Career Paths

The Victorian Music Business Career Life Cycle

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Foreword

A message from the VMDO

The music industry will always evolve and so will career prospects. This study provides a genuine insight into how change can be managed in an uncertain industry.

The skills, knowledge and experience demonstrated by passionate Victorian music industry professionals and businesses are imperative – they solidify and bind so many possibilities for musicians and artists in the music sector. It's also evident that this extensive and nimble skillset is transferable across many sectors – creative, corporate and non-for-profit.

These unsung heroes could include artist managers, record label owners, promoters, publicists, agents, marketing and publishing practitioners (amongst others) who may work for organisations or within their own small or micro music businesses.

The Victorian Music Development Office (VMDO) co-designed the Victorian Music Business Career Life Cycle study with RMIT University and Doctor Catherine Strong from the School of Media and Communication, which looks at gaining a deeper understanding of what skills and strategies people need to be successful as a music professional.

Through this research, it was identified that so many Victorian music business professionals acquire a substantial amount of work-know-how from real-life-job experiences. It also highlighted there are some challenges in retaining these crucial industry insights and wisdom as the music sector grapples with shifting attrition rates, sometimes due to long hours, burn-out and high pressure circumstances. While focussed on the experiences of music business professionals, many of the findings and recommendations may be applicable to other areas of the creative industries and cross-sector exploration of shared experiences may reveal more applications for the outcomes of this report.

This study also highlighted and emphasised the importance of support that the VMDO provides the Victorian music sector through its programs, resources and initiatives including:

> CLOCK – a ground breaking alternative higher education program that transforms experience into formal qualifications. It will help Victorian music professionals to progress their careers by validating their real-life work-based experience.
>
> Connections across music and other sectors – facilitating opportunities across Australia and globally where businesses can capitalise on music business expertise. This may be through Music Ally, Business Vic, Council of Small Business Australia and Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry as well as many other organisations.
>
> Mentoring, knowledge sharing and skills development – a key priority for the VMDO, including periodical Networking Breakfasts, Fast Track Fellowship, Experts In Residence, Blak Sound and masterclasses. The VMDO provide ongoing support and knowledge into many issues and trends that affect the sector Victorian music sector, including business coaching, financial planning, legal obligations, managing health and well being,

This study is evidence that the VMDO and Victorian government can maintain their commitment to a thriving music sector in Victoria and to ensure that the next generation of Victorian music professionals are well-supported to developing their careers as well as with the musicians they represent.

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The Victorian Music Development Office (VMDO) is a Victorian Government initiative, delivered by Music Victoria – it has a commitment to boosting the growth and evolution of the Victorian contemporary music industry, supporting the creation of sustainable opportunities and ensuring Victoria maintains its reputation for great music.

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Executive Summary

While there is extensive research on the careers of musicians, far less work has been done on the business aspects of music making. Even less prevalent is research that examines how support for music businesspeople translates into better outcomes for musicians. Given that business, career growth and innovation are some key areas that the VMDO focuses on, supporting these professional workers is a priority for research by the organisation. This project aims to deliver information on career life cycles in Victorian music businesses, with an emphasis on uncovering areas where support is required, and ways to prevent the loss of experience and expertise from the sector. This will help ensure that the next generation of Victorian music professionals are as well-supported as possible in developing their careers, along with the musicians they represent.

The aims of this research are:
- To map examples of the 'life cycle' of music industry careers, with an emphasis on those who have had careers of more than 10 years on the business side of the industry;
- To determine at what stages of their careers industry participants need the most support and why;
- To understand how careers are maintained on a long-term basis and why participants leave the industry; and
- To develop strategies to develop careers and businesses, particularly through retaining people in the industry on a long-term basis.

To achieve these aims, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 27 music business professionals (11 women and 16 men) who have been in the industry for ten years or more. These surveys were analysed to determine key themes that arose across the cohort. The interviewees were between 33 and 64 years of age, and their careers had lasted for up to 35 years, with the majority having careers of more than 20 years in length. The main roles that were represented in the group were artist manager, record label owner, promoter, publicist, agent, marketing and publishing. Almost all respondents had moved between these roles or had at times undertaken more than one role simultaneously over the course of their career. Twenty-three out of the 27 interviewees reported that they worked as an artist manager at some point during their time in the industry, making this the most common role amongst the cohort.

Findings

Interviews revealed common themes in terms of how music businesspeople entered the industry, what sustained their careers and what they saw as the main roadblocks in the industry. These are summarised below, in the following sections:
- Starting out
- Sustaining a career, and
- Barriers and exits

Starting out

Four key pathways into the industry were identified:

1. **Networks:** this is where respondents identified a specific connection to another person or group of people as being fundamental to the establishment of their career.
2. **Formal processes:** this is where respondents started their careers through more formal means, such as answering job advertisements, buying established businesses, or doing internships as part of formal education.
3. **DIY pathways:** these arise when music business careers started as hobbies or passion projects, usually as a way to engage with a music-focused scene or community.
4. **Musicians:** a number of interviewees identified as musicians and had a career on this side of the industry before shifting to a business focus.

The pathway taken into the industry had implications for the shape that a person's career took, with formal processes tending to lead to more 'traditional' career maps in organisations, and DIY pathways resulting in more haphazard careers, but this was not always the case.

The respondents discussed the key attributes they believed people needed to succeed in the industry. The key attributes of success were:
- passion for music and the industry;
- having an entrepreneurial and risk-taking approach;
- self-reliance.

In terms of formal training for people entering the industry, opinions in our cohort were mixed on the topic of higher education courses focused on the music industry. While some respondents saw such courses as a good opportunity for people to learn basic skills and had had positive experiences with graduates, others questioned whether the key attributes discussed above could be taught in institutions.

Sustaining a career

The defining characteristic of the people interviewed for this research is the length of their careers. The analysis of the stories of their careers revealed four key 'anchors' that sustained their participation in the industry, and which they moved between at different points in their careers.

1. **Organisational anchors** are found where careers are sustained by an association with an established and stable company that provides ongoing employment and security. These anchors are established through employment in an organisation like a major record label, but also through a respondents' own business, particularly if it is flourishing and closely aligned with an individual's identity. This is the most stable but least flexible type of anchor.
2. **Portfolio career anchors** are found where careers are sustained through a series of ventures covering different aspects of the industry. Interviewees reduce risk by not 'putting all their eggs in one basket' financially or in terms of he artists they looked after. This sometimes encompassed work in jobs outside the music industry.
3. **Reputational anchors** are found where careers are forged in industry networks. These are scenarios where respondents have made a name for themselves and embedded themselves so securely that word of mouth alone is enough to sustain a career.
4. **Emotional anchors** are found where careers are sustained by a love of music, particular artists, or the industry itself. The reward sought with these anchors may not be about financial gain or even security. There is a risk here, particularly if the balance between emotional and financially sound decision making is unsound.

Respondents recognised that there are often skills gaps among professionals because the music industry is not a sector where qualifications are needed for entry. These skills gaps can lead to simple inefficiencies, but in the worst cases a lack of financial expertise or understanding of legalities can have serious or even career-ending consequences for either the professional or the artists they work with. To overcome this, interviewees reported improving their business skills in several ways. Most have consulted or employed other professionals, particularly accountants and lawyers, where needed to ensure they are fulfilling their legal and financial obligations, or to improve their business practices. Most have also attended industry-focused training such as that provided by Music Victoria, and provided positive feedback on such events. However, the most common form of training identified was 'on-the-job' training. The risks associated with this are that it does not always address the skills gap problem identified by respondents. Secondly, the most comprehensive on-the-job training discussed by our cohort is found in major labels and other large organisations, and for many this occurred before the downturn in the music industry which led to a substantial downsizing of major labels in Victoria. This may point to the existence of an emerging 'training gap', which may be being partially filled by people like our respondents, and partially by higher education institutions.

Barriers and exits

Sustaining good health — both mental and physical — was discussed as a key problem for industry professionals, both in regards to themselves and to the artists they work with. 'Burn out' was frequently mentioned as a hazard, and a number of our cohort experienced this during their careers. This is related to the long hours and pressures of the roles they were in, but also to industry norms around alcohol and drug consumption. Many interviewees mentioned that while poor mental health was still a major problem in the industry, a positive shift had taken place in recent years with this issue being talked about more and greater support available. A small number of interviewees described coping strategies that they had developed for dealing with these issues.

Most of the women respondents in this study mentioned experiencing discrimination at some point in their career due to their gender, including in relation to having (or wanting to have) children. While this was also an area where respondents felt positive steps had been made, they also indicated that the issue remained unresolved.

In terms of exiting the industry, three of our cohort had retired, while twelve had at some point left the industry and returned. The end-of-career stage emerged as a risk in the industry, as most respondents had not considered how their career might end or made any plans for retirement. A lack of information on this issue, in combination with careers outside of formal structures providing things like superannuation, means many interviewees were ill-prepared in this regard. However, some had transitioned, or begun the transition, to other types of employment, particularly in the higher education sector. Two of our respondents talked about putting in place succession planning in the businesses they ran, with the hope that the business would continue beyond their involvement.

Recommendations arising from these findings have been included at the end of the report (Section 9).

1. Introduction

Recent research has demonstrated that the music industries in Victoria are exceptionally vibrant and can be considered world-leading in many respects. At the same time, it is also well-recognised that these industries are marked by extreme precarity, with sustainable careers often hard to maintain, and benefits accruing unequally across the sector.[1] While extensive research has been, and is currently being, done on the experiences of musicians,[2] far less work has been done from a perspective that prioritises the business aspects of music making and examines how support for those working on the business side of the industry might translate into better outcomes for creative workers also. Given that business, career growth and innovation are some of the key areas that the VMDO has been established to focus on, this has been identified as a priority for research by the organisation. This project aims to deliver information on career life cycles in Victorian music businesses, with an emphasis on uncovering areas where support is required, and ways to prevent the loss of experience and expertise from the sector.

2. Objectives

This research aims to provide a comprehensive qualitative analysis of the experiences of those on the business side of the music industry in Victoria. In particular, those who have had careers that have lasted more than a decade have been targeted with a view to understanding how their careers were developed and sustained — or became unsustainable — over this period.

As such, the aims of this research are:
- To map examples of the 'life cycle' of music industry careers, with an emphasis on those who have had careers of more than 10 years on the business side of the industry,
- To determine at what stages of their careers industry participants need most support and why,
- To understand how careers are maintained on a long-term basis, and why participants leave the industry; and
- To develop strategies to develop careers and businesses, particularly through retaining people in the industry on a long-term basis.

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[1] Newton and Coyle-Hayward 2018
[2] See, for example Throsby and Petetskaya 2017; Cunningham and Higgins 2010; and the ongoing ARC Linkage project 'Making Music Work: Sustainable portfolio careers for Australian musicians'

3. Background

The music industry worldwide is currently in a period of growth that has come about after more than a decade of extreme upheavals, particularly related to technological and organisational changes. While in the 1990s the recording side of the industry was generating huge revenues, the rise of downloading in the 2000s, and the initial failure of the industry to adapt to this new technology (in conjunction with other factors such as the Global Financial Crisis), caused a downturn in profits so extreme that predictions of the 'death of the music industry' became common.[3] The industry had only just started to find ways to make downloading profitable in the early-to-mid 2010s when yet another new technology, music streaming, quickly superseded it. This uncertainty around the profitability of recorded music meant other aspects of artists' careers, such as live shows and merchandise, increased in importance.[4] Alongside this, the rise of social media fundamentally altered how communication about music happens. Traditional gatekeepers and tastemakers such as professional music critics, journalists, and radio broadcasters have been (not completely) displaced by peer-to-peer discussions on social media, direct interactions between artists and fans, and, more recently, playlist curators.[5] This has all meant significant changes to where and how people encounter music, how they find new music to listen to, and ultimately how profits and risks are distributed in the industry.

