Victoria’s live music venues

To determine a count of live music venues throughout Victoria, data from collecting society APRA AMCOS was provided directly to the authors. Venue directory listings from music street press magazines *Beat* and *Forte* were also used in the below analysis.¹¹⁵ The APRA AMCOS data listed all Victorian venues which had a licence to host live music performances in 2024. Due to copyright laws, venues are generally required to acquire relevant licensing from APRA AMCOS to legally host live music performances on the premises. Through combining multiple datasets, 964 live music venues were located across 367 Victorian suburbs for this research. Major regional hubs for live music include Geelong, Warrnambool, Bendigo, Ballarat, Echuca and Torquay.

Given many of these suburbs only contained one music venue, suburbs were grouped by ABS Statistical Area 3 (SA3) to provide a clearer, aggregate-level summary and ensure confidentiality of data.¹¹⁶ The top 15 SA3s by live music venue count are listed in Table 2.

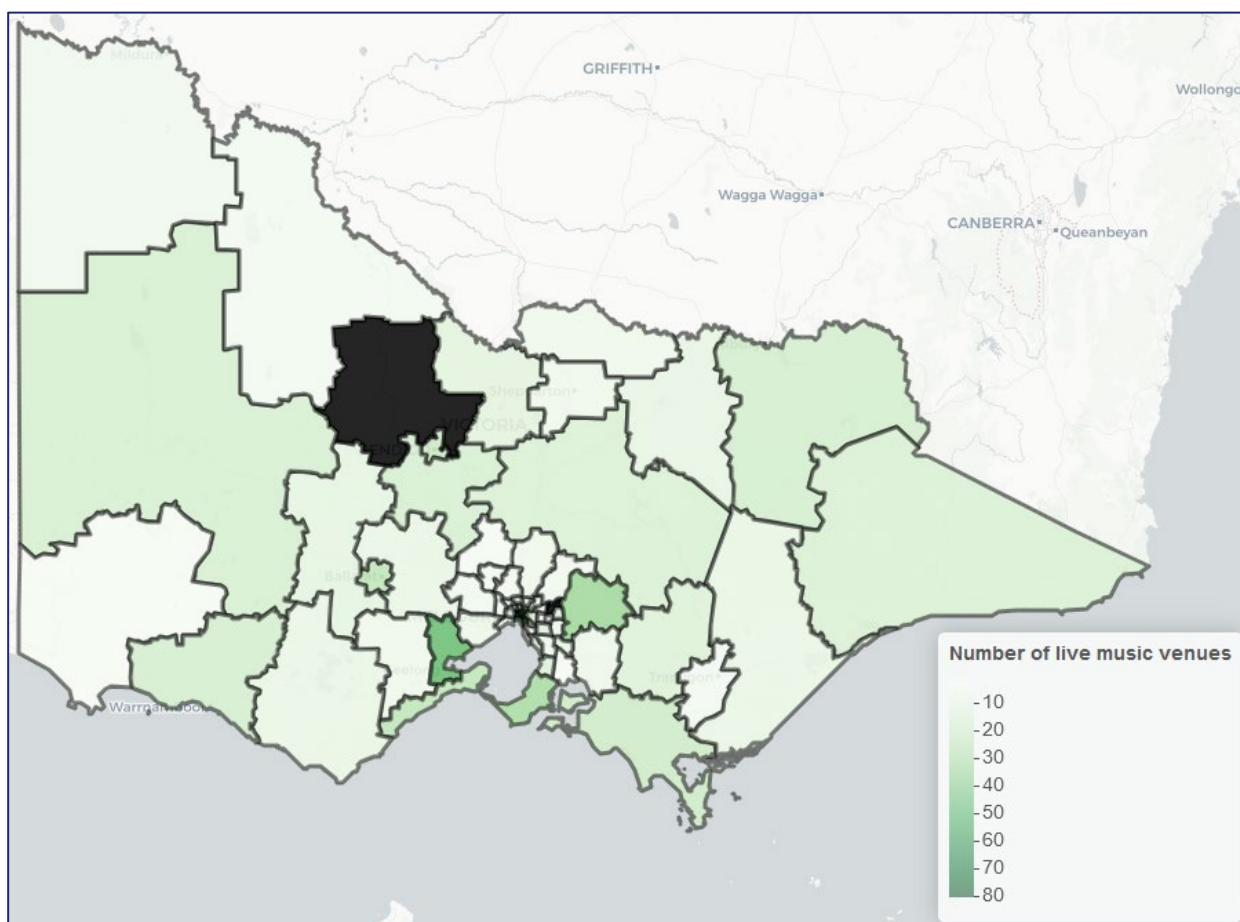
Table 2: The 15 SA3s in Victoria with the highest count of live music venues, 2024

Statistical Area 3 (SA3)	Count of live music venues
Melbourne City	144
Yarra	80
Port Phillip	49
Geelong	43
Stonnington - West	35
Yarra Ranges	31
Brunswick - Coburg	29
Mornington Peninsula	29
Darebin - South	24
Ballarat	23
Surf Coast - Bellarine Peninsula	23
Bendigo	20
Gippsland - South West	19
Warrnambool	17
Wodonga - Alpine	17

¹¹⁵ Beat (2025) ‘[Beat](#)’, Beat; forte (2025) ‘[forte](#)’, forte.

¹¹⁶ For more information on SA3s, visit Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) ‘[Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\) Edition 3](#)’ ABS website.

Map 1: A count of live music venues per SA3¹¹⁷



Click the image for an interactive version

Decline

A decline in music venues during and following pandemic-related restrictions has been reported through news articles and submissions to various inquiries. Well-known Melbourne music venues, such as The Gasometer Hotel and The Bendigo Hotel, closed in recent years.¹¹⁸

Analysis of APRA AMCOS licensing data provided to the authors for this research paper shows a net decline of 338 Victorian venues between 2018 and 2024.¹¹⁹ Approximately half of the 562 Victorian suburbs included in the licensing data provided for analysis recorded a net loss of at least one venue, while only one in four suburbs recorded a net increase of at least one venue. Just under half of the suburbs had a minimum 50 per cent decline in venues.

Again, these suburbs have been grouped by SA3 to aggregate the granular suburb data provided and effectively illustrate changes in music venue counts across the state (see Table 3, Table 4 and Map 2). Fifty-three of 66 SA3s recorded a decline in venues ranging from 5.56 per cent to 100 per cent.

¹¹⁷ The Melbourne City SA3 (with 144 venues) has been removed to avoid skewing the results. Note that no venues were found for Loddon - Elmore and Manningham - East

¹¹⁸ N. Griffiths (2025) [“Not the outcome we had hoped for”: Beloved Melbourne live venue to close permanently](#) *Rolling Stone*, 17 March; Dexter and Cunningham (2024) op. cit.

¹¹⁹ This data is different to that discussed above.

