



NSW Independent Bushfire Inquiry

Live Music Office Submission

17 April 2020

Dave Owens APM
Professor Mary O'Kane AC
NSW Independent Bushfire Inquiry,
inquiries@bushfireinquiry.nsw.gov.au
GPO Box 5341, Sydney NSW 2001

RE: NSW INDEPENDENT BUSHFIRES INQUIRY

The Live Music Office greatly appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to this inquiry.

The impact from the bushfires across greater New South Wales through 2019 and in particular the early weeks in January in 2020 on the south coast and across south eastern New South Wales has had catastrophic personal and economic consequences for the arts and cultural sector in regional NSW.

The already devastating situation has now been made even worse as music and live events have suffered a further and immediate direct negative impact as a result of the Federal and State Government's necessary and important response to the COVID-19 crisis.

With regard to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, we recognise that much of the focus is on fire management, responses and planning in particular as well as safety and communications, however, we also note that under section 4. the inquiry has the capacity to consider additional matters and make appropriate associated recommendations.

This inquiry therefore provides an important opportunity to document the experiences of the arts and cultural sector, to bring to the inquiries attention the support that the music industry was able to provide to our colleagues through this time, and to also contribute constructive guidance to assist recovery from what has been a very difficult time for not only our industry, but also the industries with which we are associated, being the tourism and hospitality sectors in New South Wales.

This submission was prepared by John Wardle and Lucy Joseph from the Live Music Office, with assistance from Tina Broad. We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Narrell Brown from Jaybees Entertainment in Sanctuary Point NSW.

Both John Wardle and Tina Broad are semi-resident/resident in the Shoalhaven - south of Nowra and Milton respectively, and were personally directly impacted by the bushfires through January 2020.

We trust this submission will be of use to the inquiry. Please don't hesitate to be in contact if we can be of further assistance at any time.

Yours Sincerely,
John Wardle
Live Music Office
16 Mountain St, Ultimo NSW 2007, Australia
Locked Bag 5000, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012
P +61 2 9935 7875 F +61 2 9935 7970
[REDACTED]
W <http://livemusicoffice.com.au/>



ABOUT THE LIVE MUSIC OFFICE

Established by the Federal Government in 2013 in partnership with APRA AMCOS, the Live Music Office was set up to review the impact of policy frameworks on the Australian live music sector. Our scope includes planning, licensing and regulatory policies, as well as cultural, audience and market development strategies.

BUSHFIRES IMPACTS

Significant impacts have been experienced from the recent bushfires by the music and hospitality sectors across affected regions of NSW and in other areas across the country.

Immediate issues experienced by the music and hospitality sector in these regions included:

- **Artists:** Widespread loss of employment across peak season
- **Venues:** Significant loss of business and visitation
- **Festivals:** Cancellations of events (Falls Festival, VIC, Cobargo Folk Festival, NSW)
- **Music Industry:** Agents and industry booking events across the region losing work / commissions / still processing admin from cancelled gigs and managing drop in future performances
- **Property** - A number of South Coast artists have lost property and musical equipment
- **Agricultural Shows** cancelled include Berry, Cobargo, Candelo, Albion Park, Kiama and Bowral
- **Local Government** venues also lost in the Bega Shire

