Preliminary Findings from the Cairns Music Industry Gathering

9 & 10 November 2024

What does a thriving live music scene look like?
Forum participants identified the following factors as being characteristic of a thriving live music scene:

A **thriving live music scene** prioritizes music culture through supportive regulations, infrastructure, and a connected community of musicians, venues, and audiences. Key elements include entertainment precincts, noise policies, performance and rehearsal spaces, and local music advocacy. It also supports musicians at all career stages by offering performance opportunities, fair pay, career development, and mental health support. Collaboration and cooperation within the live music community are central to its success.

In addition, a **thriving live music scene** supports youth participation by providing early career support, all-ages spaces, and skill development for young musicians. It fosters a supportive local community, including musicians, venue owners, and engaged audiences. Music is accessible most days of the week in various settings, including busking and venues, with venues that are inclusive and accessible. Information about gigs and local musicians is widely available, and infrastructure such as public transport supports access. Thriving scenes are diverse in genre, venue types, and participation, with a focus on cultural, gender, and age diversity among musicians and audiences.

What are the strengths of the Cairns live music scene?
Forum participants said that Cairns has a 'strong foundation to build on' and identified the following strengths of the Cairns music scene:

Cairns has a strong music scene foundation, with passionate, talented local musicians spanning diverse genres, including busking, original music, and emerging electronic and hip-hop scenes. These musicians are well-connected and supported, with access to high-quality technical support. The city boasts an engaged and enthusiastic live music audience, bolstered by a strong tourism sector. Cairns' multicultural diversity, including First Nations communities and youth audiences, is a key strength.

What are the challenges for the Cairns live music scene?

- Marketing, promotion, and networking
- Rising costs
- Accessibility
- The Cairns music scene is dominated by cover performances.
- Policy and regulation Noise restrictions, noise complaint management, and restriction of busking locations
- It is also costly for locals to hire council venues for live music events.

Solutions for Cairns' live music scene include:

- Revising busking regulations to allow performances outside business hours
- Establishing grassroots community organisations to advocate for live music
- Modifying council noise regulations
- Funding public transport routes to improve access to live music events
- Offering incentives for venues to book independent, original musicians
- Creating a live music directory or gig guide with details of musicians, venues, and events
- Hosting regular local music industry networking events and showcases.