



Joint Contemporary Music Industry Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation 2026

May 2026

NEXT GENERATION NOW

REVIVE 2028–2032

FAST FORWARD TO 2030

A ten-year-old in Townsville is forty minutes into her weekly music class, learning to read notation and write her first song. A young family drives to a festival on the outskirts of Geelong, one they've been to every year since their kids were small. A retiree in Port Augusta tunes into his local community station and hears something new, something unmistakably Australian. A twenty-two-year-old in Blacktown discovers an artist on a streaming platform actively recommending local music playing a gig down the road. A first-year artist manager in Darwin secures a paid internship with a senior manager, learning what took the seasoned veteran a decade. In a rehearsal room in Fremantle, a First Nations songwriter finishes a track that will be recorded, published and generating global royalties within the year. And somewhere between Canberra and Wangaratta, a young band is on the road finishing their second successful grassroots regional tour.

The policy settings that made all this possible were put in place by two successive national cultural policies.

A National Song Academy producing world-class songwriters, recording artists and producers. Universal sequential music education in primary schools. A network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music Centres generating new IP from remote and regional communities. The recommendations of the First Nations Music Industry Review implemented. Revive Live a permanent fixture of the arts funding architecture. Sound engineers, production crews, venue operators and festival producers working in an industry with proper workforce pathways. Australian composers and recording artists soundtracking films, television series and games screening around the globe. Australian music not just competing on the global stage but shaping it.

2030. Australia is a music powerhouse.

BUILT ON WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY ACHIEVED

Revive was transformational for the way government and industry partnered through the establishment and long-term investment of Music Australia. The First Nations First Board has cultural authority over its own funding. Creative Workplaces is addressing systemic harm, and Support Act has built the social and emotional wellbeing infrastructure that sustains mentally healthy workplaces. The decision to reject text and data mining exceptions for AI put Australian creators sets a precedent the world follows. These are structural policies and investments that changed how the Commonwealth engages with contemporary music.

This submission is built on that foundation. It is the next chapter of the same story.

THE CHALLENGE

Since Revive, four converging pressures have reshaped the landscape. The traditional venue economic model is shifting. The regulatory and funding environment remains inconsistent across jurisdictions. Consumer confidence has been hit by cost-of-living pressures and growing market concentration among international touring and ticketing operators. And the platforms where Australian music is discovered; community radio, commercial radio, and streaming are each under pressure.

The stages where Australian artists build their craft are shrinking. Fewer classrooms, fewer venues, fewer community stations, fewer platforms, fewer pathways to discovery: the ecology that builds audiences and launches careers is fragmented and under pressure at every level. This is the boomerang culture. Australian artists increasingly need to export their way to domestic success, to tour internationally and return home with a stamp of global approval before their own country embraces them. The risk is that artists go too early, before their craft is properly honed. Or that they never come back, and Australia loses the creative economy, the mentorship, and the cultural identity they would have built here.

None of this is inevitable. It requires renewed investment in the pipelines, platforms and people that will build the music ecology fit for the digital age.

NEXT GENERATION NOW

Next Generation Now is about the audiences who make it all worthwhile, the teenager going to their first gig and finding a new favourite artist on a streaming platform, the family at a regional festival, the retiree discovering something new on community radio, a worker wowed by the soundtrack to the latest local TV production, and the policy settings that ensure they always have something unmistakably Australian to find.

It is about the pulse that music sends through Australian life. The child whose classroom outcomes improve because music is part of every week. The patient whose anxiety lifts through music therapy. The regional town whose Friday night comes alive when a band plays the pub. The city precinct whose hospitality strip fills because a venue anchors it. The tourist who books a trip because of a festival. The First Nations community whose songs carry language, ceremony and connection to country across generations. The new Australian who finds belonging in a shared room full of music.

Music does not sit alongside Australian life. It runs through it. It is about the next chapter of Australian music across all genres and forms contemporary, popular, experimental, art music, screen, First Nations and everything in between and the full ecology of people who make it possible: the mid-career artist navigating declining radio airplay and capped royalties; the established composer whose screen commissions have shifted offshore; the touring musician whose support slot opportunities have declined; the venue operator who cannot get affordable public liability insurance; the First Nations artist striving for equity; the worker whose wellbeing is impacted by disruption; the artist manager whose workload has expanded to unsustainable levels, for a commission that may never come; and the worker whose skills the live music industry desperately needs.

