



**Media Release – For immediate release**

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## **New visa charges to ‘stop the tours’**

Huge increases in visa processing fees for international touring groups will hit Australian fans of live performance including some of our most iconic music festivals.

Live Performance Australia (LPA) has called on the Immigration Minister, Peter Dutton, to overturn the increased fees which are due to come into force next month.

LPA Chief Executive Evelyn Richardson said the Turnbull Government’s decision to scrap the long-standing group discount for entertainment visas for overseas touring groups would hit the financial viability of international tours, leading to fewer tours, reduced job opportunities for Australian performers and workers in the live performance industry, and higher ticket prices.

‘Visa processing fees are being increased by up to 600 per cent which could stop touring artists from coming to Australia altogether,’ Ms. Richardson said.

‘This is a massive money grab by the Government, which is being introduced under the guise of a new online visa processing system that is supposed to cut red tape and streamline visa approvals.’

For example, the world-renowned Bluesfest held each year at Byron Bay attracts a strong contingent of international performers. In addition to the festival event, many of the touring acts also do side shows in capital cities or regional areas. Under the new charges, the visa processing fee for the organisers of Bluesfest have soared by 600 per cent to \$55,000. Other festivals such as Splendour in the Grass and the Falls Festival face visa fee increases of more than 200 per cent for their international artists.

‘These new fees add significantly to the cost of touring Australia, and will act as a major disincentive for international artists to come here compared to opportunities in other markets,’ Ms. Richardson said.

‘Australians who go to a live performance event or who work in the industry will be the biggest losers under this new scheme, as well as those who work in local tourism and hospitality businesses especially in regional communities.’

Ms. Richardson said LPA was also seeking clarification around changes to the exemption from visa fees for not-for-profit organisations and those which received government funding.

‘To date, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection hasn’t been able to provide certainty or clarification on this issue which is affecting the ability of live performance companies to plan for their upcoming summer tours.

‘LPA has raised our concerns with the Minister and is seeking an urgent meeting to resolve these issues which will have a hugely detrimental effect on Australia’s live performance industry,’ Ms. Richardson said.

The new online system comes into force on 19 November 2016. Although LPA handles around 20 per cent of entertainment visa applications, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection has denied it the opportunity to participate in testing of the new system before it is launched.

**ENDS**



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### **About LPA**

LPA is the peak body for Australia's live performance industry. Established in 1917 and registered as an employers' organisation under the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*, LPA has over 400 Members nationally. We represent commercial producers, music promoters, major performing arts companies, small to medium companies, independent producers, major performing arts centres, metropolitan and regional venues, commercial theatres, stadiums and arenas, arts festivals, music festivals, and service providers such as ticketing companies and technical suppliers. Our membership spans from small-medium and not-for-profit organisations to large commercial entities. LPA has a clear mandate to advocate for and support policy decisions that benefit the sustainability and growth of the live performance industry in Australia.