



INQUIRY INTO THE STATE OF LIVE MUSIC IN NEW SOUTH WALES

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance

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ABOUT MEAA

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) is the largest and most established union and industry advocate for workers in the creative and cultural industries, with a history going back more than 110 years. Our members include people working in television, radio, theatre, film, entertainment venues, sporting stadia, journalists, actors, dancers, sportspeople, cartoonists, photographers, musicians, orchestral and opera performers as well as people working in public relations, advertising, book publishing and website production – in fact, everyone who works in the industries that inform or entertain.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

MEAA acknowledges the traditional custodians and cultures of the lands and seas on which we live and work. We pay our respects to all First Nations Peoples, Elders and Ancestors. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and stand in solidarity towards a shared future.

Inquiry into the State of Live Music in New South Wales

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Standing Committee on Social Issues into the State of Live Music in New South Wales.

Australia's music industry is in crisis. While large international conglomerates like Spotify and Live Nation extract substantial profits from the Australian live and recorded music industries, most musicians earn below minimum wage. Underpayment, wage theft, insecurity, and harassment are widespread in the industry. At the same time, emerging technologies – including generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and virtual live music synthesisers – displace and devalue musicians' work.

Without musicians, there cannot be a music industry. Unfortunately, when the viability of the music industry is considered by governments, commercial interests tend to dominate the discourse. As a result, public policy – including previous NSW state inquiries – have failed to confront the serious structural problems undermining the industry.

The centrality of the artist is a core pillar of the Australian Government's cultural policy 'Revive', and we commend the NSW Government's role in supporting the artist as worker. MEAA welcomes the NSW Government's endorsement of the Musicians Australia Minimum Fee for taxpayer-subsidised gigs, which constitutes an important step towards ensuring fair conditions and pay in the sector. We also commend the government on its implementation of Michael's Rule across the Venues NSW network, supporting greater exposure for local artists at a time when listenership is increasingly shaped by dominant global streaming platforms.

However, more needs to be done to address the structural challenges facing the music industry, including stronger measures to hold dominant platforms across the live and recorded industries to account. The \$250 minimum fee should be extended beyond direct government engagements to agencies and organisations that benefit from public grants and tax concessions. Michael's Rule should be extended beyond the Venues NSW network, in order to ensure that its effects extend beyond major touring acts.

Further action needs to be taken to safeguard live music itself. Orchestral musicians, particularly those working in commercial theatre – face displacement by live music synthesisers like KeyComp. More needs to be done to keep music live and ensure that orchestral musicians are not replaced with these technologies, especially in the case of government-funded performances.

Finally, it is important to recognise that musicians' livelihoods typically depend on a combination of earnings from live performance and recorded music. In the past, earning from recordings often helped to subsidise live work. However, the steady decline in revenue from recorded music over recent decades has largely eroded this model. As a result, as musicians' income from recordings have declined, so too has the viability of live performance. It is therefore essential that this inquiry acknowledge the interconnected nature of work in recorded and live music and ensure that both sectors are considered within its scope.

Working Conditions in the Australian Music Industry

Musicians work in a music industry characterised by the systematic prevalence of underpayment, insecurity, wage theft, harassment, alongside a widespread expectation that they will play unpaid gigs in return for ‘exposure’. Average earnings remain far below minimum wage, with half of working musicians earning under \$15,000 per year.¹ These conditions make it near-impossible for musicians to earn a living wage.

In this system, even widespread public recognition fails to translate into financial sustainability, with commercially successful artists unable to afford basic living costs. For example, at a 2024 hearing of the federal Live Music Inquiry, Australian musician Montaigne (Jess Cerro) explained:

“Despite my ostensible success, with radio play and millions of streams... I still don’t make enough money from my recordings to make minimum wage. I actually still owe money to my label. I have not made a profit from my music for 10 years, despite the fact that I’ve had a platinum-selling single”.²

Musicians often face an upward battle to be paid for their work in a system where unpaid work is framed as an opportunity for ‘exposure’. MEAA’s 2025 musicians’ survey found that one in three (32%) musicians were playing unpaid gigs.³ As one MEAA musician observed, “one of the biggest difficulties is asking for a respectable fee when those booking you treat you as though you are being arrogant or full of yourself”.⁴ In this sense, musicians are expected to routinely confront the view that performing is a privilege and not to be associated with the normal expectations of paid work.

