



A Sound Future

South Australian
Music Development Strategy
2026–2028

**Music
Development
Office**



Government
of South Australia



CreateSA

Foreword



***A Sound Future* is CreateSA's two-year strategy to strengthen South Australia's music industry – supporting artists and music businesses to perform, create and thrive, and ensuring audiences continue to benefit from our rich music culture state-wide.**

In March 2025, we released *A Place to Create*, a 10-year cultural policy designed to enrich South Australia's future by strengthening communities, enlivening places, and connecting us through arts, culture and creativity.

As part of the first delivery plan for *A Place to Create*, the Government of South Australia committed an additional \$1.5 million to the state's original contemporary music industry. This investment builds on support already delivered through the Music Development Office (MDO) – a dedicated unit within CreateSA.

The MDO is responsible for programs and services that build the capability, visibility and sustainability of South Australia's original contemporary music sector. *A Sound Future*, which sits alongside *A Place to Create*, is the MDO's driving framework.

It has been developed through extensive stakeholder consultation, including a dedicated roundtable with young people, ensuring the strategy reflects the needs and aspirations of the sector it serves.

***A Sound Future* highlights**

In the next two years, we're planning to:

- establish a new Youth Reference Group, to help develop the audiences and artists of the future
- create a venues program, to support the presentation of original music in dedicated live music venues
- update the MDO's funding programs, to reflect the changing needs of artists and music businesses
- form an ongoing contemporary music reference group, to coordinate and strengthen support for the sector.

We thank everyone who contributed feedback to inform *A Sound Future*. Your insights will help deliver stronger outcomes for musicians, music businesses and audiences across South Australia.

The Honourable Kyam Maher MLC

Deputy Premier
Minister for Arts

Acknowledgement of Country

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have made – and continue to make – a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the state of South Australia.

The Government of South Australia acknowledges and respects South Australia's Aboriginal people and nations as the state's first peoples, and recognises Aboriginal people as traditional owners and occupants of South Australian land, sky and waters.

The Government of South Australia acknowledges that the spiritual, social, cultural and economic practices of Aboriginal people come from their traditional lands and waters, and that Aboriginal people continue to maintain and practise cultural and heritage beliefs, languages and laws that are of ongoing importance today.

Where we are now: the current context

South Australians deeply value our music industry. 90% of us listen to recorded music, making it the most accessed of all artforms in the state. Almost half of us regularly attend live music events. One in six South Australians creates music by singing, playing instruments, or writing and composingⁱ.

South Australia's Aboriginal musicians are part of the oldest living musical practice in the world, with stories passed down through song for generations. Today's Aboriginal musicians are vitally important to the state's music ecosystem and are achieving global recognition.

South Australia has nurtured the careers of internationally successful performing artists and songwriters including Cold Chisel, Electric Fields, Guy Sebastian, Hilltop Hoods, Jimmy Barnes, No Fixed Address, Paul Kelly, Peach PRC, Sia, Tkay Maidza and many more.

In 2025, Adelaide celebrated its 10th anniversary as a UNESCO City of Music, the first and only one in Australia.

Our live music venues range from heritage pubs through to major venues that enable high-profile acts to perform for South Australian audiences. Our renowned festivals provide a platform for local bands and bring national and international artists to the state.

We have a vibrant contemporary music scene that includes grassroots communities across all genres. We are home to managers, promoters, agents, studios, independent labels, and specialist music stores, and have a strong tradition of community radio.

The music industry is an integral part of the economy. The second edition of Music Australia's *The Bass Line: Charting the Economic Contribution of Australia's Music Industry*ⁱⁱ has found that the sector generated revenues of \$10.76 billion and contributed \$4.28 billion in direct gross value added (GVA) nationally in 2024–25. It also found that there is strong international demand for Australian music, with music exports contributing \$1.08 billion to total music industry revenue.

Despite its considerable contribution, today's music industry faces challenges. Artists and music businesses are under increasing pressure, due to rising costs, competition from international content on streaming platforms, and reduced attendances.

Research has found that almost half the nation's musicians are earning less than \$15,000 a year, and the rise of AI-generated content threatens to further erode their earningsⁱⁱⁱ.





