

Submission
No 97

INQUIRY INTO ARTS AND MUSIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Association of Artist Managers

Date Received: 1 August 2024

30 July 2024

RE: Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales.

The Association of Artist Managers (AAM) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the important matter of music education and training in NSW.

ABOUT THE AAM:

The Association of Artist Managers (AAM) is the peak industry body representing Australia's leading music managers and their artists. With over 350 managers as members, the AAM community represents over 1000 Australian artists and songwriters, including some of the biggest names in Australian music - Tame Impala, Paul Kelly, Cold Chisel, Guy Sebastian, The Teskey Brothers, Dom Dolla, Courtney Barnett, Amyl & The Sniffers, Tash Sultana, Midnight Oil and more.

ABOUT MUSIC MANAGERS:

The best way to describe music artist managers is to picture the act as the Board of Directors, and the manager as their CEO. Managers are specialists in music career strategy, and are responsible for developing, mobilizing and executing that strategy in consultation with "the Board". In this CEO position, the manager leads the company which could at any stage employ upwards of 100 staff on a contract or freelance basis (agents, publicists, media, brands, accountants, lawyers, record labels, publishers, etc) as well as negotiating with all existing partners investing in the artist's start-up. Managers often run numerous artist-run companies without corporate assistance or job security.

- Australian music managers are often business-owner managers, operating small to medium enterprises.
- There are fewer Australian management companies with more than 5 staff, than there are in other territories, largely due to our market size.
- A traditional management deal involves commission-based remuneration, meaning the manager only earns when the artist earns, and therefore shares the risk.
- Sustaining a career as a music manager in Australia is extremely rare without offsetting income from other areas.
- Managers are entrepreneurial by nature.



- Artist pays flat fee or % for service
- Artist pays flat fee for service
- Other
- Derives revenue to artist for fee or %

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. We refer to and encourage the expert recommendations of our peers in primary and secondary schooling, making music education a priority and easily accessible by all.
2. We submit that the NSW Government's approach to training and education in the field of contemporary music business should be rooted in consultation and collaboration with the relevant and reputable industry organisations who represent each subsection of the industry.
3. We note that there is a skills shortage in the artist management sector that is limiting the potential for Australian artists. This has serious negative impacts on venues, promoters, festivals, agents, labels, publishers and all roles in the ecosystem. This skills shortage is hampered by sustainability issues of the modern artist management model which has led to attrition. While this submission focuses primarily on education for those looking to enter the industry, it would be extraordinarily beneficial to open that scope to education of politicians and policy makers to learn more about how our industry works. Together we could find long term solutions to the current challenges in artist management sustainability.
4. We recommend that all efforts should be made to reduce financial barriers of entry to education and experience in the music business industry.
5. We suggest a formal review of the legitimate education pathways, that involves all the people actually working in the contemporary music industry. We believe that a delineation should be recognised between classroom-based education practices, and those needed to specialise in artist management specifically. On-the-job learning is the most effective form of training and education in the field of artist management, and as such, we encourage more opportunities for paid internships, traineeships and equivalent.
6. We posit that aside from the education reform itself needed to produce quality artist managers, there needs to be serious and comprehensive outreach to First Nations and culturally diverse communities on the notion that this is a career in the first place. There is a striking lack of First Nations managers in particular, something that the AAM is dedicated to reversing as long as artist management sustainability and training access is addressed.
7. Major funding needs to be invested to develop proven education and training models to ensure there is a thriving sector of high level artist managers so that recording and touring artists have the support they need to go to market domestically and internationally.

OUR RATIONALE:

The AAM understands that the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education Training in NSW is a brilliant opportunity to explore the importance of music education in schools specifically. It is with this in mind that we strongly support the Submissions of our industry colleagues who specialise in musical performance, composition and theory education in primary and secondary schools. Organisations such as MusicNSW and Music Education:Right From The Start will provide key recommendations in this field which we encourage.

We specialise in advocating and supporting Australian music managers so that they can grow the careers of the artists in their charge. One of the most fundamental factors about this specific career path that we recognize as true, is that the barrier to entry is extremely low. In essence, a person can be deemed an artist manager once they find an act that allows them to be (as easily as an artist can call themselves an artist once they have written a song). There are no necessary qualifications to become a manager, much like there are none to start a small business. In fact, it is the delineation between “business owner” and “employee” that establishes the context of our submission on education and training, in this field at least.

