

The Secretary
Economy and Infrastructure Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002
tourisminquiry@parliament.vic.gov.au

RE: Inquiry into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism and events sectors

The Live Music Office welcomes the opportunity to provide our contribution to this Inquiry.

As background, established by the Federal Government, in partnership with APRA AMCOS, the Live Music Office was set up to review the impact of policy frameworks on the Australian live music sector. Our scope includes planning, licensing and regulatory policies, as well as cultural, audience and market development strategies.

Twelve (12) months now into the COVID-19 crisis and the live music, performance, education, and hospitality sectors continue to experience serious and widespread impacts as a direct result of the government's necessary and important response to the COVID-19 crisis.

These include long term closures of theatres, nightclubs and festivals, reduced capacity and increased costs for hotels, clubs, restaurants and small bars and widespread loss of employment for performers, agents, managers, crew, venue and event staff.

These impacts will compound further as jobs and opportunities continue to be constrained or restricted for the foreseeable future.

Firstly, we would like to recognise the strong support our industry has received to date from the Victorian Government across the following priority areas,

- 1 The [Victorian Live Music Venues Program](#) provided \$15M to support venues that have a solid reputation for presenting original live music and demonstrate best practice in business operations including in staff, contractor, performer and patron management to respond to the devastating effects of the coronavirus pandemic. This program provided desperately needed support to underwrite venues navigating long lockdown periods and where other funding programs were unable to support operational costs. The program also directly informed the announcement of the associated \$24M NSW program in March 2021. There is a compelling case for this funding program to be supported through a second round in 2021 as many venues are still experiencing unsustainable economic impacts on their operations at this critical time.
- 2 Planning Scheme Amendment VC 1831 was introduced on 28 September 2020, and introduces a new state planning policy Clause 13.07-3S (Live Music) and makes changes to Clause 53.06 (Live Music Entertainment Venues) of the Victoria Planning Provisions (VPP) and all planning schemes to encourage, create and protect opportunities for the enjoyment of live music. We strongly commend the Victorian Government for the introductions of this far reaching reconfiguration of the land use planning objectives for our industry in this state, which will support enhanced capacity for precinct development and retaining arts and cultural character in night-time economy areas.

¹ Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Planning Scheme Amendment VC183
<https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/schemes-and-amendments/browse-planning-scheme/amendments?f.Scheme%7CplanningSchemeName=VPPS#Amendments--VC183>

Whilst many industries have been able to survive much of the disruption from the Pandemic and some even thrive, there are a number of sectors, including airlines, events, tourism and hospitality which still face grave circumstances for the foreseeable future.

An open letter from APRA AMCOS, Live Performance Australia, and over 3,000 music industry supporters to the Federal Government this year² speaks to ongoing issues faced by our industry;

We applaud the work of local, state and federal authorities, as well as the community and acknowledge the situation in Australia is much different to most nations around the world. But Australia remains in a cycle of lockdowns and border closures to keep on top of the insidious COVID-19 pandemic.

Each time there is another COVID-19 cluster or a quarantine breach, any plans to trade again are halted. Musicians, sole traders, venues, clubs, festivals, music businesses and the industry remain out of work. Billions of dollars for hospitality and tourism generated from Australian music remains stifled. We are an industry in crisis.

At present, live music alone is operating at under 4 per cent of pre-COVID levels as a result of continual border closures and social distancing regulations. Since March last year there has not been a single national tour undertaken by an Australian artist and there has not been a single festival run at full capacity. The music and live entertainment industry remain in lockdown.

Alongside the afore mentioned Victorian Live Music Venues Program, additional priority areas will continue to be the capacity restrictions still applied to venues and events that aren't applied to other collective activity including sporting events, the end of JobKeeper, and barriers to both domestic and international touring, the indispensable lifeblood of both venue and festival based industry.

In December last year Live Performance Australia developed the plan for a Business Interruption Fund³ "to provide greater assurance against the risk of disruption to live performance productions or events due to the reimposition of public health restrictions to manage COVID-19 outbreaks or clusters. "The proposed Business Interruption Fund (BIF) will help increase industry confidence to reactivate live events, by providing indemnification for costs if a live event is cancelled, postponed, or negatively affected by the re-introduction of government restrictions, or a slower than anticipated easing of government restrictions". We strongly commend this initiative.

In closing, we thank the Parliament and the Committee for this inquiry in a time of transition and uncertainty for our industry,

Please don't hesitate to be in touch if we can provide any further assistance,

Yours sincerely,

John Wardle

Live Music Office

16 Mountain St, Ultimo NSW 2007, Australia
Locked Bag 5000, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012
P +61 2 9935 7875 F +61 2 9935 7970

E john@livemusicoffice.com.au

W <http://livemusicoffice.com.au/>

² Open Letter 21 February 2021 https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ITB0f2hMipKw-kjP3ixLHS2nP6X9mI5mN-Mq4eUg0_w/edit

³ [LPA calls for Business Interruption Fund to protect industry against future COVID-related shutdowns](#), 9 December 2020