



**AUSTRALIAN  
LIVE  
MUSIC  
BUSINESS  
COUNCIL**

New National Cultural Policy Discussion  
Paper: ALMBC Response  
SUMMARY

## **ALMBC Submission to the New National Cultural Policy 2026: Summary**

Australia's live music sector is at a critical inflection point. The progress under Revive (Music Australia, streaming content rules, arts worker support) is welcome, but the structural conditions facing grassroots live music have got materially worse since 2022. The next policy must treat live music as social infrastructure for community wellbeing, belonging and cohesion, not just a commercial sector.

### **Four converging crises**

- The traditional economic model is broken. Alcohol revenue used to cross-subsidise local artist programming; soft drink sales now outpace alcohol 3-to-1 at some emerging-artist shows.
- The regulatory environment around noise, planning, insurance and venue classification remains hostile, with Victoria's EPA review exposing deep failings.
- Consumer and business confidence has been hit by high-profile cancellations, including Bluesfest and the flood-hit Birdsville Big Red Bash, alongside dominance of large international ticketing and promotion operators.
- Community fracture points (political violence at events, market concentration, pricing out of marginal communities) are making live music spaces feel less safe and stable.

### **Recommendations across the five pillars**

**First Nations First:** shift from “recognise and strengthen” to “invest, implement and sustain”. Fund a First Nations Music Commissioning Fund, embed self-determination, and make cultural consultation costs explicitly grant-eligible.

**A Place for Every Story:** recognise grassroots live music venues as cultural institutions in planning, regulatory and funding systems. Support not-for-profit transitions, explore a national ticket levy, and create dedicated regional venue support.

**Centrality of the Artist:** address the emerging artist pipeline directly through incentives for venues programming emerging acts, business and superannuation supports for artists, and work-integrated learning pathways aligned with A National Plan for Young Australians and Music 2026-2036.

**Strong Cultural Infrastructure:** most 2022 venue requests are still unmet. Encourage all states to adopt Special Entertainment Precinct frameworks, deliver concrete insurance reform, legislate mandatory ticket trust arrangements (post-Bluesfest), and introduce a federal live music tax offset. BIS Oxford Economics modelling shows this could deliver 200,000 extra gigs a year, lift artist incomes by \$205m, and support 7,400 jobs.

**Engaging the Audience:** extend local content obligations to algorithmic curation. Pursue ticketing transparency reform, informed by the US Live Nation/Ticketmaster monopoly finding. Push 2025 data shows 59% of 16-25-year-olds cite cost as a barrier to attending live events while 63% say it matters to them; back the Live Music Pass and review licensing barriers to all-ages events.

The ALMBC isn't asking for charity. It's asking for a policy framework that recognises live music for what it is: an economic driver, community infrastructure and cultural identity, deserving the same protections as theatres, galleries and museums.