Table 3: Top five SA3s with the greatest increase/greatest decrease in number of music venues, 2018–2024

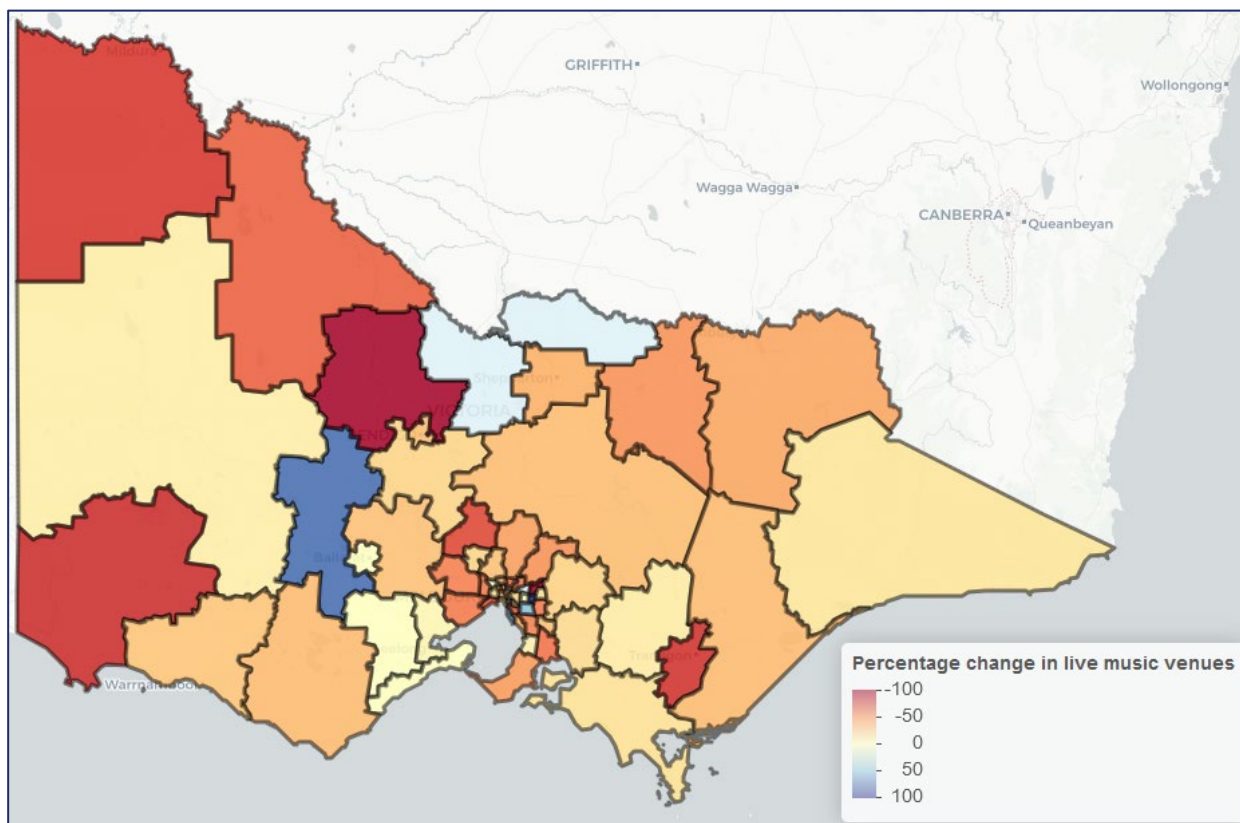
SA3	Increase/decrease in music venues
Maryborough-Pyrenees	5
Bayside	3
Monash	3
Stonnington-West	3
Campaspe	2
Wodonga-Alpine	-13
Latrobe Valley	-14
Mornington Peninsula	-23
Yarra	-27
Melbourne City	-34

Table 4: SA3s with the greatest percentage increase/decrease in music venues, 2018–2024

SA3	% Increase/decrease in music venues
Whitehorse - East	100
Maryborough - Pyrenees	83.33
Bayside	60
Monash	50
Campaspe; Manningham - West; Moira	20
Mildura	-80
Latrobe Valley	-82.35
Glenelg - Southern Grampians	-84.62
Loddon - Elmore	-100
Manningham - East	-100

The highest percentage declines in venues were mostly recorded in outer Melbourne suburbs and rural areas of the state. These were areas that were already likely to have a low count and/or density of live music venues, making their loss significant.

Map 2: Percentage changes in live music venue counts, 2018–2024



Click the image for an interactive version

The changes in Victoria's live music scene shown above largely reflect those documented elsewhere. In the federal inquiry into the live music sector, APRA AMCOS submitted that 'there has been a loss of 1,300 venues hosting live music across the country'.¹²⁰ In a hearing for the inquiry, then Music Victoria head Simone Schinkel reported a slightly different decline recorded in their most recent audit of Victoria's live music venues: an 8 per cent decrease since 2019 in Victorian venues that reported presenting live music a minimum of once a week.¹²¹ This decline is more pronounced in Victoria's inner-city neighbourhoods, with neighbourhoods like Darebin, Maribyrnong, Merri-bek, Port Phillip, Stonnington, and Yarra seeing a 21 per cent decrease in these venues since before the pandemic.¹²²

¹²⁰ APRA AMCOS (2024) 'Submission to the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts', Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry, Canberra, p. 4.

¹²¹ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2024) 'Ms Simone Schinkel, CEO, Music Victoria', transcript of evidence, Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry, 5 August, Melbourne, The Committee.

¹²² *ibid.*

3 | Challenges

‘We’d need to start charging \$10 for a pot’— Insurance and other costs

Live Performance Australia has reported an increase of up to 40 per cent of pre-pandemic operational costs for venues, a number repeated in the federal inquiry.¹²³ APRA AMCOS reported that ‘financial concerns, such as insufficient revenue and high costs, were a most common reason (around 70 per cent) why venues have discontinued hosting live music’ (sic).¹²⁴

The Live Music Office and other stakeholders have also identified overregulation and compliance as increasing operational costs for venues.¹²⁵ The former owner of the Tote criticised the APRA OneMusic licences as prohibitively expensive for many venues, on top of other costs like taxes, council rates, health and safety licences, and GST.¹²⁶ Some events also require a police presence and these costs can be passed to venue operators; however, many have noted that Victoria’s policing costs are substantially lower than those in NSW.¹²⁷

Other venues, artists and audience members have reported many venues are unsuitable for hosting live music in the face of modern soundproofing and accessibility requirements and the substantial costs that come with meeting compliance.¹²⁸ Recently, notable Fitzroy venue the Night Cat launched a crowdfunding campaign to assist in purchasing additional soundproofing infrastructure following what the venue owner claims to be ‘increasing compliance demands from developments in the area’.¹²⁹

Insurance

Insurance premiums are the most cited prohibitive cost for venues.¹³⁰ Some venues have reported their insurance premiums are now ten times their pre-pandemic levels.¹³¹ Often venues have no choice but to pass these costs on to audiences through ticket sales or food and beverage prices, further exacerbating the cost-of-living pressures keeping audiences away from attending live music.

The Old Bar in Fitzroy, long known as an institution of Melbourne’s live music scene, is a clear example of the rising costs and the difficulties venues face in bringing them down. The Old Bar’s owners reported that its premiums increased from \$10,000 to \$60,000 in one year.¹³² This was despite the venue taking several steps to increase the safety of the venue and reduce risks, such as its now infamous move to ban dancing while drinking.¹³³ The federal inquiry found this practice common; even venues which had long histories with the

¹²³ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 19; Live Performance Australia (2024) ‘Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts’ op. cit.

¹²⁴ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit. p. 20.

¹²⁵ Live Music Office (2024) ‘[Submission to the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry](#)’ Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian Live Music industry, Canberra, The Committee; H. Good and A. Tessler (2022) *Impact of tax offsets on the live music industry: Report for APRA AMCOS*, APRA AMCOS.

