

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the Cultural and Creative Industries in Victoria

Melbourne – Wednesday 12 March 2025

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WITNESS

Craig Barrie, General Manager, Community Music Victoria.

The CHAIR: I declare open the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee's public hearing for the Inquiry into the Cultural and Creative Industries in Victoria. Please ensure that mobile phones have been switched to silent and that background noise is minimised.

I would like to begin this hearing by respectfully acknowledging the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of the various lands we are gathered on today, and pay my respects to their ancestors, elders and families. I particularly welcome any elders or community members who are here today to impart their knowledge of this issue to the committee or who are watching the broadcast of these proceedings. I also welcome any other members of the public watching via the live broadcast.

To kick off, we will just have committee members introduce themselves to you, starting on the screen with Ms Terpstra.

Sonja TERPSTRA: Thanks, Chair. Good morning. My name is Sonja Terpstra, and I am a Member for North-Eastern Metropolitan Region.

John BERGER: John Berger, Member for Southern Metro.

The CHAIR: Georgie Purcell, Member for Northern Victoria.

Richard WELCH: Richard Welch, Member for North-Eastern Metro.

Evan MULHOLLAND: Evan Mulholland, Member for Northern Metro.

Katherine COPSEY: Katherine Copsey, Member for Southern Metro.

The CHAIR: Thank you so much for appearing before us today. All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council's standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during this hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing, and then transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

For the Hansard record can you please state your full name and the organisation you are appearing on behalf of.

Craig BARRIE: My name is Craig Barrie, and I am the General Manager of Community Music Victoria.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you so much. We now welcome your opening comments but ask they are kept to around 10 minutes to ensure plenty of time for questions.

Craig BARRIE: Great. Thank you. I would also like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung country and that sovereignty was never ceded. I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to make a submission on behalf of Community Music Victoria's 200-odd members as well as the broader community music sector.

I thought I would like to begin with just a quick word on what community music is. Community music facilitators focus on helping people participate in music for the purpose of being in the music together. The forms that community music take vary greatly across Victoria and across the world, from community choirs to street bands to culturally specific groups. In each case the aim is not to achieve a specific outcome external to the activity of music making, like a recording or a performance, but rather to foster the inherent value of experiencing being in the music and creating the music together. Importantly, community music is an embodied and shared and active being in the moment. You can think of it in contrast perhaps to today's commute with everyone having Spotify on their headphones, which is an isolated, passive consumption of

music. It is not to say there is no place for that, but rather if we only support elite music production and passive music consumption then we might miss something important to our culture. Community Music Victoria exists to facilitate this thing that could be missing; we might end up in a world where we are each separated from each other, wrapped in our own personal AI-powered algorithm as opposed to being together as citizens.

You are no doubt aware that this week's research findings from ANU Professor Nicholas Biddle show a significant Australia-wide decrease in life satisfaction, hope for the future and trust in institutions and democracy, despite economic indicators like inflation and unemployment being relatively strong. I see these results echoing findings around loneliness and isolation that we have seen in recent research, and activities like community music are proven to promote exactly these civic virtues and dispositions in that community development work. I think it is no coincidence that it is called civic harmony; that is what we are aiming for here.

Before I delve deeper into the benefits of investing in community music, I think it is important to note that community music facilitators are highly skilled and require a number of skills across a number of areas. Think of community music as an intersection of arts, health and education. The skills required actually require quite a bit of training, so while the participants in community music might be called hobbyists or amateurs, the leaders are very much highly skilled practitioners. That requires training and some financial support, which I will talk about in a moment.

As you would have seen in my submission, there are public health benefits of community music. Local and international research has repeatedly demonstrated that community music is one of the most powerful social connectors and is ideal for addressing the social determinants of health. In my written submission I linked to examples of recent research by academics such as Professor Jane Davidson and Professor Brydie-Leigh Bartleet and their teams, which build on a long tradition of research into the health benefits of participatory music. To give an example, Community Music Victoria has been involved with the Royal Children's Hospital in running the Festival for Healthy Living in Melbourne's west, which saw artists going to schools in Brimbank, Melton and Wyndham to write songs with students of primary and secondary age that promoted positive health messages. This was in response to a need identified by the Royal Children's Hospital and local support agencies regarding young people's mental health in the west, including in suicide prevention. The funding for this program ran out last year, and we are currently seeking funds to keep this program growing. I should say 100 per cent of the participants who have been involved have always said they would like to do it again, so the appetite is there – and the need is still there, if you talk to the Royal Children's Hospital – but all it needs is some resourcing. This is just to give an example of where community music is at and where the public health benefits can flow from community music.