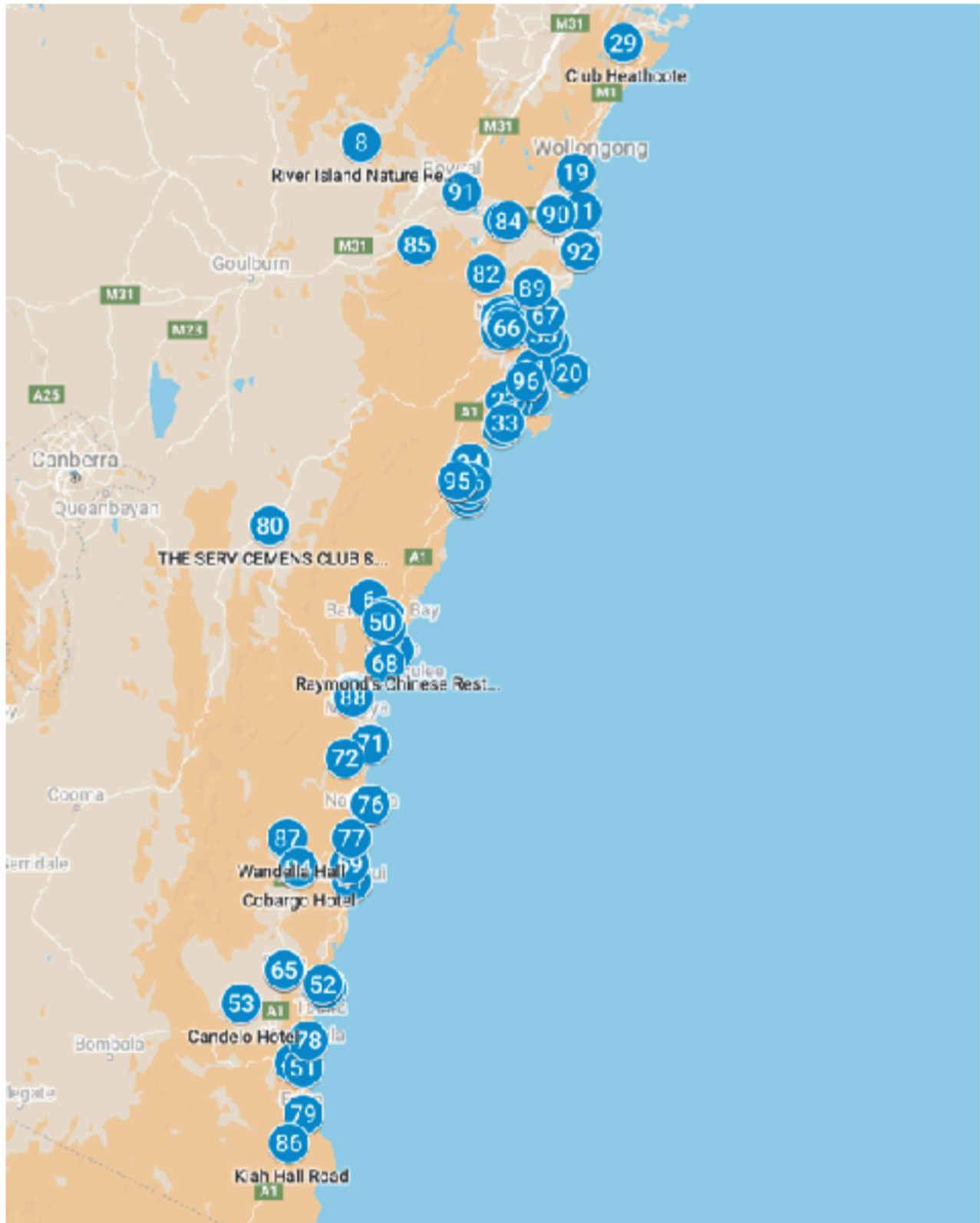
ONGOING ISSUES

- Future bookings in abeyance as visitation drops and residents manage impacts
- Whilst some artists may have income protection on public liability and instrument insurance, this isn't coming through on feedback
- Many artists impacted offering their services for fundraising events despite lost income in peak season
- It is unclear what support the sector has been provided with from recovery funding to date.

LIVE MUSIC OFFICE MAP

To communicate just how seriously the fires affected the live music industry, in early January the Live Music Office provided the following Google map of 96 impacted venues on the NSW South Coast alone since New Years Eve that had to either cease trading or stop events.

[See Google Map link here.](#)



Many venues used social media to keep their community connected as bushfires impacted regions. The following posts from Facebook tell some of these stories.

