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Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS
*Inquiry into Pathways and Participation Opportunities for
Indigenous Australians in Employment and Business*

**SUBMISSION:
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MUSIC OFFICE
AND APRA AMCOS**



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ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MUSIC OFFICE – ABOUT

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music Office was initiated by APRA AMCOS in 2008 to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander songwriters and composers. The office operates a number of programs with industry organisations, focusing on professional development, education; and partners with the wider music industry to address issues of education and training, the lack of performance opportunities, physical distance of remote communities and the lack of economic return.

Acclaimed singer-songwriter, arts manager and APRA AMCOS Ambassador Leah Flanagan was recently announced as the National Manager of APRA AMCOS' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music Office. Leah is an Alyawarre woman from Darwin and will work out of APRA AMCOS' Northern Territory office.

APRA AMCOS – ABOUT

APRA AMCOS has been representing Australian songwriters, composer and publishers since 1926. With over 100,000 members across Australia and New Zealand, our membership includes the very best and brightest of established and emerging musical talent at home and around the globe. We administer rights on their behalf, supporting songwriters, composers and publishers in an industry that is a flagship of Australian culture and creativity, generating billions of dollars each year for the Australian economy.

We are affiliated with similar collective management organisations around the world. So when Australian and New Zealand songs and compositions are played overseas, Australian and New Zealand writers get paid. We also help music customers in Australia and New Zealand access music from the rest of the world.

We work in partnership with government to support the development and career paths within Australian music through the cornerstones of live music, digital distribution, local venues, education and the global stage.

APRA AMCOS has successfully initiated and led industry and government co-investment strategies, developing highly regarded capacity building programs, most notably: the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music Office, SongMakers, Live Music Office, SongHubs and Sounds Australia. For the purposes of this inquiry, we draw the attention of the committee to the work of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music Office in particular.



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OUR SUBMISSION

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music Office and APRA AMCOS want to help create a more balanced music industry where First Nations people and people of colour are employed within higher levels of power and influence within the Australian music sector.

We want to see the development and support for First Nations owned and operated music sector organisations, including everything from record labels, publishers, recording studios, festivals, booking agents, promoters and artist managers. We want First Nations music in Australia to be strong and independent.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists are achieving extraordinary levels of success both locally and internationally. The likes of Thelma Plum, Briggs, Jessica Mauboy, Dan Sultan, Mojo Juju, Emily Wurramara, Young Australian of the Year Baker Boy, Eleanor Dixon and Birdz are part of a new wave of global success.

It is well documented that First Nations people in Australia experience widespread socioeconomic disadvantage, education and health inequality. First Nations people are on the lower socio-economic scale in Australia and there are very few First Nations CEOs or people in positions of significant power. This is also true of First Nations people in the Australian music sector.

Despite the increasing profile and popularity of First Nations artists, First Nations people lack a presence in higher levels of management and roles of influence within the industry. This presents an enormous opportunity for both Government and Industry to develop sustainable pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into the industry through education, the development of First Nations led, owned and operated music businesses, a robust Indigenous cultural intellectual property and copyright system, live music opportunities and export development.

According to a [Statement on Indigenous Australian Music and Dance](#) endorsed in 2011 by the International Council for Traditional Music, around 98 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music traditions have been lost. A partnership approach to invest in music will go some way to protect against further loss of music traditions and help foster renewed cultural pride through music.

Both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music Office and APRA AMCOS support the development of protocols to educate people seeking to use traditional cultural expressions on the importance of informed consent, respect and benefit sharing in communities that hold rights over such cultural expressions. We point the Committee to our work in assisting the development of music protocols which are [elaborated by the Australia Council for the Arts](#).

We propose that greater investment in music focused programs and support can:

- Close the gap for First Nations people and support a growth in cultural expression through music and language
- Enhance education opportunities for First Nations children and young people
- Foster more career pathways for First Nations music artists, arts workers and arts leaders to support the creation of sustainable First Nations owned and operated music sector organisations
- Expand the opportunities for First Nations artists to grow international audiences and export markets



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Music will help close the gap for First Nations people and support a growth in cultural expression through music and language

With a considered and strategic approach of investment from both Government and the music industry, greater involvement and ownership of music practice and industry, this sector can help lead change and prove to other industries that it is possible to improve cultural pride, reduce inequality and provide tangible earning opportunities to First Nations artists, arts leaders and arts professionals regardless of location.

A 2018 [Australia Council for the Arts submission](#) to the Closing the Gap Refresh documented evidence that First Nations arts and cultural participation can support:

- the development of strong and resilient First Nations children
- improved school attendance and engagement; higher levels of educational attainment
- improved physical and mental health and wellbeing
- greater social inclusion and cohesion
- more employment, economic opportunities and meaningful work
- safer communities with reductions in crime and improved rehabilitation
- the prevention of suicide – fostering a secure sense of cultural identity is a powerful protective factor for young First Nations people and helps them navigate racism and being a minority group in their own country

The music industry can play a critical role in exposing the use of first languages in contemporary composition to mainstream audiences through the profile distribution of this music through both digital and broadcast mediums.