¹²⁶ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 20.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 22.

¹²⁸ A. Darling and T. Cowie (2025) ‘[Much-loved music venue ordered to improve its soundproofing – for flats that don’t exist](#)’ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April.

¹²⁹ Staff writer (2025) ‘[The Night Cat battles for survival amid sound compliance crunch](#)’, *Beat*, 9 April.

¹³⁰ Live Performance Australia (2024) ‘Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts’ op. cit.

¹³¹ *ibid.*

¹³² House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit.

¹³³ M. Cunningham (2024) ‘[“No dancing whilst drinking”: Insurance hikes push music venues to the wall](#)’, *The Age*, 19 January.

same insurer and had never made a claim saw their premiums increase by over \$100,000 following the pandemic.¹³⁴

The Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman said insurance companies are becoming less likely to underwrite live music venues because it is seen as high risk, and that claims are likely to exceed the value of premiums.¹³⁵ The Insurance Council told the federal inquiry:

Rising premiums ... have been driven by unsustainable combined loss ratios where insurers are operating unprofitable insurance portfolios, paying out more in insurance claims than they collect in premiums.¹³⁶

Another explanation given for the rising premiums has been a general misunderstanding of risks involved in live music venues.¹³⁷ Venues are seen as high risk because they often include people moving about indoors, high levels of alcohol, and often cumbersome equipment and infrastructure like cords, speakers and lighting rigs. However, the federal inquiry heard that insurers still aren’t likely to decrease their premiums even if a venue shows it has taken steps to decrease risk.¹³⁸

Insurance is also often uniform across venues, despite significant variations in risk between small and large venues and venues catering to different scenes and audiences.¹³⁹ One stakeholder said that insurers rarely considered that there was a ‘difference between a punk thrash band playing to drunk people in their early 20s and a string quartet’, and that premiums are assigned arbitrarily and with little consideration of the particulars of a venue’s risk factors.¹⁴⁰

The ACCC also pointed out that there is a lack of regulatory oversight in the insurance industry, and that most insurers underwriting music venues are international syndicates.¹⁴¹ There has also been a decrease in the number of insurers offering public liability insurance, thus lowering competition and driving up premiums further.¹⁴²

Rising insurance premiums are impacting small and medium venues more significantly than larger venues, which has direct impacts for Australian musicians using these venues to gain experience and develop their audiences.¹⁴³ Smaller venues have lower capacities and therefore often smaller profit margins—‘you can’t make enough money off 50 people to cover the insurance costs’, said one owner of a small music venue, with another saying ‘we’d need to start charging \$10 a pot’ just to cover costs.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁴ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 24; Cunningham (2024) ‘No dancing whilst drinking’: Insurance hikes push music venues to the wall’ op. cit.

¹³⁵ Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (2024) ‘[Submission to the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry](#)’, Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian Live Music industry, Canberra, The Committee.

¹³⁶ Insurance Council of Australia (2024) ‘[Submission to the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts](#)’, Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry, Canberra, p. 1.

¹³⁷ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 24.

¹³⁸ Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (2024) op. cit.

¹³⁹ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., pp. 23, 51; Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (2024) op. cit.

¹⁴⁰ Cunningham (2024) ‘No dancing whilst drinking’: Insurance hikes push music venues to the wall’ op. cit.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

¹⁴² T. Jenke and K. Martin (2024) ‘[It is killing us all’: How a 400% increase in insurance costs is slowly destroying Melbourne’s live music scene](#)’, *Beat*, 23 February.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*; Cunningham (2024) ‘No dancing whilst drinking’: Insurance hikes push music venues to the wall’ op. cit.

‘The kids aren’t drinking anymore’—Changing audience behaviours

A consistent theme across submissions and reports is the changing nature of audience behaviours that are having direct impacts on venues’ revenue and the industry’s business models. Music Victoria’s CEO at the time Simone Schinkel said that while large events like festival and stadium shows are starting to show signs of rising audience numbers, live music venues are the ‘canaries in the coalmine’ for a sector struggling to attract audiences:

Lots of the smaller venues have challenging business models on a good day, just because of the number of people they can get through the door. When things tighten up, they’re the ones who feel it first.¹⁴⁵

Following the pandemic, audiences reported a renewed preference for in-person events following digital fatigue of the lockdown years, but Creative Australia reported long-lasting and ongoing effects of the pandemic on organisations.¹⁴⁶

However, many venues are reporting that they are getting fewer patrons through the door, pointing to significant changes in audience preferences and barriers to attendance, particularly for young people.¹⁴⁷ Former owner of the Tote John Perring, for example, told the federal inquiry that his venue was seeing 65 per cent fewer gigs in 2023 than before the pandemic hit, which he attributed to smaller audiences making shows less financially viable for both venues and bands.¹⁴⁸

Cost of living

While participation in the arts is growing, spending behaviours are not growing alongside it.¹⁴⁹ Creative Australia’s yearly Audience Outlook Monitor found in 2023 that economic conditions are the top barrier to attendance at all cultural and creative events and organisations, and that this is no less the case in live music.¹⁵⁰ Cost is consistently reported as the primary barrier to live performance attendance for Victorians, particularly among young people.¹⁵¹ The cost of a ticket was the most cited reason for not attending a live music event that a person wanted to attend; ‘I couldn’t afford the other costs associated with attending’ and ‘I did not feel that the cost of attending represented value for money’ were the third and fourth most cited reasons, respectively.¹⁵²

Alongside cost-of-living pressures, audiences are facing much higher costs than before the pandemic. Average ticket prices for contemporary music have increased by 47 per cent between 2022 and 2023, and the costs of food and drink, transport, accommodation and parking have similarly increased disproportionately to audience incomes.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁵ B. Eltham (2024) ‘As Taylor Swift sells out the MCG, local festivals and music venues shut their doors’ *Crikey*, 19 February.

¹⁴⁶ Australia Council for the Arts (2022) *Impacts of COVID-19 on the Cultural and Creative Industries: Arts and cultural audiences, organisations, artists and creative workers*, August, Melbourne, Australia Council for the Arts.

¹⁴⁷ K. Quinn (2024) ‘Festivals ‘in the thick of a real crisis’ says Music Australia chief’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April.

¹⁴⁸ J. Perring (2024) ‘Submission to the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry’, Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian Live Music industry, 29 April, Canberra, The Committee.

¹⁴⁹ Australia Council for the Arts (2022) op. cit.; Creative Australia (2025) op. cit.

¹⁵⁰ PatternMakers (2023) *Audience Outlook Monitor: Audiences 2023+*, op. cit.

¹⁵¹ PatternMakers (2023) *Audience Outlook Monitor - How cultural audiences in VIC are impacted by rising inflation: Victoria Snapshot report - April 2023*, op. cit.; Creative Australia (2025) op. cit.; C. Strong and The Push (2024) *Young Australian Music Audiences*, The Push.

¹⁵² Creative Australia (2025) op. cit., p. 42.

¹⁵³ Live Performance Australia (2024) *Live Performance Industry in Australia: 2023 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Report*, op. cit.

