

Women in the Victorian Contemporary Music Industry

This discussion paper considers the issues confronting women in the contemporary music industry in Victoria. It is based on a survey conducted by Music Victoria and focuses on workplace gender equality and career development.

While Victorian in its context, its conclusions and directions can be extended nationally.

Music Victoria is the peak body for the contemporary music industry in Victoria. We commit to the 'next steps' outlined below, and commend this paper to the music industry, policy makers and the Australian community.

Music Victoria, September 2015

Background

Victoria's contemporary music industry is dynamic, diverse and vibrant. This scene is created by talented women and men, however, women are underrepresented in many spheres from festival lineups, radio play and award nominations to conference panels, industry organisation boards and other decision making roles. Even in 'the world's biggest musical democracy', Triple J's Hottest 100, women have an equal vote but not equal representation with women constituting 48% of voters but only 21% of acts¹.

Gender equality benefits both women and men, the economy (e.g. increased productivity, greater labour force talent pool) and society (e.g. social cohesion, reduced violence). LISTEN and One of One are two websites that have recently launched to recognise and promote the contribution of women to the Australian music industry, as well as provide a forum to connect with other women and share their experience. Moreover, these initiatives aim to highlight the importance of women having an equal role and voice in the music industry as employees and managers of music businesses, and more importantly, as creators and performers of music.

Music Victoria, as the peak body for the contemporary music industry in the state, is well placed to promote women in music and in early 2015, the Board provided in principle support to explore options

¹ Koziol, M. 27 January 2015. Triple J Hottest 100: It's a man's world. Sydney Morning Herald.

to do so. Music Victoria conducted a survey in April 2015 to seek insight into the experience of women working in the Victorian contemporary music industry. The survey asked a series of questions about women's employment and career development, as well as whether gender has had an impact on their experience. Over 300 women completed the survey providing a wealth of information on the issues and barriers women face in establishing and building a career in the Victorian music industry.

Many of the issues and barriers raised in the survey results are industry wide and not gender specific. However, there is a consistency in the responses that suggests women are impacted by these issues and barriers more strongly than men. The key themes emerging from the survey results are discussed in further detail below.

Who responded?

The majority of respondents were young, educated women living in Melbourne. Their primary role within the music industry is a musician or songwriter, and these women typically work multiple roles within and outside the industry in order to financially support themselves. Only a quarter (26%) of the respondents earn all of their income from their employment in the music industry.

Women employed in the music industry typically work for small and micro sized businesses that are male dominated, with the majority of employees and senior management being male. However, 20% of respondents describe themselves as self-employed.

Further detail on the survey results is provided at Appendix A.

Key themes

The overarching theme that emerged from the survey results is pay inequality. Pay inequality is well documented and recent research has found the pay gap between women and men *increased* from 14.9% in May 2014 to 19.5% in May 2015 in the arts and recreation services industry, and is now higher than the average national pay gap of 17.9%². The survey results identified five interconnected factors that contribute to the pay gap experienced by women in the music industry: lack of paid work opportunities; casualisation of the workforce; gendered nature of caring responsibilities; access to opportunities; and the confidence gap.

A second theme regarding the value of music also emerged from the survey results. This theme is not gender specific and is an issue confronting the entire industry.

Finally, several survey respondents raised sexual harassment and assault as an issue facing women in the music industry and the serious nature of this issue deserves attention.

Lack of paid work opportunities

Simple economics of greater demand than supply for jobs in the music industry is a key factor in keeping wages and fees low, and in many cases, unpaid. Volunteering, internships and other unpaid opportunities are plentiful and seen as a valuable way to gain experience, with 42% of respondents

² Workplace Gender Equality Agency. September 2015. Gender pay gap statistics.

stating they use volunteering as a strategy to further their career. However, numerous respondents indicated that it is difficult to transition from unpaid to paid work opportunities.

The biggest barrier is breaking through the unpaid barrier into an actual valued and payable member of the team.

