



Barriers to career progression

Prepared by Music Victoria December 2011

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■ Background and Research objectives	3
■ Verbatim comments	4
■ Respondent demographics	5
■ Respondent demographics at a state level	6
■ Current employment status	7
■ Current involvement with Centrelink	8
■ Taking up benefits to progress a music career	9
■ Active musicians time contribution	10
■ Active musicians monetary contribution	11
■ Time and monetary contribution while on Centrelink benefits	12
■ Perceptions of Centrelink	13
■ A 'work for the dole' scheme for music and the arts	21
■ Summary	22
■ Next steps	24
■ Verbatim comments	25
■ Appendix A [Centrelink case study]	26

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- In light of the recent Deloitte Access Economics report 'The economic, social and cultural contribution of venue-based live music in Victoria'¹, which has clearly demonstrated the significant economic and social contribution live music makes to the state, Music Victoria undertook a bespoke research piece to further understanding of possible barriers to career progression currently facing musicians.
- The focus of this particular study is Centrelink policy and the research objectives were to understand if current policy and procedure is creating barriers to the opportunity musicians have to further their career, in turn impacting on the economic, social and cultural contributions as outlined in the Deloitte report.
- In addition, the research also aims to understand the perceptions musicians and individuals involved in the music industry have towards Centrelink's encouragement and support for the arts.
- Music Victoria circulated an online survey Nationwide on Wednesday 12th of November 2011 with distribution aided by state key peak bodies. The live survey link was also published on the Music Victoria website and participation was encouraged via social network sites such as Twitter and Facebook.
- The survey was open until November 30th 2011.
- 365 people completed the survey and provided their feedback.

¹Economic, social and cultural contribution of live music in Victoria
| Deloitte Access Economics June 2011

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It would make a huge difference as what I do would be recognised and valued and I could become better at it and therefore maybe make some more money and not need Centrelink. Male, Regional Qld, Established band, Unemployed, currently receiving Newstart

I think NEICE is a great concept and could be geared more towards creative industries to help musicians build their professional careers. The recent music economy studies show it can be a sustainable industry if properly invested in. Female Metro, NSW, Emerging band, Employed part time, past recipient of benefits

It would help legitimise it for one. Music for a lot of musicians isn't a hobby, but a career aspiration with considerable investment in training, on the job experience, working contacts, etc. It also leads to many other potential careers in the music industry: sound engineering, artist management, events management. To disregard the musician, is to disregard an entire sector of the economy. Male Metro SA, no longer actively performing, Employed full time, past recipient of benefits.

If you mean what Centrelink defines as a hobby as a legitimate and potential career pathway then the personal impact of unnecessary pressure would be greatly appreciated. Male, Metro Qld, Emerging soloist, past recipient of benefits

Although musicians are widely praised once established there is little support for talented artists that are starting off because they don't have the funding or networks to progress, music is very important to society and our generation, and the cost to get a solid foundation in this field can be very expensive. I work harder at my career than most people do in there office jobs yet I still have to be listed as unemployed and am expected to be looking for full time work to be eligible for support. Male, Metro Vic, Emerging band, Unemployed currently receiving Newstart

Australia would become so much more culturally rich if artists were allowed the space to work and the support of their government. If we were recognised for our contributions to society then the whole industry would become more professional and the quality of the work, no doubt could only improve. Female, Metro Vic, Established band, Unemployed currently receiving Newstart

I would be able to spend more time promoting my musical career, which could support me eventually (even if partially). Female, Regional NSW, Emerging band, currently receiving Newstart

Instead of wasting time meeting Centrelink requirements I could become a better musician. Male, Regional NSW, currently receiving Newstart

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Respondent demographics

- A total of 365 respondents completed the survey, of these respondents the breakdown at a state level and musicianship is below;

Which of the following best describes you?	Total n=	%
A musician / songwriter in an emerging band	118	32%
A musician / songwriter no longer actively practicing or performing	44	12%
A musician in an established band	68	19%
A solo musician / songwriter with an emerging career	57	16%
A solo musician / songwriter with an established career	22	6%
None of the above	56	15%
Total	365	100%

Emerging artists make up almost 50% of the sample

Which state do you currently live in?	Total n=	%
ACT	2	1%
New South Wales	50	14%
Northern Territory	13	4%
Queensland	31	8%
South Australia	15	4%
Tasmania	12	3%
Victoria	236	65%
Western Australia	6	2%
Grand Total	365	100%

Higher proportion of Victorian respondents among the survey results

Do you live in a metro city, a regional centre or a rural town?	Total n=	%
Metro city	301	82%
Regional centre	48	13%
Rural town	16	4%
Total	365	100%

Metro city over indexed

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Respondent demographics at a state level

Northern Territory 4% of total (n=13)
69% Metro, 31% Regional
77% Emerging

There are more artists with emerging careers represented within East Coast states than established artists. The trend continues in the Northern Territory.