However, cost is a less significant barrier for people attending small and local live music venues. Music Australia found that 'It costs too much to purchase tickets' was the leading barrier for attendance at large venues and major events, but only the second barrier for audiences attending small venues.¹⁵⁴ Audiences were more likely to cite 'There are no live music events near me that I want to attend' as a barrier to attending these smaller venues. This supports the 'save and splurge' behaviour documented in Victoria's media, where mega-shows like Taylor Swift or Lady Gaga are selling out in minutes.¹⁵⁵

Cost barriers are also not felt equally across age groups. Under-35s are feeling cost-of-living barriers to arts participations more keenly than other age groups, despite 44 per cent saying they are 'happy to pay more for events at this time to help support the arts sector':¹⁵⁶

Young people are more likely to say financial barriers are stopping them from attending live music, even though they are attending events more often but spending less. This means events are considered a 'splash out' or 'splurge' purchase, which supports other findings showing decreasing attendance at small to medium size live music venues but maintained or even increased attendance at large scale 'arena' music events.¹⁵⁷

These barriers have the potential to create a downward spiral of pressure on live music venues, who are faced with audiences who can no longer afford to pay to attend gigs and are therefore forced to increase ticket and food and drink prices, creating a higher financial barrier for audiences to overcome. This is compounded by audiences continuing to preference large venues and major events over small and local venues, the latter of which also often receive less government funding (see 'Business models' section).

Delayed purchasing

While ticket sales for major events like festivals or arena shows have largely bounced back following the pandemic, audiences are delaying the purchase of their tickets until much closer to the date of the event.¹⁵⁸ This has been mostly documented in festival ticket purchasing; it has also been found in relation to other live music events and gigs at venues.¹⁵⁹ This is particularly seen in younger audiences, who value flexibility in their ticket purchases more than other age groups.

Without the assurances that early ticket sales bring to events, organisers find it difficult to assure vendors, contractors, insurers, and other service providers they rely on to put on their events that it will be a success.¹⁶⁰

The delayed purchasing behaviours were initially assumed to be in response to the uncertainty brought about by the pandemic's health protection measures and cost-of-living concerns.¹⁶¹ Creative Australia's 2023 Audience Outlook Monitor (published by PatternMakers) found that last-minute ticket buying 'appears here to stay for the time being'.¹⁶² But in 2024, Creative Australia's report *Soundcheck: Insights into Australia's music festival sector* indicated that delayed purchasing may be on the decline.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁴ Creative Australia (2025) op. cit.

¹⁵⁵ Eltham (2024) op. cit.

¹⁵⁶ Creative Australia (2023) *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*, op. cit.; PatternMakers (2023) *Audience Outlook Monitor - How cultural audiences in VIC are impacted by rising inflation: Victoria Snapshot report - April 2023*, op. cit.

¹⁵⁷ Creative Australia (2023) *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*, op. cit.

¹⁵⁸ PatternMakers (2023) *Audience Outlook Monitor: Audiences 2023+*, op. cit.; Live perf (2024) op. cit.; Creative Australia (2024) *Soundcheck: Insights into Australia's music festival sector*, Canberra, Creative Australia.

¹⁵⁹ PatternMakers (2023) *Audience Outlook Monitor: Audiences 2023+*, op. cit.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁶¹ Creative Australia (2024) op. cit.

¹⁶² PatternMakers (2023) *Audience Outlook Monitor - How cultural audiences in VIC are impacted by rising inflation: Victoria Snapshot report - April 2023*, op. cit.

¹⁶³ Creative Australia (2024) op. cit.

However, the *Soundcheck* report indicated that cost may be a motivator for delayed ticket purchasing, more so than the fear of lockdowns or public health measures.¹⁶⁴ More research will be needed to judge if this buying behaviour will persist as the risks of health-related shutdowns fade but cost-of-living pressures persist.

Reduced demand for local music

Several stakeholders have identified a reduced demand for local music and a decrease in discovering new artists.¹⁶⁵ This has flow-on effects to small and medium live music venues, which have traditionally been seen as incubators and launching pads for early-career artists. 'Small venues struggle', argued Stuart Green of SGC Media, 'when small artists are unable to find new audiences to grow'.¹⁶⁶

Many have attributed this change to changes in the way audiences discover and listen to music. Audiences are now more likely to discover new music through algorithmically driven recommendations, whether through streaming services or social media, and established artists are more likely to be recommended through these services.¹⁶⁷ One venue owner told the federal inquiry, 'If you're not in the right algorithms, it's really hard ... for emerging talent to get noticed. Spotify or whatever will just pick up things you're already listening to and that you like'.¹⁶⁸

This has also resulted in a commonly identified paradox in the live music scene, that while small and medium music venues and hospitality businesses are closing or struggling to maintain their live music offerings, large arena-style events from established international acts are regularly selling out. International acts such as Taylor Swift, Charli XCX and the Foo Fighters have made recent headlines by drawing huge crowds to purchase expensive tickets. Both Swift and Charli XCX's large crowds and ticket sales have been partly attributed to their popularity on TikTok and to the algorithms of streaming services like Spotify.¹⁶⁹

The federal inquiry also heard that merchandise sales are down due to the shift to streaming platforms, meaning that many venues are taking a larger cut of merchandise sales to cover their costs, reducing the funds available to musicians.¹⁷⁰

Alcohol consumption

A decrease in spending over the bar has been reported across the Victorian live music industry. Jon Perring, for instance, submitted that a decline in ticket sales fell alongside a decline in bar sales.¹⁷¹ Similar observations were made by the Live Music Office and Music Australia, and by owners of various live music venues that are also pubs and clubs:¹⁷²

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Live Music Office (2024) op. cit.; Victorian Government (2024) op. cit.

¹⁶⁶ The Music Press (2024) 'Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts' Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian Live Music Industry, Canberra, The Committee.

¹⁶⁷ B. Eltham (2023) 'We need to break down their power': why Australian music is facing an 'existential threat' *Guardian*, 14 April.; Live Music Office (2024) op. cit.

¹⁶⁸ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁶⁹ ABC News (2024) 'Taylor Swift effect masking live music crisis', *ABC News*, Radio, 19 February.; G. Au-Nhien Nguyen (2025) 'Laneway festival review – Charli xcx headlines a euphoric festival for the masses' *Guardian*, 9 February; L. O'Brien (2025) 'Likes vs life: What Laneway reveals about Gen Z's online-offline paradox', *Mumbrella*, 20 February.

¹⁷⁰ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 28.

¹⁷¹ Perring (2024) op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁷² Live Music Office (2024) op. cit., p. 4; Creative Australia (2025) op. cit., p. 58; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 10; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2024) 'Mr Kit Atkinson, Venue Booker, Social State Entertainment; Ms Kayely, Chief Financial Officer, Marriner Group; Ms Sally Mather, Programming and Commercial Director, Forum Melbourne, Marriner Group; Mr Liam Matthews, Director, The Old Bar; Mr Joel Morrison, Booker, The Old Bar; Mr James Power, Managing Director, Social State Entertainment', transcript of evidence, Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry, 5 August, Canberra, The Committee, p. 26, p. 27; Darling (2024) op. cit.; E. Robinson (2023) 'Why Aren't People Getting Trashed At Concerts Anymore?', *The Music*, 21 April.

