



MAKING MUSIC WORK:

*Sustainable Portfolio Careers
for Australian Musicians*

Making Music Work examined the careers of Australian musicians. The findings highlight musicians' creative and financial agility as they negotiate multiple music and non-music roles.

The vast majority of Australian musicians undertake a portfolio career, which encompasses a variety of concurrent and often impermanent roles. While this is not a new phenomenon, major shifts in how music is made, paid for, and consumed, as well as a changing commercial, funding, educational, and policy landscape, are currently impacting upon how musicians develop and sustain their careers.

Making Music Work mapped the creative, social, cultural, and economic realities of the portfolio music career, and delivered recommendations to address the realities this presents for Australian musicians. The study employed a national survey of 592 musicians and 11 in-depth interviews with a diverse group of musicians to provide a nuanced and granular understanding of the working lives, career trajectories, and economic circumstances of portfolio musicians across the country.

The study's findings provide significant insights for musicians, as well as the music and broader arts sectors. These findings are also relevant for music institutions and organisations providing professional training and lifelong learning opportunities.

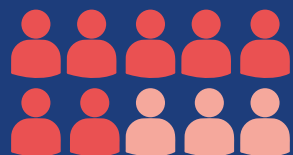
SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS

600+
MUSICIANS
participated in this study

6 IN 10 MUSICIANS
hold more than one work role



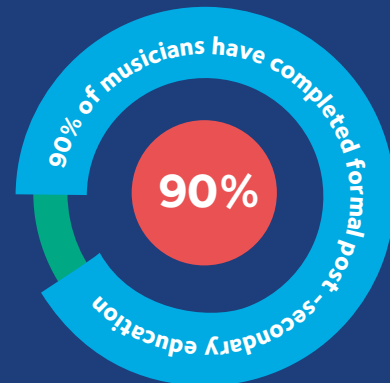
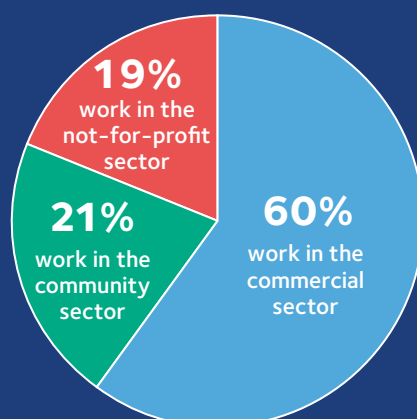
LESS THAN 1/5 **\$\$\$\$\$**
of musicians' work is paid on a continuing (salaried) basis



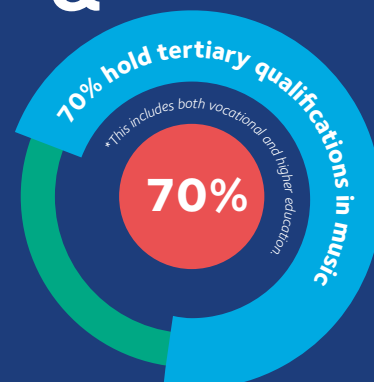
7 IN 10

have worked in music for more than 10 years

23% of the musicians were living with a disability and **more than half (55%)** of the reported disabilities are **mental illness**



&



52% OF MUSICIANS
report that they receive income from non-music sources

97% OF MUSICIANS
are motivated to pursue their careers because they are doing what they love

The most prevalent form of work for Australian musicians is the portfolio career. This features multiple, often impermanent concurrent roles. To engage across a variety of markets, genres, and performance sites, Australian musicians need diverse and agile skillsets.

Snapshot of Australian musicians' work and careers

Among the *Making Music Work* participants, the most common types of music work activities were music teaching/education, composition, performing, producing, instrumental music, and vocal music.

More than six in ten musicians held more than one role at the time of the study. Participants most often held either one (37%) role or two (27%) concurrent roles, and 21% held either three, four or five concurrent roles. The musicians who reported a single role were almost all working in education institutions or as studio teachers.

60% of roles are situated in the commercial sector, with the community and not-for-profit sectors accounting for 21% and 19% of roles respectively. Self-employment is the most common mode of work, with less than one-fifth of all work being paid on a continuing (salaried) basis.

The study's data also suggests that over half of Australia's portfolio musicians receive income from non-music related sources, and that non-music work accounts for approximately 90% of these musicians' income overall.

