



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## As NSW live music re-opens can musicians afford to play?

The New South Wales government must back moves to introduce a minimum fee for music gigs to end the exploitation and rip offs in the live music sector, says their union.

Musicians Australia, part of the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance, says it is unacceptable that staff working behind the bar at a gig are required by law to be paid, but the artist on the stage is not.

Deputy Opposition Leader in the NSW Legislative Council, John Graham, will today move in Parliament for a minimum fee of \$250 per musician per gig at publicly funded events. If this was adopted, it would bring NSW into line with South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia.

MEAA Musicians Director Paul Davies said even before the pandemic a quarter of all gigs went unpaid, with musicians enticed to undercut each other's fees just to get a gig. During the pandemic they lost all live work.

Now governments were providing funding to help the live music sector get back on its feet, but this must come with a requirement that musicians get a minimum wage.

"If you pour beers at a pub or wait tables you'll get a minimum wage by law but if you're standing in the corner of the pub, holding a guitar and singing, you can be playing for peanuts," Mr Davies said.

"Millions of taxpayer dollars are being spent on getting a struggling but vital industry back on its feet, and that's a great thing. But this money shouldn't be used to keep musicians begging to be paid. Our 24 hour economy needs live music which is why we need greater security and support for musicians."

Musicians Australia has been looking at the standards that apply across the economy when public funds are used to help business and what has been found is that there is a sound and equitable principle: when public money is spent it should go to all workers as a minimum, whether that is according to an Award or an agreed industry standard.

To do otherwise is a misuse of public money and simply feeds exploitation.

"We are calling on the NSW government to endorse a simple extension of this fair and equitable principle to musicians," Mr Davies said. "We need a minimum fee of \$250 per gig paid for every musician doing a gig where public money is being spent.

"The SA, Qld and WA governments have already endorsed this position and today we're pleased to note that the NSW Opposition will also be backing in the claim in the Parliament. We need the Premier and Ministers Ayres and Harwin to join with those others states in making sure public money is being spent in the right way, to support the musicians who make our live music industry. We need them to endorse our minimum fee."

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