Because of the terms of reference of the committee, most of what I wrote in the written submission was about the economic benefits of community music. These basically flow from the economic benefits of anything that addresses loneliness and isolation. I quoted the July 2022 white paper, *Strengthening Social Connection to Accelerate Social Recovery*. Some headline figures from that include that a 2021 report from the BankWest Curtin Economics Centre estimated that the cost of loneliness is about \$2.7 billion per year nationally, and that is equivalent to the annual cost of \$1565 for each person who becomes lonely. The 2019 National Mental Health Commission showed that for every dollar invested in programs that address loneliness, the return on investment is between \$2.14 and \$2.87. There is some UK research as well that shows what the non-private and private cost to employers is, which is significant. We have already heard a lot about the kinds of economic impacts earlier today from Creative Victoria and Screen Victoria. I would add that our submission is probably a little closer to the community development side rather than the arts side, only because that ANU study that I cited before from Professor Biddle shows that underlying the economic case is the importance of social cohesion and civic engagement. For community music what matters is closer to community development KPIs than economic KPIs. A recent trend we have found, which is adjacent to the terms of reference here, is that local councils are moving their arts officers into economic development and tourism for lots of good reasons, and what that is potentially leaving out is the kind of arts investment that will have local ratepayers participating in things for the public health benefit of participating in art. It could become a bit of a battle for travelling disposable income or visitations rather than actually providing support for the ratepayers who are paying for those arts officers in the first place. That is just a trend that we have not seen play out fully yet, but we know how KPIs can gradually change the way that someone has to think about decisions around limited funding.

A third point I would like to surface from our submission, which probably was not on the surface originally, is that there is an opportunity here to create career pathways for emerging music professionals. Community Music Victoria receives its funding through Music Victoria, so ultimately from Creative Victoria. We are keen to work with Music Victoria and organisations like the Push to provide opportunities for emerging musicians. What we have found is that, following the COVID pandemic and the cost-of-living pressures, the very low cost and highly volunteer-based nature of these community choirs and these street bands means that we have seen in the outer suburbs and in the regions a real decimation of activity, whereas in the richer inner suburbs – I run a couple of choirs in Brunswick myself – we have been able to continue to provide that important social service.

What we are finding is that the trends around volunteering and volunteerism mean that unless we are able to actually provide some funding for people who could gain those skills, the younger generation coming through, it is hard to see how they are going to be able to enter community music practice. But in fact in a world of Spotify and festivals struggling a bit it is potentially a great parallel stream of income, community music, for young musicians, so there is a great opportunity here to fund and support young artists, especially in the regions and in the outer suburbs. That Festival for Healthy Living program I was talking about was bringing in artists, First Nations artists, local artists, to go into the schools, and we were paying them out of that fund. They are not able to volunteer their time, because of cost-of-living pressures, so the only people who are able to volunteer their time tend to be older, tend to be white and tend to live in the inner city. What we are trying to do is diversify who is able to do this work and preferably keep it in the local community – so people from Melton providing programs in Melton, for example. I will leave that point there.

I should say there are already some good models for how to do this as well, which I also did not really reference in the written submission. You can look at networks such as the With One Voice network and the Play It Forward network. We work in far East Gippsland with Reclink, who are for recreational sport what I think Community Music Victoria should be for community music and community arts. Reclink have also branched into community arts because they understand the benefits of that, and I think that models like that are particularly useful when we look at things like social prescription, which I know is outside the terms of reference of this committee. But if you have got well-trained, well-skilled practitioners whom clients can be referred to who are experiencing loneliness and social isolation, then those trained practitioners are much more likely to realise the impacts and the purpose of social prescription. There are great opportunities in Victoria, especially because Community Music Victoria already has all the infrastructure to train and upskill leaders to do that. Other states do not have a Community Music Victoria, so we are very grateful for Creative Victoria's support.