Another entrenched problem is the culture of late or delayed payments. One musician told MEAA that they “have stood watching the cheques being written out, then told after the event that [they] needed to wait until the Treasurer got back from holidays, then till they reconciled the finances, then to see whether there was enough to pay me”. In this sense, a ‘pay when paid’ policy is rife in the industry, normalising insecurity and disrespect for workers.⁵

Precarious conditions in the workforce are also associated with significant health and safety risks for workers. Bullying, harassment, and discrimination is widespread, with nearly two in three workers (64%) saying that they have witnessed such behaviours in the workplace.⁶ Physical injury is also common, with 65% of musicians reporting that they had suffered from an injury at work.⁷ Sexual harassment remains pervasive, affecting more than half of workers in the

¹ Musicians Australia (2025) *End of Year Survey Report*, <https://www.meaa.org/mediaroom/time-for-9-billion-industry-to-pay-up-and-stop-exploiting-professional-musicians/>

² Full transcript available at Official Committee Hansard (2024) *Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts Inquiry into the Challenges and Opportunities within the Australian Live Music Industry*, Friday, 26 July, 2024, https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/commrep/28241/toc_pdf/Communications%20and%20the%20Arts%20Committee_2024_07_26_Official.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf

³ Musicians Australia (2025) *End of Year Survey Report*

⁴ Musicians Australia (2023) *End of Year Survey Report*

⁵ Musicians Australia (2023) *End of Year Survey Report*

⁶ Musicians Australia (2025) *End of Year Survey Report*

⁷ Musicians Australia (2025) *End of Year Survey Report*

industry, including 74% of women.⁸ These figures point to a systemic failure to provide safe workplaces.

In addition, it is not standard practice for musicians to be paid superannuation for live performance – despite being eligible to receive the superannuation guarantee. MEAA's survey found that 59% of gigs in the 2025 year did not include superannuation payments.⁹ This raises serious concerns about musicians' long-term financial security, with many likely to end their working lives without sufficient savings to guarantee a decent retirement.

Compounding poor pay and insecurity are high costs associated with sustaining work in the industry. Musicians must routinely absorb expenses associated with travel (including accommodation, parking and fuel), the upkeep and purchase of musical instruments and equipment, insurance, marketing and promotion, and recording expenses (including studio time, sound engineering, mastering, mixing, and distribution).¹⁰

Previous surveys also indicate that venues are pushing more costs onto musicians, including marketing and promotion, and taking a greater share of ticket door sales.¹¹ The plight of music venues has been well publicised, and a thriving music scene requires a diverse range of venues that can operate sustainably. However, pushing costs onto already-struggling artists is exploitative, and does nothing to solve the structural issues faced by both artists and venues.

The human cost of this financial precarity is profound. Musicians are less able to save for their retirement, own a home, pay off debt, or even afford the costs of raising children. One musician told MEAA that they “have little to no savings...and [their] ambitions for owning a home are completely forgotten and have been for years”.¹² Another spoke of “scaping an insecure living, built on decades of not earning enough. Forget restaurants and Friday night takeaway, my car is six months overdue for a service...and a gym membership is the stuff of dreams”.¹³ This indicates a structural failure to provide sustainable livelihoods.

Musicians also face underpayment and exploitation in the recorded music industry. For decades, creators – including artists, writers, and musicians – have been pushed into exploitative contracts with record labels, trading away their rights for meagre compensation. Many musicians fail to ever see any income from these contracts, having to first pay off debts to cover production costs and advances.