The gap between study and a job is experience. I already do a lot of unpaid work so it can be difficult to get experience to a certain position without doing more unpaid work.

Another issue is one of expectation management. Young women in particular appear to use volunteering in an attempt to bridge the gap between learning and earning. For example, 63% of Music Victoria's education committee are female students and 70% of Face the Music volunteers are female.

The harsh reality is that only a few will find paid employment in the music industry, and even fewer will find paid employment in full time roles. Music Victoria received 113 job applications when it recently advertised the role of Office Administrator and 64 job applications for the role of Program and Operations Manager, providing one indication of the overwhelming demand for such roles.

Casualisation of the workforce

Just over a quarter (27%) of respondents work full-time in the music industry and only 1% of respondents stated they were permanently employed. This casualisation of the workforce is reflective of the nature of the music industry but also reflects a wider trend.

Recent research indicates that 30% of Australian women aged 20-24 years old are not engaged in full time work or study, 10% higher than men in the same age group³. These women are either unemployed, outside the labour force or surviving on casual or part time work. The research suggests that this gap is due to a lack of a strong, well defined set of pathways from education to industry. So while education opportunities have expanded, this hasn't been matched by employment opportunities, particularly for women.

The casualisation of work in the music industry coupled with lower pay impacts women strongly in financial terms. Recent research by the ANZ found Australian women earn an average of \$295 per week less than men, which equates to \$700,000 over their lifetime⁴.

Gendered nature of caring responsibilities

The ANZ report also found that almost half of all mothers report some form of workplace discrimination and of these, a third resign and look for another job or drop out of the workforce altogether. This research is supported by the survey results that indicate many women in the music industry are effectively forced out of the industry to raise children. Women with and without children commented that a family and career in the music industry are incompatible.

I am young and not yet thinking about children but there will come a time when [I will have to consider], how can I be the best manager and travel/attend gigs if I have children? ... This is not something that the men in my workplace have had to have a second thought about.

Lack of industry and government support for mothers in the industry, low rates of payment, lack of ability to tour with children.

³ 'Generation stressed' being left behind, Weekend Australian, 20 June 2015.

⁴ ANZ. 2014. Women's Report: Barriers to Achieving Financial Gender Equity.

Ability to tour and gig with small children under 8 – less of a problem for men with wives. I need a wife!

While the question of how to balance family and career is a consideration for all women, casual work, night time and weekend work, and work involving travel make this juggling act harder for women working in the music industry. Until greater progress toward gender equality is achieved, women will continue to earn less than men, are less likely to advance their careers as far as men, and are more likely to spend their final years in poverty⁵.

Access to opportunities

The music industry is based on personal and professional networks and it is these relationships that give rise to job, performance and other opportunities. The overrepresentation of men in decision making roles in the music industry means it can be difficult for women to develop the relationships they need to 'get a foot in the door' and 'take the next step' to establish and build their careers.

Numerous survey respondents felt overlooked for opportunities because of the perception that they could not perform on stage or in a particular role as well as a male. The survey results provide plenty of examples of the 'just a girl' and 'boys club' mentality of many men (and some women) that impacts the experience of women working in the music industry by limiting their access to opportunities.

The 'just a girl' mentality is often reinforced by the media with women commonly referred to as female musicians rather than simply musicians. As Gloria Steinem observed "whoever has power takes over the noun – and the norm – while the less powerful get an adjective"⁶. Further, the media often focuses on how women look and act rather than the music they play.

Feeling of being considered a 'female musician' instead of just a 'musician'.

Male egos taking credit for female initiated achievements and lack of recognition professionally due to male dominated industry.

As a female artist I commonly get comments from males saying 'I didn't expect you to be able to play guitar so well'.

I feel I have more pressure to look, be and sound a certain way (which I don't and am not) in order to be successful.