In summary, I would just like to say that community music is a very low-cost art form compared to many of the other art forms – like making blockbuster films, for example – and so only a small investment can actually get you quite a significant uptick in all the benefits that I have been talking about. What we do recommend is that wherever any funding is provided it should be targeted to the regions. I would like to particularly underscore Jo Porter's remarks from last week that when you dig down, especially once you move outside of large organisations and large training organisations to the independent arts, it is very difficult for young artists. They have to move to metropolitan areas at the moment to forward their careers. I would underline Jo Porter's comments and analysis of what the per capita spend is in regional Victoria. We think community music is a relatively low cost, easy way to provide some of the benefits of participatory art across the state. I have in fact made all my closing remarks, I do believe. I would like to close it there and open for questions.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you so much for your time and your opening remarks. I will kick off. In your submission you speak about the reliance in the community music sector on volunteers, and obviously volunteering across the board is down, for a range of reasons, in all spaces – cost of living and changes in behaviour post pandemic. What do you see as the solution to relying on volunteers for the sector? Is that the best model and that is how you would prefer it to stay, or do you think part of it is investment to put jobs into this space?

Craig BARRIE: I think it needs to change, only because it changes the demographic profile of who can be involved. There are too many people who look like me doing community music, basically. What we want is people in local communities generating their own businesses, but they need some opportunity to get started, because not everyone has got a music degree. Sometimes people are coming from more of a social work background and they have a music practice and they bring the two together, but however you get there, it costs a bit of money to upskill to the point of starting as a community music practitioner. So provide opportunities for

young musicians to do the festival choir at Port Fairy Folk Festival. I know Maggie Rigby was there, so that is a great example of someone – she was there with her parents, which shows how it is still kind of within the family, so to speak. What we would like to do is broaden those opportunities to younger musicians. It is a bit more like what the Push is trying to do, in a way.

The CHAIR: Yes. I think across the board in the arts there is this idea, which artists and creatives are trying to break through, of not being paid in exposure but being paid for their work, but it is obviously a sector where people often expect people to work for free. Do you think that there is anything that the government could be doing more of, particularly in the regions, to find a solution to that and to stop that change where young people are moving to metro areas? They are often going back out once they have established their careers, but how do we keep them? I am sure many regional MPs here would be interested in how we keep them there doing their work and contributing to our communities.

Craig BARRIE: One of the things we are doing at the moment is called growing community music, where we have a catalyst. We want a network of catalysts across the state, but we have one in Mildura, in the Sunraysia Mallee; one in far East Gippsland; and then one in the outer western fringe of Melbourne, which we are calling inner-western Victoria. What we are finding is that just having a catalyst there, which is a bit like the link worker for social prescription, is creating relationships that make people feel like they belong to that place, and together they create opportunities. We have done everything. We did a showcase of talents for people with disability for International Day of People with Disability, and that just brought together people who would not have come together if we did not have that catalyst forming those relationships first. It is the isolation between artists that draws people to these hubs of the metropolitan areas. If we have got ways of connecting people within their communities, and also you have to have a bit of funding – which we have got from Helen Macpherson Smith Trust to run those – those two things together can keep people doing things in their local communities. That is an example of the model there. I am sure there are other ways as well.

The CHAIR: Beautiful. Great. Thank you. I will go to Mr Welch.

Richard WELCH: Thank you. Thank you, Craig. Just a quick question. You mentioned in the submission that you get \$67,000 from Creative Victoria. What is your total budget? Where does your total funding come from?

Craig BARRIE: Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, and this money is running out at the end of this financial year, has provided us with \$180,000 over three years, which we then have been able to dollar match with funding from the Department of Social Services – it provided some money for Mildura – and a few other small grants along the way.

Richard WELCH: But less than a million overall?

Craig BARRIE: Yes, well and truly less. I earned more in my last job in the university sector than my entire organisation gets in a year.

Richard WELCH: Gotcha. And how many in the team? How many full-time employees do you have, or are they all part-timers?

Craig BARRIE: We are all part time. There are six of us in the team, and our EFT is about two.

Richard WELCH: Okay.

Craig BARRIE: Sometimes we get bigger project money. VicHealth provided quite a bit of money about 15 years ago, and that grew us above two for a while, and then it shrank back down again.

Richard WELCH: I could not agree more with you about the social and health benefits of community music and doing music in a non-professional, organic gathering way. You know, people sitting down in the backyard playing guitars together or whatever; there is a ukelele club in my community – exactly what you are saying. This is a bit of a creative question, given this is a creative inquiry. Musical gatherings of people used to be common. People would gather around the piano and people would sing in pubs. Wherever they were, it was absolutely part of the culture. In a sense we have lost that. How do you see your role? Is your role basically

blowing on the embers of what once was, or do you see it as providing a new flame? What is the legacy of what you do?