Western Australia 2% of total (n=6)
83% Metro, 11% Rural 48%
26% Emerging, 50% Established

Queensland 8% of total (n=31)
84% Metro, 13% Regional, 3% Rural
48% Emerging, 29% Established

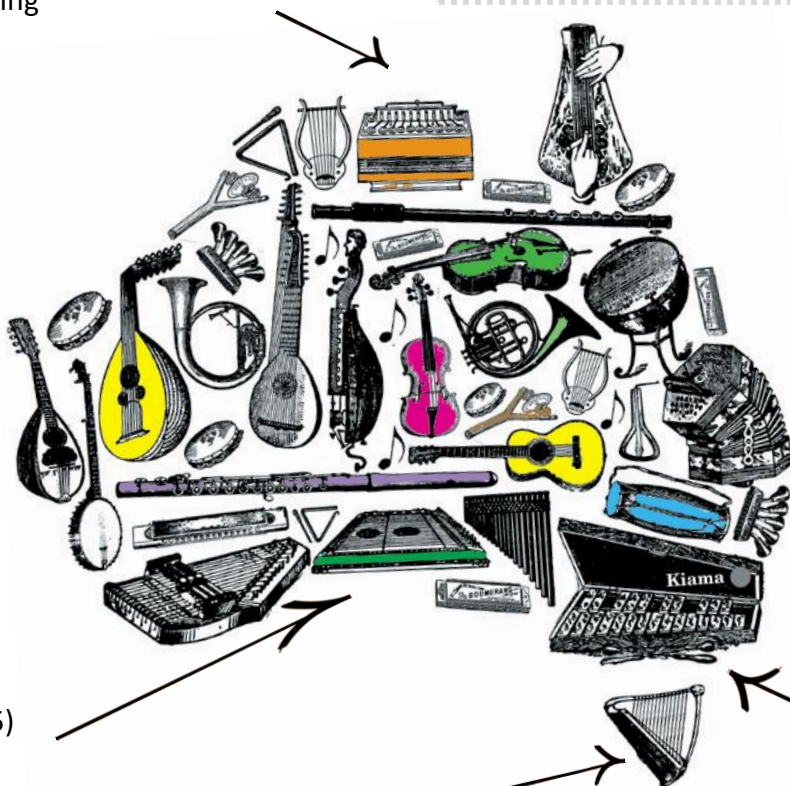
New South Wales 14% of total (n=50)
66% Metro, 26% Regional, 8% Rural
54% Emerging, 12% Established

ACT 1% of total (n=2)
50% Metro, 50% Regional
1 Emerging band

South Australia 4% of total (n=15)
100% Metro
33% Emerging, 53% Established

Tasmania 3% of total (n=12)
83% Metro, 8% Regional, 8% Rural
17% Emerging, 25% Established

Victoria 65% of total (n=236)
86% Metro, 11% Regional, 4% Rural
48% Emerging, 26% Established



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Current employment status

- Over half of all respondents who took part in the survey are employed either full or part time, 13% are currently unemployed, significantly higher than the national figure of 5.3%².
- Musicians are more likely to be currently involved in part time rather than full time employment.
- Established soloists are more likely to be employed in some capacity [83%] than any other group.

Employment Status	Total	Emerging Musician Solo	Emerging Musician Band	Established Musician Solo	Established Musician Band
Base size	365	57	118	22*	68
Employed full time	26%	21%	25%	23%	25%
Employed part time	30%	39%	25%	55%	40%
Full time student working	12%	14%	16%	5%	6%
Full time student not working	6%	11%	6%	--	3%
Part time student working	2%	--	1%	--	1%
Part time student not working	1%	--	2%	--	1%
Unemployed	13%	7%	19%	5%	13%
Other	8%	9%	4%	14%	9%
Not stated	2%	--	3%	--	1%

Musicians who are part of an emerging band are more likely to be currently unemployed [19%] than either emerging or established solo musicians [7% and 5% respectively]

*Sample size <30, results are indicative only

²<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0> | November 2011

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Current involvement with Centrelink

- Three quarters of all respondents have received Centrelink benefits at some point.
- Musicians involved in an emerging band are more likely to currently be receiving Centrelink benefits [43%] than any other group.
- Established soloists are more likely to have received Centrelink benefits in the past and less likely to be currently receiving benefits.

Employment Status	Total	Emerging Musician Solo	Emerging Musician Band	Established Musician Solo	Established Musician Band
Base size	358	57	42	22*	37
Currently receiving benefits	33%	33%	43%	14%	31%
Not receiving benefits but have in the past	43%	46%	31%	64%	55%
Not receiving benefits and never have	24%	21%	26%	23%	13%

- Just over half of those currently receiving Centrelink benefits are on Newstart Allowance.

Currently receiving benefits	Total	Emerging Musician Solo	Emerging Musician Band	Established Musician Solo	Established Musician Band
Base size	119	19*	49	21*	3*
Austudy	14%	5%	14%	14%	33%
Youth Allowance	24%	37%	22%	10%	--
Newstart Allowance	54%	53%	63%	62%	67%
Other	19%	26%	12%	19%	33%

Of those respondents currently receiving benefits, 31% are students, 26% are unemployed and a further 24% are working part time.

*Sample size <30, results are indicative only
'Type of benefit received' is a multiple response question, results may not add up to 100% / Overlap is caused by 'Other' benefit only

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Taking up benefits to progress a music career

- On average, respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement that their career had some bearing on their decision to take up Centrelink benefits.
- The very nature of a music career may impact on the ability to undertake employment in a 'traditional' role.