Non-featured or sessional musicians face additional unfairness. Many sessional musicians receive a one-off fee for their work, regardless of the commercial success of the resulting recording. In addition, they are currently undercompensated for international use, due to broken reciprocity arrangements between Australia and other territories. The experience of prominent Australian musician Peter Luscombe is that of the majority, where despite performing on dozens

⁸ Shehadie et al (2022) ‘Raising their Voices’, *MAPN Consulting & Australian Women in Music Awards*, <https://womeninmusicawards.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Music-Industry-Review-Report-Raising-Their-Voices-2022-web.pdf>

⁹ Musicians Australia (2025) *End of Year Survey Report*

¹⁰ Musicians Australia (2025) *End of Year Survey Report*

¹¹ Musicians Australia (2023) *End of Year Survey Report*

¹² Musicians Australia (2023) *End of Year Survey Report*

¹³ Musicians Australia (2023) *End of Year Survey Report*

of popular recordings, he has received no income from the broadcast of this work in Australia, and after more than 40 years in the industry is facing an underfunded retirement.¹⁴

Streaming is yet another site of exploitation. On Spotify, musicians can earn as little as a fraction of a cent per stream.¹⁵ In addition, in 2023, the platform announced that musicians' tracks would need to be streamed a minimum of 1,000 times *before* the company would start paying royalties.¹⁶ This change was estimated to divert more than \$40 million away from smaller artists.¹⁷ If musicians don't want to abide by these terms, they have very few alternatives, courtesy of the platform's dominance of the online streaming market.

Emerging forms of digital disruption compound these pressures, further threatening the viability of work. The rise of AI has flooded online streaming sites with millions of synthetic music tracks, diluting payments to human creators. One example is the AI-generated 'band' *The Velvet Sundown*, which amassed close to 1 million monthly listeners on Spotify.¹⁸ Meanwhile, work that once provided stable income – including the composition of background music for films, video games, and ads – are being replaced by AI-generated content. As such, AI threatens to further erode already fragile income streams in the sector.

Technology is also reshaping live performance. KeyComp, a system that uses a single synthesiser to replicate the sound of multiple orchestral instruments, is being rolled out across major productions to reduce orchestra size. Disney Theatrical Productions, for example, has now deployed the technology across its international productions, including *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Lion King*.¹⁹ The spread of this technology threatens the livelihoods of Australia's theatre orchestra musicians and risks extending into related sectors like ballet and opera.

Consolidation of the Music Industry

While musicians contend with widespread precarity, low wages, and insecurity in the music industry, corporate interests in the sector are booming. Live Nation, a company that owns a range of Australia's major music festivals, agencies and venues, as well as major ticketing platforms Ticketmaster and Moshtix, made a net profit of US\$691 million over the last financial

¹⁴ Linda Morris (15/08/2023) 'Session musicians are caught in a 'broken system'. It affects Ed Sheeran too', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/music/session-musicians-caught-in-broken-system-it-affects-ed-sheeran-too-20230810-p5dvgh.html>

¹⁵ Marisa Dellatto (2022) 'Spotify Says It Paid \$7 Billion In Royalties In 2021 Amid Claims Of Low Pay From Artists', *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/marisadellatto/2022/03/24/spotify-says-it-paid-7-billion-in-royalties-in-2021-amid-claims-of-low-pay-from-artists/>

¹⁶ Tim Ingham, (5/11/2023) 'Confirmed: From next year, tracks on Spotify will have to be played 1,000 times before they start earning money' *Music Business Worldwide*, <https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/confirmed-next-year-tracks-on-spotify-1000-plays/>

¹⁷ See above.

¹⁸ Matt Teffer (2025) AI is now a hand grenade for Australia's music industry, *The Financial Review*, <https://www.afr.com/life-and-luxury/arts-and-culture/it-took-me-three-years-to-make-an-album-ai-can-do-it-in-seconds-20250901-p5mrhf>

¹⁹ Joshua Kosman (2022) Technology in S.F.'s 'Frozen' reduces musicians in live performances, but at what cost to audiences?, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/entertainment/article/technology-in-s-f-s-frozen-reduces-musicians-21174407.php>

year.²⁰ The Company's margins also continue to grow, increasing to 3.3% for the 2025 financial year, reflecting growing profitability over time.²¹

Meanwhile, the recorded music industry has also grown over the last decade. The three biggest record labels – Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment, and Warner Music Group – each generate billions of dollars per year.²² Revenues in Australia for the music publishing and sound recording industry now run in excess of AUD\$1.1 billion,²³ off the back of the global recorded music industry doubling in value over the last decade.²⁴ Following the transition to streaming, platforms like Spotify are also thriving, with the company generating a net income of US\$2.2 billion over the 2025 financial year.²⁵

Yet research shows that despite increased revenues across the sector, a declining portion of that income is flowing to Australian musicians.²⁶ A key driver of this imbalance is the growing disparity in market power between these companies and individual musicians. Across the music industry, large conglomerates have horizontally and vertically integrated music markets, consolidating control over local venues, agents, and musicians.