In Victoria, these changes have been accompanied in the last decade by a reassessment of the relationship between the state and the industry, particularly after the Save Live Australian Music (SLAM) campaign in 2010 that saw laws damaging live music reversed. A series of reports over the last decade have for the first time measured the value of the industry to the state in various ways. This includes through showing that live music alone contributes over half a billion dollars to the economy of Victoria,[6] and that Melbourne can be considered as one of the world's great 'music cities', with more live venues per capita than any other place on the planet.[7] This coincides with a greater understanding of the importance of music to tourism and a rethinking of how Melbourne's music history is an aspect of what draws people to the city.[8] This has led to positive policy outcomes on local and state levels. Both the State Government and various local councils have committed themselves to the ongoing development of the music industries across live music and other sectors. For example, the Victorian Labor government has committed $22 million to its 'Music Works' program,[9] and on the local level, the City of Melbourne has made supporting "Melbourne's music ecosystem at all levels" a priority area in its Melbourne Music Plan 2018–21.[10] This includes the promotion, publishing, distribution and development of music artists and businesses. Music Victoria has similarly committed itself to the development of "Victoria's music sector and [to] support its innovative small businesses", noting explicitly the importance of supporting business growth and "prioritis[ing] professional development and business skills training for artist managers".[11]

[3] Hesmondhalgh 2009
[4] Marshall 2013
[5] Haynes and Marshall 2017
[6] Arts Victoria 2011
[7] Newton and Coyle-Hayward 2018
[8] Strong, Cannizzo and Rogers 2017
[9] https://creative.vic.gov.au/funding-and-support/programs/music-works
[10] City of Melbourne 2018
[11] Music Victoria 2018, pp. 12–13

At the same time, however, more information is needed in some areas to ensure that support is provided in the most effective way. The Melbourne Live Music Census 2017 Report has gone some way in mapping the economic, social and cultural significance of the live music sector for Melbournians. This commendable effort includes a survey of performing musicians, but not of the music business professionals whose management, promotion, marketing, sales, logistics, and broad interpersonal labour make these events feasible, despite 48% of musicians on the night claiming that they regularly employed a manager, booking agent or publicist.[12] In their national study of artists, Throsby and Petetskaya noted that 9% of musicians and 16% of composers rated their own business management skills as "inadequate" for operating as a freelance artist, while most regarded their skills as less than "excellent",[13] reinforcing the importance of having experts available who can take on these roles. While studies in cities, such as Newcastle, NSW,[14] and Brisbane, QLD,[15] and a state-wide study of music economies in Queensland[16] have mapped some of the roles that music businesses play in the music ecologies of those places, the role of music business professionals in the Victorian music ecology has not yet examined in depth.[17]

Music businesspeople fulfil a variety of functions, including artist management, promoting live and recorded music, publicising artists, acting as an agent on behalf of musicians and organisations, managing record labels (both small-scale and internationally-distributed), marketing artists and music, and scouting music talent for established music production companies. The diversity of roles and industry experience associated with these roles makes their presence invaluable to the careers of up-and-coming musical talent. However, the changes outlined above mean music business professionals have experienced a shift in career expectations similar to music artists, both stemming from the digital disruption of the music label-centred industrial model.[18] While little work has been done to date to track the changing career models of music business professionals, music artists have been found to maintain "portfolio" careers[19] – that is, artists are finding diverse employment arrangements and activities a necessary and regular part of their professional practice. While some researchers have noted that artists felt the need to continually re-think their career trajectories as they encountered changing work situations,[20] others found that those in precarious employment drew on the support of networks of "like-minded friends and collaborators" to remain engaged in their creative pursuits.[21] As is discussed later in this report, like musicians, music professionals experience diverse work roles and career expectations, due to the uncertainties associated with working as freelancers and small-business operators. The uncertainty and flexibility expected of creative workers and associated business professionals has led artist manager and management researcher Guy Morrow to champion "agile" business management practices as essential for success as an artist manager.[22] For Morrow, career development in the arts sector is not linear, but "circular", as artists and their managers are likely to be supported by industry gatekeepers to the extent that they can retain (or regain) music listeners' attention.[23]

The types of roles taken on and the risks associated with them change for professionals depending on their main role and the career stage of artists. For artist managers and promoters in the Australian setting, the circular career model described above is especially relevant because of the distribution of risks associated with the sector, compared with the larger markets in the US and UK. Morrow argues that, "at the entry to

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[12] Newton & Coyle-Hayward 2018, p. 74
[13] Throsby and Petetskaya 2017, p. 101
[14] McIntyre & Sheather 2013
[15] Flew et al. 2001
[16] Rogers et al. 2004
[17] See Baker 2017 for an overview of mapping models used in the case of Melbourne
[18] Hughes et al. 2016
[19] Bartleet et al. 2012
[20] Bennett & Hennekam 2018
[21] Threadgold 2018
[22] Morrow 2018a; Morrow 2018b
[23] Morrow 2018a, pp. 38–39

mid-level of the Australian live music industry it is common for a combination of the artist and their management to promote their live shows themselves, without the assistance of a promoter".[24] The risks associated with artist management are pronounced at the stage in an artist's career development where management is needed most: "During the start-up phase of an Australian artist's business it is common for the artist manager to also be their business manager".[25] The career trajectories of both artist and manager come to depend on the artist manager's business management knowhow and willingness to take on the financial risks associated with their client. This differs somewhat from the work of publicists and music service providers who charge their clients a service fee, rather than invest their own capital directly into the success or failure of musical talent. Promoters, on the other hand, have benefitted from the declining power of record labels due to digital disruption,[26] while still risking higher financial and reputational consequences for failure.

The roles that formal and informal education play in the music business career life cycle are unclear. Research in the creative industries more generally suggests that creative industry graduates face insecure working conditions and wide-spread multi-jobbing upon entering work in the industry.[27] Transferrable, rather than vocation-specific, skills and attitudes are highly valued among workers and employers alike, as graduates may be expected to work across multiple job roles in both creative and non-creative roles.[28] The prominence of freelancing and project-based work within the work lives of creative industry graduates put a premium on self-management and self-directional attitudes, as well as business management skills, which participants in Hennekham and Bennett's study claimed they would like to be better trained in.[29] As will be discussed in the results section of this study, multi-jobbing and the application of transferrable (or "soft") skills are central to the work lives of both creative and business professionals in the music industry.

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[24] Morrow 2013a, p. 136
[25] Morrow 2013b, p. 16
[26] Coupe, in Morrow 2013a, p. 136
[27] Bridgstock 2011; Bridgstock et al. 2015
[28] Hennekam and Bennett 2018
[29] Hennekam and Bennett 2018, p. 75

4. Methodology

This project used qualitative data-gathering in order to understand how professionals establish and maintain careers in music in Victoria, and what barriers there are to this. Ethics approval was granted from the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee for this research. This procedure ensures that research at RMIT is ethical, responsible and consistent with relevant legislation, regulations, guidelines and institutional policy and procedures.

This project draws its findings from 27 in-depth face-to-face interviews with key Victorian music professionals at different stages of their careers (including retired), but all of whom had been in the industry for at least a decade. Theoretical sampling[30] was used to select a sample of participants on the basis of their relevance for the categories adopted in this research project. Staff at the VMDO assisted the researchers in initially identifying potential participants with the requisite music industry experience, and snowballing — whereby interviewees were asked to recommend other possible participants — was subsequently used. Participants were approached by RMIT researchers to participate in the study, via telephone or email, and interviews were conducted by the authors between February and July of 2019. All interviewees were given the option of being de-identified in the reporting of data collected, and nine chose this option.

The interviews were conducted in a place of the respondents' choosing, usually an office or meeting room. Interviewees were asked to give an overview of their career in the industry, in chronological order. The interviews were semi-structured, with prompts were given by interviewer to ensure that key topics of the research were covered, including how skills were developed, how problems encountered were overcome, how career decisions were made and what support was needed at various stages. Interviews were recorded with the explicit permission of participants, transcribed and coded using the data analysis software NVivo.

A list of the respondents who opted to be identified in this report is included in Appendix 1.

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[30] Glaser and Strauss 1967

5. Overview of Participants

Of the 27 people interviewed, eleven were women and sixteen were men. They were aged between 33 and 64 years, with people in their 40s being the most well-represented in a relatively even spread of ages across the four decades represented.

Figure 1: Age of Interviewees (Years)
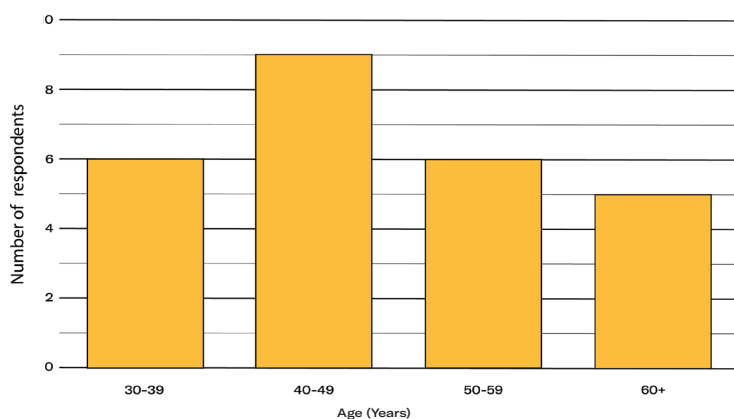
While the majority of the participants agreed to be identifiable in the data, nine did not. Therefore, in order to maintain the anonymity of those who requested it, limited demographic data can be provided beyond gender and age. This is because the small size and high level of interconnectedness in the Victorian music industry makes it likely that the provision of more detailed demographic information will make people identifiable. However, it can be noted that the sample was for the most part made up of white, heterosexual, cisgendered individuals. The homogeneity of the sample can likely be attributed to two interrelated factors: the tendency for people with these characteristics to be privileged in business environments of all types in Australia, meaning it is likely that such persons will be more likely to construct a long-term career in music; and the sampling method used, as networks of the type drawn upon to make up our sample tend to be made up of people who are similar to one another. There are, therefore, further questions relating to diversity within the industry, and what specific barriers might exist that prevent other groups from developing the types of long-term careers in the same ways as those in our sample, that cannot be answered using the data gathered in this study, but that are worthy of further investigation.

Figure 2: Interviewee time in industry (Years)
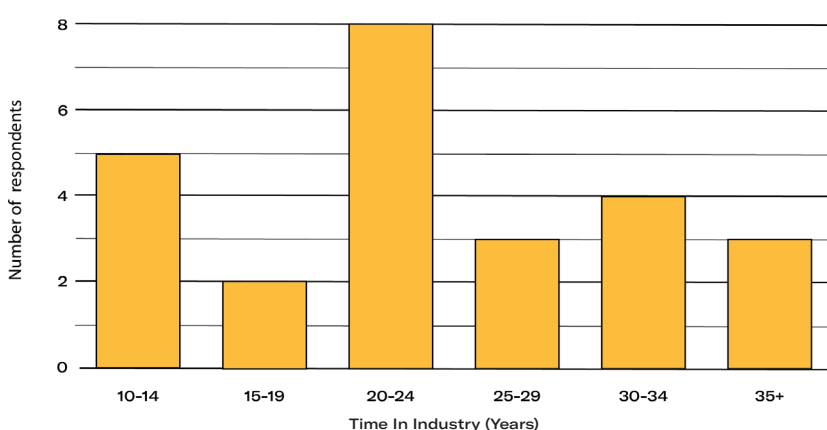
While all those in the sample had sustained their careers for at least one decade, the shape and length of these careers varied significantly. Figure 2 shows the time that the interviewees had spent in the industry, with the majority having careers that have lasted more than 20 years. This suggests that our sample consists of highly experienced professionals that represent an elite group who have managed to maintain long careers in a volatile industry.

Figure 3: Roles undertaken by interviewees
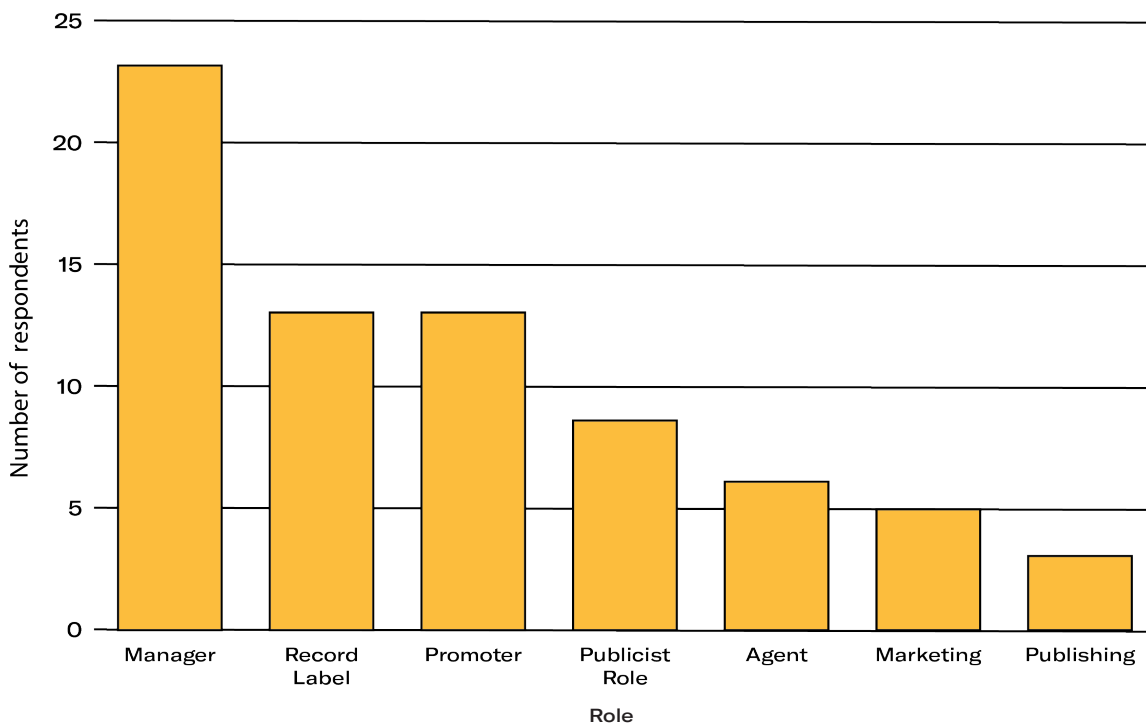
The roles that the respondents have played within the industry have been varied. The main categories that were included in the sample were managers, record label owners, promoters, publicists, agents, and those working in marketing and publishing. Figure 3 shows the number of interviewees who had ever worked in any of these roles. Almost all participants (23 out of 27) worked as a manager at some stage during their careers, making this the most common role experienced, with record label owner and promoter being the next most common categories with 13 respondents in each. Only three respondents had worked in publishing. There are two important things to note about this data, both of which will be explicated throughout this report. First, it is uncommon for industry professionals at this level to remain in one role throughout their careers. Second, almost all respondents had a point in their career where they were undertaking more than one of these roles at the same time and it was not uncommon for this to expand to three or four roles being undertaken simultaneously. At times, these categories become somewhat artificial in translating people's stories, as there is not always a clear delineation between them in the daily work lives of our interviewees. There are also other roles not included in Figure 3 that respondents have taken on during their careers that are related to music but do not correspond with one of these core roles; for example, interviewees have served on the boards of music-related bodies, run venues, been involved in music journalism and taught music-industry related content in higher education institutions. These will be discussed where appropriate throughout the findings.

6. Stage I: Getting into the Music Business

This first section describes how business professionals get into the music industry. It begins by describing the pathways that music businesspeople in Melbourne have carved out, as well as the tracks that they have left behind them for would-be professionals to follow. Section 5.1 identifies four patterns in industry professionals' entry points into the music business, covering entry through networks, formal processes, DIY pathways and musicians who change to a business focus. Section 5.2 accounts for the values these professionals hold, presenting a sense of their values as business practitioners, but also suggesting the values that they are looking for in future professionals in the sector. Finally, Section 5.3 accounts for how industry professionals view the role of higher education and formal training in assisting the next generation of music industry entrants.