Part of the problem we’ve got in the live music sector is that it was built in the heyday of pubs. You’d go to the pub, you’d have live music, there were no pokies and you would engage; it was your social event, it was your cultural event, it was identity driven. All these factors meant live music was part of the fabric of culture. That’s now changed ... and COVID sped up that change dramatically.¹⁷³

The National Drug and Alcohol Centre has found that alcohol is ‘falling out of favour’ with Australians, a phenomenon also documented—particularly in young people—by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.¹⁷⁴ While there has been a steady decrease in weekly and daily alcohol consumption in Victoria since 2007, and the percentage of people who drink monthly remains relatively stable, there’s also been a small uptick in those who drink less than monthly and those who have never had a full glass of alcohol.¹⁷⁵ This is generally in keeping with national trends.¹⁷⁶

Music Victoria also found that while data on alcohol consumption is complex, there is strong evidence showing that people are cutting back on alcohol as a way of reducing costs, particularly for young people.¹⁷⁷

This is directly challenging the business models of many live music venues that subsidise income from live music events with alcohol sales (see ‘Business models’ section). ‘We can’t force people to drink’, said one venue owner, pointing to the need for venues to shift their business models to survive.¹⁷⁸

The kids aren’t drinking as much and that’s awesome...The trouble is a lot of the business models of these venues often have stakes on selling booze at the gigs to pay all the bills, so it stings.¹⁷⁹

‘Learning how to be in crowds again’—Young audiences

Younger audiences, particularly those aged 15–35, have long been considered the mainstay of the contemporary live music audiences. Several reports and other stakeholders drawing on anecdotal evidence have reported a decrease in attendance of this age group at live music events—a trend that is raising concerns for the future of the industry without the next generation of musicians and music-lovers. Former head of Music Victoria Simone Schinkel said the lack of young people is an issue for an industry that always needs to replenish itself:

You need a first experience to get hooked [on live music], and you need it to be great ... Once you’ve had that experience, it’s a really easy sell. But we need to get you through the door, and if we can’t get you off the couch and to the door, it’s very hard to translate that into a lifelong obsession.¹⁸⁰

Young adults aged 18–24 used to lead in festival attendance, but the *Soundcheck* report found this has shifted to those aged 25–30.¹⁸¹ The report found 18–24-year-olds are purchasing tickets at lower rates than before the pandemic, but the ABS has reported that young people still have the highest attendance rates in arts generally. People aged 15–17

¹⁷³ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts, (2024) ‘[Mr Sam Nardo, Chief Operating Officer, Century Venues](#)’, transcript of evidence, Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian Live Music Industry, 17 October, Canberra, The Committee, p. 10.

¹⁷⁴ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 27.

¹⁷⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2025) ‘[Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia: Web report](#)’ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

¹⁷⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024) *Alcohol*, Canberra, AIHW.

¹⁷⁷ Creative Australia (2025) op. cit.

¹⁷⁸ D. Condon et al. (2023) ‘[Australian live music venues ‘firmly in crisis’ as gig goers shift behaviours post-lockdown](#)’, ABC, 4 December.

¹⁷⁹ Cunningham (2024) ‘Half of Melbourne’s famous live music venues could soon be dead’ op. cit

¹⁸⁰ K. Quinn (2024) ‘[Music festivals are in crisis. So where have all the young people gone?](#)’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 February.

¹⁸¹ Creative Australia (2024) op. cit., p. 28.

were the most likely of all age groups to attend a cultural venue or event (81 per cent), followed by the 18–24 cohort (78 per cent).¹⁸² Young Australians are most likely to say they are attending more live arts events and festivals now than before the pandemic (51 per cent of Australians aged 15–24 compared to 37 per cent of Australians aged 25–49 and 16 per cent of those 50 and over).¹⁸³ This high demand but lower levels of attendance indicate significant barriers to live music that are affecting young Australians more severely.

Youth music organisation The Push argues that there is significant data showing young people are attending less live music, but there is little research as to why.¹⁸⁴ Potential reasons that have been floated include cost-of-living pressures, social disconnection, and changing attitudes towards alcohol. Experts have repeatedly identified that young people are facing post-pandemic challenges with more intensity than other age groups.¹⁸⁵ Young Victorians are more likely to face cost-of-living challenges, have higher rates of reported mental illness, and experience higher rates of social anxiety (see ‘Cost of living’ section).¹⁸⁶ This likely means the barriers to live music attendance seen across the population are being felt more intensely by young people.

Media reports and anecdotal evidence tend to focus on how young people are particularly exacerbating the challenges caused by venues’ reliance on alcohol sales by generally drinking less.¹⁸⁷ Research tracking this trend is still ongoing, but many are pointing to the increase in anxiety and other mental illnesses and other general risk-averse behaviour.¹⁸⁸ The AIHW has found that young people are drinking less overall; there is an increase in ‘abstainers’ and ‘infrequent’ drinkers in this age category, fewer young people are drinking at risk levels, and the proportion of young people who drink monthly is also decreasing compared to before the pandemic. This follows a dramatic decrease in young people drinking since 2001.¹⁸⁹

Additionally, an Australia Institute study in 2024 found that 15 per cent of Victorian respondents aged 18–25 did not enjoy attending licensed venues because of the presence of alcohol.¹⁹⁰ Increased costs of alcohol and decreased discretionary spending can also be attributed to this trend (see more on cost-of-living challenges below).¹⁹¹

This has direct flow-on effects for live music venues that are reliant on alcohol sales to make live events profitable. A reliance on alcohol also makes all-ages gigs less profitable and unappealing for venues, meaning young people have fewer opportunities to attend live music.

Several studies have also shown changing social habits in young people. They are now less likely to say they prefer ‘going out’ over ‘staying in’ compared to 2019, and there is an emerging sense that alcohol plays less of an important role in their social lives.¹⁹² Young people are also more likely to delay ticket purchasing, placing more pressure on venues (see

¹⁸² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) *Cultural and creative activities*.

¹⁸³ Creative Australia (2023) *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*, op. cit.

¹⁸⁴ The Push (2024) ‘[Submission to the parliamentary inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry](#)’, Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian Live Music industry, Canberra, The Committee.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*; Victorian Government (2024) op. cit.

¹⁸⁶ R. Morgan et al. (2024) *Young people and loneliness, Sydney, Orygen and Ending Loneliness Together*; R. McHale et al. (2024) *Youth Survey Report 2024*, Sydney, Mission Australia; Victorian Government (2024) op. cit.

¹⁸⁷ M. Naglazas (2024) ‘[Gen Z is not drinking – and it’s threatening Perth’s live music scene](#)’, *WAtoday*, 8 April.

¹⁸⁸ L. Fenton et al. (2024) ‘[Youth drinking is declining – myths about the trend, busted](#)’, *The Conversation*, 6 February.

¹⁸⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024) *Young people’s consumption of alcohol*, Canberra, AIHW.

¹⁹⁰ The Australia Institute (2024) *Polling – Young Australian’s participation in live music*, Melbourne, The Australia Institute, p. 14.

¹⁹¹ Creative Australia (2025) op. cit.

¹⁹² *ibid.*; D. Jones (2022) ‘[How alcohol lost its cool](#)’, *Vice*, 1 September.