One example of this phenomenon is Live Nation. The company now controls key aspects of the supply chain in Australia, including festivals such as Splendour in the Grass and Falls Festival, venues such as The Triffid, Marvel Stadium, and The Palais Theatre, artist agencies including Mixt Up Agency, Secret Service and Village Sounds, and ticketing platforms including Ticketmaster and Moshtix.²⁷ This consolidation of the industry grants them leverage across the supply chain.

High levels of market consolidation diminish musicians' bargaining power. Booking agent Paul Sloan, for example, has argued that "the scale of [these] large companies means that they have been able to aggressively reduce the capacity of third parties to negotiate reasonable terms".

²⁰ Live Nation (2026) *Live Nation Entertainment Full Year And Fourth Quarter 2025 Results*, <https://newsroom.livenation.com/news/live-nation-entertainment-full-year-and-fourth-quarter-2025-results/>

²¹ See above.

²² Companiesmarketcap.com (2025) *Market capitalization of Universal Music Group (UMG.AS)*, <https://companiesmarketcap.com/aud/universal-music-group/marketcap/>

²³ IBISWorld (2025) *Music Publishing and Sound Recording in Australia*, <https://my.ibisworld.com/au/en/industry/j5520/at-a-glance>

²⁴ From US\$14 billion in 2014 to US\$29 billion in 2025. Lauri Rechartd (2025) 'IFPI looks at a decade of digital transformation in the music industry', *WIPO Magazine*, <https://www.wipo.int/en/web/wipo-magazine/articles/ifpi-looks-at-a-decade-of-digital-transformation-in-the-music-industry-73661>

²⁵ Spotify (2025) *Annual Report 2025*, <https://investors.spotify.com/financials/default.aspx>

²⁶ Will Page and Morgan Harrington (2025) *Reversing the decline of Australian music*, The Australia Institute, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/drowned-out-in-the-stream-australian-music-is-in-trouble-and-needs-investment-new-report/>

²⁷ Michael Sainsbury (26/10/2022) 'The Overseas Giants Swallowing Australia's Live Music Industry' *Sydney Morning Herald*, <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/music/the-overseas-giants-swallowing-australia-s-live-music-industry-20221026-p5bt01.html>

This, he claims, “lead[s] to lower artist returns and less sustainable careers”.²⁸ One unnamed agent goes so far as to say that “no one is going to challenge a Goliath like Live Nation”.²⁹

These concerns are not limited to the Australian market. In the US, they have fuelled an antitrust lawsuit against the company, brought by the Department of Justice.³⁰ The lawsuit claims that the company is engaging in anticompetitive behaviour against musicians, venues, festivals and agents, among others.³¹ Together, these developments underscore the urgent need to address the impact of market concentration across the industry within this inquiry.

However, this story is not unique to Live Nation. Other major multinational companies are doing the same thing – buying up huge numbers of festivals, venues, ticket companies, and agencies – and consolidating huge sections of the live music industry. TEG – the owner of ticketing company Ticketek – is another example. It has bought up a number of agencies across Australia, including Empire Touring, MJR group, and TEG Dainty, as well as venues and festivals including South by Southwest.³² Last, AEG Frontier owns CMC Rocks festival and Hanging Rock festival, as well as a number of agencies.³³

Recommendations

The consolidation of the live music industry – particularly by Live Nation – is a matter of serious concern. Despite reassurances from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) that it was “keeping a close eye” on Live Nation, no substantive actions have followed.³⁴

MEAA has persistently argued that the Federal Government should refer the live music industry to the ACCC to investigate potential anticompetitive conduct. As a state with an outsized interest in the live music industry – housing nearly 800 live music venues and hundreds of festivals – we urge the NSW Government to support MEAA’s call and advocate for stronger regulatory action.³⁵

²⁸ See above.