6.1. Pathways into the Music Business

The following subsections describe the experiences of music industry workers as they establish themselves in the sector, with a particular emphasis on the moments when a career in the music industry becomes a reality. Four types of pathway emerged as the most commonly encountered: entry through networks, formal processes, DIY/entrepreneurial ventures and moving from music creation to business. These categories are not mutually exclusive; for instance, an individual's networks can play a role in them gaining access to formal opportunities, and musicians who enter into business ventures will often have come through a DIY pathway. However, for almost all participants there was one of these methods of entry that was emphasised in their stories. It should be noted that while all these entry points are still available in the industry, as all our respondents started their business careers at least ten years ago, new pathways not captured here may now be available, and the relative importance of each of these categories may have changed.

6.1.1. Networks

Networks are the social connections in the music industry through which information and opportunities flow. Research has shown that these types of connections are particularly important in creative environments like the music industry where there are fewer formal structures in place to govern how decisions are made than in other workplaces.[31] It is, therefore, important to note that having the right connections to other people has been a fundamental aspect of the careers of all the participants in our study, and plays a part in many of their stories about their entry into the industry. There were, however, some interviewees who identified a specific connection to another person or group of people as being fundamental to the establishment of their career.

Bernard Galbally, for example, was working in a separate industry when a friend's band who were already experiencing success in the industry approached him to do management and publicity work:

> I actually did recreation, and then outdoor education and was working that area. And I just had friends who were in a band called Bachelors from Prague, and… they had seen that I'd got a lot of publicity for the company that I had, who I was in partnership with in the outdoor ed area, and they said, 'You get great publicity. You can do that for us.' They were an independent band, and that stage, Mario Macaroni from Mario's Café was managing them. So Mario and I decided to together manage them.

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[31] Christopherson 2009

This connection meant that Bernard was able to establish himself in the industry relatively quickly. A similar story is told by an anonymous respondent who, through community ties, took on management of a band just as they unexpectedly gained national success. He says, "That band got me into it. There's no way I would have gone into the music industry if not for that band. It was just sort of something which happened." These are examples of people who were working on business ventures in other areas who were offered opportunities to work in music through their networks, but were not necessarily seeking them out.

For other participants, these opportunities arose through chance connections made because of a shared interest in music. Stephen Cross, for instance, met two key players in his future career while selling records at a market:

> The guy on the store next to me was a guy called Dave Williams. And, unbeknown to me, Dave was setting up Shock Records. And we just chatted and it was nice. And there was this guy buying records off me and his name was Harvey Saward, and … we just got chatting and ended up swapping phone numbers or something and he is the guy I run Remote Control with. So Dave Williams weirdly contacted me and Harvey and said, "Do you want to work at Shock?" which he was about to set up.

This chance encounter created the conditions under which Cross could establish his career, first working part-time at Shock but later running a label with Saward.

Others took a more strategic approach in leveraging connections to get a foothold in the industry. Lorrae McKenna completed a music industry course at RMIT University, specialising in public relations, before a job selling merchandise at live shows led to an encounter with an experienced professional with an already well-established business:

> I met Rae [Harvey]. I was selling merch for a show. A band that she had just started managing was supporting and I actually sold quite a lot of his merch and she came up to me at the end of the night to get the money and I just started chatting to her. I just saw that as an opportunity to just send her an email because she would know who I was then and I wasn't just someone just emailing her off the bat… Nothing came of it for three months and then she just called me out of the blue. I went to her office and just had a meeting which was quite informal but we ended up chatting for two hours and she hired me on the spot. I ended up working for her for nearly four years doing marketing and PR and also just general management assistance stuff.

While all of these stories involve an element of luck in being in the right place at the right time, or knowing the right people, all respondents had skills or, in the case of McKenna in particular, a training for the type of career that was on offer, that enabled them to take advantage of the situation when it arose.

6.1.2. Formal Processes

Some respondents started their careers through more formal means, such as answering job advertisements or buying established businesses. This pathway does not require a pre-existing relationship with people in the industry, or even necessarily a particular interest in music. For example, although one of our interviewees did have connections to the music industry and saw herself as eventually working in it, her entry was via a "traditional" route involving qualifications and a formal application process:

> And I got that because I'd just done an advance diploma in public relations and from there I got a job at [non-music firm] in their public affairs division. And while I was there I actually saw [a music job] advertised, and I just literally old school just sent in a CV and went and did an interview. (Anonymous Publicist)

Catherine Haridy tells a similar story about being employed by Michael Parisi in the late 1990s through an interview process. In a somewhat different type of formal process, Nick O'Byrne describes his progression from an internship undertaken as a requirement of a degree to a full-time job:

> I also did an internship at AIR, the Australian Independent Record label association. And out of that came — that sort of after a little while turned into a sort of part-time job, like running a few projects for them, and they went really well so that turned into like a kind of three-four day a week job. And what happened, I just happened to be there at a time when the organisation lost a lot of funding and the board seemed to have quite a disagreement with its senior staff. They kind of fired everyone and kind of like Steven Bradbury, I was the last one standing.

While an internship is a different type of formal process to a job application, it also involves using a structured process governed by pre-existing rules to gain a position, with an extra step involved whereby the internship is converted to a job.

For a small number of interviewees, an entry-level record company job gained through formal processes but in a role that was not strictly music-focused created the opportunity to advance by finding ways to demonstrate their soft skills, such as oral communication and organisational abilities. Stu Harvey, for example, recalls being recognised as a valuable marketing assistant at Mushroom Distribution:

> I was essentially Karl Richter's Assistant. So, I was working on reception. He needed someone to help him out, because at the time he was quite successful because he had signed a band called The Living End, and The Living End were blowing up. So, he needed me to come and help with that, and a bunch of other artists doing really well. So, Karl basically said, "I want you to come and do this." I guess this was all talked about with the higher-ups behind my back, because it was kind of like, "Do you want this role? It doesn't really matter because this is what you're doing now".

Harvey's time working as a receptionist (and prior to that, in the warehouse at the same organisation), allowed him to become known to the strategic and marketing personnel. Similar to most others in marketing and publicist roles, Harvey describes his time in the industry as beginning when he is recognised by more senior staff. Chrissie Vincent describes a similar process, whereby while training to be a vet nurse she:

> Just landed this job at a record company. I really wasn't specifically going into work at a record company. I just got this job. I really started to enjoy it. I talked a lot so they put me up into the PR department and that was it for three years of my life, the first few years.

These stories show some of the slippages between the different entry types, whereby larger companies that use formal methods to recruit at time can still operate by similar network-based logics when it comes to advancement within the organisation.

It should be noted that the participants who entered the industry via these more formal pathways tended to have more stable careers, with less movement between different roles over time, than people who entered via one of the other pathways. This could be for a number of reasons. Acquiring a job through a formal process may require people to already possess certain skill-sets that may mean that person is already better equipped to succeed in the industry, as is likely the case with respondents who got their jobs because of a qualification. Another possibility is that music businesses who use formal methods to hire are likely to be larger organisations (as was the case with almost all the examples here) that therefore are likely to be able to train or mentor employees, and give them experience with a range of industry roles. This function of larger music businesses will be discussed further in Section 7.1.1.

6.1.3. DIY Pathways

Whereas the Networks pathways described above were about respondents having one key connection that helped establish their careers, DIY pathways arise when people are embedded in a scene, subculture or community that has music at its core, as in this quote from an anonymous respondent:

> I guess I'd always been really obsessed with music from being a kid, and in some ways it's kind of like hard to see where it changed from being like a DIY involvement, a hobby kind of thing to actual paid work... I would go to shows like all the time and kind of became friends with a bunch of people in bands and that kind of thing... And then I guess I started volunteering [in community radio] and helping out there and on a very low level helping like organise shows and that kind of thing. And then — I'm trying to think of that order of — I guess I was just really kind of like involved in the scene and knew lots of people and knew different, not just one group of musicians but different scenes.

These interviewees started their ventures as hobbies, and, while a passion for music was common among all our participants, it is this group that foregrounded this the most in their stories about how they started in the industry. Their key motivation in starting out was to share music they were passionate about, or facilitate others' engagement with music. The development of their careers is the least linear of the groups here, with some never getting their music businesses to a point where they are completely sustainable; this is partly because in some cases it is clear that doing what is seen as best for the music is more important than being a good businessperson. As one anonymous respondent said:

> It was something that was done for fun and excitement and passion, and enthusiasm about local music and wanting to introduce people to new things. Because it was a kind of evangelical but not commercial enterprise.

In addition to creating multiple connections, being part of music communities sometimes exposed interviewees to particular philosophies about music production that encouraged the development of a range of skills, as well as providing access to information about how to do things.

> Nobody in the conventional music industry was interested in what we were doing for a whole bunch of different reasons so we ended up having to go DIY, a) because we wanted to, but more importantly because we had to. That then meant we had to learn how to print posters, we learnt how to make flour and water paste, we learnt how to just get out and how to organise a gig, how to ring a council, hire a hall, all that sort of stuff. How to master a record, how to make a cover, which shops sold them, all this information was coming from these things we had to do in order to get our message out there. (Roger Grierson)

Being a part of a music community also enabled respondents to identify needs within that community that they could help meet, opening up opportunities for entrepreneurial activity. This could manifest in days of voluntary or low-paid work, the investment of the promoter's own assets and capital, and a degree of uncertainty about whether or not the 'experiment' (as one promoter called it) of organising a music event would prove to be viable. One promoter, Zac Abroms, describes his initiation into the music industry as almost accidental:

> Well, it started very informally. Music was always an interest and passion/hobby of mine, starting out as a musician myself and being affiliated socially with a lot of musicians in Melbourne. One thing that I began to recognise in my early twenties was that kind of a requirement for the kind of local, grassroots level gigs in Melbourne, to be better produced. We'd often play these performances ourselves, or friends of mine would play these performances, I would attend as an audience member, where it had really subpar audio production, they were really poorly promoted, it ran over time, or experienced issues with ticketing, and also frequent cancellation, that kind of thing. And I guess my desire to become involved in the business side of things grew out of that desire to see the grassroots live music scene in Melbourne better organised, and musicians play better shows to more people, and better publicise their music.

Abroms did not view his early involvement as the start of a career. As he tells it, his role in promoting Melbourne music remained a gambit for some time.

> There were so much nerves around — it started as an experiment, and the first experiment went well. And when you roll the dice once and put $2,000 of your own money into an event, work really hard to make it a success, and $2,400 comes back, the desire to try it again is pretty real. I didn't want to just pocket that money and say, 'Okay, that was fun. Let's try it again.' It took a few successive events to feel like it was becoming more than just a part for my friends, or more than just a hobby. After 12 months, and starting to

mingling with members of the industry and actually converse over email, on the phone, with real live booking agents, record labels, managers, that sort of thing, it began to feel like it had legs as an actual career possibility.

Like those in other music industry roles, Abroms' perception that he might have an ongoing role in the music industries developed through finding connections with more established members of the Melbourne sector. Abroms retained his freedom to develop events that reflected his personal taste and networks by keeping other paid work (outside the sector).

6.1.4.   Musicians

The final core group that emerged when respondents were discussing the establishment of their careers was those who segued into the business side of the industry after (or sometimes alongside) being a musician. Unlike some other respondents who have also had experiences playing music at various points, this group primarily identified as musicians before making the move into business.

All the people in this category described themselves as having had an interest in the business side of the industry while pursuing their music careers, and saw this as marking them out from their peers. For instance, Tom Larkin describes himself as being "the band member within my group who was most concerned with strategy and business within the band", and Paul Gildea says:

> I was in bands that got record deals, a couple of record deals, and I was always really curious as to what they were going to do with this and how they were going to place us — and, essentially, what I suppose I mean is "how they're going to market us and who we were and how did we identify?" It's very easy to become just non-objective about, "I'm just the guitar player, this is what I do in the band" as opposed to, "Well, what's the grander scheme of all of this and when you plug into a major record label, what do they do?" ... I saw myself as a musician but ticking away was always this thing of "I actually really want to know what the science behind this is and how it goes".

The contrast in this quote between being 'just' a musician and being someone who understands the 'grander scheme' suggests that for some musicians understanding the business side of the industry has positive implications for their self-identity. For others, such as this anonymous respondent, taking on work in publicity was more of a practical choice made to supplement their musician's income, but which led to a gradual shift into the business area:

> ... from there, I started to build a network, and then kind of worked with managing my own band and then there were a couple of other artists that saw what I was doing good things and then we started working with my friends' bands... So in the beginning I viewed myself as I was still in it just to do music and I was helping friends, and then I think it probably wasn't until a few years later that I started to actually separate the roles and it was probably through learning about the different roles and realising how big they were and how much time they were involved.

For this respondent, there was a slow realisation that the business area was more suited to them.

Some musicians changed their focus more abruptly at the time of a crisis in their music career, such as the break-up of their band, or, in the case of Tom Larkin, the death of his band's manager. In these situations, respondents needed to reassess what their strengths and weakness were in this new area. Some found that a grounding in music meant they already had contacts and a certain amount of knowledge about how the industry worked that they could draw on to facilitate their entry into business:

> I met a lot, a lot of people, contacts, internationally, locally. I got a really great insight to how the machinations of the industry worked, and it was an incredibly awesome period because I got to meet all these incredibly influential people. I was a bigger fan of some of the people that sat behind the lines, more than some of the people that sang the lines, if you might. And I've really enjoyed hanging out with them, because they were such an integral part of so many people's different careers. They were incredibly influential, or really smart — had great IP, or whatever you want to call it. They just knew what to do with the right acts. (Damian Costin)

For Tom Larkin, on the other hand, a realisation that it could sometimes be incompatible to try to make both business and artistic decisions for a band led to a period where he returned to a musician-only role, before returning to the business side a few years later:

> So when you sit in the middle, unfortunately you can't — your decisions will always be wrong because your primary responsibility is to deliver the art and sometimes the art or the delivery of the art has to tell the business considerations to be secondary in order to create great art. That's just how it is. That doesn't mean that artists can't be wrong or it doesn't mean the business people can't be right; it's just that, in terms of your responsibility to build the great shit that the audience requires and is really the thing that the business is supposed to sell, you need to think like an artist a hundred per cent in order to do that.

