

Music industry calls for boost to Australian sounds



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May 10, 2022 – 5.12pm

Leading musicians, record labels and concert promoters have challenged [Scott Morrison and Anthony Albanese](#) to offer new policy vision to boost Australia's music industry, including through federal election campaign promises.

Less than two weeks before the May 21 poll, a newly formed alliance of 16 organisations, including publishers, festival organisers and Indigenous music groups, want new investment in traineeships and skills development to help rebuild capacity after the COVID-19 pandemic.



From left: musicians Mahlia Barnes, Isabella Manfredi, Jenny Morris, Jonathon Zwarts, Josh Pyke and Prinnie Stevens are pushing for government investment in Australia's music industry. **Michael Quelch**

Hit hard by [physical distancing restrictions and extended lockdowns around the country](#), the music industry alliance said the major parties should announce new post-COVID relief packages that include plans to improve mental and physical health across the industry.

They propose an expansion of the Australian Music Industry program to boost funding for Indigenous-led programs, as well as Sounds Australia, support programs for women, and new youth music and diversity programs.

Mentoring schemes and a new annual Commonwealth fellowship program for emerging and established artists are also proposed.

PwC research found Australia's live and recorded music market was worth about \$1.1 billion to the economy in 2020, a decline of nearly 39 percent on the previous year. But total revenue is expected to climb to about \$2.2 billion by 2025.

The alliance said a Commonwealth-backed insurance scheme was needed to increase confidence and help manage future closures sparked by public health orders or natural disasters.

Jenny Morris, chair the Australasian Performing Right Association, said the election was a chance to further invest in the local and global success of Australian music.

"The last two years have been devastating for so many in the music industry," she told *The Australian Financial Review*.

"But while we've been locked down, brilliant Australian songwriters and composers have been creating extraordinary new music that is already travelling the world live, streamed or on screen."

She said acts including Rüfüs Du Sol, Baker Boy, Tkay Maidza, The Kid Laroi, Gang of Youths, Antonio Gambale and Sampa the Great were among those benefiting from investment in the local industry.

Dean Ormston, chief executive of the combined Australasian Performing Right Association and Australasian Mechanical Copyright Owners Society, helps represent more than 111,000 songwriters, composers and publishers.

"The cultural, social and economic benefits of investing in Australia's contemporary music industry are substantive and far-reaching," he said.

“The challenge for government is to develop a smart whole-of-government approach across cultural diplomacy, trade, tourism, small business, education, health and arts to take full advantage of the music industry’s impact.

“The opportunity for government is to see dividends in employment opportunities throughout the industries that rely heavily on music, whether it be hospitality or the visitor economy, and delivering on the huge appetite for Australian music around the world.”

ARIA chief executive Annabelle Herd said the business of music was a significant potential driver of GDP.

“Whichever party forms government, it is critical that these priorities are addressed, and the real value of music is acknowledged and supported in the same way that the government supports film, TV and sport.”

Live Performance Australia’s Evelyn Richardson said support for the sector was essential.

“Australia needs a vibrant arts and entertainment industry, not just to support other Australian industries and contribute to our economic recovery from COVID-19, but to drive social interaction and well-being in our communities,” she said.

“We need support from all parties and candidates to drive investment and rebuild skills and capacity in our industry.”