

Music Tasmania

Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation 2026

Towards a New Settlement Between Government and Creative Communities

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Music Tasmania is the state peak body for contemporary music in Tasmania and a member of the Australian Music Industry Network (AMIN). This submission is made in our own voice and is consistent with, and extends, AMIN's national submission.

Opening Statement

The dominant narrative treats music and the arts as beneficiaries of public investment. We argue the opposite is true.

Creative communities are not passengers in the Australian economy. They are its advance guard — the people who build cultural life, generate place identity, and make communities worth living in. Developers, tourism bodies, and governments follow that cultural value, capture it, and call it growth. The artists who created it are rarely at the table when the returns are distributed. This same dynamic now plays out in the digital realm at far greater scale: Australian artists generate the creative catalogue, offshore platforms set the royalty rates, control the algorithms that determine who is heard, and feed that same catalogue into generative AI systems without consent or compensation. The music is Australian. The profit is not.

The Australian music industry generated \$10.76 billion in revenue and \$4.28 billion in direct gross value added to the national economy in 2024-25.¹ Yet artist incomes grew just 0.9% year-on-year — a real wage decrease — in the same period. Research by Musicians Australia found that 49% of Australian musicians earned less than \$5,999 from their music in 2022-23, and 64% earned less than \$14,999 — 15% of the national minimum wage.² An industry of this scale, sustained by a workforce earning poverty-level incomes, is not a market failure. It is a policy failure. Recent analysis shows that capital expenditure consumes an increasing proportion of government investment in arts and culture, meaning artists receive a

declining share of a growing investment pool — directly at odds with the Centrality of the Artist pillar.³

The framing of arts funding as a handout obscures this reality. All industries receive public investment. The arts sector receives a fraction of what fossil fuels receive in subsidies and tax concessions, yet contributes more broadly and deeply to the cultural, social, and civic fabric of the country. Artists and musicians are among the most consistent contributors to charitable causes, social enterprise, and civic advocacy in Australia. The sector framed as a recipient of public generosity is in practice one of the most generous sectors in public life.

DIY and grassroots music scenes are the entrepreneurial gardens from which the next generation of artists, producers, promoters, lighting designers, sound engineers, and festival programmers grows. Every major Australian artist who has broken internationally was loved locally first. This creative ecology generates economic value, social capital, and place identity that others — developers, tourism bodies, platforms — then capture without return. The next National Cultural Policy must recognise this explicitly and invest in the ecology, not just in its most visible outputs.

Music builds social cohesion at a time when community trust is at historically low levels. Grassroots venues and live events are accessible, non-clinical mental health infrastructure. Music creates safe, collaborative social environments that reduce youth isolation and provide alternatives to disengagement. These are public health outcomes with measurable value to the health system — they are simply not measured, and because they are not measured, they are chronically underfunded.

Music education is an economic powerhouse hiding in plain sight. Music Australia's More Than Notes on a Page report found music education generated \$1.79 billion in revenue and \$1.495 billion in direct gross value added in 2024-25, with a GVA-to-revenue ratio of 84% — the highest of any industry subsector.⁴ A Griffith University study found sustained music education develops creativity, adaptability, collaboration, and cognitive discipline — the skills the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025 identifies as most valued for the decade ahead.⁵ Music education is not a cultural luxury. It is workforce infrastructure and an alternative pathway to STEM capability.

Music Tasmania's submission is a structural argument, not a funding request. We call for a new settlement — one that measures what music actually produces,

invests in the ecology that makes it possible, and returns to creators a fairer share of the value they generate.

Recommendations

Pillar 1 First Nations First

Music Tasmania commends the establishment of Creative Australia's First Nations Board and endorses AMIN's call for continued First Nations-led self-investment in the music industry. We call for the next policy to shift from recognising the centrality of First Nations music to investing in it — with multi-year commitments, embedded self-determination, and funded cultural consultation built explicitly into grant frameworks rather than absorbed by already-stretched artist budgets.

Specific programs deserve ongoing and increased investment: NATSIMO's LIFECYCLE grants, which provide pathways across the full spectrum of music industry roles; and Support Act's dedicated First Nations services and research. These are not supplementary programs. They are the infrastructure of First Nations music development.