Employment Status	Total	Emerging Musician Solo	Emerging Musician Band	Established Musician Solo	Established Musician Band
Base size	248	42	80	17*	55
My music career had no bearing on my decision to take up Centrelink benefits	5.15	6.48	4.46	4.53	4.62

Emerging bands are slightly more likely to indicate a link between progressing their career and taking up benefits

Centrelink benefits have helped me financially on and off for years. I value it very much, but do think the activities I sometimes have to do are a waste of my time and Centrelink staffs time. Male, Metro Vic, Emerging band, currently receiving Newstart

*I was employed with full time work within the music industry for three years after finishing university and playing in a band at the same time that was on the rise and required more time and attention than I could give while working full time hours. I decided it was integral to give more time to focus on my creative musical career and applied for New Start, obviously leaving my full time position at the same time. As far as Centrelink and Job Prospects were concerned, being in a band was not considered "work," and I was forced to "apply" for jobs I had no intention of taking to avoid being cut off from payments, all in the while, working extremely hard (although with few *immediate* financial rewards) with the band. Male, Metro Vic, Established band, Employed full time, past recipient of benefits*

To be able to receive a weekly payment without pretence or spending time doing Centrelink required activities would allow me to have small regular supplement within a field that does not pay routinely. This would alleviate a lot of stress off artists and also create an environment for Australian artists to make more meaningful contributions to their field. Female, Metro Vic, Established band, past recipient of benefits

'Don't know' responses excluded
Average based on 10 point scale where
0='strongly disagree' and 10='strongly agree'
*Sample size <30, results are indicative only

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Active musicians time contribution

- On average, active musicians spend 34.38 hours per week on career related tasks. Rehearsal and administration tasks contribute to almost half of this time allocation.

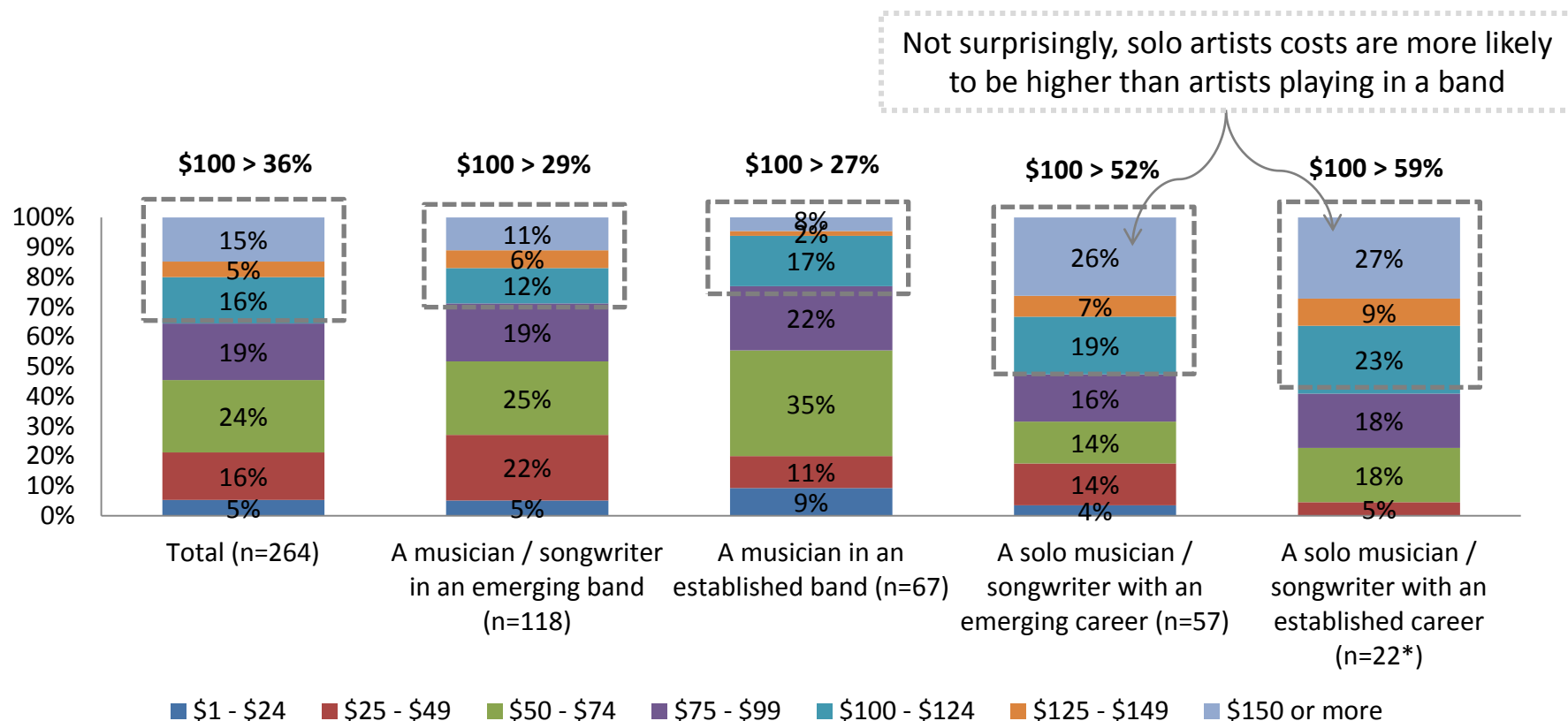
How much time would you spend on the following tasks in an average week?	Active musicians	Emerging Musicians	Established Musicians
Base size	264	175	89
Administration and management tasks	6.59	6.14	7.49
Live performance	4.65	4.21	5.55
Marketing and promotion	5.21	5.41	4.87
Rehearsal	8.22	9.15	6.46
Travel time (e.g. to and from rehearsal pace, venue etc)	3.98	4.07	3.84
Networking	5.72	6.17	4.87
Total Average hours per week	34.38	35.14	33.08

Musicians spend the equivalent amount of time on their career each week as a full time employee working an 8 hour day

- Live performance time indicates approximately two gigs per week.
- Emerging musicians spend slightly more time on their career per week with rehearsing [9.15 hours compared to 6.46 hours] and networking [6.17 hours compared to 4.87 hours] more time intensive than established musicians.
- Established musicians tend to spend slightly more time on administration and management tasks [7.49 hours compared to 6.14 hours] and live performances [5.55 hours compared to 4.21 hours] than emerging artists.