'Delayed purchasing' section).¹⁹³ The organiser of Laneway Festival commented that, following the pandemic and lockdowns in their formative social years, 'young people are learning how to be in crowds again'.¹⁹⁴ Some stakeholders have further blamed the attention economy of social media:

You have competition from social media, which is causing a generation of young people to sit home on their couches messaging each other on their phones rather than being with 5,000 other young people jumping around and screaming to the same music.¹⁹⁵

Social media and concert attendance have been found to be linked, but not always negatively. For example, one study found that young people consuming social media content of live music events might experience 'FOMO' (fear of missing out) on a large-scale, shared cultural moment, driving up ticket sales.¹⁹⁶ Still, others have pointed out that social media is allowing underage fans to become the most musically engaged generation ever, but that this engagement cannot be translated into attendance because of a lack of underage venues and high levels of government regulations around underage drinking.¹⁹⁷

Young people are also most likely to discover new music via streaming services, compounding the effects these services are having on local artists' discoverability and ability to draw a crowd to local gigs (see 'Mega-gigs and market concentration').¹⁹⁸ Other research has shown a resurgence of 'underground' dance venues that are particularly favoured by young people, thanks in part to their lower costs—these venues are often unlicensed and unregistered and so often have lower costs to pass on to patrons—as well as their intimate and community-focused atmosphere, and the rise of their popularity on social media.¹⁹⁹ Young people's 'love for live music has not died', one media report argued, 'it's gone underground'.²⁰⁰

Finally, diversity and inclusion are also more important to young Victorians than older people. In particular, where there are barriers for women, LGBTQI+ people, CALD people and people with disabilities, these barriers disproportionately discourage young people from attending or participating.²⁰¹ 'Young people want to see themselves represented on stages', The Push submitted, 'reflecting the divers[ity] of voices in their community'.²⁰²

'Sugar hit to the market'—Business models

Government funding

As seen in Table 1, successive governments have committed large amounts of funding towards the live music industry, both before and in response to the pandemic. The Federal Government's Revive Live program provides ongoing grants to venues, while the Victorian Government continues to fund the scene through its post-COVID recovery policies as well as its creative and cultural industry portfolio.

However, industry stakeholders have identified the grants system of funding from the government as unsustainable, inefficient and even actively hindering a self-sufficient live

¹⁹³ Creative Australia (2025) op. cit., p. 34.

¹⁹⁴ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁹⁶ A. Japutra et al. (2025) 'The dark side of brands: Exploring fear of missing out, obsessive brand passion, and compulsive buying', *Journal of Business Research*, 186 (p. 114990).

¹⁹⁷ Laneway Festival (2024) 'Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts', Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian Live Music Industry, Canberra, The Committee, pp. 3-4; TEG (2024) 'Submission to the parliamentary inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry' Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian Live Music industry, Canberra, The Committee.

¹⁹⁸ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁹⁹ M. Slattery (2024) 'Young people are partying underground in a new boiler room music scene that is filling the music festival gap' ABC, 5 September.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*

²⁰¹ The Push (2024) op. cit.; Creative Australia (2025) op. cit.

²⁰² The Push (2024) op. cit., p. 4.

music industry.²⁰³ A grants system is also labour-intensive for artists, venue owners and managers, and other industry staff, who are already often working long and unpaid hours in administration, travel, and rehearsal.²⁰⁴ A quick injection of funding via a one-off government grant can result in what has been called a 'sugar hit', supporting a venue temporarily but not allowing for significant or sustainable changes to the industry.²⁰⁵

The federal inquiry also heard that the government grants were often not sufficient to cover rising costs, and that they could be better managed to ensure they support local artists and community-focused venues as much as they do larger venues and promoters.²⁰⁶ In 2024, a *Four Corners* report found that Live Nation received millions of dollars in state and federal funding despite posting a \$34 billion revenue in 2023.²⁰⁷ Government funding has been seen to flow to new festivals in an already overcrowded marketplace. The Association of Artist Managers particularly called out the Federal Government's RISE program, saying it 'created a false ecosystem because it was too much money and not enough oversight'.²⁰⁸

Others have pointed to the continued awarding of grants to state-owned venues that places them in competition with pubs and clubs who often do not receive the funding.²⁰⁹ And the federal inquiry suggested state and territory funding would be better spent on infrastructure and capacity-building for venues, including establishing permanent infrastructure for outdoor festivals.²¹⁰

Mega-gigs and market concentration

Music Australia has found that large shows and 'save and splurge' purchasing practices are leading to mega-gigs selling out stadium shows, at the same time as small and medium live music businesses are closing down.²¹¹ APRA AMCOS reported that concert income in Australia was up 400 per cent in 2024, compared to that of 2023.²¹² Audiences, particularly younger audiences, appear to be saving their discretionary spending for huge gigs at mega venues, which are often supported by either large amounts of government funding or multinational conglomerate companies.

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) called this the 'Amazon-ification' of live music, particularly calling out the vertical integration of the market by the US touring conglomerate Live Nation.²¹³ However, LPA said:

... we don't believe there's a problem with vertical integration of our major companies in Australia. ... Consolidation occurred because the market ... is global, it's highly competitive and it's highly capital intensive. If Australia wanted to retain its place in a growing global market, companies had to consolidate in order to compete at that level.²¹⁴

Live Nation also argued there were no systemic barriers to access for small and medium venues.²¹⁵

The federal inquiry also heard that the market for tickets to live music is becoming increasingly concentrated, which in turn is driving up ticket prices and resulting in less money

²⁰³ Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, (2024) '[Submission to the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts](#)' Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian Live Music industry, Canberra, The Committee; Live Music Office (2024) op. cit.

²⁰⁴ Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (2024) op. cit.

²⁰⁵ Corner Group (2024) op. cit.; Perring (2024) op. cit.

²⁰⁶ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit.

²⁰⁷ A. Dias et al. (2024) '[Global music giant Live Nation given tens of millions of dollars in grants by Australian governments](#)' ABC, 15 October.

²⁰⁸ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 42.

²⁰⁹ *ibid.*

²¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 78.

²¹¹ Eltham (2024) op. cit.

²¹² APRA AMCOS (2024) '[2023-2024 Year in Review](#)', op. cit.

²¹³ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 15.

²¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 17.

²¹⁵ Lynch, J. (2024) '[Live Nation Hits Back at Explosive 'Four Corners' Investigation: 'Inaccurate and Unbalanced'](#)' *The Music Network*, October 10.

for performers.²¹⁶ Recent years have seen the emergence of ticket-selling practices like drip-pricing, the gradual addition of fees and charges that were not advertised at the start of the ticket-buying journey, and dynamic pricing, a strategy in which a ticket price changes depending on demand, as opposed to a fixed price. These practices, while not illegal, were seen as creating more costs for the consumer and funnelling fewer resources back to artists, thus adding to the cost barriers identified above.²¹⁷

‘We’re lucky, we’re iconic’—Community support and social value

Artists, promoters, and venues have also cited a lack of community support for the live music scene. Noise complaints are often cited as reasons to block the establishment or development of a live music venue in or near a residential area. Similar to the Night Cat’s soundproofing issues mentioned earlier, iconic Melbourne venue Cherry Bar successfully ran a crowdfunding campaign in 2014 for funds to properly soundproof its premises in order to comply with noise regulations.²¹⁸

Others described state or local governments as not valuing live music enough to fund infrastructure updates, or to create better regulations that would open more spaces to be viable as live music venues:

There’s an attitude that we’re not considered to be contributing to the community, without really understanding or acknowledging how much we can contribute to the community in the area and the local economy.²¹⁹

Even venues known for their cultural contributions have reported difficulty in converting this into consistent revenue. A booker at one renowned Melbourne venue said ‘We’re lucky, we’re an iconic venue. But ... we’ll have a sold out show one week, but then 100–200 people in the next week’.²²⁰

Live music venues also have a history of being portrayed as ‘dangerous’, whether as a site of potential infection during the COVID-19 pandemic or as places where diverse groups may not feel safe or welcome.²²¹ As explored above, this is particularly impactful for younger audiences:

... that’s the messaging being heard by teenagers who are turning 18 and ... are trying to work out what spaces they want to go to and be safe in, that’s not something that they’ll easily forget.²²²

Particularly outside Melbourne, many have argued that live music is undervalued as an arts scene or as a key part of tourism.²²³

²¹⁶ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 67.