Distinct from this account, however, is Jonathan Williamson's discussion of building a career as both musician and professional, which he did not see as being either distinct from or at odds with one another. This is because of his entry through a DIY pathway similar to those described in Section 6.1.3 above, where the ability to have your music heard was inherently connected to your ability to undertake business tasks:

> *I started out as a musician, as a drummer in some indie bands in inner Melbourne in the mid to late 1980s. And as part of that experience, I was exposed to the DIY ethic. Because we had no alternative, in that we didn't have professional management. We weren't at a stage in our careers where we required management. So like most artists, we shared the responsibilities amongst the band members. And that could mean anything from contacting venues and booking agents, trying to get work. Trying to secure gigs. Liaising with various other bands and trying to get on their bills. And I guess trying to put together a workable sort of band management function to cover things like publicity, organising our demo recordings, putting up posters in stores and around the place which you were able to do more freely back then. And getting together our toolkit of press and marketing materials, postcards, photographs, biographies, that sort of thing.*

This pathway meant that when returning to a business focus Williamson already possessed certain skills that he could draw upon.

6.2. Valued Attitudes Among Music Businesspeople

When describing desirable attributes for people entering the music industry, our respondents most often emphasised the qualities of passion, entrepreneurialism, and self-reliance. Many of our interviewees were at pains to emphasise the highly competitive nature of the music industry, and the low likelihood for most entrants of ever achieving significant success. It is therefore important to understand what qualities our interviewees thought helped them establish their careers, but also what they, as influential figures within the industry and as employers, see as desirable in others, as this will be impacting on hiring practices and the makeup of the industry workforce going forwards.

6.2.1.   Passion

Entry into the music industry was described by many of our interviewees as driven by a passion for music, music making, night-life and the communities of music lovers that sustain the music sector. This passion was described as playing a number of roles in how music industry workers related to each other. At its core, being enthusiastic about music is understood to connect professionals in the industry. Enjoying music, wanting to help music scenes thrive and helping friends' bands or other musical acts allowed our interviewees to develop a sustained interest in the music industry as well. For some, this manifested as a desire to know as much as possible about all aspects of the music world: as one anonymous respondent said, "I'd just go over and above. I just wanted to do more. I wanted to learn. I was a sponge. That's it." As this person noted, being known as someone who is both passionate about music and who is always willing to learn and develop their skills in the industry can become an entry point into paid work in the industry.

More importantly, being passionate is seen as a crucial characteristic for how the industry operates. Speaking and supporting music with passion is also understood as a way to sell music to others. Lorrae McKenna, for example, discovered that knowing how to talk about your love for music is a trade skill.

> I feel like a good personality, someone who can talk, a lot of people come up [to the merch desk] and they kind of look and then they will walk away and I found that someone with a personality who is willing to engage with people and get people over to the desk, someone with a personality and a love for the band, (it) really helps sell merch because you can talk about the records or whatever it is that you are selling.

Sharing a passion for music and the industry was also described as a common point of bonding between friends working in the industry. For the following industry businesswoman, developing a group of friends who shared some of her musical interests and professional experiences became an invaluable form of support during what might have posed significant career interruptions:

> I had my own support network of women who were just invaluable at supporting me through everything. Like they all work in the industry so they've all helped open doors or introduce you to people. So they have been incredible. But there wasn't any formal kind of group like that that could introduce you to other people. So again been fortunate to have that. I think that's the only thing because I know that there's always been, and continues to be a lot of support for people entering the industry.

For others, enthusiasm for the industry and for music is more of a prerequisite than a fortunate characteristic:

> If you are a lazy person, don't even bother. If you're not passionate, don't enter the building. If you feel like the industry owes you something, go away. (Damian Costin)

Passion then was something that helped hold the industry together through a shared emotional connection, and sustained professionals through difficult periods. The downside of this is that there is the potential for the expectation of a deep commitment to music to be used to drive a culture of overwork and possible exploitation, through the idea that being able to work with music is a privilege that requires neither proper remuneration or a sustainable work-life balance. This will be discussed further in Section 8.1.1.

6.2.2.　　Entrepreneurialism

An entrepreneurial attitude, including risk-taking behaviours, was also seen as desirable. A number of artist managers and promoters in our sample sought out others who were willing to take risks in their work. As Zac Abroms claimed:

> *I tend to gravitate towards the people that are doing a similar thing to me in terms of structure. People who are more entrepreneurial in spirit, do a wide range of things, and have a flexible, project-based approach to working in music, which is fraught with job insecurity or financial insecurity and involves a higher degree or risk.*

Others claimed they spent their careers "doing entrepreneurial ventures", reflecting some of the varied work roles and careers that artist managers and publicists may have had before finding their footing in the music industries. For Damian Costin, founding director of 123 Agency, this entrepreneurial, risk-taking attitude was essential to the expansion of the business:

> *The diversification [of my business] came from that. Whatever the client needs — whether you're from an agency, you're a manager, you're from a label or radio — I could always find you a solution. I always wanted to engage in a solution, or find a way to do things. So we started our own company, yeah.*

Seen as more than an explanation for business successes, entrepreneurialism complements the often erratic, short-term and project-based nature of music production and performance work itself. A degree of curiosity and flexibility are seen as both important for taking advantage of fast-moving opportunities, but also to create security in the industry through diversifying business interests.

> *Within the music industry, it's so completely entrepreneurial and iterative... Right now there is someone sitting on a laptop in their bedroom and they're making something that you're going to be listening to in six months' time and it's going to be a worldwide hit, and they'll have come out of nowhere. Now, that person may have a friend who is their manager, and they can be thrust into that role of dealing with a global footprint and a global infrastructure within six months with zero experience. (Tom Larkin)*

For music businesspeople at the start of their career, this entrepreneurialism is seen as one of the more decisive, career-defining personal attributes in the industry.

6.2.3. Self-reliance

In lockstep with entrepreneurialism is another desirable attribute: self-reliance. Talk of being able to depend on oneself often emerged in discussions of work and career security: as one anonymous respondents noted, "I've pretty much created my own stability". Catherine Haridy similarly emphasises the need to be self-reliant in working as an artist manager in her own business, where work may entail extended periods of working alone.

> I found that there was a lot of on-the-job learning and there was a great expectation to be proactive and to move forward and independently learn. So if there were terms I didn't understand or there were certain particular skills that I didn't have, it would be incumbent on me to go out and learn them, self-learn. But that also makes you very resilient and it makes you very proactive in finding out information... A manager's role, so often is behind a computer or a phone. It's very solitary. It's a very solitary experience unless you've got people working with you or you're sharing an office and that only happens when you're in a position where you can afford those things. Most often managers are working in isolation, probably in their house.

Self-reliance is discussed by the interviewees as providing a certain level of protection to oneself in an industry where, as Damian Costin says, "there are loads and loads of sharks". Carolyn Logan framed this in terms of control and independence:

> I have never liked being at the mercy of other people, yeah, I've always preferred to be in control of my own destiny. It just suited me, it suited my personality to collaborate with people, but to have my own business.

Music professionals, then, need to negotiate a space for themselves where they can be self-reliant, and therefore protect their own interests, while also being able to access the help and expertise from others that will enable their businesses to succeed, and to also stay embedded in the networks that are crucial to survival. Being too self-reliant risks isolation and inefficiency. However, as Jonathan Williamson notes, starting out with a self-reliant mindset can have positive ongoing effects for someone's career:

> there's a lot of self-reliance and self-discipline. Most of these music business start small and there's a lot of blood, sweat, and tears that go into — you know, creating a record label or a magazine or a website or a foray — a band or whatever the case may be. And that resilience and that work ethic puts them in good stead for the rest of their career.

6.3. Higher Education from an Industry Perspective

Music industry professionals express a range of positive and negative sentiments about the higher education sector and its role in offering a pathway into the Victorian music industry. This century has seen a pronounced growth in music industry degrees, or related courses. This change has occurred during the lifecycle of many of our research participants, many of whom began their careers before any formal Australian course offerings focused on the music sector existed. Lorrae McKenna, for example, claimed that:

> I am one of the rare people in the music industry I think, who actually did one of those music industry courses, who is around my age because there weren't many of them, I think it was very new 15 years ago. It was not as prevalent as it is now.

McKenna's perception that this is rare may be not entirely accurate however, as five of our sample had done some sort of music industry-specific higher education training. In addition to this, a number had done degrees such as Public Relations or Radio that were directly relevant to their music industry careers. On the business side of the music industry, higher education qualifications in small business management, accounting, intellectual property law and contract law were highly valued. Music industry specific courses, on the other hand, received more mixed responses.

There are differences of opinion about the quality of course offerings, and discussion of formal education focussed on two main areas: business skills and the ability of education to instil the types of qualities described in the previous section. In terms of business skills, there was agreement amongst respondent that higher education for the industry should at the very least be providing basic business skills. Damian Costin describes his frustration with music school graduates who do not have these:

> You should have the simple smarts about how to do a business plan, how to manage funds, how to understand the accounting process, how to operate a bank account. How do you account for everything? Do you get a bookkeeper? These things are really, really simple 101s, but if I was to ask a young kid from [a HE provider], "Do you know how to do that?" Most of them would be like, "What are you talking about?"

For Damian, an understanding of business management is deemed necessary to take part in an industry that is "surrounded by microbusinesses". Damian is not alone in desiring for more graduates to be trained in small business management skills. Another artist manager advised potential students to consider adjacent or complimentary training rather than a music/music industry qualification:

> Maybe you do want a degree that will either compliment your music career, such as a business degree, or maybe, if you don't want to do a whole degree, a certificate or diploma in bookkeeping or something that sounds really utterly boring to a musician. It doesn't have to be bookkeeping. It could be in creative writing or it could be in media or anything that might help you or a public career. Anything that might help you along that way. Or law. Maybe you want to study media law. So that you might have a chance to have other sources of income along the way. (Anonymous Artist Manger)

For Bruce Butler, who educates music industry professionals, a music business education is essential for any entrant to the industry:

> [I] talk to musicians about running their own business, how to do contracts, how to do tax and accounting. Even publishing. Talking to musicians who would tell me, "Well, yeah, we're professional musicians. We go out. We do gigs. We don't get paid much," and so forth, and I'd say, "Well, you know, what about your APRA live music returns?" and they're all looking at me blankly. I mean, I'd have a class of 30 people who all claimed to be professional musicians but didn't know that, if they got up on stage and sang their own songs, they could actually get paid royalties from APRA for performing their own songs. So the need for a business course seemed quite obvious.

Butler's presence in the classroom ensures that his students are being introduced to these concepts, demonstrating the value of having experienced industry professionals in the classroom.

The other key theme that emerged in discussions of higher education related to key traits valued in music professions, as well as a graduates preparedness for the hard work of the industry. Some interviewees saw higher education providers as being fundamentally ill equipped to prepared students in this regard:

> You can't [train people] by sending them to a class and bringing in people from the music industry and going, "Now, book a hypothetical tour." Why don't you just go and book a real one? (Damian Costin)

> The whole premise of building a business in music is about being entrepreneurial. In other words, basically there's no foot in the door, and those schools and institutions make you think that all you need to do is fulfil the class structure and then you're given a piece of paper and therefore you are now qualified to enter the music industry, and what's missing is that the only way to actually have a foothold in the music industry or, as a friend of mine likes to say, the only way to build a door into the music industry is to build the door yourself. People think that in going to those schools, they are automatically entitled to just walk straight in, and it's like no, that's not the case. Higher education is deeply valuable for gaining skills and methodology, but it doesn't teach you how to work well without structure, and the music industry has very little structure in comparison to other vocations. (Tom Larkin)

> They're just not cutting it. We're not producing risk-takers. (Caroline Logan)

The criticisms described above are primarily focused on the kind of character or personality traits that were described as valuable in earlier sections this report, namely entrepreneurial risk-taking, enthusiasm and self-reliance. That graduates could not develop or test their suitability to the music industries without exposure to real business risks was a common sentiment among music professionals in this study. Negative sentiments about the higher education sector were expressed nearly exclusively by those who had not undertaken music industry education themselves, but were commenting on the qualities and skills that they appreciate in employees, mentees and industry colleagues, and what the higher education institutions communicate to students about realistic pathways available to them.

However, others had a more positive perspective. For example, Jonathan Williamson, a former marketing manager and marketing director recalls:

> While I was finishing my law degree, I worked as a lecturer for the Australian Institute of Music in IP law and governance and ethics. That gave me exposure to a bunch of students who were very motivated, very confident, and taking responsibility for their future careers in music. And they were very entrepreneurial.

In addition to this, a number of interviewees mentioned having positive experiences with interns from higher education courses, and noted that this could be a successful pathway into the industry:

> It's interesting, at Mana we've taken on a lot of people having to do their work experience or work placements with us. And I've always been really impressed with their knowledge of the music industry. And I think that's fantastic. And we would then actively try and seek to get them a position — we employed two or three through that. (Bernard Galbally)

The role of the higher education sector in music industry training has increased since most music businesspeople in the study began their careers and so too have the demands now made of higher education institutions. The relationship between our interviewees and higher education will be revisited in Section 8.3.2.

7. Stage II: Career Planning or Contingency Planning?

This section looks at how our interviewees maintained and grew their careers once established in the industry. Section 7.1 describes the four types of 'anchor' that enabled our participants to sustain themselves as music professionals. Section 7.2 explores the ways that businesspeople developed workplace skills and business savvy, accounting for both formal training schemes (including mentorships) and informal training (or "on-the-job"). The final part, Section 7.3, identifies the specific aspects of the Victorian music industry that interviewees claim inspired their music business passions and offered support in their ongoing careers.