The centrepiece is a **Next Generation Now** framework that treats music as national IP infrastructure, not cultural decoration. Federal investment in a National Song Academy. Minimum standards for music

education in primary schools. Workforce development for the live music economy. An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music Centres Framework modelled on the visual arts network. Regulatory barriers to artist and industry sustainability removed. And a renewed mandate and **\$180 million** over four years for Music Australia to deliver the research, artist development, industry and export programs the sector needs to compete globally.

The ambition to make Australia a net exporter of music is already on the record. This submission is about what we build next: the infrastructure, the investment and the policy settings that make sustainable careers possible at every stage, from first song to global stage, so that 2030 looks like the picture we imagine.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED THROUGH REVIVE

In 2022, the Australian music industry made a coordinated submission to the National Cultural Policy consultation. In February 2023, the Australian Government delivered Revive.

For the music sector, *Revive* delivered:

- Music Australia established with \$69.4 million over four years for Australia's first national music development agency.
- First Nations First Board within Creative Australia with \$20 million Works of Scale fund and First Nations autonomy over funding decisions.
- Creative Workplaces established to promote fair, safe and respectful workplaces, responding directly to the Raising Their Voices report on sexual harm and systemic discrimination in the music industry.
- Significant expansion of Support Act's mental health and First Nations teams, building tailored wellbeing services and embedding mentally healthy workplace practices across the broader creative industries.
- Copyright framework maintained, setting the foundation for Australia to become the first major jurisdiction to reject text and data mining exceptions for AI.
- Revive Live launched to support the development of venue and festival live music infrastructure.
- SVOD local content obligations secured, meeting the Australian Content and Children's Television Standards (ACCTS), creating new opportunities for Australian screen composers.

These are structural investments that changed how the Commonwealth partners and co-invests in contemporary music. Several Revive commitments remain outstanding: increased creative practice in classrooms, songwriting and recording initiatives in schools, and stand-alone legislation to protect First Nations traditional knowledge and cultural expressions on digital platforms. This submission carries them forward.

FIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY

This submission is structured around the five pillars of the National Cultural Policy. Each priority identifies the cross-government connections that make music a whole-of-portfolio investment, not a cultural sideshow.

PILLAR 1: FIRST NATIONS FIRST

PORTFOLIOS: INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS · ARTS · TRADE · HEALTH · REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, music is a cultural determinant of health, a vehicle for language transmission, a foundation of social and emotional wellbeing, and an engine for economic development in remote and regional communities. Investing in First Nations music is simultaneously an investment in health, language, cultural sovereignty and economic development. Cultural policy must shift from the language of 'recognise and strengthen' to the language of 'invest, implement and sustain'.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music Centres Framework

Establish a Music Centres Framework modelled on the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support (IVAIS) network, using community radio infrastructure as its backbone to create songwriting, recording, distribution and royalty administration hubs in remote and regional communities. This generates IP, preserves cultural expression, creates export pathways and builds the economic infrastructure that turns creative output into durable community returns, modelled on what IVAIS achieved for visual arts over thirty years.

First Nations Music Commissioning Fund

A dedicated First Nations Music Commissioning Fund for First Nations artists and First Nations-led organisations, building on the success of the NATSIMO Lifecycle grants. Alongside this, a First Nations Music Skills and Workforce Capacity Building Plan that develops pathways beyond performance: producers, promoters, technical crew and administrators. Self-determination must be an embedded principle across all delivery.

Cultural consultation as an eligible cost

Consultation with First Nations communities is a cultural process that takes time and requires the involvement of many voices across diverse traditional owner and language groups. Make cultural consultation costs explicitly eligible in all project grant budgets rather than absorbed into already-stretched creative budgets.

On-Country producer and presenter development

Pilot regionally-based, on-Country First Nations producer and presenter professional development programs, drawing on existing networks across the Northern Territory, Far North Queensland and beyond. Support Act's ongoing First Nations Music Industry Review, the first of its kind, will provide a critical evidence base to inform these future policy settings.

First Nations ICIP on digital platforms

Deliver stand-alone legislation to protect First Nations traditional knowledge and cultural expressions on digital platforms, as committed in Revive. This is urgent: AI systems are already generating Aboriginal-style content without consent, compensation or cultural authority.