- **Air Raid Tavern Moruya**, 31 December 2019 at 11:17: The Air Raid will not open this evening 31 Dec due to bush fires.
- **Eden Fishermen's Recreation Club**, 2 January at 10:57 : Members and Guests are advised that due to the ongoing situation in the area and the forecast for the coming days the decision has been made to cancel the raffles and entertainment scheduled for both the venues for Friday and Saturday nights. We apologise for any inconvenience cause, please stay safe and we will see you again in the near future.
- **Club Narooma**, 31 December 2019 at 13:53: No NYE celebrations tonight at the Club due to the fires. Please keep safe everyone.
- **Dromedary Hotel Tilba**, 31 December 2019 at 07:41: With Tilba surrounded by several large and fast-growing fires, we have closed the pub and are focused on making sure our staff, family and friends are out of danger. We will post updates when we have them.
#staysafeeveryone
- **Tura Beach Country Club**, 31 December 2019 at 14:18: We have cancelled the New Year Fireworks tomorrow evening due to the current 'catastrophic' fire conditions and in the best interest of the wider community. Band of Gold entertainment is still on though so come on down to the Tura Beach Country Club for some cracking live NYE entertainment!
- **Currarong Bowling & Recreation Club**, 31 December 2019 at 08:44: Please share this to get the word out.. unfortunately the Melbourne band Catfish Voodoo can't make it on Saturday 4th January due to fires between Melbourne and Nowra. Hopefully we will get them during 2020.
- **Great Southern Hotel Berry**, 31 December 2019 at 16:57: With the fires impacting so many of our staff we have made the decision to close the hotel tonight and tomorrow. Our thoughts are with our staff, patrons and the greater Shoalhaven. Stay safe.
- **Club Bega**, 3 January at 11:31: Due to the fires and uncertain conditions we have decided it would be in the best interest of our members to postpone tonight's badge draw. We have tentatively moved the date to next Friday 10th January, however will keep you updated if this changes. We apologise for any inconvenience this causes. As a big thank you to our fires, the Club will be donating \$1000 to Bega's NSW Rural Fire Service and we will be continuing to provide complimentary meals for all crew members involved in battling the fires. Please call 6492-1055 to make a booking.
- **Moruya Golf Club**, 3 January at 11:01: Due to the bush fire crisis our club will be closed from 2.00pm today (Friday) until Sunday or Monday. We will keep the community posted through social media during this time. This Saturday the club will be available for evacuation overflow. Keep safe everyone! Update: The Moruya races have been called off. The Calcutta and Golf day have been called off.
- **Bottlerocket Bar Nowra**, 4 January at 12:40: Due to the uncertainty of today – Saturday 4th Jan, We will be closed. Please stay safe and a massive thank you to all the people out there fighting these fires – you are all heroes.
- **Postmans Tavern Nowra**, 4 January at 16:38: We opened our doors today to accommodate air conditioning, water & food for anyone that needed it, unfortunately due to the safety of our workers & patrons we have now closed, stay safe xx
- **The Ex Servos Nowra**, 4 January at 16:08: *Update*To all members and visitors.As of 4pm we have made the decision to close the Exservos in Nowra. As you could imagine our resources are stretched with staff understandably anxious as the Currowan fire begins to impact on other suburbs North of the river. We will be consolidating staff resources to Worrigea Sports and continue to provide Club facilities and refuge as previously posted. We have a large amount of emergency services based out of our accommodation and will continue to provide meals from

Pepper Trees Bistro. Today our offer of refuge had not been utilised in town which is understandable. We will keep you updated as the evening progresses. Regards Management