An important aspect of the music industry which needs to be kept in mind when considering how careers are talked about is the role of luck. Career pathways are only linear in retrospect, as participants often experience their careers as a succession of accidents and possibilities. Despite the best efforts of music businesspeople to shape the course of their workdays and futures, a recurring theme in their career histories is the elusive nature of fortune and fame. Depending on the public's reception of new releases — from both established and unknown artists — managers, publicists and promoters need to take fortune where it surfaces, and guard against the inevitable failures:

> The line is a very fine line between not earning any money and then once you cross it, you can make a lot of money, very quickly, but it takes a long time to get to that point, or to get a band to that point, because it does rely on an artist blowing up to make that happen. There are a few people I know who that has happened for, and then they're like "It's all set-up now because I have one band that's doing really well and that's it". I don't think I am quite at that point yet. It is still a lot of hard work for not a lot of money at this point. But as I said, it's a line and a lot of people are underneath it and there are a few that are above it. (Lorrae McKenna)

Entire careers can be made or broken with one artist. One artist manager claimed that "one of my artists just blew up big and all of a sudden I could make a living being a manager". They were able to quit their job outside the music industry and become what they described as "a full-time manager". For growing businesses, such as Jaddan Comerford's UNIFIED Music Group, signing Vance Joy "made a big difference" for the future of that business:

> We now have an office in Hollywood. We have four full-time staff who are not only developing domestic talent there, as in American talent, but also helping our managers here develop talent there and vice versa. So that's a big one.

On the other hand, others in our cohort described times when one failed tour or album release led to bankruptcy or exit from the industry. An anonymous publicist notes also the emotional fallout from failure, and the impossibility for even very experienced professionals to know what will happen with a release:

> [sometimes I think] this is a shoo-in, this is incredible, what an amazing album, I can see this just taking off. And then you get it out there and no one has the interest or time and it's just an incredibly heartbreaking thing to go back to the client and go, 'I'm sorry I really thought this was going to work. I really thought this was enough' and it turns out it's not. For all the ones that have worked incredibly well there's always, always a number that just don't work.

The anchors, strategies and plans described in this section can all be seen to some extent as a way of mitigating against the effects of luck in an industry where success can never be guaranteed, and these accounts should be read with this in mind.

7.1. Career Anchors in the Music Industry

This section explores four common 'anchors' — organisations, portfolios, reputations and emotions — that our music professionals felt kept them in the music business at different points in their work history. There is sometimes a relationship between the entry points considered in Section 6.1 and these anchors; for example, those entering through formal pathways are likely to have an organisational anchor for a period of time, and those entering through DIY pathways often relied on emotional anchors. However, few respondents relied on the same anchor throughout their career, but moved from one to another at different points as their priorities and the industry changed.

7.1.1. Organisational Anchors

A central source of stability in some music careers are businesses such as major and independent record labels, artist management companies, and events management businesses that can offer ongoing employment and predictable income to industry professionals as employees, or businesses that are self-owned. The business owners and employees interviewed here described the stability on offer a little differently, but agreed that a period of stable income, experience and work was an essential element in their career.

A number of interviewees had spent long periods of their careers as employees in one of the large record labels such as Sony or Mushroom. For these employees, the labels offered opportunities for career development and experience in a diverse array of roles:

> I was promoted to the position of international marketing manager for Australian artists. And that role involved the promotion and coordination of international releases for Sony Music's Australian artist roster. I did that for about two years. And then moved into the Epic Records label as a label manager. And from there moved to a label — a boutique label, which was a wholly owned subsidiary of Sony, called Murmur. They had artists like Silverchair, Something for Kate, Jebediah, and others, where I was a marketing manager. I then moved back to Sony Music as a marketing manager. (Jonathan Williamson)

These labels offered both a sense of obligation and involvement that some described as a "lifestyle":

> I do recall there was a lot in that A&R coordinator role that had to be achieved in a very finite amount of time. It required me to be relatively organised, but I also did work very hard and very long hours. Of course, not forgetting that I would be going out at night a lot after work, so the work was very much, it was a lifestyle choice. It was not just a job. You embraced every part of it and that became your life. That expectation was there. (Catherine Haridy)

Both Haridy and Williamson described their time working with major or large independent labels as both encompassing their time beyond a 38-hour work week, while offering them financial stability in the form of salaried payment. The work demands they experienced were spoken of as evidence of their desirability to employers and others in the industry. Their standing within their employing organisations hence gave them an awareness of ongoing roles in the music industry and how they were orchestrated.

It is important to note, however, that these types of major and large label organisational anchors have become less available over time, and have become much less prevalent in the stories told by our interviewees after the turn of the century. This is clearly related to the downturn of the industry that resulted in significant downsizing in many major labels, and a number of interviewees discuss having gone through the experience of either losing their jobs as a result of this or being part of companies where hundreds of people were fired. This has implications for skills development within the industry, something discussed further in Section 7.3.

Furthermore, some respondents eventually moved on voluntarily from these positions, because while they offered stability, there were sometimes other qualities missing from their work life. For some, this was the challenge of running their own business, which many went on to do. Chrissie Vincent, on the other hand, left a job with Virgin in LA where she was working with artists such as the Rolling Stones and David Bowie because she lacked a sense of connection with those she was working with:

> What I realised is that I want to work with artists. I wanted to know that I was instrumental in their careers, that I wasn't just one of thousands of people that work at a record label that has worked for them over the years that they would never remember.

Vincent abandoned the organisational anchor in order to pursue what could be described as an emotional anchor, discussed below — although it could also be argued that by this stage in her career her reputation had become strong enough that this could also anchor her career. This demonstrates the fluid nature of these categories.

Owning a music business can also be a type of organisational anchor. The most common music business owners in this study were those who owned labels or artist management companies, or companies that offer a range of different services. For example, companies such as 123 Music Entertainment Group (Damian Costin) established both artist management (VVV Management) and label (123 Music) branches to offer a comprehensive suite of services to clients, and Remote Control (Stephen Cross) "provides publicity, label management, distribution and marketing services to international and local artists and labels".[32] Across all types of management organisation, the CEOs consistently describe how their sense of identity within the industry and future careers are tied into the fates of their businesses:

> The record label is my life's work… It is my life's work, and I am comfortable now with it being my career, rather than just something I did on the side while earning money in other ways. I still have to do that, but it is the bits and pieces we do on the side which are on the side, instead of the label being on the side. The vision is for the company to exist forever, like beyond my lifetime. I just continue to refine and develop the services and the brand and the business, focusing on the maturity of the business, things like creating a board, things like having succession plans for myself. And I don't mean selling or retiring. I mean, eventually replacing me as a CEO and having someone else run the company. That's a goal of mine, for me to then be able to develop the business further or develop other businesses or something like that. (Jaddan Comerford)

The development of career stability for these owner operators entails the growth of careers for other music industry workers, such as artists who employ their services:

> It's a very crucial time, because I am three years into a new business, but things have really grown at a rapid rate, managing five bands, and we have quite a few bands on the label as well. Now it is about building the managed bands into sustainable full-time musicians because some of them still have part-time jobs and that's a very hard thing to do, getting bands from one level to the next level but, I think that's what I am really focused on at the moment: helping all of my management clients to become full-time touring musicians, because that's what they all want. My focus is very heavily on that and also growing the label and signing new bands to the label. Really establishing the record label as a household name in Australia, I think that's really important for me at the moment. The first couple of years have been like you take the training wheels off the back and it's wobbly and I feel like I am nearly riding straight. (Lorrae McKenna)

It is worth noting however that when organisational anchors are discussed by our cohort currently they are more likely to be their own companies than a situation where they are working for someone else (indeed, they are likely to be providing such anchors for the next generation of professionals), the major labels have not entirely disappeared from the picture. Rather, the role they play has been redefined. Stu Harvey, for example, has recently partnered with Sony:

> So, we sold part of the company to them, which gave us some financial security, both on a personal and on a business level. And just having their backing has meant that we could grow a little bit faster, that's probably the best way to put it. So, the aim is to just slowly keep growing the company. Sony don't invest in companies which are going to keep plodding along, they want us to grow. We want to grow also.

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[32] http://www.remotecontrolrecords.com.au/about/

Likewise, the record label arm of Lorrae McKenna's Our Golden Friend has been developed in partnership with Universal. In these instances while our respondents expressed a closer sense of identification with their own business, meaning this is likely to be their key anchor, the major label involvement increased their sense of security.

Music industry professionals whose careers are attached to the success of organisations depend upon the reputation and success of the wider organisation. Those working with major labels, as employees or in partnership, express a stronger sense of career stability or development than those who are solely responsible for the development of their own businesses. It is this group of small and micro-business owners whose sense of career stability is most easily affected by the success or failure of particular clients or projects and who benefit most from opportunities to engage in professional development and mentorship events organised by groups such as the VMDO and BIGSOUND.

7.1.2.   Portfolio Career Anchors

Portfolio careers are careers where a worker has a "continually evolving range of concurrent and overlapping paid and unpaid, predominantly part-time and freelance work, in order to carve out a viable living."[33] Those who pursue a portfolio career "seek employment security no longer, but opt instead for security in employability."[34] Bruce Butler described this idea as it relates to music industry professionals when he said:

> And I think that it's an industry where you can move on as long as you've got that desire and willingness to try something new, that you can make a career of the music industry rather than have a career that is just part of the music industry.

This type of career structure has been found to be very common among musicians, and is increasingly seen in a variety of other professions outside of the creative industries, as the 'gig economy' begins to displace full-time permanent employment. It is unsurprising then to find that the majority of our respondents at one point in their career — and in some cases for the entirety of their career — were anchored to the industry via a portfolio of ventures. We describe these professionals as having portfolio career anchors because they account for their career success and continuity as dependent on their work portfolios and being able to communicate these portfolios to others.

The portfolios of our respondents sometimes built up as a matter of chance, as opportunities were taken advantage of as they arose. Zac Abroms exemplifies this well: his early career involved a combination of his own promotion activities and paid work outside the industry until he transitioned over a number of years into a full-time job at a record label. This only lasted briefly before he started his own business (Viceroyalty) that also has a portfolio nature, incorporating publicity and management (with management becoming more important over time), and more recently a return to promotion. While in some cases, various ventures can be eventually subsumed under the umbrella of a company, at which point it can be described as more of an organisational anchor, the philosophy behind Abroms' approach means his ventures continue to resemble a portfolio:

> Flexibility is a really big aspect. I don't think when you start your own music business you can be too stringent about, 'I'm going to do A, B and C, but I'm not going to ever do D.' You have to just put the feelers out in lots of different ways and have irons in lots of different fires, and then see which ones kind of take-off.

Abroms contrasted this type of approach directly with the structure of an organisational anchor described in the previous section:

> There are a myriad of different models, but you can break it down into two; either work for yourself and it's inherently more freelanced and entrepreneurial, or you work for someone else and it's inherently more conventional. And I think that you're going to get two completely different responses to this. There are a lot of things that were unattractive to me about going down a conventional route. And most of that has to do with restrictions on what you can and can't do.

It is important to note though that while the upside of portfolio careers is the type of flexibility and freedom to experiment that Abroms thrived on, the downside is that more risk rests with the professional in an already risky industry. One anonymous respondent focuses on this more in describing his career as "I've had another job going on paying the bills and then risking to do that little entrepreneurial activity." This also become apparent in the stories of another anonymous respondent for whom a portfolio career has developed to ensure security and avoid exploitation when they found themselves providing some services to artists for free:

> [My business] supports itself. It is sustainable, but there are times when it has lost money or isn't making money. I have always done other things to supplement it [including working outside the music industry]. I do what it takes.

[33] Bartleet et al 2012, p. 35.
[34] Bridgestock 2005, p. 40.

In other cases, interviewees attempted to strategically diversify their activities as a way to try to ensure financial security for themselves. This was particularly the case for label owners and artist managers. This had varying results:

> There was a conscious decision at some point early on that maybe owning copyrights is a smart thing to do and that it's an investment in your future to have this kind of passive income stream, but to this day it's not — it's not a profitable part of the business. And I think it's a bit of a secret amongst all our labels at our level, because "Are you making money?" "Oh, good. Me neither." So, the business is really funded on what we make as managers and then we've invested a lot into the label at the time. (Nick O'Byrne)

> But I still had these two little businesses and the [teaching], it was my thing, you know. So, I just battled and struggled and battled and struggled until one day, one of my artists just blew up big and all of a sudden I could make a living being a manager. So, I gave up the teaching side of it and kept   the two little businesses, because they were pretty passive, and I was a full-time manager. (Anonymous manager)

A number of interviewees noted that they felt vulnerable only managing, either because this left them too reliant on the success of their artists, because they understood that the relationship they had with their artists was fundamentally insecure and could end at any time, or because they saw management as a 'slow burn' that would take time to develop. Many managers therefore attempted to develop another type of portfolio: a roster of artists that complemented each other in terms of career stage, fame and profitability.

7.1.3.　　　Reputation Anchors

All interviewees alike identified the importance of their professional contacts for securing contracts, work and the trust of important industry actors. A network becomes an anchor, however, when the development of reputation is itself identified as the source of career security. On one level, this could be done through association with artists who had achieved success. A less risky version of this, however, is where the reputation of the professional themselves can stand alone. One anonymous interviewee, for example, notes that her career developed through the consolidation of her reputation among industry networks:

> Yeah I think I just got approached by other artists that wanted some work done and because I'd gotten myself back out there and I think some people, some media people in particular they definitely remembered me from working at the record company before. So those relationships were still solid and good. And then it just was a gradual process of getting my name known among other record companies and promoters and managers and stuff like that who would hire me. And I can't even remember what the first job was after that, but I just remember going, for a long time I haven't had to look for work.