Active musicians monetary contribution

- Just over one third [36%] of musicians spend more than \$100 per week on costs associated with developing their career.



Q. In an average week, how much of your own money would you contribute towards costs associated with working on your music career?

Base: Musicians who are currently active
 *Sample size <30, results are indicative only

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Time and monetary contribution while on benefits

- Unemployed musicians spend more time and money on progressing their careers each week compared to the total.

Time allocation	Currently receiving benefits	Currently Unemployed
Base size	92	37
Administration and management tasks	6.91	6.11
Live performance	3.39	6.55
Marketing and promotion	4.91	8.22
Rehearsal	7.93	11.43
Travel time	3.66	6.14
Networking	6.18	8.49
Total Average hours per week	32.99	46.93

Musicians who are currently unemployed spend 12.55 more hours on average than the total [34.38]

Monetary contribution	Currently receiving benefits	Currently Unemployed
Base size	92	37
\$1-\$24	4%	--
\$25-\$49	17%	3%
\$50-\$74	35%	41%
\$75-\$99	15%	16%
\$100-\$124	14%	19%
\$125-\$149	5%	8%
\$150 or more	9%	14%
\$100 or more	28%	41%

Musicians who are currently unemployed are more likely to spend \$100 or more per week than the total [41% compared to 36% total spend]

Base: Musicians who are currently active

Q. How much time would you spend on the following tasks in an average week; Q. In an average week, how much of your own money would you contribute towards costs associated with working on your music career?

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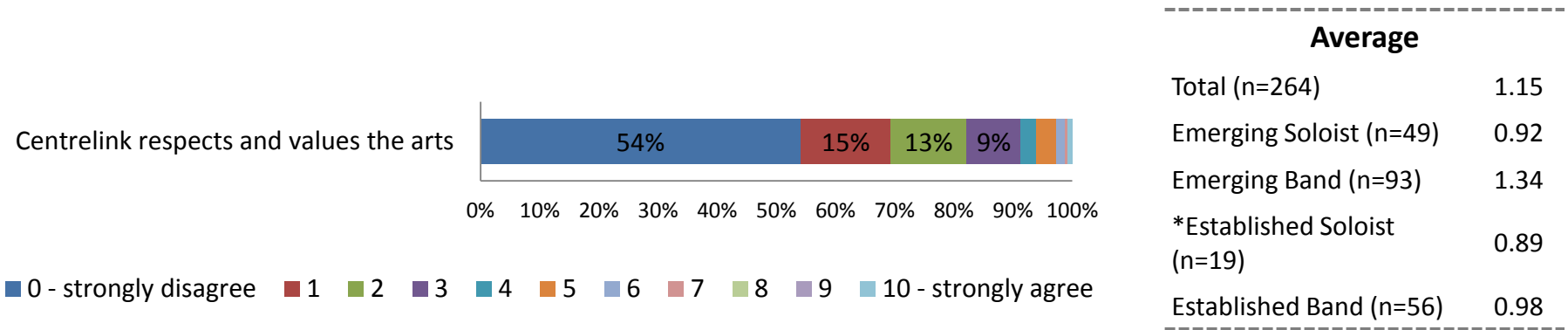


- A battery of attitudinal questions was included in the survey in an attempt to capture current thoughts and perceptions towards Centrelink and its involvement and assistance in the arts.
- The following pages provide results and key verbatim to highlight responses.
- In the main, results are not positive and indicate that respondents general perceptions of Centrelink are as an organisation that does not assist with career progression for musicians and artists.
- The key themes emerging from the verbatim comments collected are;
 - Musicians feel devalued and under appreciated by the Government due in part to their experiences with Centrelink.
 - Current Centrelink processes are inflexible and not suited towards individuals pursuing a career in the music industry.
 - Musicians feel as though they are being pushed into looking for and taking up employment opportunities that they are not qualified for or interested in in order to meet current Centrelink requirements.
 - This is highly evident among those who have undertaken tertiary study in music related University courses.
 - There would be a positive effect on musicians career progression if the time dedicated to pursuing their career was accounted for by Centrelink.

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- Over half of all respondents strongly disagree that Centrelink respects and values the arts.



Centrelink staff told us that, as musicians, we "are not contributing to society". If they were at all supportive our music careers would have continued far longer.

Female, Metro Vic, Non active musician, Unemployed, past recipient of benefits

I'm quite sure that if my "thing"/skills/experience was in sports I'd be receiving far, far more support and respect as a skilled professional.

Male, Metro Vic, Self employed, currently receiving Newstart Allowance

Just generally more flexibility, understanding and respect. I was often criticised by Centrelink and my job network provider. My ESP once said to me "you are using my tax dollars".