- **Harvest Bar Milton**, 3 January at 13:37: C L O S E D // We will be closed until further notice due to the current bushfires surrounding our beautiful home & the forecast conditions over the next few days. Please stay safe & be prepared
- **The Guild. Italian Restaurant Cafe Bar Milton**, 2 January at 14:06: Dear customers, Milton has no running water. Unfortunately we must remain closed tonight. We "should" be able to open tomorrow. Please stay safe and take care of one another.
- **Angels Bayside Cafe/Restaurant Huskisson**, 31 December 2019 at 13:57: It is my decision to cancel our NYE celebration tonight at cafe, with many staff only just making it home to families, and others still stuck here with family and friends for the moment. We all wish everyone a Happy and Safe New Year. We will be open New Years Day from 7am
- **Adelaide Hotel Moruya**, 10 January at 11:57: Hey everyone I know things have been absolutely devastating and there have been a lot of people that have lost a lot in these fires. We all missed out on a New Year's Eve so The Adelaide hotel and Dj Jester are getting together to hold a NYE 2.0 on the 31st of January where we can try and bring a bit of light and a good time on to 2020. We hope to see you all there and we can have a bit better of time then we all have had as of late!!!
- **Sussex Inlet RSL Club**, 9 January at 12:50: Anyone after information in relation to disaster assistance and Centrelink benefits, Human Services have set up a pop up station in the Club's carpark and will be assisting any questions and guidance you may require this afternoon. Please do not hesitate to pop down, they are here to provide support.
- **Hotel Commercial Bega**, 31 December 2019 at 14:09: Hi all, We have decided to close the pub at 6pm tonight. We would prefer that our staff are safe at home with families whilst we deal with the current fire emergency. Apologies for any inconvenience this causes. Stay safe and look out for each other. The Bega Valley Shire is an amazing community and we will get through this. Regards Mitch and Alexis.
- **Corrigans Cove Resort – Batemans Bay**, 8 January at 14:49: We regret to advise due to the current bush fires we will not be opening for lunch or continuing our entertainment throughout January. Our restaurant will still be OPEN 7 days a week for breakfast and dinner as usual. Our thoughts are with our community at this difficult time, and our doors are always open for anyone who needs a hand. Thank you.



On 31 January 2020, South Coast Agent and Managing Director of Jaybees Entertainment Narrell Brown provided the following in correspondence to Destination NSW:

The fires started in September but only had minimal impact on anything on the South Coast.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/the-summer-from-hell-how-the-fire-season-has-unfolded-20200103-p53onh.html>

We are used to fires on the South Coast and everyone just goes about their business while being aware and wary of the fires around. However fanned by a west-north-westerly, the **Currowan fire** began its rapid spread on November 26 as the temperature reached 30 degrees. By the next day it had grown to 2500 hectares. This story from the Canberra Times gives you an indication of what happened

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6575661/the-currowan-fire-a-monster-on-the-loose/>.

Across the board, we were getting cancellations from both bands and venues. Some because of evacuations, fire impacts or road closures - all out of our control. Some bands were fearful of traveling to areas who had fire threatening for fear of not being able to get home from their families. Many venues couldn't even contact us because the whole area was without power and in many instances mobile phone communications were also out because batteries on mobile phone towers had melted. Trying to keep on top of the cancellations, fire movements, road closures and who was actually where was a total nightmare. I have never worked so hard in my life - particularly for no remuneration.

I worked around the clock trying to get information out to our artists, venues and the wider community about what was going on. Things were changing so rapidly. I was glued to the Fire Services scanner and the ABC radio to keep up to date constantly. All this while preparing my own home for fire protection.

https://www.facebook.com/pg/jaybeesentertainmentbookingagency/posts/?ref=page_internal

From my own point of view as a Booking Agent - the months previously where we put all of these bookings into place, supplied contracts, posters etc was all completely undone. So in effect, we had worked for several months for nothing.

I have attached screen shots of cancellation notices I posted, there were many more as well - this was just a snapshot. Some we didn't know about in time to notify, when artists turned up at venues only to find they were closed due to power outages. Some cancellations happened just hours before a gig was supposed to start because of a wind direction change and a new threat to a village pending. For some venues who had booked an entire program for the Summer, the December fires and road closures just forced their hand and they called and cancelled everything.

After the most traumatic day of the Currowan fire, the Rural Fire Service told holidaymakers to leave the South Coast. A [mass exodus clogged roads](#), slowing and halting traffic along the Princes Highway at Ulladulla and Batemans Bay. This was pretty much the final straw and anyone who was able to perform reported next to no-one in the venues unless they happened to be performing in one of the venues allocated as an evacuation centre where they were then able to perform for everyone from babies to grandies as well as dogs, cats, chickens and goats. At least they were able to help folks forget their troubles for a few hours.