What we heard

The Music Development Office (MDO) considered a range of consultation and research to inform the development of *A Sound Future*. This included reports from industry associations, Music Australia, and national and state parliamentary inquiries^{iv}, including the work of:

- the Premier's Live Music Advisory Council, an election commitment to enable greater engagement between the government and the South Australian live music sector.
- the Select Committee on Local and Live Creative Venues^v, a South Australian Legislative Council inquiry established to inquire into and report on matters relating to local and live creative venues.

These insights informed further targeted consultation by the MDO in late 2025, in which key local and national music industry stakeholders took part. A series of roundtable discussions and interviews were held, including with cultural leaders, artists, music businesses, industry organisations and a youth roundtable discussion hosted by Carclew that included stakeholders as young as 15 years old.

Participants noted that:

- rising costs of living are impacting attendances
- a perceived decline in focus on music in schools has weakened future participation
- grassroots spaces are under pressure to survive, yet critical to the local ecosystem
- discoverability barriers and media shifts limit visibility for South Australian artists
- there is a lack of clear, sustainable career development pathways
- South Australian artists have limited access to national and global markets.

Participants described a future vision for an interconnected system in South Australia in which grassroots venues, regional touring, funding models, education and Aboriginal leadership work together to create a sustainable and globally connected industry.

Our strategy

A Sound Future is a new two-year strategy to enable South Australia's music industry to perform, create and thrive, and to enable audiences across the state to benefit from our rich music culture. It builds on the MDO's previous strategy, *Supporting Revival 2023–2025*, acknowledges current challenges and opportunities, and celebrates South Australia's extraordinary music sector.

Vision

South Australia is a place in which artists and music businesses thrive as part of a connected ecosystem, and in which music enriches our communities, contributes to our economy and celebrates our cultural identity.

Ambitions

- South Australia's music industry has strong Aboriginal representation, participation and cultural leadership.
- South Australia's world-class artists can build successful careers from our state.
- Young people are recognised and valued as artists, audiences and businesses, now and into the future.
- Our venues are accessible, and our music sector is equitable and inclusive.
- South Australia is enlivened through music, and everyone can participate in and experience music culture.
- There are clear pathways into the music industry, and professional development is available at all career stages.
- South Australian music reaches audiences across the world, and our music industry is globally connected.
- Adelaide, as a UNESCO City of Music, has a thriving live music ecosystem.
- Organisations and government work collaboratively to collectively drive impact for the sector.

Strategies

- Prioritise Aboriginal cultural leadership and knowledge.
- Update the MDO's funding programs to meet the evolving needs of artists and music businesses.
- Support young people as artists, audiences and businesses, now and into the future.
- Boost support for live music venues and festivals.
- Increase state-wide access to and participation in music.
- Build capabilities and professional development pathways across the music ecosystem.
- Connect the South Australian music sector to international networks.
- Grow the profile of South Australia's music sector.
- Collaborate to collectively drive impact for the sector.



A Sound Future – at a glance

	Seed		Nurture		Grow	
	Audiences	Education	Venues	Profile	Pathways	Export
The current situation	Reduced audiences and participants	Limited opportunities for music education	Grassroots spaces are critical to the local ecosystem yet are under pressure	Limited visibility due to discoverability barriers and media shifts	A lack of clear and sustainable career development pathways for artists	Limited opportunities for domestic and international market development
Our future vision	A vibrant culture of regular attendance, where diverse audiences confidently engage with live music across South Australia	Strong music education pathways that inspire creativity, build cultural literacy and connect young people to lifelong music engagement	A thriving network of sustainable grassroots venues	A unified music brand that makes local artists visible, valued and widely promoted	Clear, connected career pathways that guide artists from local stages to national opportunities and sustainable professional growth	A globally connected music sector enabling South Australian artists to participate in showcases, tours and international markets
Our strategic approach	Increase state-wide access to and participation in music	Support young people as artists, audiences and businesses, now and into the future	Boost support for live music venues and festivals	Grow the profile of South Australia's music sector	Prioritise Aboriginal cultural leadership and knowledge Update the MDO's funding programs to meet the evolving needs of artists and music businesses Build capabilities and professional development pathways Collaborate to collectively drive impact for the sector	Connect the South Australian music sector to international networks

Farhan Shah and Sufi Oz, photo supplied by artist



The Empty Threats, Photographer: Jack Fenby



Our delivery plan

The strategies set out in *A Sound Future* will be delivered through a range of actions by the MDO, in partnership with industry associations, government agencies, artists and businesses, including Music Australia, MusicSA, Australian Music Industry Network (AMIN), The Push, Carclew and Adelaide City of Music (UNESCO). These actions complement and build upon the *A Place to Create Delivery Plan 2025–2027*.