Networking or community-building became a dominant explanation for career progression in the story of managing director of Cooking Vinyl, Stu Harvey, who describes relying upon his reputation and word-of-mouth to find work in the music industry after leaving previous employment:

> [I] took the leap of faith and sent out an email to all my contacts, all these relationships I had built up over the years. I said, "Look, I'm leaving Zomba. Here's my personal email, get in touch if you want to catch up, or if you have any work opportunities." And within a couple of hours one of those contacts who I'd made, again through the radio work at Shock Records, called me up and said, "Hey, come down for an interview." And I had a job there, probably two weeks later… it was a bit kind of clique-y I suppose… It wasn't until after I left Shock that people said, "You know there's a bit of a clique thing going on there". And I went, "Oh, wow, I didn't realise it was happening and I guess I was in the right part of that clique."

Being a part of the right clique gives music professionals with reputation careers a sense of security that does not depend on a stable business structure, as Chrissie Vincent noted when asked about her career stability:

> All of my friends all worked at record labels or all worked in the music industry, so there were plenty of jobs back then. Not anymore… Job security — it was never an issue. I was never unemployed at all and even this whole 17 years of running my own business, I never once went on the dole, never. I've always been able to find work.

Unlike discussions of portfolio careers, reputation careers in the Melbourne music industry depend more on established friendship networks than professionals' connections with reputable clients. However, establishing them requires much more than knowing the right people. For example, Jenny Moon (live music production) and Lorrae McKenna (artist management and marketing) both frame the growth of their business reputations as a result of their own efforts:

> It really is word of mouth, a lot of my side of the industry. It's being known. It's a hard industry to break into, production, because it's a hard slog, and it's harder now. (Jenny Moon)

> I feel like the position I have now, I have a bit more of a reputation attached to me. I am not trying to toot my own horn, but people have seen what I have done with other things and they go "We want to work with you because we saw what you did here". (Lorrae McKenna)

Business reputations could result in calls from artists seeking representation, from major label representatives seeking a partnership, or other industry professionals seeking advice and collaboration, but each is understood as an outcome of the efforts of music businesspeople to develop their personal brands and perceptions of reliability in the industry. A solid reputation also reduces risks for professionals, through being able to choose what artists to work with. Carolyn Logan describes how, at a time when she was already well known and respected in the industry, but needed to change the way she ran her business in order to balance caring for her children with her career, her reputation enabled her to do this in a sustainable way:

> So, what I did at the time is I managed heritage artists, because the heritage artists are the ones who are reaping the seeds they've already sewn. They don't need you to hold their hands. They've been through it. They want someone who will be honest, who will work their business honestly for them, who will do the things that they want covered. So, you knew also how much money you were going to have coming in per year, basically, because you knew pretty well what you had to work with.

The ability to do this ensured that Logan, and her expertise, stayed in the industry.

7.1.4.　　Emotional Anchors

Most music professionals in our sample experienced some period in their career where their role in the music industry was not defined by either an organisation, portfolio or network, but rather characterised by a personal, emotional connection to the work role itself. For many, this was at the outset of their careers and came as hobbies and passion projects evolved into business ventures, as described in Section 5.1.3. Here, we examine how similar emotional connections help sustain a career.

On a fundamental level, a number of interviewees made broad statements about the emotional attachment to music being fundamental to their work in the industry. Stephen Cross said that "being a fan I think is the big thing" and for Stu Harvey:

> My passion for music has always been strong and one thing I love about it, is the opportunity to tell people about music, and introduce people to new artists that they might not have heard, and that's just something I really enjoy.

A love of music and music-loving people was also often described as a motivation for both personal and business decisions among music industry professionals. One publicist, for example, describes working outside the music industry, but returning to the sector because of the desire to help others in their pursuits:

> I also did publicity independently for different people when they asked me. So, I did the publicity role when it suited me. If I really liked somebody and I liked what they were doing, and I thought I could help I would do it. Or if somebody came to me and said, "I'm really struggling, do you want to take this on?" most of the time that wasn't driven by money, it was driven by a connection or a love for that person and I wanted to do it, I wanted to help. (Anonymous Publicist)

Lorrae McKenna also describes how, after taking a break from the industry for six months she applied for a job at a record company because:

> I missed it. Even though I was still kind of connected to it [through a job in radio], I felt that I wasn't, and music is just really important to me, it is kind of everything to me.

In these cases, emotional attachments work to prevent the loss of experience from the industry. Later in her interview, McKenna also discusses how she views her emotional connection to music as an important part of her skillset that she uses to succeed in her job:

> Music is a really emotional thing for me, it is an emotional connection so if I can connect with it emotionally, I think others are definitely going to connect with it emotionally.

Zac Abroms makes a similar point when he says, "I've never been very good at working on projects that I'm not passionately passionate about". This appeal to passion is sometimes used to justify decisions that may otherwise be seen as questionable from a business point of view:

> I've had offers from bands from whom I would make money because they're successful, older bands who are successful, but I'm just not into it. So, I can't just do it as a job sort of thing. I find it difficult to do that. I have to love them. Personally, because of my entrepreneurial nature as well, it makes things difficult for myself because I love to get in at the early stage and pick them and play that whole journey to get there. That's the most satisfying thing. So that's what I enjoy doing. So, I'll often start with somebody brand new and work with them. But that takes a lot of time. It can take years.

For the anonymous manager quoted here, financial security is less important than both working with music they love, and also the personal feeling of satisfaction they get from working with an artist throughout their career.

For other respondents, however, emotion does not always outweigh financial considerations. For another anonymous manager and label owner, the portfolio career that they have constructed is partially about being able to manage the tensions between wanting to be involved with music for the love of it, and needing to be financially secure:

> It is different for a label act and management client. ...I think for the record label used to be if we loved the record then we would put it out and there was no consideration of "Is this going to sell?" "Are people going to be interested in this?" We never used to think about that at all. [A] management client has to be someone who is going to make a living, someone who wants to make a living from music, who is willing to put the work into doing it, who makes music that could get them to that place. ... With a label it's trying to create and present a world that you'd like to live in, and management is a lot like that but it's also like, you got to get paid.

This type of career anchor can be characterised by a distinct absence of longer-term planning, which is displaced by music professionals' emotional attachment to music and music communities. This way of framing one's involvement with music is also a way of retaining a sense of certainty in an industry defined by luck, in that a person's own taste and belief in the value of music and the artist they work with are always within their control.

In conclusion, we reiterate that these career anchors are overlapping concepts. Within our interview data, it's rare that a music professional described their career entirely with one anchor. More so, one anchor was highlighted or foregrounded, and thus used by the interviewee as a through-line or central theme of their career. Having music businesspeople relate their biographies produced these results, as it asked individuals to concisely summarise complex work/life experiences. Observed from a distance, these anchors should be read as dimensions of involvement. They are a very useful means of mapping and positioning music careers, drawing their explanations from a very direct source: the desires of long-term professionals, and their application avoids cliched and out-moded explanations of why people work in such a challenging sector.

7.2. Developing Work Competencies

Music professionals in Melbourne develop their work role competencies through a range of formal training methods, as well as informal on-the-job training, mentorships, trial-and-error, and through connections to work colleagues, allied professionals, mentors, bosses and formal business training programs. As discussed in Section 6.5, around a third of our respondents had formal qualifications in or closely related to music business. However, only one of these people returned to education after starting in music. Given that retraining in a formal setting is not something our respondents have been inclined to do, this section will discuss how skills are developed once people enter the industry. We will begin by looking at areas where respondents identified gaps in skills, then examine how outside professionals, industry-provided training and informal training provided our cohort with opportunities to improve their business practices.

7.2.1.　　Skills Gaps

One of the risks of an industry where entry is often through hobbyist and informal pathways, rather than through the gaining of formal qualifications, is that as professionals build up their businesses they may be missing vital pieces of information or skillsets, or merely doing things inefficiently due to a lack of access to know-how. For example, Catherine Haridy found small business management challenging despite having previously worked for at Festival Mushroom as an A&R manager:

> I never thought about what it meant to start a business. I didn't see being a manager as me starting my own business. I think I saw it as me just managing my mates and that was somehow different and I'm sure it is in a lot of other people's as well at that starting point. It wasn't at all like "starting a business", more "I really like this artist and I'm going to manage them now" and then all of those other things that you have to think about start coming into play.

While Haridy's expertise from years working in large record labels stood her in good stead in this instance, for others a failure to engage with the business aspects of what they are doing — or failing to even realise they are running a business — can have negative consequences. Some interviewees shared stories about instances in the industry where successful artists ended up losing money because, for instance, their managers were not fully across tax laws. One anonymous label owner and manager noted that even if a manager does not lose a band money, they are not doing their job as well as they could if they don't know how to maximise profits:

> There was a whole lot of administrative stuff that is quite specific that you need to know. Stuff about rights management, like the different income streams. Your job as manager is to maximise every income stream. There are a lot of income streams that people don't even know exist unless you get deep into the nitty gritty of artist management.

Catherine Haridy notes that finances are an area where bands are particularly likely to have problems, meaning it is crucial that those they turn to for advice are themselves fully informed:

> I continue to see artists who have the same reoccurring problems. They generally seem to land within the financial and business management realm: how to manage money, what kind of structure their business has, what kind of things they're claiming and not claiming, different grants that they should be accessing that they don't know exist. Just things that seem basic but aren't basic and you wouldn't know them unless you had that advice.

A lack of information can also extend to foundational business procedures, which can lead to underperformance or a reinvention of the wheel around common tasks. A number of interviewees talked about how this stemmed from the high-intensity nature of the industry, where people were often too busy and too reactive to have the time to think about improving business practices. One anonymous interviewee described how this played out:

> Even at [a large organisation] the accountant used to get RSI from the calculator. She didn't properly use MYOB even to run a multi-million-dollar company. Because it was just old school and that's how they, you know, how her and the boss understood things and so they just kept — she'd be going crazy and screaming in her office because her spreadsheets weren't matching. ... Because you're just in your bubble and people don't think about sending people out to learn. So, the music industry has got a massive lack of proper efficiencies and systems and procedures and things.

Another anonymous label manager told a similar story about her own practices:

> I didn't really know what a proper spreadsheet was, I remember that. But then I can remember also saying, "Well it's no different than what I've done here," which is my own scribble of where the money was being spent … But yes, probably there would have been better skills to have learnt earlier on in terms of those spreadsheets.

This quote reveals a tension between wanting to defend the practices she used and acknowledging that she may have been disadvantaged by not adapting to more commonly used methods. The quality of self-reliance identified as a desirable characteristic in the industry in Section 6.2.3 may be relevant here, as highly self-reliant people may at times struggle with admitting they need help. This may also be connected to a tendency in some parts of the industry for people to be wary of certain types of business cultures or practices, as one anonymous respondent who transitioned into music from other business ventures observed:

> I found I was the odd one out in that I'd been in business, and the culture of the music industry is sort of very different to the culture of being in business. … I think when you're in business, you develop a certain formality in the way you go about things. And this industry is very informal, I think. And so, any sniff of this formality, it's almost met with a bit of distrust.

The music industry benefits in many ways from the aspects of its culture that are informal and connected to creativity. Preserving this culture while also ensuring the financial security of the artists who are at its heart through good business practices is part of the balancing act that the professionals in this study have needed to perform in their careers. The following sections describe how they have acquired the skills needed to do so.

7.2.2.   Professional Advice

Several small business owners in Melbourne music industry commented that early meeting with accountants, lawyers and tax agents revealed the limitations of their small business knowledge and prompted them to either seek out professionals to assist with their businesses or to seek out training in small business management. Bruce Butler, for example recalls:

> I had nowhere to go to learn anything. No one said, "Well, this is how this works." I mean, apart from when I had to go to accountants and start talking about [tax].

Consulting with outside professionals was presented by many of our interviewees as a necessary part of their business practices, and as an important source of education:

> That became very important to have separately to an accountant, somebody who could help us just navigate the day-to-day management of both the bands' money and my own money. I found learning from those people was quite important (Catherine Haridy)

> I felt very lucky that I found a very good lawyer and I found a very good accountant and those people were very important to helping me set-up the back end structure of the business that I knew nothing about so, I feel like that's where I learnt a lot of things but there are still things like, what is a BAS statement? What is this stuff? When it was coming to me, I had no idea. Why do I have to pay all this money? (Lorrae McKenna)

However, other interviewees have taken a further step in bringing in consultants to identify improvements that could be made to their entire business:

> I had a paid business mentor. I'd pay them monthly and they'd give me all sorts of structural help. They would put me on courses for sales training, pitch training, things like that, and then finance training and business growth training. But what was most valuable was breaking out of isolation and being able to table issues that I was facing down in the real world and getting direct solutions that benefitted both my business and the artists too. (Tom Larkin)

The following anonymous interviewee describes a similar moment, wherein her past work experiences and informal training encouraged her to identify gaps in her own business know-how and to seek out assistance or training in growing the business.

> I'll tell you that what I'm about to do right now is hire somebody to work for me that's going to teach me normal skills. Because most of the people I worked for never have actual business acumen, they just kind of steamrolled into becoming massive companies. … There's no proper systems and procedures in place. I think what it was, was I wouldn't take no for an answer and I would work really hard. I'm recruiting to get a general manager in, who has run a real company and understands what to knock into shape, because I know that there are more efficiencies that we could have and just better systems and procedures and policies… I know my strengths and weaknesses.

For others, a similar outcome has been achieved by simply hiring people with the requisite types of skills on to their staff. For example, Jaddan Comerford says:

> I've invested very heavily in what we call a head office. Our finance department, our HR, our operations, really taking that stuff seriously so I can have people around me that have got law degrees and according degrees and these sorts of things, so I can have that expert advice at my fingertips and I can also focus on what my skills are, which are strategy and marketing and artist development, things like that.