Craig BARRIE: I think of it as like handing down the torch in a way, but what is going to be picked up by the next generation will be a different kind of torch to the one that is being handed down – allowing them to self-create what that is going to look like. That is why I used the Festival for Healthy Living as an example. It is entirely the next generation, putting an artist in with them and seeing what they want to come up with, which is a bit different from some leader who is kind of like the sage on the stage leading a pub choir, where they govern what everyone is going to do.

Richard WELCH: But is there a place still for not needing a leader, just, say, creating an environment where people want to come together and make music because that is what you do habitually? Does that form it, or do you think it is now essential; it cannot function without a leader?

Craig BARRIE: I think it is possible. If you can – what is the word? – not diversify but distribute the leadership among people, because where music leadership will come from is people who are keen about music. So within the groups is where new leaders are likely to come from, if leaders are required, and the more that you can distribute that, the more the group becomes self-sustainable. We had a program called Vocal Nosh, which was all about distributed singing leadership, so people just had enough skills to be able to run their own thing.

Richard WELCH: The ability to network – like if I am sitting in one suburb, I do not know who the musicians are in the area around me. There are websites that do some of that work. Is there any part of your organisation that then just helps with the infrastructure of networking people together?

Craig BARRIE: Yes, and that is mostly what we do; in fact in the public gallery is the program manager. Just the peer networking of people with a keen interest in community music is most of what our program is. We do have a website, and one of the challenges we have found is upgrading our digital footprint on this tiny budget. Our website in 2012 was state of the art and had a beautiful – and it still has – and very thorough database of all the groups within a 5-, 10-, 20-kilometre radius from wherever you were. Google Maps is much better now than it was in 2012. What we would love to do is improve our digital footprint so that that information is at people's fingertips, because we are finding that wherever the relationships are strong, there is sustainability.

Richard WELCH: Surprise, surprise. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you, Mr Welch. We will go to Ms Terpstra.

Sonja TERPSTRA: Thank you, Chair, and thanks, Craig, for your very comprehensive opening remarks. I have just got a question about music as a social connector, and I think you touched on this in your submission. I am interested if you could unpack or expand on it a little bit. What would you say are some of the health benefits that are there for community music people? And I think you talked about this with choirs, like community choirs and those sorts of things. What are the health benefits and some of the mental health benefits, if you could unpack that a little bit. Do you think more could be done or more unique funding opportunities could be provided – and it might even feed into what your earlier comments were about volunteering and those sorts of things. Do you think it is funding but it also needs to be connected to volunteerism as well to grow – those sorts of things? If you could unpack that for me, that would be great.

Craig BARRIE: Yes, that is great. There is significant research around. There is actually an organisation called Music and the Brain Foundation run out of Highett in Victoria. There is a lot of research just around the neurophysiological benefits – like, you are literally producing oxytocin and that is great, and there are breathing benefits. Nicki, who is in the public gallery, runs a choir at Banyule Community Health centre, and those members have been referred. Many of them need to have not just the social connection but the actual physical breathing. The physicality of making the music is actually good for your body, so there is a bit of exercise in there as well. I keep using singing as an example, but there are drumming circles and there are all sorts – ukulele playing as well.

There is some really interesting research from Genevieve Dingle in the University of Queensland about the impact effect of patients who have been through social prescription – they are doing a trial of social prescription

in Queensland. Looking at their sense of psychological distress – and I am not a psychologist, so I cannot remember the exact terminology here – what Genevieve Dingle found is that there is a significant decrease in psychological distress. Interestingly, it is about an 18-month effect, so the eight-week effect is not that strong. From the work that I have done, I would have thought you would get an immediate bump in this. But actually it takes about 18 months and people who are more tuned in to a sense of belonging or a sense of not belonging tend to get more of a bump from doing community music. They are the curious findings that she is digging into more deeply at the moment.

And you asked about what we could be doing. I think there is definitely a place for just rewarding and upskilling volunteers and continuing to have volunteers do some of this work. What I am wary of is that in Gippsland we actually have a really strong volunteer network. We have basically made a sustainable network in Gippsland. CM Vic does not spend any time or money there and yet they still run lots of programs. But that is partly because the people who are there already have quite a lot of agency – economic agency – so it does tend to make it a little bit white and Anglo and of my and an older generation. I think that volunteering might continue. As the population ages, that will help with that older demographic – the ukulele clubs et cetera – but the younger demographic I am really concerned about. I do not see a pipeline there at the moment because they are so squeezed by cost of living and they do not do that kind of formal volunteering that is required.

