

RE: Select Committee on Local and Live Creative Venues

The Arts Industry Council of South Australia (AICSA) is an independent voice for the Arts. As the state's independent, sector-wide representative arts body, AICSA is extremely valuable to the South Australian arts sector. AICSA was constituted as an incorporated institution in 1991. The Council receives no ongoing operational funding from the government and derives its support from the industry through member subscriptions, fundraising, sponsorship, in-kind donations and occasional project grants.

We have collaborated on the below submission to point out the needs and requirements in response to your key areas of investigation.

AICSA is incredibly concerned about the lack of support for local and live creative venues and the flow-on effects that this lack of support creates for artists whose livelihoods are already under attack from low incomes, cost-of-living crisis and insurance costs.

As a state we celebrate our important musicians by naming laneways for them, but at the same time declining venues and the resources and policies they need to thrive threaten the venues and the artists whose work and livelihoods are dependent on venues. Similarly the conditions for the up-and-coming musicians and other artists of today will make it harder for SA to claim celebrated musicians of the future.

Adelaide is a UNESCO City of Music, and AICSA are thrilled to celebrate this along with the broader arts ecology. This designation requires action by all stakeholders to ensure that the infrastructures of music and performance venues are protected and enhanced so that South Australia can grow its reputation for the arts. AICSA is pleased to see the problem of the lack of cultural infrastructure and investment in it within our ecology is being taken seriously. AICSA acknowledges that the challenges in accessing cultural infrastructure for both exploring ideas and rehearsal as well as live presentation is negatively affecting an already crisis-ridden creative sector in South Australia.

We look forward to the results of this Committee's work in building an understanding of the problems facing the sector and how we can ameliorate them to better support South Australia's cultural venues and artists for generations to come.

Below we respond to the terms of reference in detail.

(a) The impacts of, and reasons for, recent loss of live music and local creative venues in South Australia;

- The [loss of live music venues \(27% loss in SA in the last 4 years\)](#) is an existential threat to the arts sector of South Australia
- Recent data shows a net reduction of arts and cultural jobs in South Australia ([Eltham and O'Connor 2024](#)) and opportunities for undertaking creative labour such as venues plays a role in artists determining the viability of living in South Australia
- Property development is at the centre of so many venue closures. The buildings live performance venues are housed in are bought by developers and knocked down. Venue managers are left without alternative options, and cannot afford the relocation costs. Or new developments that are neighbouring their venues and councils implement unfair restrictions on the operations despite venues creating the environment developers trade on. Similarly access to appropriate real estate leases at affordable rates is a challenge; live music and creative venues can't operate on commercial hire agreements.
- Extreme increases in insurance premiums has led to some venues closing because of the 500% price rise since 2020. Similarly some venues have not been able to get insurance at all regardless of the cost.
- Decline in alcohol sales due to cost of living and lifestyle change in younger demographic limits profit margins. This is particularly relevant to venues who have live music as a primary focus, who choose to make a positive impact and not earn money from gambling e.g. TAB or pokies.
- Limited / lessening capacity of artists evidenced by declining enrolment in creative arts both tertiary and vocational (certificates and diplomas eg. at TAFE and SAE). Arts courses are not consistently on government subsidy lists which can impact popularity and equity among emerging artists and industry.
- National touring capacity is cost prohibitive for live performing artists, where a mid level band used to be able to stage a national tour with 6 or 7 stops to build awareness, audiences and earn income, now we see more people drop out of more permanent gig and touring structures due to costs, impacting locals who would previously have toured but also got support gigs for interstate and international bands coming to Adelaide. The market supply is interrupted and for touring bands prohibitive, which loses momentum and leads to burn out across the industry, with fewer emerging and mid-career artists on stages in SA annually.
- Accessibility in terms of affordability is a concern, but also access in terms of infrastructure for artists and audiences with a lived experience of disability is minimal and often not compliant, which means these segments of the population are often isolated from venue offerings.
- Rural and regional musicians experience exacerbated difficulties in finding venues with quality equipment.

(b) Understanding the cultural, social, economic and other contributions made by local and live creative venues;

There is extensive evidence recently collected through the [Save the Cranker](#) campaign along with the Music SA report on [Economic Contribution of the Music Industry to South Australia, 2022/23](#) both of which we recommend are evidenced in this inquiry. Highlights from the Economic Contribution report include;

- 5,000 FTE jobs were supported across the South Australian economy in 2022/23 by the music industry
- \$490 million in GSP was contributed by the music industry in South Australia in 2022/23.

Artists and musicians create vibrant places to live that attract internationally-recognised high livability ratings, attract large companies to relocate to or open offices in South Australia, and build communities that are more connected and cohesive. Without venues to practice and present their artform, artists cannot choose Adelaide as the place to base their creative careers.

It should also be noted the integral part that live music venues play in training artists and arts workers as they evolve within the ecosystem, perhaps these informal and often causal commitments could have a State Government supported scheme that prioritises traineeships and internships for creative personnel like sound and lighting engineers, programmers and marketing staff.