PILLAR 2: A PLACE FOR EVERY STORY

PORTFOLIOS: COMMUNICATIONS · INDUSTRY · ARTS · TRADE

Australian music's story can only be told if Australians can find it. As audiences have fragmented discoverability is the defining policy challenge of this decade. The share of Australian music is falling on the platforms where most listening now happens. Australian music on commercial radio is too often confined to the graveyard shift. The boomerang culture where artists must seek overseas validation before receiving recognition at home is partly a product of policy failure. The fix is updating the rules of the road for a market that has moved decisively to digital.

Commercial broadcast radio quotas

Legislate local content on broadcast radio under the Broadcasting Services Act, lifting it out of a voluntary code, modernising the format settings, time of day play, and bringing digital radio in as the Convergence Review recommended.

Prominence on music streaming platforms

Consult with industry and platforms on a plan to ensure prominence of Australian music across digital service providers in playlists and through passive listening.

Screen content settings

Update the Significant Australian Content test to elevate composer alongside writer and director to properly value Australian music and screen composition in government-supported productions.

Cultural institutions content quotas

Incentivise significant cultural organisations receiving public funding, including symphonies, opera companies and other art music institutions, to commission and program minimum proportions of Australian works across all musical forms, creating durable demand for new works and developing both artistry and audiences.

Michael's Rule

Restore the long-standing industry norm that Australian artists support international acts on tours here, with practical funded promoter incentives and visa settings aligned with Michael's Rule.

PILLAR 3: CENTRALITY OF THE ARTIST

PORTFOLIOS: INDUSTRY · ATTORNEY-GENERAL · TREASURY · ARTS · HEALTH

Australian creators have a genuine competitive advantage: a copyright framework that held the line on AI. No text and data mining exception. No unlicensed training on creative work. That decision ensures Australia is leading the world in the development of innovative and ethical licensing frameworks the global digital economy will need. The next step is to build on that position by ruling out any dilution of copyright.

Cultural digital economy plan

A cultural digital economy plan developed in partnership with the Department of Industry as part of the National Cultural Policy, setting out how Australia harnesses the upside of AI while keeping creators protected, licensed and fairly compensated. Music is already a leading creative input to the digital economy, from gaming to AI-generated content, and Australia's copyright position is a strategic asset.

AI and algorithmic transparency requirements

Meaningful disclosure requirements for AI training data, and licensing pathways developed in consultation with music and technology sectors. Creators cannot currently license their work to AI developers because platforms will not disclose what they are using. Similarly, efforts to meaningfully increase Australian music discoverability on digital service providers will fall short without the algorithmic transparency required to inform them. Transparency is the precondition for a functioning market.

Sustainable careers across the sector

Support Act investment of \$8 million over the forward estimates to fund industry-specific mental health and crisis relief services for music and creative industry professionals. The contemporary music workforce faces elevated psychosocial risks that require dedicated industry-specific support. A review of tax settings, including royalty treatment, bilateral tax treaty reform and recognition of music publishing as an export industry, to ensure the fiscal framework supports sustainable creative careers.

Radio royalty caps removed

Remove the outdated statutory cap and fixed rate on commercial and ABC broadcast radio royalties for sound recordings so Australian artists and rights holders are paid fairly when commercial radio broadcasters and ABC Radio build products and services based on the use of music. Australia is the only jurisdiction in the world where artists and rightsholders are stripped of the right to negotiate a fair market value for the commercial use of their work by a cap on royalties.

PILLAR 4: STRONG CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

PORTFOLIOS: INDUSTRY · TREASURY · EMPLOYMENT · HEALTH · REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT · INFRASTRUCTURE

Live music is the engine room of the industry and the most visible part of it for most Australians. Grassroots and mid-tier venues are the R&D infrastructure of Australian music where careers are built, audiences are formed, workers are trained and export success begins. This infrastructure is under structural pressure from rising costs, insurance challenges, workforce shortages and a funding environment that can inadvertently favour large international operators over the independent sector that incubates most Australian talent.