Female, Metro Vic, Established band, Employed part time, past recipient of benefits

'Don't know' responses excluded
% <4 not shown on charts
*Sample size <30, results are indicative only

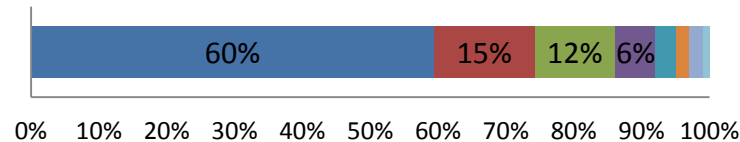
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Centrelink is empathetic

- 60% of all respondents strongly disagree that Centrelink empathises with the creative process.

Centrelink empathises with the creative process



0 - strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - strongly agree

Average

Total (n=263)	0.98
Emerging Soloist (n=48)	0.67
Emerging Band (n=94)	1.15
*Established Soloist (n=19)	0.79
Established Band (n=57)	0.89

Most Centrelink workers have little empathy for the struggle that every musician has to go through in order to even get work. maybe if you could somehow teach them that we aren't slackers and dole bludgers.

Male, QLD Metro, Emerging Soloist, Employed full time, past recipient of benefits

A basic sympathetic understanding that the arts industry is an ACTUAL business industry and not just a response of 'we don't get many arts jobs through here so we're not going to help you find a job in that field. We are also not going to cut you a break because of this'. Very unhelpful with regard to creative careers.

Female, Qld Metro, Emerging Soloist, Employed part time, currently receiving Newstart

Just understand that being a musician is a lot of hard work with often very little monetary rewards. I have a music degree. I owe the government \$30,000. But still have to stand in line. My passion is music. There is nothing else I like doing. Male, Vic Metro, Emerging band, Employed part time, past recipient of benefits

'Don't know' responses excluded

% <4 not shown on charts

*Sample size <30, results are indicative only

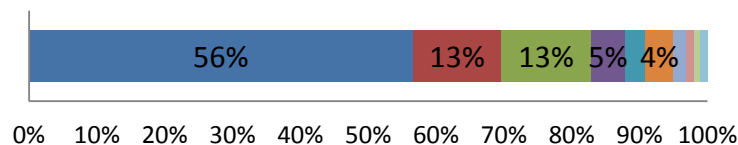
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Centrelink enables the creative process

- Over half of all respondents strongly disagree that Centrelink helps enable artist's creative progression.

Centrelink helps enable artist's creative progression



0 - strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - strongly agree

Average

Total (n=268)	1.31
Emerging Soloist (n=48)	1.06
Emerging Band (n=95)	1.07
*Established Soloist (n=19)	0.95
Established Band (n=56)	1.79

I think other than financially, knowing that the welfare system acknowledges the arts and actively supports them more than they do now would help expand the culture of the country. Male, Metro Vic, Emerging band, Full time student working, currently receiving Youth allowance

Centrelink has helped me follow my passions of art, music and writing over the years, although it has been a struggle. Female, Regional NSW, Emerging band, Employed part time, currently receiving Newstart allowance

It would have helped me gain a foothold in the music industry. I was pushed by Centrelink at all times to apply for jobs that had nothing to do with my training (Bachelor/honours and Masters in music) because they had no resources or understanding about careers in music. Male, Metro WA, past recipient of benefits

'Don't know' responses excluded
% <4 not shown on charts
*Sample size <30, results are indicative only

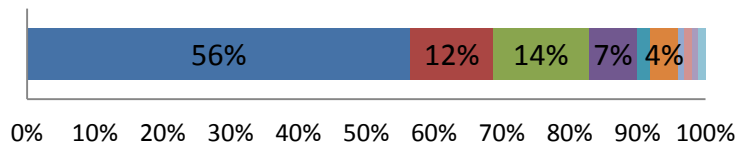
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Centrelink offers adequate financial support

- On average, all respondents rated Centrelink 1.29 out of 10, where 0 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree, on providing adequate financial support to artists.

Centrelink provides adequate financial support to artists and arts workers



0 - strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - strongly agree

Average

Total (n=268)	1.29
Emerging Soloist (n=50)	0.84
Emerging Band (n=93)	1.49
*Established Soloist (n=19)	0.63
Established Band (n=56)	1.36

No where near enough money to live and play in a working band with financial needs.
Male, Metro Vic, Established band, Employed full time, past recipient of benefits

Give adequate financial support, young people could be at the least fully employed within the entertainment industry, especially now that with internet, being an independent artist is so much easier. Male, Metro SA, Established Soloist, Employed full time, past recipient of benefits

Financial aid for musicians is available in form of arts grants and time should be better spent focusing on those arts organizations that actually serve the purpose that this survey insinuates Centrelink serve.
Metro Vic, Emerging band, Employed full time, has never received benefits

'Don't know' responses excluded
% <4 not shown on charts
*Sample size <30, results are indicative only

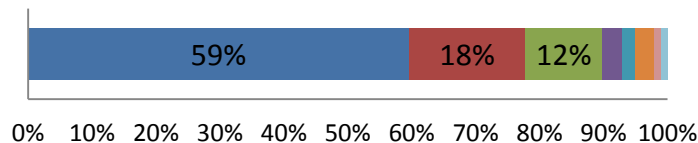
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Centrelink provides adequate administration support

- Close to two thirds of all respondents strongly disagree that Centrelink provides adequate administrative support to artists and arts workers.