²¹⁷ It is worth noting the Federal Government pledged to ban dynamic pricing in October 2024. A. Dias, A. Donaldson, M. Clark & L. Sonnenschein (2024) ‘[Concert ticket dynamic pricing, hotel and gym hidden fees, face government ban](#)’ ABC, 16 October.

²¹⁸ L. Tucker (2014) ‘[Cherry Bar in Melbourne turns to fans to keep music playing](#)’, ABC News, July 24.

²¹⁹ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 31.

²²⁰ Condon et al. (2023) op. cit.

²²¹ *ibid.*, p. 58.

²²² *ibid.*

²²³ *ibid.*

4 | Proposed solutions

While some acknowledge there is ‘no silver bullet’ to manage the crisis facing many live music venues, several opportunities for change have been suggested, including interventions from both the government and non-government organisations.²²⁴

‘We need an intervention’—Reform the live music business model

Insurance reform

Given the most prohibitive cost for venues appears to be insurance, several organisations are advocating an insurance scheme that allows state or federal governments to underwrite insurance policies, thus driving down premiums.²²⁵ The federal inquiry did not go so far as to recommend this, but recommendation 10 in the final report urged the Federal Government to:

undertake research into the viability of a self-insurance or mutual insurance model for the music industry and investigate other reforms and initiatives for insuring live music activities that could result in lower premiums for presenters.²²⁶

Several stakeholders have suggested a government-backed and regulated insurance scheme with some urgency, saying ‘We can’t wait for years and years...we need an intervention’.²²⁷

Music Victoria did express concern that government-subsidised insurance would allow insurers to charge more, arguing instead (with others) for governments to assume some of the risk in insuring venues. Music Victoria and others have advocated for an insurance scheme offered by the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA), in which the government can assume some of the risk and therefore drive down premiums.²²⁸

During the pandemic, the Victorian Government began underwriting major events through the VMIA. The COVID-19 Event Insurance product provided cover for events that were cancelled or had to be held at reduced capacity ‘because of State or Federal Government-imposed COVID-19 restrictions’.²²⁹ This program ended with the lifting of Victoria’s pandemic declaration in October 2022.²³⁰

In March 2024, Yarra City Council passed a resolution to ‘work collaboratively with Music Victoria and the Australian Live Music Business Council to find solutions to the issue of insurance’.²³¹ In April of that year, Music Victoria confirmed that it was in talks with the state government to give venues access to the state-owned insurance company.²³²

Venue owners have also suggested increasing insurers’ understanding of live music venues to allow providers to tailor their coverage and premium price points.²³³

²²⁴ M. Sutton (2024) ‘Live music industry on its knees and pleading for a government lifeline on insurance costs’, ABC, 15 August.

²²⁵ Sutton (2024) op. cit.

²²⁶ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 77.

²²⁷ Burke (2023) op. cit.; Corner Group (2024) op. cit.

²²⁸ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 51.

²²⁹ Creative Victoria (2021) ‘Victoria introduces Australia’s first government-backed COVID-19 Event Insurance’, Creative Victoria.

²³⁰ Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (date unknown) ‘COVID-19 Event Insurance’, VMIA website (archived), National Library of Australia, archived 26 October 2022.

²³¹ City of Yarra (2024) ‘Yarra makes submission for Inquiry into Australian live music industry’, City of Yarra.

²³² Cunningham (2024) ‘Half of Melbourne’s famous live music venues could soon be dead’ op. cit.

²³³ Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (2024) op. cit.

Come and look at the space, and realise that there might be some people wiggling their butt, but they’re not going nuts—it’s not like that at all. Even the heavier shows ... sure, they do get a bit physical, but they’re all laughing and hugging and having a good time afterwards.²³⁴

The Australian Live Music Business Council (ALMBC) created an app in 2022 to better collect information on a venue’s risk factors and communicate these to brokers, who could then use the data to match a venue with an appropriate level of cover.²³⁵

The ALMBC also suggested that more competition is needed in the insurance industry to drive down premium costs, while others pointed to the need to ‘derisk the industry’ (risk reduction strategies taken by venues, however, have not been shown to decrease the premium costs; see ‘Insurance’ section above).²³⁶ The ALMBC is also working with providers for solutions such as ‘accreditation requirements; amendments to business practices; signage and other changes to physical infrastructure; and potential large-scale ‘bulk buy’ insurance offerings’.²³⁷

Ticket levies

The ALMBC are among several organisations proposing an Arena Ticket Levy.²³⁸ Such a levy would take a small amount—ALMBC suggests \$1—from every ticket sale for large arena shows and donate it to a ‘music venues trust’, which would invest the funds back into local small and medium music venues. Such a scheme would mimic one currently proposed in the UK, and would be based on a governance structure used by the not-for-profit sector. The recent ‘Last Chance to Save the Tote’ campaign ran on the promise of a similar structure, in which a ‘community trust’ would be established to own and manage The Tote Hotel.²³⁹

The federal inquiry recommended the investigation of such a ticket levy.²⁴⁰ The committee recommended the funds raised through the levy be distributed by Music Australia through the Revive Live program, and could contribute to a series of live events at local venues, capital investments to infrastructure for venues, and funding for music festivals.²⁴¹

Government funding reform

Given the challenges with a grants-based funding model identified above, alternatives have been suggested including a focus on artist career development, upgrading permanent venue infrastructure, and increasing industry capability through training programs.²⁴² Many have argued that underwriting public liability insurance would be a better and more sustainable use of government funds.²⁴³

The ALMBC has argued for a more directed flow of funding to ‘grassroots’ venues, and others have called for investment specifically in small and medium venues to avoid governments funding the biggest companies which have consolidated ownership of live venues and festivals, ticketers and agencies.²⁴⁴ This may include requirements for governments to fund a

²³⁴ Jenke and Martin (2024) op. cit.

²³⁵ *ibid.*

²³⁶ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 50.

²³⁷ Victorian Government (2024) op. cit.

²³⁸ Australian Live Music Business Council, (2024) ‘[Submission to the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts](#)’, Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry, Canberra, The Committee; S. Whiting and B. Green (2025) ‘[Will \\$1 on your ticket help save Australian live music? A UK model is much more ambitious](#)’ *The Conversation*, 25 March.

²³⁹ C. Kelly (2023) ‘[“It’s happening”: beloved Melbourne music venue the Tote finally saved by community campaign](#)’ *The Guardian*, 7 September.

²⁴⁰ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit.

²⁴¹ *ibid.*

²⁴² Live Performance Australia (2024) ‘[Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts](#)’ op. cit.; Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (2024) op. cit.

²⁴³ Sutton (2024) op. cit.; Cunningham (2024) ‘[Half of Melbourne’s famous live music venues could soon be dead](#)’ op. cit.