Many orchestras have implemented 'blind auditions' to overcome gender bias in candidate selection. Research demonstrates that women are 50% more likely to advance beyond preliminary auditions and are also more likely to end up in the final audition when the blind audition approach is used⁷. This example indicates an inherent bias among both men and women that women cannot play certain instruments as well as men.

Other respondents felt overlooked for opportunities because of the perception that the industry is based on who you know, rather than merit. As men dominate the key roles of power and influence in the music industry it is particularly difficult for women to overcome this barrier.

⁵ Workplace Gender Equality Agency. 2013. The business case for gender equality.

⁶ Steinem, G. 6 July 2007. In defense of the 'chick-flick'. Alternet.

⁷ Goldin, C & Rouse, C. 1997. Orchestrating impartiality: The impact of 'blind' auditions on female musicians. NBER Working Paper No. 5903.

The biggest barrier we face is getting in with the boys club. It's hard to progress because all the guys stick together in their crews and don't allow for much movement in the scene.

Most positions are hired based on who you know, and who you're friends with, opposed to experience and capabilities.

Some respondents commented that job opportunities are not formally advertised, further limiting access to a merit based approach. This is supported by 55% of respondents who believe a register of job and other opportunities would help to further their career.

A brief examination of the number of men and women in senior positions (i.e. executive roles or board members) of selected industry organisations supports the perception that the music industry is a 'boys club' (see Appendix B). Only half of the organisations have 50% or more females in senior positions and several organisations have no females in senior roles. Of all the senior positions available across these organisations, only 28% are held by women. However, women are over-represented in non-senior positions holding 58% of staff positions. These crude statistics show that like many other industries, women in the music industry do not have equal representation in the key decision making roles and face a 'glass ceiling'.

Confidence gap

Research has shown the 'confidence gap' between men and women applies widely. An often quoted example involves how men and women approach promotion. Typically, men will apply for the promotion even if they don't have all the skills/experience required. Conversely, women are unlikely to apply unless they have every skill/experience required. Many responses highlighted that women are often their own worst enemy.

The biggest barrier to my career development lies in trust in my skills and ability.

Interestingly, it often seems that the biggest barrier is my own reluctance to self-promote.

My level of confidence in myself. I need to believe and be more confident with myself.

Further, the lower level of females in senior roles or as internationally successful artists further impacts confidence. The suggestion is that if one woman has 'made it' this proves it is possible for all women to succeed. Therefore, if other women do not succeed then their failure can be attributed to personal shortcomings and made the responsibility of the individual rather than anything systematic⁸.

Undervaluing of music

There are few barriers to entry in the music industry and practically anyone can upload a song online or attend an open mic night. This results in a saturated market with strong competition to find, build and monetise an audience, which keeps performance fees and other financial returns from music low.

The majority of respondents (62%) described their primary role within the music industry as a musician or a songwriter, however, it appears that few are able to make a living from their music. The need for a 'day job' to earn an income was seen as a barrier to artistic practice for many women. Over 58% of respondents cited 'more opportunities for artistic practice' as a key means to further their career development.

⁸ Strong, C. 2015. All the girls in town: the missing women of Australian rock, cultural memory and coverage of the death of Chrissy Amphlett. Draft paper.

The lack of value of music in society, as a viable product that costs money to create by us, the makers. Hence music is free or very cheap to enjoy. Thus there are always financial barriers...

The fact that my entire band have to work so many jobs makes it very hard to organise anything.

Low pay for gigs, which necessitates having another job. As a result, committing time to my craft, composing, promotion, marketing, being a band leader etc is difficult. (This is a common problem!)

Time vs money. It takes huge amounts of unpaid work to produce quality work but rent and bills have to be paid so other work often takes over for practical reasons.

Sexual harassment and assault

Research by La Trobe University found that unwanted sexual attention is a significant problem faced by women, and occasionally men, going out in Melbourne. 96.6% of respondents thought that unwanted sexual attention happened in licensed venues and 80.2% viewed unwanted sexual attention as being common in Melbourne's pubs and clubs⁹. This research is consistent with comments in the survey results and the many experiences of sexual harassment and assault documented by the LISTEN initiative.