(c) Supporting South Australian artists and creatives with venues and spaces where they can develop their craft, audiences and communities;

Economic precarity has led to minimal capacity across the sector, [lack of wages and security for artist and arts workers](#), lack of infrastructure both for performances but also rehearsal are contributing to a compromised end product. The importance of small spaces and main streets that prioritise cultural infrastructure alongside hospitality and retail are essential across metro and regional SA to maintain the grassroots cultural ecosystem. These community hubs are valued community assets contributing to social cohesion and inclusion.

In 2024 Minister Michaels initiated an Artist at Work Taskforce investigating the precarity of artist in South Australia. We recommend this inquiry references the outcomes of the finalised report.

The Music Development Office is under-resourced. It is essential that a funding increase be considered for the Music Development Office, specifically the project grant round, the value of which hasn't increased in a long time.

We also recommend an evaluation of the effectiveness of See It Live, the live music voucher commitment from the Malinauskas Labor Government. The scheme was designed to build a

thriving music sector, and did have a requirement to engage South Australian artists. Schemes like these offer a small amount of temporary relief, but the problems are much bigger and systemic.

We recommend a more transparent procurement process for all major events and live music expenditure with policies that prioritise South Australian artists, arts workers and suppliers, with funded events reporting transparently on numbers of South Australians engaged rather than the bulk of funds supporting interstate and international companies and artists.

AICSA calls for minimum commitments for artists' payment "rates benchmarked by arts and entertainment industry organisations" [such as the MEAA](#) to be mandated rather than "[encouraged](#)".

(d) Understanding the types of cultural infrastructure needed for a healthy art, culture and creative sector in South Australia;

There is considerable opportunity for rezoning and the recent amendments to the PDI Act as a result of the *Save The Cranker* campaign, creating a new protection for live music venues in Adelaide. However ensuring the intention of the new legislation is fit for purpose is essential and protecting venues from noise restrictions and development complaints must be a priority.

Working with state wide local governments to build prioritisation of music and live performance cultural spaces to have preferential treatment in approvals and developments should also be considered.

We agree with and recommend further investigation in the 5 key opportunities listed in the previously mentioned [Economic Contribution of the Music Industry to South Australia, 2022/23](#) A report for Music SA. The report highlights as "development opportunities" (page 12) that the South Australian government provides mechanisms to:

- Support musicians to adopt and leverage digital technologies to strengthen revenue streams and reach new audiences
- Support music venues to develop and adopt new business models to diversify revenue streams away from alcohol sales
- Develop knowledge and literacy of insurance options for live music and festival businesses, including exploration of relationships with insurance providers that understand the industry
- Take a 'whole of supply chain focus' to industry development to maintain the incubator venues and businesses that support the grass roots emergence and growth of local musicians
- Undertake market research to identify opportunities to leverage the new preferences of younger music consumers (such as digital platforms, superstar focus, strong

environmental and health values) to support grass roots emergence and growth of local musicians.

We fully endorse these recommendations and invite the Committee to engage with them.

For performing arts organisations and independent artists, the distinct lack of rehearsal and performances spaces, beyond Adelaide Festival Centre facilities, is of significant concern. Adelaide Festival Centre plays an important role in the presentation of work, but has a disproportionate amount of control and access to these spaces. Where there has been a focus and reliance on the public/presentation side of the performing arts by government, there needs to be urgent attention paid to providing accessible, affordable and productive spaces for artists and small-to-medium companies to experiment, play and develop work. Working with LGAs to identify empty or underutilised spaces in their portfolios can respond to localised needs in a swift and effective manner - this has been done successfully recently across NSW LGAs, with artists using their spaces for [free](#).

(e) Protecting local and live creative venues and performance spaces; and

Some further notes to consider around development that we recently submitted for the Greater Adelaide Regional Development plan to Minister Champion's office.

- More flexibility in zoning for street scapes, main streets and infill areas for arts and cultural spaces would be of benefit. A consideration for a minimum amount of space (3%) that is quarantined for arts and cultural activities and broader civic spaces in any urban environment is needed. This has been done successfully in other jurisdictions through Voluntary Planning Agreements, where development approvals have only been granted with the proviso of free or low-cost arts spaces, notably the collaboration between [City of Sydney and Brand X](#). Acknowledging that they don't fit neatly into other zoning requirements or commercial financial models like hospitality and retail trade.
- Prioritising arts and cultural spaces within main street rejuvenation plans and new developments as part of a living local strategy. Noting that these spaces need support not just in infrastructure but ongoing maintenance and activation budgets, and how commercial development models can assist here. For example, there are many councils across Australia that mandate a 1% spend on public art in any new development over \$2million. How could a similar standard be adopted here but focus not only on public art but also the activation of theatres, galleries and live music hubs.
- We can't let the market dictate what the development of arts and cultural spaces look like, as often these spaces are not commercially viable. Developments need to make it easier for operators to run arts and cultural spaces, and the easiest way to do this would be to implement free or highly subsidised rent for these spaces within the community – their business model isn't measured on commercial success and can't afford to run on commercial rental agreements. We strongly recommend the adoption

of a model to guarantee a percentage of space for cultural use similar to the way we quarantine green space within a community. The broad and diverse benefits arts and cultural activities deliver to community cohesion should be considered.