Live music tax offset

A targeted live music tax offset for venues, festivals and touring artists, modelled on existing screen and digital games incentives, recommended as the first priority by the 2025 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts. Oxford Economics modelling confirms \$636–920 million in GVA uplift, up to 10,800 jobs created, 322,500 additional gigs annually. For every dollar invested, live music returns three dollars to the community through tourism, hospitality and local economies. The tax offset is the single most efficient lever available to government for growing the live music economy, supporting artists at every career stage and sustaining the venues and festivals where Australian careers are built.

Revive Live: make it permanent

Lock in Revive Live funding as a permanent fixture of the forward estimates rather than short-term grants, providing the certainty venues and festivals need to plan and invest. Over its first two years, Revive Live delivered \$21 million in support to 217 live music businesses, including 119 music festival activities and 98 live music venues. A final \$12.5 million is committed for 2026-27. Festivals, live music and events are major public-facing cultural events, artist development pipelines, tourism drivers and training grounds for the workers, contractors and suppliers who power the live music supply chain. In regional Australia, a festival is often one of the principal cultural and economic events of the year. Targeted investment in smaller and emerging venues and festivals is essential: these operators take the greatest creative risks on early-career Australian artists, face the highest cost barriers and build the pipeline of audiences and acts who go on to fill larger stages.

Workforce and skills

Critical investment addressing urgent skills shortages across the full music workforce, artist managers, booking agents, label and publishing professionals, marketing experts, music supervisors, sound engineers, lighting technicians, production managers and tour crew, connecting music industry needs with broader employment and training frameworks. The full ecosystem of roles that connect artist to audience is under pressure and deserves dedicated investment.

Youth music participation and pathways

Establish a national youth music participation and pathways program aligned with The Push's A National Plan for Young Australians and Music. This includes all-ages live music access, high school music events, youth-led event teams, and mentoring and workplace learning opportunities that connect young people with Australian artists, venues, festivals, broadcasters and industry employers. A national audience

development scheme including a My Gig Pass under-25 ticket subsidy modelled on the NSW program, all-ages touring circuits, regional and outer-suburban programming, and partnerships with broadcasters, streaming platforms, venues and festivals focused on Australian music discovery and creating pathways for young people to move from audience member to artist, worker, promoter or cultural leader.

Venues as essential cultural infrastructure

Formally recognise independent live music venues as essential cultural infrastructure within national policy settings, on a par with other cultural institutions that receive public support and protection.

Grassroots Music Fund

A Grassroots Music Fund, seeded by a levy on major commercial event ticket sales, that reinvests into grassroots and mid-tier venues, emerging artists and development pathways.

Competitive neutrality

Embed competitive neutrality principles in future music funding frameworks to ensure public investment grows the overall ecosystem rather than displacing the independent sector.

PILLAR 5: ENGAGING THE AUDIENCE

PORTFOLIOS: EDUCATION · TRADE · FOREIGN AFFAIRS · TOURISM · INDUSTRY

The most powerful audience development tool available to government is hiding in plain sight: universal sequential music education. A child who receives sequential music education does not only become a better candidate for a career in music. They become a more engaged, more loyal, more economically active music audience member for the rest of their life. They go to gigs. They seek out new artists. They take their own children to concerts. The return on that primary school investment compounds over sixty years. And the same artists who find their audiences at home become the cultural exports who carry Australia to the world. The next phase of national cultural policy should also be informed by The Push's A National Plan for Young Australians.

National Song Academy

Music education in schools builds the foundations. A National Song Academy builds the pinnacle. There is no equivalent elite, government-funded institution for contemporary music in Australia. AFTRS' own research shows 75 per cent of screen industry professionals undertook formal training, with 41 per cent citing it as key to their career growth. The same pipeline logic applies to music. Sweden has Musikmakarna. The UK has the Brits School. Berklee College of Music has shaped a generation of global hitmakers. Establish a National Song Academy attached to AFTRS, with an initial annual cohort of students in a one-year Graduate Diploma covering songwriting and creative development, recording and production, and the business of music including copyright, distribution and marketing. Industry-partnered, hands-on, and designed to produce graduates ready for global careers.

Music education in every classroom

Federal investment in music teacher training in universities and for existing teachers. Minimum 60 minutes per week of sequential music education in primary schools as recommended by the Music Education Advisory Group. Continued funding for artists-in-classroom programs and school songwriting and recording initiatives.

Music Australia: a renewed mandate

\$180 million over four years for Music Australia to develop and promote artists, drive innovation, deliver research programs and support export development. Music Australia can become for Australian music what Screen Australia is for screen: a strategic investment partner that builds markets and positions the country internationally.