Centrelink provides adequate administrative support to artists and arts workers



0 - strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - strongly agree

Average

Total (n=264)	0.93
Emerging Soloist (n=50)	0.88
Emerging Band (n=95)	1.00
*Established Soloist (n=18)	0.50
Established Band (n=54)	0.72

Centrelink are an administrative nightmare, poor communicators and lost every form I submitted as a Youth Allowance recipient, making twice the amount of work for me. Unless the administrative side of their operation could be improved, I'd have some serious considering to do before I reengaged with them. Female, Metro Vic, Emerging soloist, Employed part time, previous recipient of benefits

Centrelink had no idea how to deal with my Music work as a contractor while I was studying at university and receiving Youth Allowance. They gave me a different answer every time I had to report earnings. Male, Regional Vic, Established band, Employed full time, previous recipient of benefits

'Don't know' responses excluded

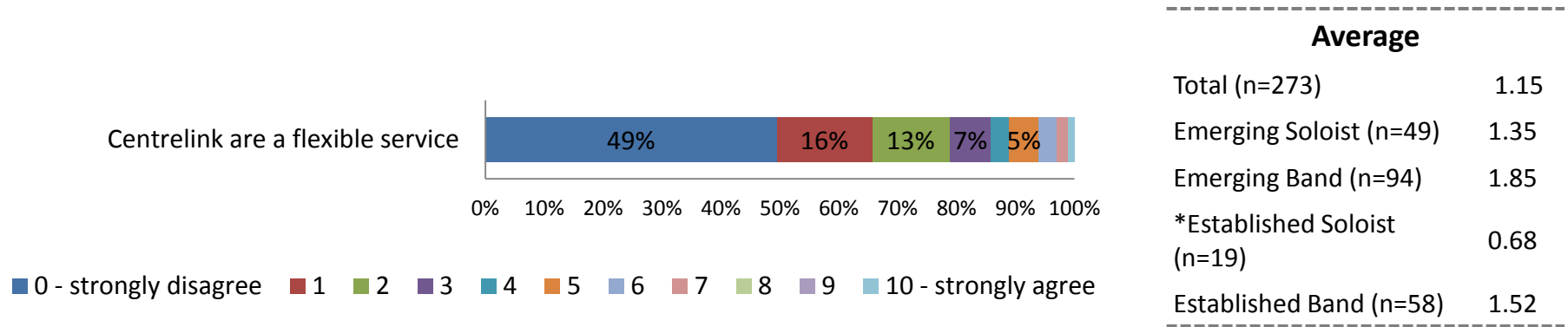
% <4 not shown on charts

*Sample size <30, results are indicative only

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- Just under half of all respondents strongly disagree that Centrelink are a flexible service.



Centrelink are very inflexible and like to have the "last word" on everything.

Not interested in individual cases and just prefer to enforce the rules.

Male, Metro NSW, Established Soloist, Employed part time, previous recipient of benefits

They could be more flexible in their approach to people who are involved in the arts. All of the time spent on art is part of the productive industry and should be included in the concept of looking for work!

Male, Regional Qld, Emerging band, Employed full time, previous recipient of benefits

I also have the insight of previously working for what became Centrelink. I was able to help many young athletes and musicians with their careers by advising them on the best way to arrange their affairs to fit the inflexible and unhelpful system.

'Don't know' responses excluded

% <4 not shown on charts

*Sample size <30, results are indicative only

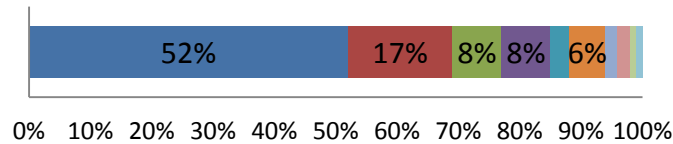
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Centrelink treats people as individuals

- 52% of all respondents strongly disagree that Centrelink views people as individuals with unique needs.

Centrelink view people as an individual with unique needs



0 - strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - strongly agree

Average

Total (n=271)	1.45
Emerging Soloist (n=50)	1.46
Emerging Band (n=96)	1.65
*Established Soloist (n=18)	0.72
Established Band (n=56)	1.50

The individual people there are nice and want to help, but the rules make their job tricky.

Male, Regional Vic, Emerging Soloist, currently receiving Newstart allowance

Create more (slightly) individual specific rules and regulations, I understand the generic system based program which is used has not a lot of room to move, or understanding of separate circumstances.

Female, Metro Tas, Established Soloist, Unemployed, currently receiving Newstart allowance

My biggest frustration and annoyance with Centrelink is that they have a "blanket" approach to all their customers and do not look at everyone on an individual basis. Musicians are an extremely unique group in terms of how we work & get paid so I think Centrelink needs to put a little more time into understanding these things.

Male, Metro Vic, Emerging Soloist, Employed part time, currently receiving Newstart allowance

'Don't know' responses excluded

% <4 not shown on charts

*Sample size <30, results are indicative only

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A 'work for the dole' scheme for music and the arts

- 54% of all respondents strongly agree that a Centrelink work for the dole scheme tailored to music and the arts would benefit the community.