Several musicians lost their homes, some lost all their equipment and others lost all their bookings. My own brother-in-law lost everything he owns at Lake Conjola. A wonderful couple who had a company called "Tender Loving Covers" who made fabulous covers for band equipment lost everything in the fire at Sussex. He is a musician as well and he had already lost everything in the fires of 2001. He was one of the first at that time to put his hand up to help put on a benefit for the local fire brigade that year. He rebuilt his life and started this business with his wife which was a wonderful resource for musicians only to be struck down again.

We didn't really see any pick up until Australia Day when most areas felt confident enough to be able to stage an event and book entertainment. So on Australia Day everyone (who could) was working again.

Despite the huge loss that every entertainer copped over what is traditionally the biggest earning period of the year, they have now all been asked to perform for nothing for the hundreds of benefit gigs across the country... most have put up their hand to help but how ironic is that!!!!

There can be no cancellation clause written into any contracts to cover such an apocalyptic event. Both entertainers and venues all lost out hugely - this is the same sector that everyone turned to to provide relief for the evacuees and refugees from the fires.

There needs to be a built in safeguard for all of these people without the need for them to jump through the hoops at Service NSW or Centrelink. I had a discussion with Service NSW in their mobile van at Mollymook and they just gave me the phone numbers for Service NSW and Centrelink. We know those numbers, our musicians have not approached them for compensation, not wanting to have to wade through their tiresome systems.

I have possibly jumped all over the place with this, but one day I will try to sit down and make sense of it all one day. For now, I hope I have given you a glimpse of our world on the South Coast and Southern Highlands of NSW....

Regards
Narrell Brown JP
Managing Director Jaybees Entertainment
Vice President Basin Villages Forum

SHOALHAVEN, ILLAWARRA AND SHELLHARBOUR BUSHFIRES IMPACT SURVEY

To provide further data, The Live Music Office sought additional information on how the creative community has been impacted by the recent bushfires through an online survey informed by the model used by South East Arts in Bega. [See Survey Link Here](#)

The survey was aimed towards professional musicians, artists, venues, agents, creative businesses, museums, galleries or collectives living or operating in the Shoalhaven, Shellharbour or Illawarra areas who had suffered direct impact from the bushfires, and had 25 respondents.

Of the 25 respondents:

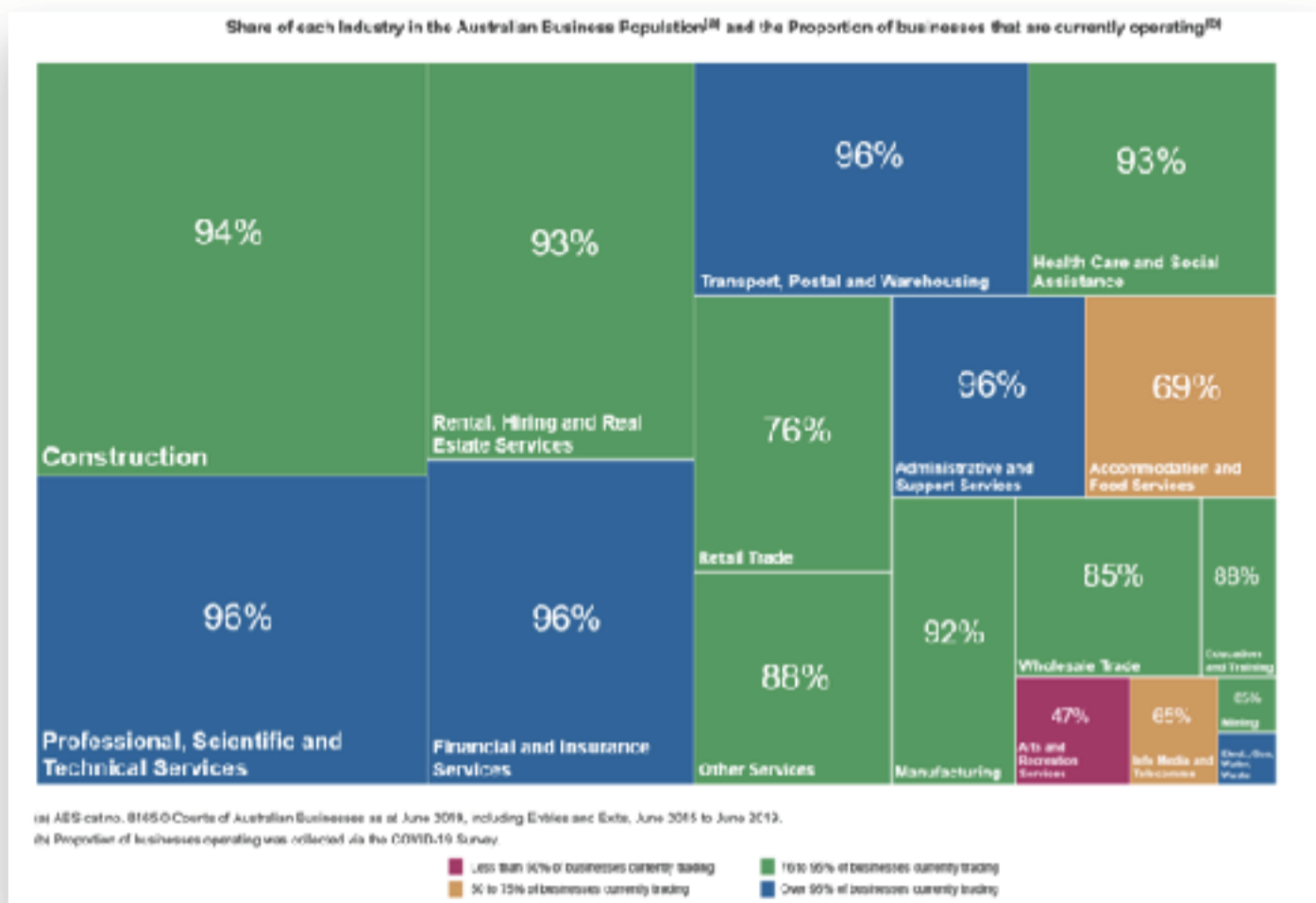
- 9 had lost either their home or studio or both.
- 4 identified as working in Shoalhaven North, 23 in Shoalhaven South, 2 in the Illawarra and 1 in Shellharbour
- 14 (56%) responded that their arts and cultural practice was their primary source of income.

COVID - 19

Previously identified in the introduction, the already devastating situation has now been made significantly worse as music and live events suffered a further and immediate direct negative impact as a result of the Federal and State Government's necessary and important response to the COVID-19 crisis.

In recent weeks the Australian Bureau of Statistics surveyed businesses operating in each industry division for COVID - 19 impacts in the week commencing 30 March¹.

- By industry, less than half of businesses in Arts & recreation services were operating, at 47%.
- By contrast, 96% of businesses in Professional, scientific and technical services were operating;



¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Business Indicators, Business Impacts of COVID-19, Week Commencing 30 March 2020

MUSIC INDUSTRY SUPPORT

To respond to the bushfires, the music industry quickly organised to provide support across a range of initiatives, not only through peak bodies and charity work, but many artists also gave their time and skills to perform for fundraising initiatives.

Industry support included:

- APRA AMCOS provided support for members and licensees – Members can talk to them about how they might be able to offer support through a dedicated phone line in case members need assistance. Please call on [REDACTED] between 7.00am and 7.00pm AEDT.
- Music industry charity Support Act provides free, confidential counselling support to anyone working in Australian music through their Wellbeing Helpline available by calling 1800 959 500. With support from CMI Australia, are delivering up to \$50,000 in instrument and music equipment replacement in fire impacted regions, as well as the existing crisis relief services.
- Australian Music Industry Network (AMIN) guide for event organisers putting on benefit gigs



RECOVERY - LIVE AND LOCAL

Across 2016/18, The Live and Local Strategic Initiative from Create NSW and the Live Music Office provided \$525,000 in funding to bring local councils, local businesses and local musicians together to stage free family-friendly 'micro-music festivals' for the public.

Providing a thoroughly road tested and evaluated vehicle for partnerships between local councils, retail, tourism and the hospitality and music industries, in our view the Live and Local model is a serious initiative that would have a genuine role to play supporting recovery for fire impacted communities in NSW.