(f) Any other related matters.

Healthy artists are a prerequisite for delivering cultural, social and economic benefits to the state and the availability of accessible local and live cultural venues is a key factor in artists' wellbeing. AICSA has long been recommending the Malinauskas Labor Government consider a basic income for artists (BIA) trial that enables a greater arts ecology to thrive. South Australia's population, cost of living and current capacity is primed for a trial such as this and the benefits are well documented through the [Irish trial](#) currently taking place. Some headline findings from the trial include:

- Each week, BIA recipients spend one and a half hours more on research and experimentation, one hour more on management and administration, and one hour more presenting to audiences compared to the control group, i.e. 3.5 additional hours on their creative practice per week.
- BIA recipients decreased the weekly amount of time spent working in another sector by 3 hours compared to the control group.
- BIA recipients are 12 percentage points more likely than the control group to be able to sustain themselves through arts work alone.
- Life satisfaction, measured on a scale of one to ten, increased by more than half a point for BIA recipients compared to the control group.
- Depression and anxiety experienced in the previous 4 weeks decreased by almost 10 percentage points for BIA recipients compared to the control group.
- BIA recipients spent each month €353 more on equipment and materials, €18 more on advertising and marketing, €34 more on work spaces, and €24 more on work travel compared to the control group.

[You can find more information about the Ireland Basic Income for the Arts trial in the report here.](#)

There is no doubt a basic income for artists scheme would flow on economically, socially and culturally throughout the sector and communities.

Additionally, it is urgent that we consider how we can revive some of the [lost venues](#) and catalyse new ones within the ecosystem. Below are just a few examples of South Australian venues that have closed in the last 10 years, and there are many more:

- Hades Hula House
- The Bakehouse Theatre
- La Boheme
- Enigma Bar

- Fat Controller
- My Lover Cindi
- Confessions in Port Adelaide
- Sugar
- Rumpus

AICSA is keen to collaborate on strategies and opportunities to ensure that we don't lose any more venues, restore better access to diversity and interconnectivity of live performance and development and rehearsal venues around the state.

[As Dr Sam Whiting has noted](#), community-led venues and publicly owned or managed venues (with local and regional government leadership) are models for supporting live arts and culture venues to thrive.

The health of the sector is dependent on the health of its infrastructure, and venues for performance, where the arts sector meets its audiences, are crucial. Also crucial is access to space for the development of future live performance work. This is deeply connected to artists' livelihoods and the training and development of future arts and culture workforce of South Australia.

Further Reading

APRA AMCOS (2024). *Submission: Inquiry into the challenges and opportunities within the Australian live music industry*

https://assets.apraamcos.com.au/images/PDFs/About/APRA-AMCOS_Live-Music-Submission_240514.pdf

Arts Industry Council South Australia (2024). *SA Art Sector Financial Wellbeing, Mental Health & WHS Report 2024*, Arts Industry Council South Australia

<https://aicsa.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/AICSA-SA-Arts-Sector-WHS-Report-2024.pdf>

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Ireland (2023). *Basic Income for the Arts Initial Impact Assessment (6-month)*

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b24f4-basic-income-for-the-arts-initial-impact-assessment-6-month/>

Eltham, B., & O'Connor, J. (2024). *Australian Cultural Employment: An analysis of the Australian Census and Labour Force Survey Data: Reset Working Paper no. 4*, Creative People, Products and Places (CP3)). University of South Australia.

<https://unisa.edu.au/contentassets/0ed6be61dba440078c3632204554be73/cp3-wp-04.pdf>

Media and Entertainment Arts Alliance (2024). *There's No Industry Without Musicians: Submission Of The Media, Entertainment And Arts Alliance To The Inquiry Into The Challenges And Opportunities Within The Australian Live Music Industry*
<https://www.meaa.org/download/meaa-submission-inquiry-into-the-challenges-and-opportunities-within-the-australian-live-music-industry/>

Music SA (2024). *Economic Contribution of Music in South Australia: 2022/23 Report*
https://www.music.sa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Economic-Contrib-of-Music-in-SA-Economic-Analysis_Final_240705.pdf

Throsby, D., & Petetskaya, K. (2024). *Artists as Workers: A summary and response by Creative Australia*, Creative Australia
https://creative.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/3654_Creative-Australia_Companion-Report_V6.pdf

Whiting, S. (2024) The real value of Adelaide's live music venues. *InDaily* 2.2.2024
<https://www.indaily.com.au/opinion/2024/02/02/the-real-value-of-adelaides-live-music-venues>

Whiting, S. (2023). *Small venues: precarity, vibrancy and live music*. Routledge
Available: State Library of South Australia
<https://catalog.slsa.sa.gov.au:443/record=b3791396~S1>