Employment Status	Total	Emerging Musician		Established Musician	
		Solo	Band	Solo	Band
Base size	270	49	94	17*	58
A Centrelink 'work for the dole' scheme tailored to music and the arts would benefit the community	8.13	8.51	8.09	8.41	8.19

I am studying the effects of group music making on community's and individual health and wellbeing, and it is a proven source of community wellness!! Please employ good facilitators and get this happening. It will give young people a routine to begin a healthy work ethic and hopefully start a pattern of enjoying 'going to work'. This is the biggest hurdle for young.....it is hard to enjoy working when you are not confident or motivated for something other than money. There needs to be other ways to bring the habit of working into young people's lives and music is the perfect way as it can be utilized on so many levels by everyone from every background and culture. GO FOR IT !!! Female, Metro NT, Emerging soloist, Full time student working, previous recipient of benefits

Musicians and the arts are providing a huge service to the community on many levels. This needs to be mirrored from the government back to the artists. I have received government support in the past but not because I am a musician, rather that I had to prove that in being a musician I was considered 'unemployed' in Centrelink's eyes. Male, Metro Vic, Emerging band, past recipient of benefits

A work for the dole in the music Industry if regulated and connected to genuine work experience placement and study options would be of great benefit and perhaps legitimise the mentor system that is necessary for a musicians business and industry understanding. Male, Metro Qld, Musician no longer practicing, Employed full time, past recipient of benefits

'Don't know' responses excluded
Average based on 10 point scale where
0='strongly disagree' and 10='strongly agree'
*Sample size <30, results are indicative only

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- On average, the amount of time musicians currently spend progressing their careers per week is equivalent to full time employment. Couple this with the ongoing costs associated with tending a music career [36% of musicians spend more than \$100 per week on costs associated with developing their career] and the effort is justifiably significant and one which should be acknowledged.
- The majority of musicians who completed this survey are currently employed (and/or studying) and cite the negative impact this has on their ability to devote sufficient time towards pursuing their musical aspirations and furthering their career.
- 13% are currently unemployed, significantly higher than the national figure of 5.3%². Within this group, almost half [49%] are musicians in an emerging band, 19% are musicians in an established band and solo artists make up 6% of those currently without employment.
- 33% of respondents are currently receiving benefits while a further 43% have received benefits in the past, combined this equates to three quarters of those who completed the survey having had direct dealings with Centrelink.
- Musicians in an emerging band are more likely to be current recipients of benefits and Newstart Allowance is the most common benefit being received across all musician groups.
- Common themes emerging from the study is the belief that Centrelink is an inflexible service that does not adequately acknowledge and/or support the contribution musicians make to both society and the economy.
- Changes to current Centrelink processes and policy that were focused on allowing musicians to dedicate more time to pursuing their careers were viewed favourably. The main themes emerging around this discussion point were;
 - Allowing musicians the opportunity to dedicate themselves towards their music career may enhance self sufficiency
 - Removing constraints dictated by current policy would directly increase practice, rehearsal and performance opportunities which may in turn enhance skills and impact positively on economic contribution
 - Viewing music as a legitimate and valued skill that contributed positively towards society would directly increase self esteem and self worth

²<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0> | November 2011

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- There is some concern however, that changes to current Centrelink processes that favour musicians and the arts may in fact compound current perceptions that musicians are 'dole bludgers' who don't contribute to society. In addition some respondents are concerned that there may be pockets of the industry that would take advantage of the system for their own self gain and not utilise the opportunity to dedicate more time to progressing their careers.
- To combat the possibility that these things may occur, respondents offer approaches to structuring a policy to ensure it's not taken advantage of by ensuring musicians are accountable for their own actions
 - Diaries logging hours and tasks undertaken
 - Finite time period for assistance
 - Processes to differentiate between a hobbyist and professional musician
 - Fellowship or internship type arrangement similar to those seen in some European countries
 - A NEIS scheme tailored to musicians and artists
- The majority of respondents believe that if the time they dedicated towards progression and growth of their music careers was recognised by Centrelink as valid employment related activities this would afford the opportunity to focus on progressing their careers by;
 - Removing the need to look for employment that is of little interest
 - Removing the need to look for employment in areas where they have no qualifications and/or experience
- Musicians acknowledge that Centrelink may not be the most appropriate vehicle for offering support to artists due in part to the purpose of the system (i.e. assisting those who are in financial stress) and the role that arts grants play in enhancing current conditions should be considered and brought into future discussions.

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- Music Victoria is committed towards sharing this information with the following key stakeholders;
 - Music Victoria board of directors
 - Victorian music industry
 - AMIN network
 - Victorian state government
 - Arts Victoria
- Music Victoria will initiate discussions with key stakeholders around how to interpret and utilise the information gathered in this study to inform policy changes and enhancements.
- Music Victoria is dedicated towards creating a working group comprised of Victorian musicians to drive these issues forward in the attempt to change current policy and processes.
- Music Victoria will facilitate a partnership between a musicians working group and key stakeholders in an attempt to achieve the best possible outcomes based on the research findings.
- If appropriate, Music Victoria will assist further research to refine and validate the findings emerging from this research piece.

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Please make this happen! Female, Metro Vic, Emerging band, Employed part time, currently receiving Newstart

I just urge Centrelink to get strongly get involved, please do your research, maybe the artists have to show a legitimate plan to show how hard at work they are, in order to receive some kind of benefit from Centrelink.