Music Tasmania also calls for a dedicated funding and mentoring program to develop and support First Nations music businesses, providing practical business development support grounded in self-determination. Critically, this program must resource First Nations people in regional areas, including Tasmania, to travel to conferences, industry events, and festivals across Australia and internationally, with particular emphasis on connections to our Pacific neighbours. Knowledge sharing, skills development, and the right to participate fully in international industry conversations are not privileges. They are foundations of genuine First Nations sovereignty in business. The model for this program already exists: First Nations Music NSW's report *Supporting First Nations-Led Music Businesses (2024)* provides a comprehensive framework, including extended mentorship programs, tailored professional development, increased funding access, and strengthened First Nations-led industry networks. This model should be adopted and resourced nationally, with state and territory peak bodies funded to deliver locally appropriate programs in partnership with their First Nations communities.

Generative AI presents an urgent and specific threat to First Nations cultural expressions. AI systems are generating content in the style of First Nations artists and cultural traditions without consent, compensation, or cultural authority. As the

Productivity Commission's 2022 report on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual arts and crafts found, 'legal recognition and protection of ICIP are patchy.'¹⁶ This gap is now critical. Music Tasmania supports the establishment of a taskforce to address ICIP copyright implications in an AI context, and calls for legislation protecting First Nations cultural expressions on digital platforms.

Music Tasmania recommends:

1. Invest in NATSIMO's LIFECYCLE grants, and Support Act's First Nations services as core infrastructure — not discretionary programs.
2. Fund cultural consultation costs explicitly in all grant budgets, with time and resources built into frameworks rather than absorbed by artists.
3. Establish a dedicated national program to fund and mentor First Nations music businesses, modelled on the framework developed by First Nations Music NSW in Supporting First Nations-Led Music Businesses (2024), resourced through state and territory peak bodies and including support for First Nations people in regional areas to attend industry events, conferences, and festivals nationally and internationally, with particular emphasis on Pacific engagement.
4. Establish a taskforce to address ICIP copyright implications in an AI context, and legislate protections for First Nations cultural expressions on digital platforms including provisions addressing unauthorised AI generation.

Pillar 2 A Place for Every Story

The stories that become nationally significant are built locally first — in community halls, small venues, regional festivals, and backyards. DIY and grassroots music culture must be explicitly recognised as innovative and entrepreneurial infrastructure, not amateur precursor activity. Investment in local music ecosystems generates returns — economic, social, place-making — that far exceed the outlay. The policy settings must protect this ecology from the tendency of funding systems to concentrate resources in large-scale spectacle at the expense of the grassroots development that makes spectacle possible.

Geographic disadvantage as a structural export barrier takes different forms in different places. Tasmania's Bass Strait and remote communities' desert distances are expressions of the same problem: the first export step costs more than the market has yet rewarded. A Tasmanian band getting their music to Melbourne is already crossing a border — a logistical and financial barrier non-regional artists do not face. This double export challenge — from Tasmania to the mainland, and from the mainland to the world — requires explicit investment that current policy does not provide.

Music Tasmania supports the continuation and expansion of the Regional and Remote Music Summit, now in its third year, as a critical national gathering that

fosters development and connection across distance with First Nations leadership at its centre.

The model of regional music advisors embedded in communities — demonstrated through MusicNSW's Regional Coordinators and QMusic's Regional Arts Advisor through the Regional Arts Services Network — should be adopted nationally, with federal funding enabling each state and territory peak body to maintain on-the-ground presence beyond capital cities.

Music Tasmania recommends:

5. Explicitly recognise DIY and grassroots music ecosystems as entrepreneurial infrastructure in policy language, and direct investment accordingly — away from large-scale spectacle where majority economic benefit flows to national and international operators.
6. Establish a geographic equity mechanism — minimum investment per state and territory distributed through peak bodies — ensuring all parts of Australia benefit from national cultural investment regardless of population size.
7. Create explicit funding for the first export step for geographically disadvantaged artists — island states and remote communities alike — recognising that Bass Strait crossings and desert distances are equivalent structural barriers.
8. Fund federally a national network of regional music advisors embedded in communities, working within state and territory peak bodies.