Sonja TERPSTRA: All right. Great. Thank you so much for that.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Ms Terpstra. Ms Copsey.

Katherine COPSEY: Thank you. You touched a couple of times on the pipeline. I am curious about two things. We are seeing community music leader as a viable part-time or even full-time role. Given the kinds of cohorts that commonly have been sources for this talent, where do you think that there is a missing stream in terms of targeting those cohorts? You have mentioned so far social workers. I think you also mentioned music graduates and people studying music. I am particularly interested in the availability of music education across our school system, with the pressures on our school system, and people clocking this as an opportunity and something that they can do not just in their spare time but as a support for building a career. Whether it is just in this, in teaching, in social work or in music, what kinds of supports would help people identify that?

Craig BARRIE: That is a great question. I do think that music teachers or anyone who has chosen music teaching as their university focus will almost always be a great community music practitioner because they are thinking about music in terms of what it is doing for the people who are participating. It is the right frame of mind. I think music therapy is also a potential. We work with a few music therapists. The Mildura English Language Centre has a high proportion of humanitarian refugees, so when we organised a music program for them, we had a trained music therapist who had done trauma-informed practice work with those children. It can depend a bit on the need, but I do think music educators are a good place to start. We do have links obviously into the universities to get our message out there that this is a potential source of income for graduates. What is missing I think, once you have graduated and you have got your big HECS debt et cetera, is that first opportunity, which is pretty hard to get in community music. So it is not really a viable side hustle, if you want to call it that, for a professional musician or a music teacher for quite a few years. Trying to find a way to fast-track that so that could be a thing that people could do would be ideal, I think.

Katherine COPSEY: You mentioned a couple of existing modalities or maybe courses that help people gain these skills. Can you describe what those are like at the moment? Are they just resources that people would find on the internet and, as you said, collaborate locally to upskill in, or are there training pathways like diplomas and so on that would be a good way to formalise and make this skill set more available?

Craig BARRIE: That is a good question. With CM Vic there is not a diploma at the moment. In New Zealand they have a diploma, which Nicki will know the name of – I cannot remember it. There are community music subjects in some universities. I think USQ might have one at the moment. I can check that. I can take that on notice. CM Vic looked at whether we should do something like that and decided that an online introductory course – a free, openly available, online introduction to community music leading – would be a great resource, especially for the volunteers. It costs a bit to do. We have done a bit of the work already to get there, but getting it into a pedagogically robust state is the next step.

My personal experience, which I think goes for my colleagues as well, is that you have to have the face-to-face time. We have been running singing camps and instrumental camps for a long time, with that face-to-face trying out of things. It is one of those embodied practices, like swimming, where you just have to do it a lot to be able to do it well. Having those opportunities to do it, and having those opportunities spread around the state, is important. One of the problems we had was that we could only run one camp a year for singing and one camp a year for instruments. That meant that you had to get everyone to travel, and then you end up with the same demographic turning up: the ones that can afford to travel. So we would love to have a distributed series of events that allow people to learn skills.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Ms Copsey. I will go to Mr Mulholland.

Evan MULHOLLAND: Thank you so much. It has taken me back a bit. I used to be involved with a performing arts company that ran a choir in the northern suburbs called ARCappella. I was very involved in that. It does stuff around Darebin and Hume, and so I guess I know the community music scene a bit. One of the challenges for that that I always found was the disparate amount of funding for particularly the volunteer sector. I mean, politicians seem to be tripping over themselves to give money to footy clubs, but it is the arts organisations, which are just as big in terms of the number of people involved, that really do not even get the crumbs off the table. How do we encourage that grassroots level a bit more?

Craig BARRIE: We talk about this a lot, obviously, at Community Music Victoria, and one of the things we think could be useful is – the neighbourhood house network is already there; it has already got rooms where you could do some of this work. But the kind of fee structure for how neighbourhood houses work is such that it would never attract a young local musician to do it, because they are never going to get paid anywhere near the Australian music teacher award rate – the rate is a third of that, if that. So if there was some way of using the existing neighbourhood house network or possibly even the library network and then having money specifically for a community music practitioner – it has to be for the person. That is the problem; there is no money for people at the moment. We can kind of wangle money for other things, but money for people is really hard to get. That I think would be a kind of systematic solution that already uses existing infrastructure and already uses existing networks.

Evan MULHOLLAND: So working with councils and I guess venues that have the space for groups to use.