When negotiating these multiple roles Australian musicians have to strike a balance between their financial livelihoods and their creative fulfilment. As the study's data shows, some use the commercial music world to bring in money to support their own artistic path, others use academic jobs, music teaching jobs, as well as non-music related jobs.

Musicians use multiple strategies to find, acquire and / or create work and consider networks as essential. Digitisation and new technologies offer new opportunities for creative collaboration and work acquisition, and pose new challenges for gaining visibility in the massified market.

The most common sources of career challenge reported by musicians are the inter-related challenges of insufficient work, financial stress, and the prevalence of precarious work.



Australian musicians are well educated and tend to adopt a learning mindset. They recognise the crucial role that peer networks play in developing their creative practices, sustaining their livelihoods, and nurturing the sector.

Snapshot of Australian musicians' education

Australian musicians are well educated; 90% of the study's participants had completed formal post-secondary education and 70% held tertiary qualifications in music.

The data shows gaps in portfolio musicians' initial skills development and career support, highlighting the need for these capabilities to be included more explicitly in formal education, as well as professional learning opportunities.

In line with increased online visibility and competition, the most important professional learning needs identified by musicians related to small business administration and management roles. Currently, the most common professional learning activities reported by the musicians were in music and pedagogy.

Snapshot of Australian musicians' networking capacities

Peer networking is a vital factor in how Australian musicians develop and maintain their portfolio careers. These peers and networks are key to musicians feeling supported in their careers. These networks influence their collaborative processes, their ability to generate work, and the ways in which they learn new, or build upon existing skills.

This notion of mentoring and networking also extends to considerations of supporting and educating the next generation of musicians through teaching opportunities, and working within community music contexts, such as running community choirs and conducting community orchestras.

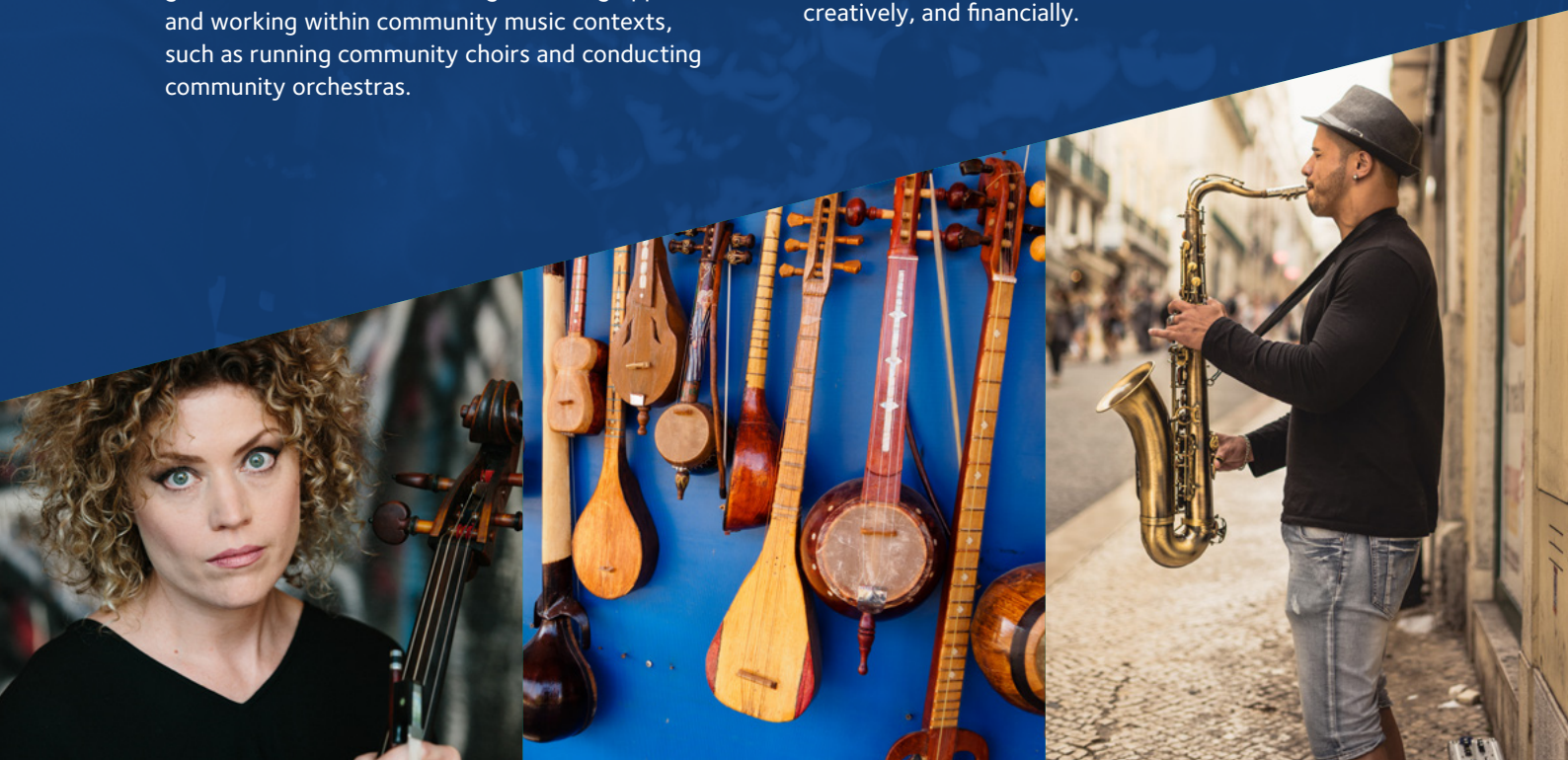
Snapshot of Australian musicians' health, wellbeing and career satisfaction