Export and cultural diplomacy

Australian music is a globally competitive export, with over 45 billion streams in the US alone in 2024 and more than 80% of royalties now earned offshore. Music stands alongside education, agriculture, and wine as a high-value export sector, delivering both economic dividends and cultural impact.

Government support for music export must be complimented by the trade portfolio to unlock full market potential. Trade missions, like those delivered by Sounds Australia, are proven vehicles for accelerating international outcomes, enabling Australian artists and businesses to secure deals, build strategic partnerships, and access new markets. In 2025 alone, Sounds Australia facilitated 51 events across 14 countries, delivering 320 negotiated outcomes and 157 performance slots, with inbound delegate growth up 120%.

Digital platforms now function as core trade infrastructure, allowing Australian repertoire to scale efficiently across priority markets such as India, Asia Pacific, Latin America, and Mexico. Strategic engagement ensures Australian rights-holders are embedded at a critical moment for these hyper-growth markets, capturing long-tail revenue and strengthening Australia's global position.

CONCLUSION

Australian music is made for audiences. It is made in bedrooms and studios, in rehearsal rooms and on country, in regional towns and capital cities. It is heard at grassroots venues and dusty paddock festivals, through community radio in remote Australia and streaming services in suburban lounges. It is felt at the age of seven in a classroom and at seventy at a concert.

Every investment this submission proposes flows back to that moment of connection between an Australian artist and an Australian audience. That is what Next Generation Now means. That is what 2030 looks like.

We commend these priorities to the Australian Government and commit to working across the sector to support their delivery.

ADDENDUM: MUSIC ACROSS THE PORTFOLIOS

The following maps the cross-portfolio dimensions of each pillar, for the benefit of departmental readers engaging with specific portfolio responsibilities.

First Nations First (Indigenous Australians · Arts · Trade · Health · Regional Development) — For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, music is a cultural determinant of health and an engine of economic development. The IVAIS visual arts model demonstrates what dedicated infrastructure achieves: IP generation, employment in remote communities, cultural preservation and export returns. Music has the same potential.

A Place for Every Story (Communications · Industry · Trade) — Australian music generated \$975 million in export revenue in 2023-24. Local content obligations on broadcast and streaming platforms are trade policy as much as cultural policy: they create the domestic audience base that makes export success sustainable.

Centrality of the Artist (Industry · Attorney-General · Treasury · Health) — Australia's copyright position is a strategic AI policy asset. Music is a leading creative input to gaming, streaming and AI-generated content. Meta-analyses confirm music-based interventions produce significant positive effects on anxiety, depression and quality of life. Support Act is community mental health infrastructure.

Strong Cultural Infrastructure (Industry · Treasury · Employment · Health · Regional Development) — Live music generates \$4.83 billion in revenue, supports over 40,000 workers and returns three dollars to the community for every dollar invested. It drives night-time economy activity, tourism and hospitality in regional communities. The Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion survey found social cohesion at its lowest in sixteen years; live music is one of the most effective community infrastructure responses.

Engaging the Audience (Education · Trade · Foreign Affairs · Tourism) — Longitudinal research confirms sequential music education improves literacy, numeracy, memory and cognitive development. Children from low-income backgrounds who receive music instruction show measurably better outcomes than matched peers. Music Australia's Bass Line report found the industry generated \$8.78 billion in revenue and \$2.82 billion in direct economic value in 2023-24. Global music revenues are forecast to double to US\$200 billion by 2035.

PREPARED BY:

Association of Artist Managers (AAM), Australasian Music Publishers' Association (AMPAL), Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA) and Australasian Mechanical Copyright Owners Society (AMCOS), Australian Festival Association (AFA), Australian Independent Record Labels Association (AIR), Australian Live Music Business Council (ALMBC), Australian Music Centre (AMC), Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) and Phonographic Performance Company of Australia (PPCA), Country Music Association of Australia (CMAA), CrewCare, Live Music Venues Alliance (LMVA), Music Producer & Engineers' Guild (MPEG), National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music Office (NATSIMO), The Push, Sounds Australia, Support Act, Australian Music Industry Network (inc Music Victoria, QMusic, WAM, MusicSA, MusicNSW, Music Tasmania, MusicACT, MusicNT).