²⁹ Kelly Burke (15/4/2024) ‘Australian music insiders take aim at ‘tick-a-box’ government funding for festivals’, *The Guardian Australia*, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2024/apr/15/australian-music-insiders-take-aim-at-tick-a-box-government-funding-for-festivals>

³⁰ Julian Mark, Perry Stein and Tony Room (16/04/2024) ‘Justice Dept. to hit concert promoter Live Nation with antitrust lawsuit’, *The Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2024/04/16/live-nation-antitrust-justice/>

³¹ See above.

³² Michael Sainsbury (26/10/2022) ‘The Overseas Giants Swallowing Australia’s Live Music Industry’ *Sydney Morning Herald* <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/music/the-overseas-giants-swallowing-australia-s-live-music-industry-20221026-p5bt01.html>

³³ Michael Sainsbury (26/10/2022) ‘The Overseas Giants Swallowing Australia’s Live Music Industry’ *Sydney Morning Herald* <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/music/the-overseas-giants-swallowing-australia-s-live-music-industry-20221026-p5bt01.html>

³⁴ Karl Quinn (2024) How Australia’s music cartels are driving up the cost of live shows, *The Age*, <https://www.theage.com.au/culture/music/how-australia-s-music-cartels-are-driving-up-the-cost-of-live-shows-20240704-p5jr4w.html>

³⁵ NSW Government (2024) *NSW is centre stage for Australian live music*, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/nsw-centre-stage-for-australian-live-music-0>

Recommendation 1: That the NSW Government formally support MEAA’s call for an ACCC inquiry into the live music industry.

The consolidation of the recorded music and streaming industry must also be treated as a priority. New South Wales is the epicentre of Australia’s recorded music industry. It is the home of the majority of national record labels, including Universal, Sony, and Warner, and nearly half (48%) of the country’s music publishers.³⁶ As a result, the NSW government oversees a very significant portion of the larger Australian recorded music industry – which, as this report details – is highly consolidated. This level of concentration raises serious concerns about the possibility of anticompetitive effects on local musicians, independent record labels, and other stakeholders.

MEAA has previously called for a formal inquiry into the recorded and streaming sectors in order to properly investigate structural issues within the sector. Given the oversized representation of the industry in NSW, it is centrally placed to advocate for and support such an inquiry.

Recommendation 2: The NSW Government support MEAA’s call for a comprehensive inquiry into the recorded and streaming industries.

Establishing and enforcing minimum rates is crucial to ensure that musicians can have sustainable jobs in the sector. With this objective in mind, MEAA launched a minimum fee campaign two years ago, targeting taxpayer-subsidised performances. We congratulate the NSW Government for endorsing the minimum fee campaign and for upholding minimum conditions for taxpayer-subsidised gigs.

However, gaps remain in the application of the minimum fee, particularly in relation to gigs funded by NSW agencies including Destination NSW. MEAA therefore encourages the NSW Government to extend the \$250 minimum fee to all gigs funded by state government agencies. This is necessary to ensure consistency across all publicly funded performances.

In addition, minimum standards should apply wherever the state indirectly subsidises live performance, including through grants, regulatory concessions, or tax relief. Under the *NSW Liquor Act*, for example, live music and performance venues can be granted generous incentives indexed to live music and performance presentation including 80% reductions on licensing fees and up to 2 hours extended trading. However, unlike other related NSW Government programs, there is currently no requirement to pay at least award wages or recognised sector minimums when granted generous fee concessions and extended trading.

Consistent with broader NSW Government policy for investment and public funding, financial benefits of this nature should be tied to fair pay requirements. This is necessary to ensure that government funds are not used to prop up exploitative labour practices in the subsidised sector.

³⁶ MusicNSW (2026) *About us*, <https://www.musicnsw.com/about/about-us>

Recommendation 3: that the government extend the \$250 minimum to all gigs funded by state government agencies.

Recommendation 4: that the receipt of government funding, including grants, fee concessions, and tax relief, is conditional on the application of the Musicians Australia minimum fee.

A growing barrier to obtaining good work in the live music industry is the declining number of local bands and artists being contracted as supporting acts for touring international artists. Michael's Rule, named after the late artist manager Michael McMartin, proposes that international tours feature local Australian artists. This ensures that Australian audiences are exposed to local talent in the Australian music industry.