Pillar 3 Centrality of the Artist

The evidence of artist income precarity is unambiguous. The Bass Line Second Edition confirms artist incomes grew just 0.9% year-on-year in 2024-25 — a real wage decrease — while industry revenue grew 5.2%. Artists did not capture a material share of industry growth. Live performance revenue grew 7.3% but was driven predominantly by international touring acts, compounding value extraction from the local ecosystem. Meanwhile, analysis from A New Approach shows capital expenditure is consuming an increasing proportion of government arts investment, meaning artists receive a declining share of a growing pool.³

Music Tasmania proposes a Universal Basic Income pilot for Tasmanian artists, modelled on Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts scheme. Tasmania is the ideal pilot site: geographically bounded with clear borders, one of Australia's lowest socioeconomic jurisdictions, with established peak body infrastructure to support delivery and evaluation. The Irish pilot — which provided €325 per week to 2,000 randomly selected artists from 2022 to 2026 — generated over €100 million in social and economic benefits from a net fiscal cost of just under €72 million, returning €1.39 for every €1 invested, and has since been made permanent.⁷ Music

Tasmania observed a demonstrable surge in creative outputs during the COVID-19 period when income supports created a temporary income floor for many artists — consistent with the Irish evidence base. Tasmania can generate the equivalent Australian evidence base for a future national conversation.

The current grant architecture compounds the precarity problem: boom-or-bust competitive rounds that require artists to demonstrate market readiness before receiving development support. Music Tasmania proposes a three-tier continuous investment model — seed investment for prototyping and development, mid-tier for production, and presentation-tier for touring and export — with tiers describing the stage of the work, not the career level of the artist. An established artist developing a new concept returns to the seed tier. An emerging artist with a breakthrough project accesses the top tier. The model serves the work, not the résumé.

Music Tasmania recommends:

9. Fund a Universal Basic Income pilot for Tasmanian artists modelled on Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts — bounded, rigorously evaluated, and designed to generate the Australian evidence base for a future national program.
10. Reform the national grant architecture to a three-tier continuous investment model with rolling rounds — seed, development, and presentation — eliminating the boom-or-bust dynamic and making investment available at every stage of creative development regardless of career level.
11. Mandate fair pay compliance — including the Musicians Australia minimum fee standard — for all publicly funded events and organisations, and strengthen copyright protections for artists in an AI context.

Pillar 4 Strong Cultural Infrastructure

State and territory peak bodies are the connective tissue of Australia's music ecology. They hold local relationships, on-the-ground knowledge, and community trust that national agencies cannot replicate from a distance. Music Tasmania calls for peak bodies to be recognised and resourced not merely as advocates but as genuine delivery partners for national investment — including as funding partners for Music Australia programs at the local level. We call for increased on-the-ground presence from OFTA in each region, ensuring equitable access to government across the country.

Music Tasmania supports investigation of a tax offset for the live music industry, as called for in the 2025 parliamentary report 'Am I Ever Gonna See You Live Again',⁸ and endorses the work of APRA AMCOS and their Australia Live tax offset scheme as recommended in their submission to the NSW Government Tax Reform

Consultation.⁹ Any reinvestment mechanism linked to major live music events must carry transparent, arms-length governance — the levy must flow to the ecosystem, not to the administration of the levy.

Sovereign digital infrastructure for music publication and distribution is an economic sovereignty argument as much as a cultural one. Australian artists are compelled to distribute through platforms that set royalty rates, control discovery algorithms, and use creative catalogues as AI training data without consent. Publicly governed Australian music infrastructure — modelled on European collective rights frameworks but going further — would stop the extraction, enforce copyright at the platform level, and create an Australian tech industry opportunity. Music Tasmania also supports investigation of international models for taxing AI system operators where works are generated from unknown derivation, such as the French proposed amendment to the Intellectual Property Code, Article 4,¹⁰ with revenue reinvested directly to artists.

Surging public liability insurance premiums for small businesses and live music venues require urgent government attention — Music Tasmania supports investigation of a mutual insurance scheme for the music industry.

