

## Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation

represents dedicated independent live music venues across New South Wales.

was formed out of the campaign during COVID and formally launched as an industry alliance following the pandemic recovery period. The now has approximately 50 venue members across NSW, representing the majority of dedicated live music venues in the state. Sounds NSW recognise approximately 55 dedicated live music venues across NSW.

Our members collectively form the backbone of the state's grassroots and mid-sized live music ecosystem.

also supports the broader OneMusic Australia submission and acknowledges the collaborative approach being undertaken across the sector. We recognise the importance of a unified national industry position and support many of the broader recommendations put forward, particularly those relating to audience development, workforce support, cultural infrastructure, touring sustainability and recognition of contemporary music as both cultural and economic infrastructure.

## Priorities and Recommendations

recommends:

1. Formal recognition of dedicated live music venues as essential cultural infrastructure
2. Targeted tax concessions for dedicated live music venues
3. Targeted operational support for grassroots venues especially during the audience recovery period
4. Continuation and expansion of Revive Live with specific operational and touring support directed toward recognised dedicated live music venues
5. The introduction of an industry-wide levy on stadium touring
6. Competitive neutrality assessment frameworks attached to publicly funded contemporary music programming
7. Requirements for major government supported festivals and precinct programs to integrate independent live music venues into official programming
8. Expansion of audience development initiatives including a national live music voucher model based on programs like MyGigPass for under 25s
9. Consideration of workforce tax-free threshold incentives supporting late-night economy employment
10. Reintroduction of planning incentives supporting cultural infrastructure retention and development
11. National expansion of Michael's Rule and support act obligations into independent venue networks



## Current Industry Conditions

members are currently experiencing:

- Reduced consumer spending
- Rising holding costs including rents, overheads and insurance
- Rising staffing costs
- Increased compliance obligations
- Declining audience attendance
- Reduced touring supply
- Increased touring market concentration
- Difficult winter trading conditions
- Increased competition from subsidised venues and publicly funded programming

Many grassroots venues are currently operating significantly below sustainable utilisation levels.

## Audience Development and MyGigPass

Audience decline remains one of the most pressing issues facing the sector.

has already taken practical steps to respond through MyGigPass, a venue-led audience development initiative designed to reconnect younger audiences with live music.

The program launched in February 2026 and already has 25 venues participating, with more than 100 offers made available since launch.

## Competitive Neutrality

strongly supports public investment into arts and culture.

However, there is growing concern across the independent live music sector regarding the increasing overlap between publicly subsidised programming and the independent commercial touring market.

Increasingly, independent live music venues are competing against organisations benefiting from:

- Government underwriting
- Public infrastructure ownership
- Tax concessions
- Reduced commercial risk
- Direct operational funding
- Publicly funded marketing platforms




Government investment should grow the ecosystem rather than unintentionally cannibalise the independent venue network already sustaining year-round programming, employment and cultural participation.

### **Workforce and Skills**

The industry faces critical shortages across:



- Technical production
- Venue operations
- Touring crews
- Event management
- Marketing
- Audio and lighting

 supports expanded workforce development programs and paid pathways into the industry.

The independent live music venue sector is essential to Australia’s cultural and economic future. Without grassroots venues, there is no sustainable pathway for artists, audiences, industry workers and cultural participation.

Future cultural policy must recognise dedicated live music venues as essential cultural infrastructure deserving of long-term strategic support.

### **Member Venues**

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 