While this type of solution will not be available to smaller or emerging businesses, there was a general agreement that certain types of expertise are only available through properly qualified individuals, and that this was worth investing in wherever possible.

7.2.3. Industry Training

While advice from financial and legal professionals was a common way that respondents filled the gaps in their business skills, a more direct avenue was found by those who actively sought out training through industry conferences, mentorship schemes and workshops. Organisations and programs that featured in our interviews included initiatives by state music offices such as Creative Victoria, The Push, Music Victoria and the Victorian Music Development Office (primarily supporting the business skills of early-career musicians and music business professionals), the New Enterprise Investment Scheme (NEIS), and other unspecified paid business mentorship schemes, as noted by the following participants:

> I built Pan Studios and I did it through NEIS. I did it as a NEIS course through the government, which allowed me to get tax business management. I got a bit of training and it was very overwhelming, and I didn't understand a lot of it, but I understood enough to get me through because it was set up like that. (Jenny Moon)

> [An employee] is doing a VMDO-supported female leaders' workshop and it's — I think it's definitely more focused on her as a leader, but what she's already been able to apply to our business is really great. (Nick O'Byrne)

> I did [a mentorship program]. So that was really helpful. And I did the [organisation] management workshop. Years and years ago, I did the [other organisation] mentorship program. I actually found the — this just shows my record keeping — I found one of the old handouts the other week. I was going through some things. So yeah, made the most of those little programs as well. (Anonymous Artist Manager)

Interviewees who mentioned undertaking such programs or attending events were overwhelmingly positive about their impact:

> Look, those things all were helpful and if they weren't there it would have been worse. They all helped, no doubt, no doubt. But I can't tell you exactly what would have happened. But I have no doubt that that education was really important for me. (Anonymous manager)

The value of these events was evident for interviewees at all stages of their careers. In one case, an anonymous respondent noted that although they were at a point where they were experienced enough to be asked to be on panels, they were also learning from others at these events:

> I guess, starting to be invited to talk on conferences, music conferences, introduced me to panels that everyone — I would see panels of things I didn't know much about, and I would go along.

These events — particularly the key conferences such as BIGSOUND — were often doubly beneficial to participants in that they offered opportunities for networking alongside training.

In addition to the face-to-face programs, some respondents also mentioned online initiatives started by industry bodies that they could use to help fill gaps in their knowledge. For example, the Association of Artist Managers has started a closed Facebook group to allow artist managers opportunities for informal networking and advice from fellow managers. While these were not mentioned often by our cohort, developing an understanding of how extensive such groups are and what impact they have on members may be beneficial in the future.

7.2.4. On-the-job Training

For the most part learning on the job was the most common way music professionals built up their skills. For those building up their own businesses through DIY pathways, this was often described as a 'trial and error' process, where information about how to do things flowed through the same networks that made up the music communities, they were part of. Many professionals also had one or two key mentors, who they could turn to when they had specific problems or questions:

> I had some great mentors as well. I was really lucky. There was one of the promotions guys from one of the promotions companies who just took me under his wing and just was like, "This is how it works," and it was really wonderful. (Anonymous Manager)

The acknowledgement by this manager that there was an element of luck to this is significant, and points again to how success can be about fortune, as well as being embedded in the right networks where those with the know-how you need are available and inclined to help.

However, a different type of on-the-job training was available to those working in larger organisations and major record companies. Working within complex music organisations, within which a range of services, clients and subcontractors intersect on a daily basis, allows early-career businesspeople the potential to work with and understand the roles of a diversity of people within the music industry. For those without formal music industry training, gaining access to a breadth of other practitioners in the industry is invaluable for understanding how the industry operates. The way in which his job at Mushroom exposed him to many facets of the industry was explained in detail by Stu Harvey:

> I suppose just things I didn't even understand how they happened. As simple as picking up street press every week and seeing the ads in there and going, "All right, I didn't even consider how that happened, but to see that needs to be budgeted for, there's a marketing person that will come up with a brief for the ad, in terms of what needs to be in there and the copy needs to be budgeted for, graphic designer, the approval process of that coming back to the marketing guy and management or whomever needs to tick off on", so as simple as that, those kinds of processes are things that I learnt. And production I suppose. Seeing that once that album master arrives in the office, how does it go from, back in those days, being a DAT tape, through actually being a CD. The process of getting quotes for the packaging, I never even considered what would be involved in that, whether it would cost $10 to make a CD or 50 cents or what. All I knew is back at that stage, CD's were $30, I thought that was ridiculous and couldn't justify in my head how that made sense, but I guess, once you got inside and saw it's $1.00 - $1.50 to make the CD just to actually make the CD and the artwork that needs to be created, and the graphic designers and everything else that goes into that, just simply the freight if it's getting made somewhere else, all those little things were I suppose the nuts and bolts of running a label, which had never even considered. And equally the other roles inside the label, like a publicist, what's involved with someone like that. How do they get media to — how do they convince media to pick this band to give them coverage, be it a review and interview or feature article, a photoshoot, what's involved there?

The all-round exposure that respondents gained from time spent in large and major labels was seen as priceless. Catherine Haridy noted that "The only grounding I didn't have in a label setting that I had to learn when I became a manager was the touring." Interviewees who described on-the-job training as valuable for their skills development and integration into the music industries worked for high-profile music firms from either the major labels (Sony Music, Warner Bros. Records) or large independent labels (Mushroom) or forged working relationships with mentors in high-profile firms within those sectors:

> I didn't know that there was an incredible amount of record labels, or where they were, who the people were that were sat within it, what their roles were — sort of fluffed my way through — and it's only until you actually get into a building like Mushroom or something like that, where you actually understand what everyone's day-to-day job is. (Damian Costin)

It is significant, then, that access to informal opportunities for skills training and the quality of such training is transforming with changing industrial norms. The downturn in the music industry in the 2000s meant few major labels maintained a significant presence in Victoria:

> The major labels still aren't really in Melbourne, they have offices here and I always get shocked when I go up to the Universal office in Sydney and they have got 300 staff and I am like, "Who the hell are you and what are you doing here?" That's not how we work in Melbourne; what are we doing? There are so many people and who is paying you? It is just a very different world. (Lorrae McKenna)

The limited opportunities available for industry professionals to work within high-profile major and independent music labels within the Melbourne music industries, due to the small organisational scale of most music businesses, renders informal music business training as an unrealistic avenue to rely on for those entering the industry.

These changes are impacting on the availability of informal training and changing the value of more formal training (i.e. higher education, state interventions, etc.) as a consequence. Where major labels and semi-majors were once central training grounds for professionals, exposing them to the roles of others in the industry through the label/ management centre, the hollowing out of staff at the majors in Victoria means that informal training now is more likely to occur as sole-traders working with mentors or other direct contacts in the industry, with the limitations inherent in this. It is noteworthy also that the changed relationship between smaller independents and majors, where the majors are investing in some smaller labels but from a distance (as described in Section 7.1.1), means that the training burden has shifted there also. Receding opportunities potentially place formal and industry-led education in a strong position to help industry practitioners develop their know-how in our current industry. At the same time, however, it should be noted that many of the respondents in this sample displayed a strong commitment to mentoring and training their own staff, and were actively working to ensure that the next generation of professionals had a better skillset in their early career than they themselves had.

7.3. Industry and Community Support

When identifying sources of career support in the music industry, interviewees noted a range of sources of financial,training and networking support from both other industry professionals, formal professional organisations and government bodies with explicit missions to support the music business. They also noted the specificity of many of these things to the Victorian industry.

The most common form of support came from other (often more established) industry professionals. Zac Abroms' transition into artist management wasn't just passion-driven, but enabled through working for an established industry professional:

> So artist management wasn't something that I ever set out to do. I started as a musician. My passion drove me into this kind of entrepreneurial live music performance promoting kind of a space, and that gave me access to the industry, and then I was presented with this opportunity and I thought, why not. It served as an apprenticeship, of sorts, that relationship with him and his business unfolded. And in the space of about three years, it just morphed into a full time job and became the basis of my career in music.

Interviewees also identified several industry bodies that they claimed were valuable for their career development. Professional industry bodies and governmental associations were prominent in our interviewees descriptions of developing financing and industry networks that would support the development of their businesses.

> We are lucky because we have the funding here for that and outside of Victoria, I don't know how people do it. We have all these resources here that they just don't have and that's why people move here, it's why bands move here, because you live in Melbourne for two years and then you can apply for Creative Victoria funding because you are deemed a Victorian then. (Lorrae McKenna)

> Creative Victoria and the Australia Council, but more Creative Victoria, have been incredibly supportive, a bunch of people we've worked with in terms of grants to help them pay for international touring, it's like a really big one because that's a massive, massive expense when you're coming from Australia and you're not bankrolled by a major label. It's really hard to tour internationally, it costs like $40,000 at least to do an international tour. (Anonymous Artist Manager)

On the other hand, the most highly criticised organisations in the Victorian music industries were by far radio stations, both commercial and public sector, from professionals working in the independent music sector. Independent label operators and those who work with independent artists spoke of the limitations faced by their segment of the Melbourne music industry:

> I just now realise that if we continue to put out the music that we put out, we are never going to get support from Triple-J. That is a huge market that we are missing out on. It is huge. The only successful labels that put out music made by young people, are labels that put out music that is designed to get played on Triple-J. You spend your entire life thinking about what they play and whether this new band you have seen is going to be appealing to Triple-J. And artists record songs in a way that they think is going to work in that framework. (Anonymous)

> Commercial radio barely plays any independent music. It's always been the case. There is a lot of research internationally and in Australia, the independent labels account for 30-35 percent of music sales. They hammered Adele and thank you very much for doing that. I appreciate it but there's something weird that they don't want to play anything else by us. (Stephen Cross)

The city of Melbourne, where most of the cohort have based their careers, plays a central role in how music industry workers imagine and act on their careers in the Australian music industry more broadly. After living in the US and travelling to Melbourne, one interviewee claimed;

> I decided I really loved the scene in Melbourne in particular. I was just enamoured with how people would go out any night of the week. Didn't matter if they had school the next day or work the next day or something. You could see any style of music almost any night of the week. (Anonymous Artist Manager)

Melbourne's reputation as a hub for the development and growth of music scenes and subcultures is widespread among its music industry workers, who describe it as "diverse" (Nick O'Byrne), a place where "the artists live" (Jonathan Williamson), and an international touring location in its own right — the Whites Stripes once "played seven shows in Melbourne, then went back to America" (Stephen Cross).

Numerous music businesspeople identified Melbourne's strongest feature as a community ethic, which is supported by community-based assets, such as community radio and professional networks. One label manager attributed this characteristic to the size of the music industry in Melbourne:

> I think everyone in Melbourne, and in Australia — Australia is too small for people to guard their secrets closely. I think everyone in Australia is very into the idea of sharing what they know with other people and helping each other, because everyone benefits in the long run. So yes, I don't know if it is just about labels, or if it is about anyone doing music.

This community ethic doesn't end with industry professionals' explanations of their individual success, but extends to how music businesspeople describe the value of music industry assets and professional networks:

> When I arrived here and I listened to PBS and RRR and 3CR, I was pretty blown away by it. By what you could hear on the radio, kind of 24/7 really. It's pretty incredible. It still is, I think it's a major asset to Melbourne and to Australia. And so, within about 12 months after I arrived, I was doing community radio which I still think is incredible and I still do a radio show on Saturday nights on RRR. (Stephen Cross)

> But it's also the kind of community infrastructure that we have here with things like rally that happened in Melbourne however many years ago it was to protest licensing laws that were happening here where 40,000 people got out in the streets and then the government had to like, "oh shit people do care about live music." But things like community radio that we have here, the infrastructure of venues that we have here. Those things are so important and they are the reason why Melbourne is seen internationally as a leading music city. People don't talk about Australian music overseas but they mostly talk about Melbourne music. (Anonymous)

Alongside community support for the music industry, music businesspeople identified state-led initiatives as central to the success of their own careers and of Melbourne as a music city:

> I honestly don't think it would be possible for us to do what we do or to have achieved what we have if we lived somewhere other than Victoria, because of the funding structures that there are here... It's because of both government and community infrastructure that we have here. And those are things that — I hope and feel like they're in pretty safe hands in Victoria with the kind of people that have been doing this stuff. (Anonymous)

Access to funding and networking opportunities not only supports music businesspeople in the midst of their careers, but also offers avenues to support up and coming artists and businesspeople.

8. Stage III: Barriers and Exits

This section explores the moments when participants' lives and ambitions are interrupted or otherwise frustrated. Music industry professionals experienced many sources of career interruption and more often lack support when exiting the sector. Advice for managing transitions and negotiating difficulties in sustaining a career is hard to access and roadblocks to career development are numerous. Section 8.1 describes the causes of poor health outcomes and "burn out" endemic to the music sector across work roles. Poor mental health and long work hours were reported by our interviewees, but also present in their responses are practical strategies for managing some of these difficulties. Section 8.2 looks at the impact of gender on the careers of our interviewees, noting that despite improvements in this area many of the women we spoke to did encounter negative effects. Finally, Section 8.3 discusses the times when music industry professionals have exited or considered exiting the industry. It describes both abrupt interruptions and career ending decisions, as well as more gradual and planned departures, focusing on the need for both career support and advice around retirement planning in the industry. This will become important as industry professionals experience life transitions and also as their businesses expand. The retention of industry knowledge and skills during times of transition is an area for further support and development in current industrial practices.

8.1. Health

The majority of the interviewees at some point mentioned poor mental and/or physical health as a roadblock in either their own career, or that of the artists they were connected to. The prevalence of these issues was seen to be connected to the conditions and expectations of the industry in a variety of ways, and there was an interplay between the factors that caused poor physical health and those that impacted on mental health.