Music Tasmania recommends:

12. Resource state and territory peak bodies as genuine delivery partners for national investment, with funding commensurate with program delivery, artist support, and community engagement roles.
13. Support a live music industry tax offset and investigate reinvestment mechanisms linked to major live events, with transparent, arms-length governance ensuring funds flow directly to artists, grassroots venues, and local communities.
14. Invest in sovereign Australian digital infrastructure for music publication, distribution, and rights management — protecting creators from platform extraction and building Australian technical capability at the intersection of creative industries and technology.
15. Investigate a mutual insurance scheme for the music industry to address surging public liability premiums threatening small venues and live music businesses.

Pillar 5 Engaging the Audience

Australian music on commercial radio is governed by an outdated voluntary code. On streaming platforms, algorithmic recommendation systems can meet local content quotas while systematically routing listeners away from Australian artists. The Bass Line Second Edition notes that consumption of Australian music by Australian audiences is directly connected to artist revenue growth — the

regulatory settings must reflect this. Music Tasmania calls for legislated local content obligations and algorithmic transparency requirements that address what platforms actually serve listeners, not just what sits in their catalogues.

Local music is an underutilised place-making and economic development tool. Music creates a sense of place, drives hospitality and tourism spend, and builds civic identity that makes communities attractive to residents and visitors. Local content requirements for publicly funded venues, hospitality precincts, and tourism programs would generate significant returns at low cost.

Investment in all-ages access is equally critical — Music Tasmania backs The Push's National Plan for Young Australians and Music 2026-2036¹¹ and calls for dedicated support for all-ages live music and youth-led cultural participation as both audience development and social infrastructure.

Music Tasmania recommends:

16. Legislate local content obligations on broadcast radio under the Broadcasting Services Act, extending to digital radio, and include algorithmic transparency requirements on streaming platforms addressing what is served to listeners.
17. Establish local music content requirements for publicly funded venues, hospitality precincts, and tourism programs, with measurement frameworks capturing place-making and economic development value.
18. Support The Push's National Plan for Young Australians and Music 2026-2036, including dedicated funding for all-ages live music, youth audience development, and youth-led cultural participation.

Pillar 6 Creative Arts Education (proposed new pillar)

Music education generated \$1.79 billion in revenue and \$1.495 billion in direct gross value added in 2024-25 — with the highest GVA-to-revenue ratio of any industry subsector at 84%.⁴ It is simultaneously an economic powerhouse, a social infrastructure investment, and a pathway to broader workforce capability. Yet it remains without a dedicated pillar in the National Cultural Policy. Music Tasmania strongly supports the establishment of a Creative Arts Education pillar with matched Commonwealth funding equivalent to STEM investment.

The Griffith University study on transferable music skills confirms music education develops creativity, adaptability, collaboration, and cognitive discipline — capabilities that flow into technology, law, finance, health, and the public sector.⁵ Adults who received arts education as children are substantially more active music consumers across every measure, making childhood music access simultaneously

a workforce investment, an audience development strategy, and a social cohesion tool. Music education is not a competitor to literacy and numeracy — it is a multiplier for them.

Education pathways must serve low-literacy and low-income communities specifically — module-based learning that builds toward qualifications without full upfront financial obligation, and micro-credentials enabling professional musicians to teach in schools, particularly in regional and remote areas. Music Tasmania also calls for structural reform of music education program design: removing consultancy-led approaches and replacing them with practitioner-led curriculum development. Structural change is the precondition for all other changes having effect.

Music Tasmania recommends:

19. Establish a dedicated Creative Arts Education pillar in the National Cultural Policy with matched Commonwealth funding for creative arts equivalent to STEM investment.
20. Set a national standard for quality music education — minimum 60 minutes per week in primary schools, sequential and ongoing — and fund a national professional learning program to build teacher capacity to deliver it.
21. Develop module-based and micro-credential pathways enabling progression toward qualifications without full upfront financial commitment, and create credentialing pathways for professional musicians to teach in regional and remote schools.
22. Fund national data collection on music education delivery and teacher readiness to establish the evidence base for accountability and continuous improvement.

A note on evidence

Music Tasmania has grounded this submission in publicly available, verified evidence. Where we draw on observational evidence — including our own assessment as a state peak body of creative output patterns in the post-COVID period — we have said so explicitly and distinguished it from quantitative data. We have not fabricated citations or attributed claims to sources we have not read. We welcome scrutiny of all claims made here.

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