Male, Metro Vic, Emerging band, Employed part time, past recipient of benefits

I think this survey should be taken really seriously because it effects the majority of people. Everyone has some form of art in their life whether it be reading a newspaper to playing an instrument. Time, money, creative thinking and sacrifice go into all these mediums, and I feel money and time should be put into supporting such people who sacrifice for the enjoyment of others.

Male, Regional NSW, Emerging band, Unemployed currently receiving Newstart Allowance

Thanks for having this survey to voice my opinion. As mentioned, if artists are serious about making music and wanting to receive a payment, make them prove that. I personally would be more than happy to undertake double the amount of activities if they were related to my career and I was learning and developing my skill. My experiences with Centrelink have disheartened me in my career and personally. Usually, you are at a pretty desperate point if you've walked into a Centrelink.. to have them tell you you're not in a valid career is a real blow. Hopefully this survey is the start of some long awaited changes. Female, Metro, Vic, Emerging band, previous recipient of benefits

Thanks for considering these issues. Male, Metro Qld, Established band, previous recipient of benefits

This is an issue that could not only revitalize local music in some areas, but also help the standard of living for a lot of jobseekers, particularly in the realms of mental health.

Male, Metro SA, Emerging band, Full time student and not working, currently receiving Austudy

appreciate greatly that this is on the table and being discussed. A wonderful event in itself. Thank you. Female Vic Metro Established soloist, past recipient of benefits

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Appendix A – Centrelink case study

By Melbourne musician Annabelle Tunley

This report details the difficulty I have experienced in applying for Youth Allowance as a working musician. Despite my ongoing attempts to prove the legitimacy of my musical work, the system was ill equipped to deal with an application from someone working in the creative industries. It was literally impossible for me to prove my eligibility within the current application guidelines. This was a drawn out and stressful process, in which I had to commence full time study without the assistance of government aid.

I applied for Youth Allowance as an independent in February 2011. The law was recently changed and now to qualify for independence you must have worked an average of 30 hours a week for 18 months. At the time of lodging my claim I had worked 15 hours a week in my part time job for the previous 18 months and had worked countless hours as a musician, gigging with and managing my various bands. I conduct my musical business under my ABN, which was treated by Centrelink as a small business. Over 18 months, I certainly worked more than the required weekly average of 30 hours.

When lodging my claim I provided all the required information regarding both my part time work and my small business, and was told I had presented all the necessary information. I was not asked to provide any documents relating to my small business such as tax returns, invoices, bank statements, receipts etc. I offered these documents but was told they were unnecessary.

I did not hear from Centrelink within the time they said the claim would be processed. I called them several times (every 3-4 days) in which I was informed that my case, being “highly complex and irregular”, had repeatedly escalated and was now with the policy office. Those who had recently rewritten the Youth Allowance legislation were now interpreting their wording specifically in relation to my case. It was becoming clear to me that my case was a guinea pig. No decision was made for a number of weeks and I repeatedly phoned to insist that if more information about my small business was required then I was more than happy to provide it as proof of the legitimacy of my claim and my small business.

In late March I received a letter from Centrelink stating that my claim for Youth Allowance had been rejected as I had not provided the information they had requested. This was absurd as they had not yet asked for any information other than the initial forms that I had filled in when first lodging my claim.

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Appendix A – Centrelink case study (continued)

I called the Centrelink offices and spoke to a man who informed me that my claim had been rejected because they simply didn't know how to process it, that it was too difficult and irregular. I don't think he should have said this as an employee of Centrelink but I appreciated the honesty.

I asked for the decision to be reviewed and was referred to a case manager whom I convinced to let me send through documents that legitimised my claim. The next day Centrelink received nearly 50 pages of invoices, tax returns, bank statements and a letter detailing my business practises and that it is not the nature of the music industry to count or document hours worked. I explained how contracts with venues were often verbal or confirmed via email, but encouraged them to call the venues to confirm that I had indeed played the gigs detailed in the information I provided. I also included in this letter professional referees, who were never contacted.

In May 2011, after three months of living on a very tight budget (of approx \$200 a week, rent taking \$140 of that), I received a letter informing me that my claim for Youth Allowance had been rejected because I had not provided sufficient evidence to support my claim for independence.


I called Centrelink and asked to speak to my case manager. This in itself is a process: you cannot call the claims office directly but must call the hotline, and when put onto a customer service operator in the call centre, ask them to send a message to the claims office asking your case manager to call you back. Several times I never received calls back or missed the call (as I was in class or working). I had to specifically request they try more than once.

When I did speak with my case manager I asked what she thought I could provide to prove my hours worked. She did not know. All of her ideas were irrelevant to the music industry, such as pay slips, log books etc. We agreed that the only other document I could provide was a day-by-day account outlining all of my business dealings for 18 months. This would have been a mammoth task to compile and my previous experience did not leave me hopeful that even this would be adequate. It became clear that there was simply no way of proving the hours I spend working in the industry as a performer and band manager. They did not understand, for example, that a one hour gig includes many hours of rehearsing, travel and promotion, as well as the hours spent at the venue. I called Centrelink a few days later to ask an unrelated question and was informed that if I waited until my 23rd birthday I would qualify as independent automatically, and that in the meantime I qualified as a dependent under my mother. I chose this option as I could no longer justify the hours needed to fight my case.

Through my dealings with Centrelink it became blatantly obvious that they have no concept of the nature of creative industries

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This report has been prepared by Music Victoria 2011
If you have any queries please contact info@musicvictoria.com.au
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