Music will enhance education opportunities for young First Nations children

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creators must be central to the music industry with greater access to career development and targeted approaches in education. The framework of the education system is a critical area for young First Nations children to be first exposed to the opportunities in the Australian music sector. There is an enormous opportunity to develop four key areas in music education:

1. Provide opportunities for First Nations children to access traditional music practices through the syllabus
2. Provide opportunities for First Nations students in secondary education to be exposed to ‘real-world’ songwriting and recording opportunities through tailored programs and in partnership with established industry leaders and teachers
3. Develop local music programs for both First Nations and non-First Nation children and young people that incorporate local Indigenous language to foster community wide understanding and pride
4. Establish an education-wide understanding of copyright, intellectual property and cultural protocols around the use of music and language

Music can foster more career pathways for First Nations music artists, arts workers and arts leaders to support the creation of sustainable First Nations led owned and operated music sector organisations

With technology and the internet, First Nations people have access to information which can help develop the education, training and learning opportunities to foster self-managed and sustainable careers from their communities. Whether they live in capital cities, regional centres or in the remote Central Australian Desert the opportunities music can provide through technology are nation-wide.



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Copyright is a highly profitable industry and teaching First Nations people to be in control of their copyright and empowering them to take control of their artistic careers. This can be through programs, training and support that can encourage First Nations people to start their own labels, touring agencies or publishing companies by using digital platforms to not only export their work and be part of an international music community.

This could be encouraged by providing annual national funding for a number of initiatives that encourage more training and entrepreneurship for First Nations people including, but not limited to:

- Support for a music sector National Advisory Body that can represent each state and territory in matters relating to ATSI needs in the music sector. This paid advisory body can be elected by each jurisdiction and housed with Music Service Organisations (AMIN) which can then advise the Australia Council, state-based arts bodies, the ATSI Music Office and state music development offices as to what First Nations artists need in each region and connect them with First Nations service providers
- Support for a First Nations music manager from each state and territory to attend industry events such as the Fairgrounds Festival Retreat with some of Australia's most high-profile artist managers
- Support for First Nations artist managers to attend key domestic music market events such as CHANGES (Melbourne) and BIGSOUND (Brisbane)
- Investigate opportunities for First Nations music artists to partner with the network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned Art Centres and artist groups for the development of First Nations music businesses

The development of a First Nations 'wills project' for musicians will help ensure First Nations artists and First Nations owned and operated music organisations have robust copyright, ICIP and SIT arrangements. This has been a successful project in the visual arts sector which should be adopted for the music industry.

We would like to acknowledge the Australian Government's Music Industry Package announced in 2019 will include an Indigenous Contemporary Music program to establish a national development program for Indigenous musicians and bands.

Music will expand the opportunities for First Nations artists to grow international audiences and export markets

Sounds Australia, Australia's music export market program, has developed a First Nations Export Strategy in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music Office and APRA AMCOS.

Sounds Australia will leverage its existing relationships with key international showcase festival directors by putting forward First Nations artists (outside of the competitively assessed Australian artists invited to showcase) to international marketplace programmers for inclusion in showcase events.

The acts will be nominated following ongoing consultation with artists, music companies, trade associations, governments and businesses that occupy this space, to ensure the artists are well prepared for export and supported whilst overseas and away from community.

This work to raise the profile of First Nations artists globally will require government investment to assist with the showcasing artists' international travel costs and other unique in-market expenses.

From 2020 Sounds Australia will increase Indigenous representation in its leadership by investing in the newly engaged APRA AMCOS position of National Manager - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Music Office. This

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position will provide an essential link in the APRA AMCOS National service between the organisation, its members and associated stakeholders in the Indigenous music community. Whilst the role forms an integral part of the APRA Writer Services team, there will be a functional relationship with Sounds Australia.

The National Manager will provide decision-making, advice, engagement and guidance to Sounds Australia's export strategy, ensuring cultural protocols and processes in promoting Indigenous artists internationally is practiced. The National Manager will attend key international showcase conference events representing Sounds Australia, including SXSW (Austin, TX), The Great Escape (Brighton, UK), Folk Alliance International, WOMEX and Mundial, (Montreal, Canada). The National Manager will also look to establish a First Nations Music Advisory Group to provide further input into Sounds Australia's export strategy.

Government has an opportunity to further partner with industry through investing and supporting First Nations cultural practitioners to build global networks and develop career pathways for both themselves and the First Nations artists they represent. This includes the development of a series of export training workshops for First Nations artist managers, record labels, agents and self-managed artists to build knowledge, capacity and confidence to increase the participation and representation of Indigenous Australian music and artists internationally.

Central to many of the opportunities, we advocate for the creation of a First Nations International Bursary Program. This program would cover travel costs for First Nations artists visiting showcase events as well as supporting the creation of safe cultural spaces at performance venues and to address homesickness together with increased touring personnel for connections to community.

There is also a significant opportunity for Government to support industry in the creation of an in-bound music export activity solely for the purpose of showcasing Australian First Nations Artists to key international buyers.

Providing this framework will ensure that First Nations artists are supported as they pursue music careers beyond the domestic market. It will give voice for First Nations artists globally and help profile a significant export opportunity for Australia more generally.

Thank you for the opportunity for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music Office and APRA AMCOS to share our experiences in the ways the Australian music sector in partnership with government can support pathways and participation opportunities for Indigenous Australians in Employment and Business of the music sector.

Yours Sincerely,

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