²⁴⁴ Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (2024) op. cit.; Corner Group (2024) op. cit.; S. Whiting and J. O’Connor (2024) ‘[The WA government spent \\$8 million on Coldplay—but this tourism sugar hit comes at the expense of local music](#)’ *The Conversation*, 15 July.

greater number of small and local venues, and to make sustainable business practices a requisite of receiving government funding.²⁴⁵

The federal inquiry also recommended a rollout of funding through a rebate or voucher scheme specifically designed to incentivise younger audiences to attend live music events.²⁴⁶ Younger audiences would also be drawn if funding was reliant on venues meeting accessibility and diversity and inclusion standards, as these issues have been more significant motivators to attend venues for young people than those in other age groups.²⁴⁷

‘Shouldn’t have to get drunk’—Adapt to changing audience expectations

While the COVID-19 pandemic delivered a definite hit to live music venues, many stakeholders have been keen to point out that the industry was in trouble long before the lockdowns closed doors across Victoria. As such, a return to ‘business as usual’—including relying on alcohol sales to subsidise ticket sales, relying on younger audiences as a customer base, and making predictions on crowds based on early ticket sales—may no longer be a sustainable way forward for businesses. As MusicSA’s Christine Schloithe told the federal inquiry:

... it is time to acknowledge that new audiences are demanding new environments and new ways to experience music, and the live music industry needs to recalibrate to consumer trends and tastes.²⁴⁸

A Brisbane venue operator told the federal inquiry that ‘people shouldn’t have to get drunk to keep a music industry alive’, highlighting not only the need for the industry to move away from a reliance on alcohol and food sales, but the need to pivot the culture of live music away from drinking towards making spaces more accessible.²⁴⁹ The federal inquiry recommended the government undertake research on business models for live music that do not require dependence on the sale of alcohol.

Youth-specific funding or voucher processes

In its submission to the federal inquiry into Australia’s live music industry, the Victorian Government stated, ‘The live music industry may need to evolve to meet young music consumers where they are, rather than expect them to replicate the behavioural patterns of previous generations’.²⁵⁰

In order to address young people’s cost-of-living barriers to live music attendance, several stakeholders have suggested a government-funded voucher that young people can spend on arts and cultural events.²⁵¹ A youth-specific arts and culture voucher system has been in use in several European contexts since the pandemic, although with most of these programs young people spent the voucher mostly on books, cinema and theatre before live music.²⁵² One voucher scheme in Italy grew the nation’s music market by 15 per cent, and in the case of another in Spain, the majority of the money was spent on live performance arts, generating almost €27 million in revenue.²⁵³

²⁴⁵ Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (2024) op. cit.

²⁴⁶ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 76.

²⁴⁷ C. Strong et al. (2024) ‘The budget has earmarked \$8.6 million for live music. Is it enough to save the flailing industry?’, *The Conversation*, 17 May; PatternMakers (2022) *Audience Outlook Monitor - The time is now: Young audiences 2022*, Melbourne, Creative Victoria and PatternMakers.

²⁴⁸ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts, (2024) ‘Ms Christine Schloithe, Chief Executive Officer, MusicSA’ transcript of evidence, Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian Live Music industry, 7 August, Canberra, The Committee, p. 2.

²⁴⁹ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 27.

²⁵⁰ Victorian Government (2024) op. cit., p. 8.

²⁵¹ Creative Australia (2025) op. cit.; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit.; The Australia Institute (2024) op. cit.

²⁵² Creative Australia (2025) op. cit.

²⁵³ *ibid.*

A report by the Australia Institute found that 4 in 5 young Australians said a \$200 government voucher would increase the number of music events they would attend.²⁵⁴

Meeting young people’s expectations in terms of diversity and inclusion was also highlighted as a way to increase their participation in the scene and ensure the next generation of music audiences.²⁵⁵ According to The Push, initiatives that facilitate participation of women, CALD and Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and the LGBTQI+ community, both as artists and audience members, would also be more likely to encourage young people to attend.²⁵⁶ Multiple submissions advocated for more access to all-ages and underage gigs, saying they would increase participation from an early age, as would events where alcohol is less prevalent.²⁵⁷

Policy changes

Changes to planning and licensing requirements have been suggested as a way to encourage private investment in the industry, as well as tax incentives for live music venues and a tax rebate on alcohol sales.²⁵⁸ The first recommendation of the federal inquiry was to investigate the potential benefits of a tax offset for the live music industry, and others have suggested land tax concessions for venues.²⁵⁹

Overregulation was also flagged as an ongoing barrier for venues. The federal inquiry recommended state and territory governments designate specific ‘special entertainment precincts’ that have a regulatory regime ‘more supportive of their ongoing viability’, including trading hour exceptions, liquor excise concessions and a relaxing of noise pollution restrictions.²⁶⁰ In 2024, the NSW government passed a set of ‘vibrancy reforms’, in which people moving into designated entertainment precincts must acknowledge they will be living in an area of late-night activity, in a move to reduce conflict between residents and late-night venues and to reduce pressure on the venues.²⁶¹

In its submission to the federal inquiry into Australia’s live music industry (submitted around March 2024), the Victorian Government stated that it had ‘commenced a process of regulatory reform to streamline regulations affecting both live music venues and music festivals ... in addition to ... potential planning reforms to protect the use of a venue for live music.’²⁶²

Regulations around alcohol and parental supervision have also been attributed to restricting young people’s access to live music, effectively preventing the next generation of music fans (who have been found to be very musically engaged) from attending live music and supporting the industry.²⁶³

Others pointed to state and local government’s roles in supporting the industry beyond funding, including holding and promoting grassroots and community events to actively foster a space in which the next generation of artists and audiences could develop.²⁶⁴ Content quotas have also been suggested as a way to encourage audiences to engage with local music and therefore smaller and local live music venues, which have been shown to rely more heavily on local acts than international ones.²⁶⁵

²⁵⁴ The Australia Institute (2024) op. cit.

²⁵⁵ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit.

²⁵⁶ The Push (2024) op. cit.

²⁵⁷ Strong and The Push (2024) op. cit.

²⁵⁸ Live Performance Australia (2024) ‘Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts’ op. cit.; Corner Group (2024) op. cit.; Perring (2024) op. cit.

²⁵⁹ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 75; Eltham (2024) op. cit.

²⁶⁰ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 76.

²⁶¹ C. McLeod (2024) ‘NSW ‘vibrancy reforms’ to combat noise complaints from neighbours of music venues and pubs’, *The Guardian*, 15 October.

²⁶² Victorian Government (2024) op. cit., p. 3.

²⁶³ Laneway Festival (2024) op. cit., p. 3.

²⁶⁴ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2025) op. cit., p. 60.

²⁶⁵ Creative Australia (2025) op. cit., The Push (2024) op. cit.; Laneway Festival (2024) op. cit., p. 57.

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Suggested citation

Triscari, C. & E. Florence (2025) *'No dancing whilst drinking': Challenges and opportunities for Victoria's live music venues*, Parliamentary Library & Information Service, Melbourne, Parliament of Victoria.

Acknowledgements

The Parliament of Victoria Library acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present, and we value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and knowledge.

The authors would like to thank Angus Tonkin, Annie Wright, Ben Reid, Caley Otter, Debra Reeves and Marianne Aroozoo for their assistance in the preparation of this paper. We would also like to thank Dale Packard at Music Victoria, Liane Moy at OneMusic and the team at APRA AMCOS for their assistance with researching the paper.

Data pertaining to venue licenses was directly provided to the authors by OneMusic and APRA AMCOS. We thank them for their assistance.

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Research Paper

Parliamentary Library & Information Service

ISSN 2204-4752 (Print) 2204-4760 (Online)