On 21 July 2015, the Victorian Government launched a taskforce to address sexual harassment and assault inside Victoria's licensed venues. Among other initiatives, the *Best Practice Guidelines For Live Music Venues* developed by the Live Music Roundtable will be reviewed to incorporate a new chapter to help address this issue.

Career development for women

The survey also asked women what strategies they use in terms of career development and what initiatives could be implemented to assist their career. Informal networking was the lead strategy with 90% of respondents citing they use this to further their career. Other key strategies were attending seminars and conferences (51%), membership of industry organisations (46%), informal mentor (45%), and formal networking (44%). When asked which of these strategies was most useful the overwhelming responses were networking and mentoring.

Over 60% of respondents stated they would like networking opportunities with more experienced or senior people as a means to further their career. As stated earlier, networks and relationships are key to accessing opportunities in the music industry so it is unsurprising that this is a leading initiative women would like to see.

Informal networking. Most work and gigs come to me through word of mouth. I work hard and I'm professional and that gets noticed, and I've found that mentioning to others that I may be looking for work helps more than applying formally for positions where I don't know anyone.

Networking, if people have worked with you in shows, seen you in concerts or if you have developed a good reputation amongst peers, you get jobs.

⁹ Fileborn, B. 23 May 2014. Sexual violence in pubs and clubs. The Conversation.

Many women commented that they use informal mentors and peers as source of advice and information. Over 49% of respondents stated they would be interested in being a mentor and 59% of respondents stated they are interested in being a mentee.

Mentoring, it builds confidence and provides valuable insights and perspective.

Informal mentors and networking. Purely because without a respected mentor speaking for you, it is extremely difficult to secure work. Ageism is rife and job opportunities are almost exclusively based on who you know, rather than what you know - which is abhorrent.

Informal mentor - there are some amazing women in this industry both performing and behind the scenes - those women need to be shown to the world as an example of YOU CAN DO IT - to both men and women.

Other initiatives women consider would be useful to further their career include a fellowship (i.e. cash prize to assist career development) and industry champions for gender equality.

Next steps

Music Victoria is well placed to promote women in music. It represents all contemporary music and believes diversity and equality is good for artists, music businesses and punters and increases the industry's capacity to generate economic, social and cultural outcomes for the state.

Many of the issues discussed reflect wider systemic issues in not just the music industry, but the economy and society more generally, and have no 'quick fix'. However, there are concrete actions that Music Victoria has committed to in order to demonstrate leadership and promote gender equality in the music industry.

Gender equality

- Convene a women's advisory panel to develop specific initiatives (e.g. mentoring, networking) that Music Victoria can lead or partner with other organisations to deliver and support women in the music industry.
- Increase the representation of women and aspire to achieve equal representation where possible on all Music Victoria panels, board, award nominees etc.
- Facilitate a networking element as part of Music Victoria's professional development seminars and workshops where possible.

Undervaluing of music

- Participate in the National Contemporary Music Roundtable to develop strategies to grow audiences and increase public respect for Australian music.
- Convene a musicians' advisory panel to advise Music Victoria on policies and initiatives to ensure musician's interests are represented on local and national issues.

Sexual harassment and assault

- Participate in the Victorian Government taskforce to address the sexual harassment and assault of women inside Victoria's licensed venues.