Many tertiary educational institutions tout “employment” as the primary goal for any student undergoing a course of study. Our submission challenges this language and concept as the primary goal for those looking to have a career in the contemporary music industry, and it challenges those who make such promises to students. While full-time employment is absolutely possible - it is not abundant, nor is it necessarily the ideal expectation of burgeoning Australian artist managers. Much like an artist, a freelancer, a contractor or a tradesperson; an artist manager (in Australia) is most commonly a small business owner with specialised skills. It then stands to reason that training approaches and opportunities should be nuanced and considered differently from careers that stem from theory-based learning (that predominantly lead to traditional employment).

Whether an aspiring artist manager is seeking to be their own boss, and derive enough income through their business to sustain themselves as a full-time manager - or - seek full-time employment as a professional artist manager through another company, their journey has one thing in common...

Real life experience.

Much like a tradesperson, an artist manager requires advanced or specialized skills that are gained primarily through experience, mentorship, on-the-job training and professional development or vocational courses.

There are many ways in which a person may pursue these avenues to become an artist manager:

- + Start managing a friend's band as a Sole Trader, while holding down a day job, eventually getting more experience and revenue to grow their business.
- + The above scenario, except they pursue a job at an artist management company using their experience as their qualification.
- + They apply for professional development, internship and mentorship programs through various music industry organisations.
- + They pay up to \$67,000 for a tertiary qualification through which some work placement is incorporated.

Like an entrepreneur, an artist manager would benefit from studying more specialised business-focussed courses, as they have to find the personal drive and independent skill set, and apply it within the arts. Artist management lives in a rare cross-section between art and commerce. While some tertiary institutions offer courses in the field of entertainment management or business, there are few that provide the necessary amount of experience-based learning in their curriculum. As such, they are not providing value for money or clear pathways into the industry.

Being the peak body for artist managers, naturally the AAM has a vested interest in developing the skills of the management workforce in Australia. One of our primary services as an organisation is that of offering Professional Development programs. Over the years we have facilitated many different types of PD programs for our members, but they have always been reliant on program funding from external sources (government funded, private sector sponsored, etc). When we do receive funding for these programs, it gives participants skills for next to nothing, rather than them paying for a formal qualification centred predominantly on theory-based learning. This opens up opportunities for people from all socioeconomic backgrounds and neurodiverse learning needs.

We commend and thank the NSW Government for their recent investment in one such program through the AAM: the 12-month paid internship program and R&D, currently in development (see Appendix A for overview). It is through this example that we put forward our recommendations for continuation and further investment in the space of on-the-job training, not just in artist management, but ideally through many other areas of the contemporary music business (of which our R&D can provide guidance).

APPENDIX A:

The AAM Paid Internship Pilot Program and R&D, funded by Sound NSW (a synopsis).

INTRODUCTION

This program is a non-tertiary-connected, artist management paid internship, at a for-profit company, where intern participants walk away with cash and gain real-life work experience in an industry where tertiary qualifications are not essential. The host company benefits by getting extra hands-on-deck in a field where “lack of time and money” is the biggest hurdle. In exchange, the company guides the participants through an industry that they are advanced in and teaches them what took them many years to learn. In this pilot edition of the program, the host company will also be paid a fee to provide desks, teach interns, and work for AAM to record benefits, issues, improvements and structures that work best. Reporting from the host company and intern participant will contribute to a report towards the end of the program, outlining their experiences. This reporting process will constitute the Research and Development element of the program, the results of which will be used to inform future internship models specific to artist management in Australia.

There will be 2 x interns, each teamed up with a host company for a period of 12 months.

GOALS

- The goal of this pilot program is to determine what factors are involved in creating a successful internship model that works as a two-way street, benefitting both the intern and the host company.
- The goal for the host company is to refine the roles and processes in their business so that they can use the extra hands-on-deck in a meaningful way.
- The goal for the intern is that they walk away with more learning and practical experience – which they are paid for – than they would learn in any class room – which they would pay for.
- The goal for the industry is to provide research on potential structures, processes and management strategies that can inform somewhat of a template on how medium to advanced management businesses can scale, and how more managers can be created through hands-on training.
- This program will identify the skills required for intermediate to senior managers to recruit staff and scale their business, and identify the skills required for aspiring managers to turn this into a long-term career.

This program will be announced and a call out for participant EOIs will happen in the next month.