The objectives of the Live and Local Strategic Initiative are to:

- Support local businesses in programming live music
- Build capacity for local Councils to provide sustainable, locally specific music based events
- Provide direct access to best practice presentation, promotion, strategy and networks
- Enhance connections for local musicians to the local and domestic music industry
- Deliver best practice policy and regulatory guidance to local councils
- Coordinate a strong, collegiate music network within Western Sydney & Regional NSW
- Support all-ages audience development and access to live music.

In its first year (2016), five Western Sydney locations were selected to host programs, supported by \$150,000 from Create NSW (then Arts NSW). Events took place in:

1. Blacktown
2. Camden
3. Fairfield
4. Parramatta
5. Wollondilly

After the success of the first year's events the NSW Government supported eight Regional Councils with \$150,000 funding and \$100,000 to support a further five more Western Sydney Councils as well as operational funding for the Live Music Office.

Round 2 Regional NSW Councils:

1. Armidale
2. Kempsey
3. Mudgee
4. Newcastle
5. Orange
6. Tenterfield
7. Tweed Shire
8. Wagga Wagga

Round 2 Western Sydney Councils:

1. Blue Mountains
2. Campbelltown
3. Cumberland
4. Hawkesbury and
5. Liverpool

At the completion of the program at June 30 2018:

- A total of **66 individual events** were held across all three funding programs.
- A total of **1359 musicians** participated in Live and Local, of which 782 (57%) individual male and 577 (43%) individual female musicians participated in the program.
- A total of **583 acts** were programmed, comprised of 244 male acts, 184 female acts and 155 mixed-gender acts were programmed. A total of 339 all-female and mixed-gender acts were programmed, representing 58% of the total acts programmed.

- A total of **852 performances** were programmed, with 348 male performances, 283 female performances and 231 mixed-gender performances. A total of 514 all-female or mixed-gender performances were programmed, representing 60% of the total number of performances.
- The program presented a range of genres but was focused mostly on acoustic music or performances with small PA requirements to suit small to medium venues.
- **Create NSW Priority Areas** were represented in every program, with a total of 236 CALD, 46 ATSI, 12 people with disabilities and 450 youth artists.
- The program presented a broad range of ages, from 9 years to 71 years.
- Total audience **attendance is estimated over 53,000** across the 18 LGAs in NSW.
- Based on findings by the Blue Mountains City Council economic development officer, a sample size of 2080 visitors was estimated to have generated around \$242,080 into the local economy from a single event.
- An estimated total of **\$448,514.00 of additional funding** was contributed by councils including both in-kind and cash contributions.
- A total of **262 venues** participated in the program.

35 different types of businesses were activated across hospitality, retail, hotel and entertainment sectors, listed as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Cafes | 19. Community Centres |
| 2. Restaurants | 20. Tattoo Parlours |
| 3. Pubs | 21. Music Store |
| 4. Public Domain | 22. Wineries |
| 5. Small Bars | 23. BnB |
| 6. Clothing Stores | 24. Hall |
| 7. Galleries | 25. Hairdresser/Barbershops |
| 8. Homewares and Gift Stores | 26. Bakeries |
| 9. Book stores | 27. Shisha Shop |
| 10. Registered Clubs | 28. Bowling Alley |
| 11. Hotels | 29. Theatres |
| 12. Delis | 30. Museums |
| 13. Arcade | 31. Florists |
| 14. Co-working creative spaces | 32. Furniture Stores |
| 15. Historic Houses | 33. Showground |
| 16. Cinemas | 34. Cycleries |
| 17. Shoe Stores | 35. Lawnmower/Garden Businesses |
| 18. Breweries | |

These events were also the catalyst for wide-ranging policy and strategy engagement with participating Councils, including:

- Engaging with the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the music and arts economy
- Participation in the consultation and development of the Create NSW Contemporary Music Strategy
- Connecting roles within Councils – cultural / events / development assessment / planning
- Enabling briefings on live music action plans, town planning models, best practice
- Supporting Night Time Economy dialogue and consideration