Craig BARRIE: Yes. We had a lot of luck in Mildura as they opened the Powerhouse, and we have run some jams and things there, getting a discounted rate on the Powerhouse, partly to get some visitation and get some profile for the venue. But we know that venues have costs that they have to meet, and so getting that continuous access to venues is also a bit tricky for us. We feel that if there was a structural solution, it might involve neighbourhood houses.

Evan MULHOLLAND: Yes. Fair enough. Richard mentioned before that you receive about \$67,000 from Creative Victoria. Is that enough? And what would you be able to do with more?

Craig BARRIE: We are very grateful that we get \$67,000, and we understand all the other funding priorities for both Creative Victoria and the Victorian government. I think an equivalent organisation, the Boîte, used to receive about \$400,000. I reckon about the Boîte's budget for Community Music Victoria would allow us to have six catalysts across the state – part-time catalysts – and they would be able to do all that local community development work that I have been talking about. We received some COVID funding from Creative Victoria which allowed us to begin the process of updating our digital presence, and that was incredibly useful. If I was to just put a rough figure – it is a very low-cost investment, community music – about \$400,000 would give us a statewide network of catalysts doing this work.

Evan MULHOLLAND: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Beautiful. Thanks, Mr Mulholland. Mr Berger.

John BERGER: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Craig, for your appearance this morning. I am interested in some of the critical services that you provide that you could probably inform the committee about, and also the broader community at large that might be useful for us to know about.

Craig BARRIE: Yes. We provide training for community music leaders. We provide advice. There are a lot of questions around copyright and kind of like the legal underpinnings of working in the music industry. We provide events, including those camps that I was talking about, but at the moment we kind of split them around the state rather than having one big camp. Our website has an online shop and also a whole bunch of free resources as well, so we are kind of curating resources. What we find is that if you just kind of google, what you get is a very west coast US view of what community music is. So telling local stories is one of the things we are trying to do, and we do that by having our own festival calendar and basically giving kind of like Victoria's point of view of community music. It is an important communications role, I guess, that we provide as well. What else do we do? No, I think that is all the things.

John BERGER: That is okay. Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thanks, Mr Berger. We do have time for some other questions if members have any more. Ms Copsey.

Katherine COPSEY: Thank you. I am curious about the camps that you have mentioned, what they are looking at so far and how you advertise to attract participants to the camps. You have spoken about referrals through some programs where people are receiving health benefits and social prescription, but what is the current advertising and how do you pull people into those camps? How would you like to do that with an expanded program?

Craig BARRIE: We have a monthly newsletter called *Shout!*, which reaches about 2500 people, and it used to be stuffed in envelopes. We are 31 years old as an organisation, and it has been running I think for 25 of those years. It is a reasonably big mailing list. We were early adopters of Facebook. We set up special interest groups for leaders and things like that on Facebook, and we are on Instagram as well. In an ideal world I would be doing far less time on social media and probably getting out of the Metaverse and trying to focus people towards more direct communications. But we recognise that some of our demographic is just on Facebook, so we have to suck it up and keep going.

I am involved in a camp that is happening in Glenmore, which is just outside Bacchus Marsh, Ballan, which is happening in April. When you look at where people come from to that camp, they are coming from Warrandyte and places like that. The Shire of Moorabool does not make up a huge number of people who attend the camp, and being able to really have locals develop things that locals come to is what I think extra funding would allow us to do. We are still shipping people with disposable income in to the regions, but more funding would allow us to advertise within the regions to develop things. And we have proven that in Mildura and Sunraysia–Mallee, where we have been running our Growing Community Music projects.

Katherine COPSEY: Do you collaborate much at the moment with local governments? You mentioned the neighbourhood house network as a possible avenue, but you also mentioned the changing focus in the local government sector for community arts officers. These would all be interesting avenues to explore with more funding, I am guessing is the answer.

Craig BARRIE: Yes. I should say there are some great community arts officers right across the state. Shires that we have had great relationships with include Mildura Rural City Council, and the Shire of Moorabool have been fantastic to work with. Brimbank has been great. And then the inner-city councils, the City of Yarra – it is very, very easy to run a thing in the City of Yarra; it only takes a couple of emails and we can get huge turnouts and big impacts in the City of Yarra. But we also know that, if you think about the public health need, the public health need is really in other parts of the state. The ease of councils to work with does not necessarily give us the biggest impact. What I would love to do is have the regional catalysts able to just form their local relationships with councils.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Ms Copsey. I think that is all questions from members. Thank you very much for appearing before us today and for your submission and answering our questions. That concludes the public hearing.

Witness withdrew.