

**Anonymous**

I am musician with a portfolio career across several streams of income – performance, teaching and composition.

Most musicians I know earn their living in a similar way – with several different sources of income. Our income is precarious, seasonal and inconsistent, difficult to administer, and fees can vary wildly depending on the work. A straightforward, high-paying corporate gig often feels like it ‘buys’ some of the dozens or hundreds of hours of work needed for less lucrative projects that are more meaningful to the artists and audience.

Musicians are, comparatively speaking, not a well-organised labour force, and not particularly assertive when it comes to negotiating better pay and conditions. The fact that many musicians have other, more secure streams of income means that some accept low fees for their musical work that they could not survive on if that was their only source of income. This puts further downward pressure on musicians’ wages.

Guaranteed minimum fees of \$250 for any performance work, of the kind that [Musicians Australia](#) have been campaigning for, would go some way to improving the working conditions of musicians.

An artist’s wage, such as the [Basic Income for The Arts](#) currently being piloted in Ireland would give artists much-needed relief from the financial instability they face, and enable them to devote more time and energy to their practice, and in turn contribute more richly to the cultural landscape of their communities.

I have never doubted the vital importance of my work and the work of all artists. I am fortunate to be doing work that is deeply satisfying and engaging, and where I can so regularly and immediately see the positive impact of my work among my audience and students.

The arts give us ecstasy, consolation, religious experience, cross-cultural understanding, escape, systems of meaning that are beyond language, and a depth and breadth of emotional experience that is mostly unparalleled in the rest of our lives. What are we living for if not these things, and the opportunity to share them with others?

From the public submissions I have read, it seems that artists are asking for policy conditions that enable them to spend more time on their work and do it more sustainably. If their needs are met, surely all of Australian society will benefit from their rich and meaningful contributions.

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