1

Seed

We will increase access and participation across the state.

- Partnering with Music Australia, MusicSA and the City of Mount Gambier to deliver the Regional and Remote Music Summit.
- Exploring travel bursaries and targeted support to enable equitable participation from the regional music sector in key industry events.
- Supporting increased access and participation for underrepresented groups, including developing information to support venues with accessibility upgrades.

2

Seed

We will support young people as artists, audiences and businesses, now and into the future.

- Establishing a Youth Reference Group to empower young voices in the development of policies and initiatives.
- Promoting music industry careers and pathways for youth, including through an annual Music Careers Expo.

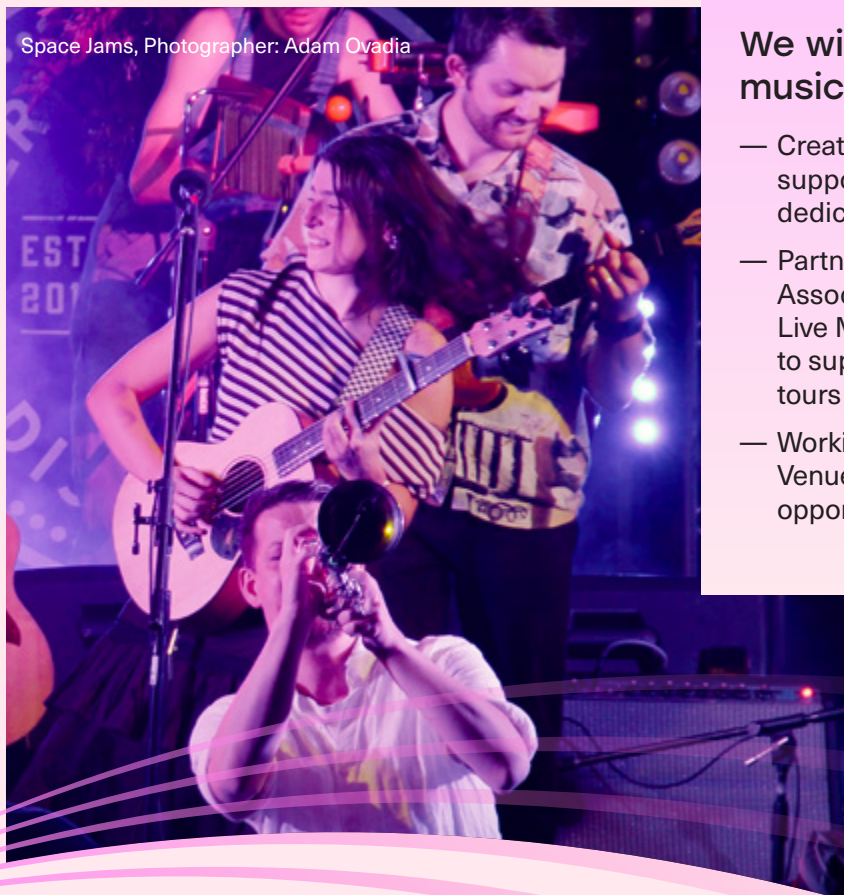
3

Nurture

We will boost support for live music venues and festivals.

- Creating a Venues Activation Program to support presentation of original music in dedicated live music venues.
- Partnering with Australian Festivals Association (AFA) to deliver a Festivals and Live Music Events Roundtable Discussion to support South Australia in attracting tours and music festivals.
- Working with the Australian Music Venue Foundation (AMVF) to explore opportunities to support live music venues.

Space Jams, Photographer: Adam Ovadia





4

Nurture

We will grow the profile of South Australia's music sector.

- Supporting marketing initiatives and audience engagement opportunities like MusicSA's Good Music Month, to encourage people to attend live music.
- Deepening the impact of Adelaide's designation as a City of Music within the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.
- Celebrating the talent and achievements of the local sector with a high-profile event.

5

Grow

We will prioritise Aboriginal cultural leadership and knowledge.

