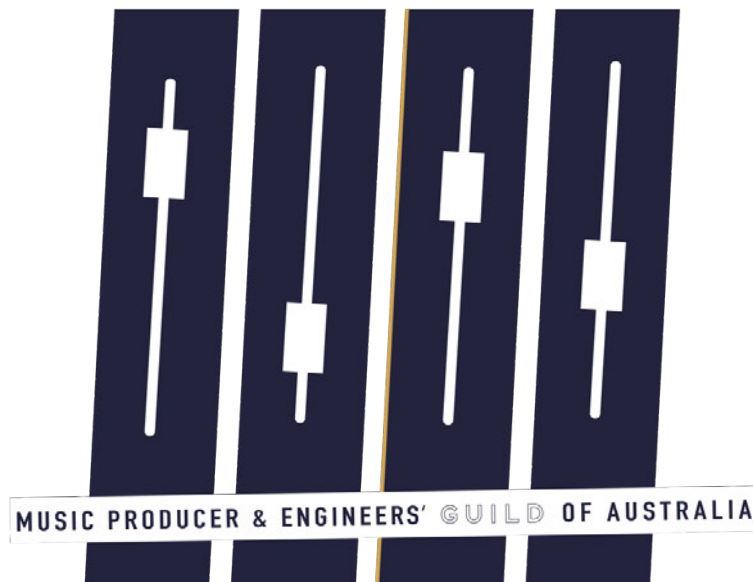




REVIVE 2028–2032

The Music Producers and Engineers Guild (MPEG) of Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute toward the 2028 – 2032 National Cultural Policy.

This submission highlights the contributions of recording engineers and producers to Australian culture and possible strategies to help sustain what is a vulnerable and critical sector of the creative industries.

The recording sector is vital for the Australian music industry and recording engineers and producers are essential to its success. The recording engineer is responsible for the capture of part (tracking, mixing, and mastering) or all of a recording and the music producer is responsible for the outcome of a musical work, thus impacting the success of the end product. They are creative collaborators that make critical audible and inaudible contributions to a recording, not simply as a technician. They collaborate with songwriters, musicians, bands and the music industry to capture a recording that will resonate with audiences.

One person may undertake all these roles, or the producer may be the nexus at the centre of this creative group of music makers and industry. Many artists and performers' success can be directly linked to the effectiveness of the producer in this role, as can the acceptance of the recording by general audiences.

The work of music producers and engineers sit across many of Revive's pillars framework and saw little attention in the first iteration of the policy. Here we will highlight the pillars where music producers and engineers require support to ensure a strong music community.

Pillar 1: First Nations First

The First Nations First Pillar set out to deliver capacity building and skills development programs for First Nations creative practitioners seeking sustainable careers in the creative industries, with the *Revive* policy acknowledging skills gaps for technical First Nations arts jobs such as sound engineering. Here we would like to add the importance of First Nations artists and producers working in culturally safe environments. There is limited research into First Nations participation in recording studios (see Goold et al, forthcoming), yet many reports into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music practice ask for more First Nations people in decision making roles in the recording studio. Current research has shown that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recording artists and practitioners face significant challenges and frustrations when selecting appropriate recording studios or attempting to record themselves (see Goold et al, forthcoming).

Recommendation:

The *Revive* National Cultural Policy has an opportunity to create more First Nations-led recording spaces through culturally appropriate training pathways enabling more First Nations people in decision-making roles in the studio. The benefits of this training go beyond career opportunities for First People but also offer cultural health and wellbeing benefits, knowledge sharing opportunities, and building community strength.

Recommendation:

The advancement in technology and the ability to record in disparate and DIY scenarios would be ideal for First Nations recording practitioners. DIY recording skills will allow more opportunity for First Nations-led recordings to happen on country in culturally safe environments.

Sources:

Goold, L, Starkey, K, Luttrell, B, Ward, A, 2026 (forthcoming). *Challenges and Frustrations for Indigenous Australians participating in the recording sector*, Perfect Beat

Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story.

The stories of Australian musicians are captured by the recording engineer and producer in the recording studio. The recording studio is a complex and rapidly changing environment that may be a well-established purpose-built recording facility worth millions of dollars and/or on a laptop with a pair of headphones set up in a bedroom.

Technological advances have brought notions of technological democracy, yet representation and inclusion in recording scenarios is far from equitable with women, BIPOC, trans/non-binary people, First Nations Australians and other minority groups being underrepresented in industry and academic surveys. The recording studio remains a male dominated space imbued with hegemonic masculinity and toxic cultures that tend to discourage equitable access despite recording practice moving toward more individualised modes of production.

MPEG actively advocates for inclusive and safe recording environments in the Australian recording industry through equitable representation, balanced and unbiased information to its members, and the delivery of training workshops focused on pathways for women and non-binary producers.

