



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Musicians appeal for anti-competition probe into live music industry

Musicians are calling on the government to investigate increasing market domination and anti-competitive practices in the live music industry, as the average Australian working musician struggles to make a living.

Appearing at a hearing of the federal government's Live Music Inquiry in Sydney today, representatives of the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance's Musicians Australia section will also urge the federal government to end kneejerk funding responses that funnel public money towards already-profitable multinational companies while musicians continue to be "systematically under-compensated for their work".

In its submission to the inquiry, MEAA cites the example of the foreign-owned giant Live Nation, which raked in more than \$16 million in government grants since 2020. The company, which controls many of Australia's music festivals and live music venues, made a net profit of \$US563 million last financial year.

Contrast that to the findings of a recent survey of Australia's working musicians, which revealed half (49%) earned less than \$6,000 last year – a mere 15% of the national minimum wage.

Musicians Australia Federal President Kimberley Wheeler said underpayment of musicians was rife in the live music sector.

"The main source of revenue for Australian musicians is live performance," Ms Wheeler said.

"Unfortunately, work in this sector continues to be characterised by low rates of pay, inconsistent work, delayed payments, wage theft, lack of superannuation, and the widespread expectation that musicians will play unpaid gigs in return for 'exposure'.

"The cost of this financial precarity is obvious – with musicians less able to save for their retirement, own a home, pay off debt, or even afford the costs of having a family."

Ms Wheeler said while precarious working conditions weren't necessarily new, increasing consolidation and vertical integration of the live music industry had meant less bargaining power for artists and performers.

We've had some artists reporting exclusivity clauses in their contracts that prohibit them from playing other gigs around the time of a festival performance, for example," she said.

"This has left several bands in the lurch where festivals have been cancelled and we are calling for these anti-competitive clauses to be scrapped.

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“We need the government to investigate the level of power and control of these large corporations and the competitiveness of the live music industry and start addressing the structural problems of the festival industry – not least the concentration of live music venues, agencies, and ticketing in the hands of large multinationals, and the systemic exploitation of Australian artists and performers.”

Singer Jess Cerro, who performs under the stage name ‘Montaigne’, will also provide evidence to the inquiry about the challenges of making a living as a professional artist.

“Despite winning an ARIA, scoring a Grammy nomination, and representing Australia at Eurovision, financial stability – particularly for the longer term – is very much a concern,” they said.

“When you start out in the music industry you know it’s not going to be an easy ride, but it shouldn’t have to be this hard. There are systemic issues that need to be fixed.”

Among its raft of recommendations to the inquiry, MEAA is calling for the Federal, Tasmanian, and Northern Territory governments to endorse a \$250 minimum for taxpayer-subsidised gigs.

Since the union launched its minimum fee campaign two years ago, six state and territory governments – South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria, NSW, and ACT – have endorsed a minimum fee of \$250 per musician per public-funded gig.

MEAA is also recommending that it be extended to the corporate sector, with the \$250 minimum payment adopted by commercial operators across Australia as part of broader industry solutions.

It is also urging the federal government to explore policies and practices to improve opportunities for Australian musicians alongside international touring acts.

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