- Supporting Aboriginal-led music development initiatives, including through engaging with CreateSA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel, to share cultural knowledge and advice and develop Aboriginal music.

6

Grow

We will update the MDO's funding programs to meet the evolving needs of artists and music businesses.

- Allocating additional funding to the MDO's Project Support Grants to enable South Australian artists to increase their creative development and to help sustain music businesses in the South Australian original contemporary music sector.
- Establishing a quick-response grants program to fund time-sensitive milestone opportunities that do not fit within existing grant round timeframes.
- Implementing recommendations from CreateSA's Grants Review to ensure MDO grant programs remain relevant to the sector.

7

Grow

We will build capabilities and professional development pathways.

- Partnering to provide professional development pathways and workshops, with a focus on emerging and grassroots artists and music businesses.
- Partnering with Australian Independent Record Labels Association (AIR) and industry, to offer professional development opportunities through Indie-Con/ Indie Week – Australia's largest global conference for independent music.
- Supporting music sector representatives to attend professional development initiatives, such as conferences through the MDO's National Contribution Fund.
- Expanding the offering of the Robert Stigwood Fellowship Program.

8

Grow

We will collaborate to collectively drive impact for the sector.

- Broadening the scope of CreateSA's Creative Spaces guide to include music-focused spaces, such as recording studios, to support musicians and businesses in finding places to work, create and collaborate.
- Establishing an ongoing contemporary music reference group, to ensure coordination and collaboration with, and connection to, the sector.
- Measuring and evaluating progress towards the ambitions of *A Sound Future*, including through universities and organisations such as Music Australia.

9

Grow

We will connect the South Australian music sector to international networks.

- Providing support for local artists and industry representatives to attend international events through the MDO's Export Contribution Fund in partnership with Sounds Australia.
- Delivering a showcase to connect South Australian export-ready artists with international delegations during AIR's Indie-Con/Indie Week.

The Push Music Careers Expo,
Photographer: Samuel Graves Photography





How *A Sound Future* aligns with the sector

A Sound Future sets out a vision requiring coordination and collaboration. Connections across the local, national and international music ecosystem are essential to ensure its ambitions are realised. In particular, the MDO acknowledges and seeks to align its work with:

- South Australia's Aboriginal Arts leaders including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Advisory Panel, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Strategy for South Australia* and broader Aboriginal initiatives
- Australia's National Cultural Policy *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*, and the work of Music Australia
- music offices within other state and territory governments
- the work of multiple partner organisations across industry and government, including:
 - MusicSA
 - Adelaide City of Music (UNESCO)
 - national and South Australian organisations, including Sounds Australia, ARIA, APRA AMCOS, AIR, Carclew, AMIN, The Push, Nexus Arts, Northern Sound System, Base 10 and Country Arts SA.

The role of the Music Development Office

The Government of South Australia supports the original contemporary music industry through the MDO, which was established in 2014 as the first dedicated state government office of its kind in Australia. The MDO partners and aligns its work with organisations across industry and government to deliver for the sector.

The MDO supports the sustainable development of the state's original contemporary music industry. It does this through an industry development framework that includes advisory services, targeted funding, strategic initiatives, and policy development. This framework supports artists, live music venues, event promoters and other music businesses across the original contemporary music ecosystem.

- i. Creative Australia, *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*, 2023 Report
- ii. Music Australia, *The Bass Line: Charting the economic contribution of Australia's music industry*, 2026 Report
- iii. Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA), *MEAA Musicians 2024–25 Survey Report*, 2025 Report
- iv. Research and reports include: Music Australia's *The Bass Line 2026: The Push's Young Australian Music Audiences*, 2025 Report; state and federal inquiry findings, including *Am I Ever Going to See You Live Again?* 2025 Report
- v. South Australia, *Report of the Select Committee on Local and Live Creative Venues*, 2025 Report

Acknowledgements

CreateSA and the MDO acknowledge and thank everyone who provided feedback on *A Sound Future*. This includes the many musicians, music businesses, government agencies and industry organisations whose expertise, insights and perspectives have informed this work. Their contributions have been instrumental in shaping our understanding of the sector and how best to support it.

We also gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Square Holes, who facilitated roundtable discussions and provided insights and expertise that enabled the development of *A Sound Future*.

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