To help facilitate this, MPEG has formulated 'Headroom', an in-person, intensive workshop specifically designed for female and non-binary producers. Headroom's objectives are severalfold – to increase creative and technical abilities, and to develop the practical and psychological skills required to create safer and fairer workplaces.

Women, non-binary, LGBTQI+ and First Nations engineers and producers have experienced, and continue to experience sexism, sexual harassment, racism and bigotry in the Australian music industry. MPEG has significant anecdotal evidence to support this assertion. This anecdotal evidence is also bolstered by the findings of the 2022 Raising Their Voices report.

The National Cultural Policy has the opportunity to considerably ameliorate this discriminatory, prohibitive and predatory culture through supporting programs like Headroom and enacting some of the recommendations submitted in the Raising Their Voices report.

Recommendation:

With further support, training pathways for women and minority groups can help build a recording sector that better represents the community.

Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist

It is imperative that music producers be recognised as artists. Often referred to as the 'silent' member of a band, or an unseen creative force behind a solo artist, music producers are primarily engaged for their artistic abilities, with technical skills being ancillary.

MPEG applauds the inclusion of music producers' eligibility in several Music Australia Export Development funding opportunities, including International Market and Audience Development and the International Professional and Artistic Development grants. These inclusions acknowledge music producers as bona fide artists and recognise the vital contribution music producers make to the Australian music ecosystem. Notwithstanding this welcome inclusion, MPEG advocates for increased, music-producer-specific programs and funding opportunities to help elevate Australian producers both domestically and internationally.

Australia is often lauded as creatively 'punching above its weight', however, paradoxically, we are still somewhat stymied by the phenomenon of the 'cultural cringe'. For Australian music producers, this can manifest by record labels and artists enlisting international personnel to produce Australian music, often in a bid to increase the perception of greater creative and commercial cachet. MPEG recognises the right to make such commercial decisions, however, equally recognises Australian music producers as being of equal calibre to their international counterparts, thus deserving of greater industry and government support.

MPEG would also like to reference the Joint Contemporary Music Industry Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation 2026 and reiterate its support for the proposed cultural digital economy plan, AI and algorithmic transparency requirements, sustainable careers across the sector and the removal of radio royalty caps.

Recommendation:

The implementation of more music-producer-specific programs and funding opportunities through Music Australia.

Pillar 4

Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Advocacy for, and support of Australian music producers and engineers has experienced some much-needed assistance recently, specifically via the formation of MPEG, and the Guild receiving Music Australia Core Contribution Funding in 2025-2026.

Music Australia's Core Contribution Funding has allowed MPEG to advance the interests of their respective members through a financial contribution to essential operational expenses. MPEG is extremely grateful for this financial assistance and the material difference it has made. In bigger-picture terms, the funding may be relatively modest, but nonetheless an essential contribution to MPEG pursuing its objectives.

Across the broader music industry, the attrition rate of music industry professionals is increasing due to a myriad of factors. These factors include the impact of streaming services, cost of living, generative AI, geopolitics, and burnout.

Focussing primarily on Core Contribution funding, MPEG advocates for its continuation, preferably with an increase in the funds available to individual organisations and the duration of funding.

Additionally, inspiration is to be derived from the successful introduction of Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts (BIA). A similar Australian initiative, subject of course to meeting the prescribed eligibility criteria, would assist the security and longevity of Australia's unique artistic voice, to which Australian music producers and engineers are vital.

Furthermore, such an initiative would increase the retention of professional artists and creative arts workers, thus further cementing Australia's reputation as a cultural powerhouse

Recommendation:

Increased funding for Core Contribution Funding recipients.

Recommendation:

Consider implementation of a Basic Income for the Arts

Pillar 5

Engaging the Audience

There is an undeniable, symbiotic relationship that exists between musical artists and music producers and engineers. It is often the recorded master that introduces musical artists to local and international audiences, thus increasing the dissemination of Australian stories, culture and creativity. Notably, a recording has the potential to exist in perpetuity and be enjoyed for generations to come. This is paramount to the Australian cultural lexicon.

Policy that does not mandate for increased quotas of Australian produced music via avenues such as radio and digital streaming services can have catastrophic results, with audiences at risk of being denied discovery pathways that reveal the breadth of storytelling that exists in the contemporary Australian music culture. This, in turn, negatively impacts the capacity for Australian musicians to attract larger audiences at live performances or establish themselves on the world stage. An undesirable consequence of this could be the migration of Australian artists to overseas territories.

MPEG proffers that Australian recordings, ergo Australian music producers and engineers, are pivotal to engaging the audience. A National Cultural Policy that proudly supports Australian music producers and engineers increases innovation, inclusivity, and sustains participation.

Recommendation:

Mandatory quotas of Australian produced music delivered to Australian audiences via radio and streaming services.