Appendix A: Key survey results

Question	Majority Response
Q1. What is your age?	45% of responses were aged between 26 and 35
Q2. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage?	Only 2 respondents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
Q3. Where are you based?	84% of responses were from Metropolitan Melbourne
Q4. What is the highest education qualification you have achieved?	49% of responses completed a Bachelor's degree
Q5. Has this qualification directly supported your career in the music industry?	45% of responses said the qualification somewhat supported their career 38% indicated their qualification did not support their career in the music industry
Q6. How many years of experience do you have in the music industry?	26% of responses have 6-10 years of experience in the industry
Q7. What is your main role in the music industry?	45% of respondents listed Musician as their main role
Q8. Do you perform any other roles in the music industry?	The most popular answers to this question were: Administration (27%) Music management (25%) Publicity (25%) Songwriter (24%)
Q9. In your main role in the music industry, which of the following best describes your employment?	27% of responses selected full time as their primary role 20% selected self-employed
Q10. In the last financial year, what was the gross income received from your employment in the music industry?	60% of responses indicated they earned under \$40,000 p.a. 40% earn under \$20,000 p.a.
Q11. In the last financial year, what percentage of your TOTAL gross income did the income from your employment in the music industry represent?	38% of responses said 1-25% of their income came from the music industry
Q12. Approximately how many employees are there in your work place?	51% said 1-4 employees
Q13. Approximately what percentage of the employees in your workplace are female?	38% said 1-25% of employees are female
Q14. Approximately what percentage of the senior managers in your work place are female?	28% said 0% 30% indicated 1-25% were female
Q15. Do you have any children or other caring responsibilities?	82% said this question is not applicable
Q17. Please indicate if you believe more opportunities for, or an increase in the following would assist your career?	68% indicated an increase in pay/wages would be of strong assistance to their career 45% also said that increased confidence, experience, skills, training and development and female role models and mentors would be of strong assistance to their career
Q18. What do you consider to be the biggest barrier to your career development?	288 open text responses received

Q19. What strategies do you currently use to further your career?	90% said they use informal networking as a strategy to further their career 51% attend seminars and conferences
Q20. Which of the strategies in question 19 do you find most useful? Why?	258 open text responses received
Q21. How useful would the following	60% indicated networking opportunities with more senior/experienced people would be very useful 53% said placement/internship opportunities would be very useful 55% said a register of job, speaking, board opportunities and industry champions for gender equality would be very useful
Q22. Are there any other initiatives that would assist your career development? If so, please outline below.	91 open text responses received
Q23. Do you feel your gender has affected your career development? If so, why or how?	243 open text responses received
Q24. Would you be interested in any of the following roles in the music industry?	54% said they would be interested in being a panel member 43% said they would be interested in being a board member. There was also a lot of interest in being a mentor, mentee, guest speaker or a buddy
Q25. Please provide any other suggestions, feedback or comments below.	66 open text responses received
Q26. If you are happy to be contacted for further consultation, please provide your name and email address below.	171 open text responses received

Appendix B: Workforce data of selected organisations by gender

ORGANISATION	ROLE	MALE	FEMALE
Music Victoria	Public Board	8 (Chair)	2
	CEO	1	
	Staff	1	3
APRA	Public Board	12	1 (Chair)
AMCOS	Public	12 (Chair)	1
APRA/AMCOS	Executive	1	
	Head of departments	4	
	Staff	9	5
Music Australia	Public Board	3 (Chair)	4
	CEO	1	
	Staff		4
Community Music Victoria	Public Board	4	7 (Chair)
Music SA	Public Board	5	4 (Chair)
	General Manager		1
	Staff	3	3
Music NT	Public Board	5 (Chair)	
	Executive Director	1	
	Staff	1	9
Music NSW	Public Board	4 (Chair)	3
	CEO		1
	Staff	2	2
WAM	Public Board	7 (Chair)	3
	CEO	1	
	Staff	2	3
Music ACT	Public Board	3 (Chair)	3
PPCA	Public Board	6 (Chair)	2
	CEO	1	
	Staff	3	4
AIR	Public Board	9 (Chair)	
	CEO	1	
The Push	Public Board	3 (Chair)	5
	CEO	1	
	Staff	1	3
ARIA	Public Board	5 (Chair)	
	CEO	1	
	Staff	4	1
Sounds Australia	Public Executive Producer		1
	Staff	1	1