MEAA welcomes the NSW Government's support for Michael's Rule by incentivising international touring artists to add Australian support acts to their line-ups. To maximise the policy's impact, we recommend broadening the scope of the rule to include gigs outside of the Venues NSW network. This will ensure that the effects of the policy are felt by the musician's workforce at large, and not just those that are booked for major international support acts.

Recommendation 5: that Michael's Rule be extended to include gigs outside of the Venues NSW network.

A coordinated plan to support live music and revitalise participation would help to build the civic and economic demand to create secure jobs and safe workplaces. This is especially important given that cost is frequently cited as a barrier to participation in live music events.

The NSW Government should consider a range of incentives, including vouchers, to encourage participation and patronage of live music that would be attentive to changing tastes and consumption habits. We are aware that the NSW Government currently offers vouchers for children whose parents receive the Family Tax Benefit (FTB). While this is a positive start, MEAA holds that such vouchers should be made universally available in order to encourage more widespread participation in live music and performance.

Recommendation 6: That the NSW Government explore the use of incentives, such as vouchers, to support participation in live music.

The emergence of new technologies such as KeyComp threatens the employment of Australia's working theatre orchestra musicians, and if permitted, may spread to other live music sectors including ballet and opera. MEAA's 'Keep Music Live' campaign seeks to ensure that technologies like KeyComp do not displace musicians or undermine the musicality or expressiveness of their work.

Supporting these measures is not only essential to sustain the livelihoods of theatre orchestra musicians, but to maintain the integrity and quality of live music for audiences, who reasonably

expect to experience live music performance when attending theatre and other forms of live entertainment. We therefore call on the NSW Government to introduce rules establishing minimum orchestra requirements for performances that receive direct funding or tax incentives from the state or state-based agencies. This will protect both musicians' jobs and the quality of audience experience.

Recommendation 7: the NSW government establish minimum orchestra requirements for state funded performances.

MEAA welcomes the inquiry and report by the Joint Select Committee on Music and Arts Education in New South Wales. It supports the recommendations related to the collection of data, mandated hours for classroom primary music education, and increasing teacher training hours and ongoing professional development. The creation of a Music Education Action Plan and its implementation, with adequate development and resourcing, will be vital to delivering quality music education to all children across New South Wales, and is enthusiastically endorsed by MEAA.

However, MEAA seeks clarification regarding the need for industry regulation and recommends that workers across a full spectrum of music education activities be adequately consulted on any future accreditation proposals. MEAA Musicians represents over 1,000 members in New South Wales, with over half of these members undertaking music education activities across a range of settings. MEAA maintains that any discussion regarding music tutors, instrumental or vocal music teachers, or other music education roles in schools (other than classroom music) should also involve MEAA as the union representing the state's working musicians.

Recommendation 8: that the NSW Government consult with MEAA on any proposed state-based regulation of the music education sector.

Last, additional transparency is required with respect to the funding decisions of Sound NSW. First, unlike Create NSW, Sound NSW does not publish information about the composition of peer assessment panels for grant rounds. Publishing the members of peer assessment panels would strengthen trust in Sound NSW's funding decisions by making the process more transparent and accountable and help applicants understand whose expertise is shaping outcomes. It will also align Sound NSW with established best practice in arts funding.

In addition, more transparency with respect to genre investment metrics is needed. Publishing these figures would reveal any structural biases in the allocation of funding and promote diversity across the funding of musical genres.

Recommendation 9: Sound NSW publish the panel membership for grant rounds and genre investment metrics.

Conclusion

Australia's music industry is at a crossroads. Musicians operate in a sector plagued by underpayment, wage theft, job insecurity, and harassment. Emerging technologies, including generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and KeyComp, further erode these already fragile incomes across the sector.

Yet, without musicians, there cannot be a music industry. As MEAA Musicians Federal President and folk artist Kimberley Wheeler observed:

“The music industry has been structured in such a way that it effectively steals from those at its very heart, and that's musicians. Whether it's live performance, recording, streaming, or now AI, musicians are being systematically ripped off.”

Addressing the structural drivers of exploitation, including the market dominance of international conglomerates like Live Nation, Spotify, and the major record labels, is critical. Without tackling these issues, we will be confined to managing the symptoms, rather than the causes, of artist exploitation.