Musicians' health and wellbeing is of growing interest to the music industry and the arts sector more broadly. Almost one-quarter (23%) of the survey participants indicated that they were living with a disability; the most commonly reported disability was mental illness (reported by 12.8% of respondents).

Musicians who were interviewed highlighted the importance of engaging in day-to-day activities including hobbies, regular exercise, and healthy eating and sleeping habits when traversing their careers.

The data revealed that musicians generally have a positive outlook on survival – they get-on-with, make-do, self-prioritise their music work. In spite of the challenges in establishing and maintaining a career in music, the musicians in this study conveyed overall satisfaction with their careers. Their rationales for staying in the profession related to their passion for music, and the centrality of music to their identities, along with development of individual skills and capabilities.

In contrast, a sense of security and stability was the weakest career motivator. This suggests that musicians always have to adjust their decisions to keep things in balance against the changing tides of funding, digitisation, and the challenges of sustaining a life-work balance. These subtle shifts are testament to how adept musicians are at surviving emotionally, creatively, and financially.



Making Music Work developed a list of concrete recommendations, designed to create a sustainable environment for Australian musicians to flourish both now and into the future.

Recommendations

R1. State and Territory-based music organisations should renew and collaborate on professional learning programs relating to small business management and networked forms of work, collaboration and learning.

R2. Multiple agencies should collaborate to build collective agency and maximise capacity by maximising the visibility of, and access to, collaborative professional learning programs across jurisdictions.

R3. Post-secondary educational institutions should utilise the evidence from research, industry and alumni partnerships and secondary datasets to engage in evidence-based curricular reform. This should both include broad career development, learning, small business management, and inclusive notions of career “success” in music.

R4. Post-secondary educational institutions should take collective action to reduce the prevalence and impact of mental and physical health conditions among Australia’s music workforce.

R5. Post-secondary institutions should emphasise inclusion, diversity, equity and access in admissions, processes and public engagement.

R6. Providers of initial and ongoing professional learning should support and develop broad facets of musicians’ careers, recognising that the administrative and career development learning aspects of a musician’s practice often underpin the outputs and outcomes of their creative work.

R7. Aspiring musicians should be made aware of their ethical rights and responsibilities and associated support mechanisms and sources of advice.

R8. The music sector should increase the provision of specialist and peer support mental and physical health initiatives through further research and education and by informing the establishment of industry codes of practice and clearer identification and support pathways for those in distress.

R9. The music sector should advocate for the revision of national data collections so that multiple and impermanent job-holdings can be recorded.



Making Music Work is an initiative of Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre (QCRC), Griffith University, with industry partners, Australia Council for the Arts, Create NSW, Creative Victoria, Western Australian Government - Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC), and institutional partner Curtin University. It was supported by the Australian Research Council as a Linkage project.

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The Making Music Work team would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we conducted this research, and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to all First Nations' Peoples.

Images

The images used consist of publicly available stock images, as well as professional photographs supplied by the eleven musicians featured in this study.

To view the full report and recommendations, musician profiles, and fact sheets,
visit www.makingmusicwork.com.au