8.1.1. Work Cultures, Substances and Mental Health

Many interviewees experienced "burn out" at some stage during their career, which often led to either a period away from the industry or in some cases a complete exit. These experiences were connected to stress caused by the high-pressure environment, insecurity and cultural expectations. The music industry does not adhere to the same rhythms as conventional jobs, with many of the key activities (namely gigs) taking place well outside of 'normal' working hours. For those on the business side of the industry, this creates a situation where they need to attend to business matters during the day but also be at events in the evening and on weekends. As Bruce Butler describes:

> One thing about the industry is that, regardless of what area you work in, it tends to be a 24/7 industry. I would, as a manager, still need to be at meetings with record labels and businesspeople that work 9:00 to 5:00. I'd still need to be up at 9:00 o'clock to do business but I'd still be at my artist's gig at 3:00, or past 3:00, sorting out the money or making sure everyone gets back to the hotel if we're on tour and so forth.

Respondents discussed working days that could be up to 18 hours long and found it difficult to take time off. This was something that affected interviewees who were self-employed and those that were working on a salary for a company and was described as being part of the music industry 'lifestyle'. As such, it was not seen as something that was optional if you wanted to succeed in your career; indeed, being at gigs is one of the more exciting and appealing parts of the industry, but one that requires careful management to prevent becoming a liability. This is also related to the centrality of passion to the industry, whereby being able to 'do what you love' can become a justification for overwork and exploitation, either of oneself or of others. A number of interviewees, including Lorrae McKenna, quoted here, discussed how an over-commitment to the intensive work patterns demanded by the industry could lead to a period of burn out or illness:

> To be honest, it was a really hard and fast introduction to the music industry and after two years of working for [her first employer], I actually got quite sick. I didn't like it because I wanted to prove myself, it was my first job in the music industry and I have definitely learnt since then, that you can't just work all the time, you can't just give everything to a job. I was very young then, in my early twenties so I was just like 'I can do anything' but your body will tell you that you can't, eventually, at some point.

This lifestyle is not only a matter of working long hours. Drugs and alcohol are a common feature of the music industry, and respondents described how there are certain expectations and pressures to be involved in drinking and drug taking, and also how these are used to cope with industry pressures. This anonymous interviewee illustrates this as follows:

> There's such a massive nexus between alcohol and music. Not just in the fact that venues rely on alcohol sales to survive to put bands on, but just the general industry. Like, I was talking to [a friend] recently and she went to a breakfast, you know, music puts on breakfast whether it's Women's Day or this or that and you walk in, in the morning at 9:00 a.m. and they're pouring champagne and giving it to you, but there's no other option. No-one's offering you mineral water and she asked for water and ended up having to go and get it herself. … That's a work event, you know. This wouldn't happen in other industries. … Some of my closest friends have become very, very, bad alcoholics and whatnot, but it's from it being how you coped over those years. I think it's a little bit better now, but it's still not good enough, I don't think, the way that alcohol is so involved in almost everything music.

The idea at the end of this quote about people not coping, and using alcohol to do so, is related to the theme of poor mental health in music, which came up in the majority of interviews. For our respondents, especially those who work directly with artists, this was a multi-faceted issue in that they themselves could be suffering from mental health issues, but they were also dealing with — and often felt responsible for — the mental health of others, particularly artists:

> There's a lot of mental health issues in our arena. I think it's five times more incidences of mental health issues. And, of course, managers can have their own mental health issues, but they can be managing artists who have got an actual mental health diagnosis. And we're not trained for that... you can imagine if you're a 25-year-old and all of a sudden, you're managing a band and a guy is talking about suicide or something, what the fuck do you do? Do you know what I mean? You're on your own. (Anonymous Artist Manager)

The professionals interviewed, and particularly the managers, described how all of these factors exacerbated one another, and were also magnified by the fundamentally personal and emotional nature of creative activities and the expectations attached to these. Not only is managing the expectations and emotional wellbeing of artists something many interviewees felt ill-prepared for, but having their own financial and professional fate connected to this amplified the other pressures they were experiencing:

> I'd say the thing of having people being responsible for other people's hopes and dreams and aspirations... there's a weight that comes with that and a responsibility that comes with that, that's really daunting. The hours are a really difficult part of my job. (Anonymous Artist Manager)

> I wouldn't do this whole process again. I just wouldn't do it. You have to be fucking insane, because it's not an easy thing to do, and you piss a lot of people off. You sort of butt heads with people along the way. People think it's really easy. It's fucking not, you know? It's incredibly hard to manage people's expectations — not only in their careers but mental state, and then the monetary parts and all that sort of thing. (Damian Costin)

The following two quotes from Jenny Moon and an anonymised respondent starkly illustrate the most extreme negative outcomes of these types of pressures:

> I think there's probably three people still alive from my era doing that level of international acts or (festival work) and all that level of production for artists like that. Three of us left probably out of 25. They've all either OD-ed, had strokes, they're the main two. There is no-one there helping guide those people. There is no funding. You can't afford on the wages you're earning to do that. You can't afford to go and see psychologists, not good ones. (Jenny Moon)

> I've seen so many bands get to the point where they've done all the hard work, they've toured for three or four years, and then just when they're at the point when things are starting to really work for them they crumble and fall apart because of mental health struggles. Like I've seen that happen so many times with bands I work with and with other bands. And I feel like if there'd been a bit more early intervention in those cases then I think some of those bands would still be together or would be massively successful now. (Anonymous Artist Manager)

These quotes show two different types of losses that result from the problems described above. The first is the extreme end of the physical damage that can be the result of living the lifestyle the industry encourages, which is the early deaths of industry personnel. The second represents the loss of talent that comes about when people are driven out of the field (and this can be the loss of talent on the business side as well as of artists).

8.1.2.   Coping Strategies

A positive note in the discussions of health was that almost all interviewees who talked about mental health as an issue also noted that they thought improvements were being made in this area, and that a shift had taken place whereby it had become easier to talk about. A number of interviewees talked about strategies that they had put into place to help them deal better with their own or others' mental health issues. For some, this involved taking advantage of formal programs aimed at the industry offered in various places:

> So, there's something starting in Victoria, [training for] managers from psychologists about the art of psychology and then a course, maybe a counselling course or something. Just a little bit of extra help to build our skills and awareness around — not that we're going to be psychologists, but... that's a great program. (Anonymous Artist Manager)

> I did a mental health first aid course which [a] publishing company we work with and some clients, do. They just had one and they invited us along. And that was really good, because it wasn't so much about what I learnt; it was just thinking about mental health for six hours straight in the context of your business and the people you're responsible for. (Nick O'Byrne)

Respondents noted that courses like this are reasonably new and expressed strong positive opinions about the growth in this area, including hopes that this growth would continue, and more programs be established.

Other interviewees developed more individual strategies for ensuring the ongoing mental health of themselves and those they worked with. A number of respondents mentioned the positive benefits of meditation. One of these was also seeking ongoing professional support for dealing with stress:

> I have a guru like an executive coach kind of person. I actually did a call with him this morning, at 7:30 this morning. And we work through different modules of how do I cope with stress when it happens, also how to give better feedback to people... I'm doing heaps of that personal development and as soon as I started doing it over the past two and a half years, I have seen immeasurable results in my business, in my revenue and in just my state.

Lorrae McKenna has developed her own strategies of holistic self-care after needing to take time away from the industry due to sickness caused by overwork:

> I am taking back the power of my self-care and looking after myself because I realise that I am my strongest tool and if I am not healthy and I am not mentally stable and I am not looking after myself then my business doesn't have anything, it doesn't operate so, if I don't put the time into take care of myself properly then my business will fall apart... I take a day off when I want to, because I am my own boss now and I just go 'Guess, what? I am having a day off'. I work a lot so, it's OK. Yoga, I have been running, I am trying to eat better, at scheduled times. I felt like one of the biggest problems for me was eating and it still is. You can fall into the trap of just ordering Uber Eats because you are working really late so, I try to have really healthy food options in the fridge in my office.

In conclusion, the pressures and working patterns of the music industry have the potential to cause poor mental and physical health in its workers. For those on the business side, this can mean being required to manage the health of artists as well as their own, creating a double burden that increases stress. Finding ways to support people in this task and disseminating information about strategies such as those described above, is imperative in reducing the loss to the industry that these issues cause. Catherine Haridy sums this up as follows:

> I think that that support is absolutely key and also for people's mental health within the role. It's not easy supporting creative people to realise their end goal and it can be a real uphill battle. I think to give people that business support and that structural and psychological support too, can be really, really crucial to their level of success within the role.

8.2. Gendered Experiences

The Victorian music business community, like the broader music industry, has been shadowed by a history of gendered discrimination,[35] which was broadly reflected in interviews with participants. A number of women interviewees had similar stories to share about negative experiences in this regard, from being sexually victimised in meetings to "putting up barriers" in response to "a lot of sexual innuendo" (Jenny Moon). Chrissie Vincent, a now internationally successful A&R representative, found the "glass ceiling" placed above her in Melbourne in the 1980s was worth moving abroad to avoid.

> You couldn't get through it unless you were playing up to those advances from older men, which I wasn't going to do or you were a hard-ass bitch in the industry and you know what? Bless them and I'm still friends with a lot of those women that were ground-breaking back then, that were doing it, but they had to be tough. They had to be as tough as the men in order to survive. You're either as tough as the men or you did stuff that you didn't want to do, so I left. I left the country and went, "I'm going overseas." By going overseas I jumped over that glass ceiling and came back.

Experiencing harassment or discrimination in their early careers is something that some of the more senior women say has prompted them to actively support junior women in gaining their footing. For example, some have made decisions to prioritise women artists or hire more women. However, the support of experienced women in the industry does not produce a gender-neutral experience of initiation into the music business. For example, Jenny Moon reports that sexism in the industry is an ongoing issue for training female A/V teams in her business:

> I've still got a few girls who work for me who saw me mixing when they were little kids, coming to all ages events and their parents now say, "I can't believe our daughter is working for you because she pointed at you at a show and said, "I want to be like her," and now she's working for you." So, that has happened a lot in my case, in my story, and I have trained a lot of those girls up. They're not in rock 'n' roll. It's too hard. It's just too male dominated still. They've gone into places like the Melbourne Exhibition Centre, and into corporate AV, because it's safer in there. What they can get in there is a full-time job, so they can get paid, they can get super… So, at least in those positions, if they stay there, they can get maternity leave and they can get all those things they need on their journey.

The question of what happens when children enter the scene was also raised by other women, with some participants questioning the compatibility of parenthood and their professional lives:

> Do I just completely step back entirely and focus on the kids? If we're financially able to do that, do I just do that while they are young or do I just have a little bit of involvement in my job? Or do I go back entirely, I don't know. (Anonymous Publicist)

Both women and men described taking time away from work to care for children, but as one businesswoman noted, "It's certainly harder for women. Men don't even think about that. They don't think 'I can't have a baby'". Several women expressed similar sentiments; that mothers are expected to change their work routines after the birth of a child while their partners would not be expected to do likewise.

Attitudes in the contemporary music industry were, however, overall presented in a positive light by the women in our sample, particularly in comparison to their own histories. One businesswoman, for example, described how she thinks a history of normalised sexist attitudes in the industry is being challenged by "a new generation of people coming into the industry". This includes through the organisation of events and training focused on women. Carolyn Logan notes that women entering the music business have found value in attending women's social networking events.

> We have a women's social network that happens once a month, and that started late last year. And that's been great, where basically you bring the young girls through, and it's empowering them, and nurturing them, and introducing them.

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[35] McCormack 2019; Music Victoria 2015; Strong & Raine 2018

Developing work experience and networking with others in the industry was identified by several senior women as a major challenge for their junior counterparts, making women-focused networking and training programs especially important. One businesswoman, who also acknowledged the value of networking events, noted that peer-support and mentorship could still be ongoing issues for women in the industry, especially as they approach leadership roles, such as being on committees and boards.

> I'd love to learn more about them, and to be on more boards. I've done a brief course and I can do more there, I'm sure, but I was just thinking … it would be really good to have a mentor in governance. I know that there is an organisation that already does that kind of thing but specifically women in the music industry on boards, getting more presence there, stuff like that. I think there needs to be a lot more support or a lot more work done there for sure.

The experiences of entry into music businesses and expectations about career possibilities within the industry remain gendered. While organisations like the VMDO, The Push, Music Victoria and private operators such as those described above work to produce practical solutions for the mentees, trainees, and employees that they work with, entry into music businesses continue to be shadowed by experiences of prejudice.

8.3. Exit

In this section we discuss how our interviewees talk about, plan for and act on leaving the industry. This is where the departure is (or is currently perceived to be) final at the time of the interview, or when respondents reported an occasion where they left, thinking they were leaving for good, but later returned. Data is also included on why other people our respondents have known have left, where relevant. Of the 27 interviewees, five were not working in the music industry at the time of their interview, and twelve had left the industry at some point in their career but later returned, with three who had left, returned, and then left again. Two main types of exit were discussed in our interviews: abrupt departures, and gradual departures. This latter category includes a small number of respondents who were not yet at a point where they wished to disengage from the industry had started to put plans in place for when they would do this.

8.3.1.   End of Career Discourses

Interviewees discussed the possibilities of the end of their career in a variety of ways, which give insights into how industry workers perceive the possibilities and risks associated with leaving the industry. Some interviewees relayed concerns about career longevity which were related to the idea that the music industry is a young person's game:

> Personally, I'm 45 now, I'm very aware that I am much older than the target demographic that I play in. So, personally the aim for me is to I think work at the label for another five to ten years, and what I want to do is very much transition, I don't know whether that's the right word, but bring through the younger staff members and get them set up to take over the label. It's a young person's game, and being a 45-year-old man saying, "Why doesn't Triple J play that song", I'm very aware that its old man screaming at the cloud kind of stuff. (Stu Harvey)

> There isn't like, like I said, I kind of got to this point in my career where I feel like these young editors, young media outlets, young blogs and stuff don't really want to hear from forty something year olds about what is the cool new music. (Anonymous Label Manager)

This perspective is, however, resisted by others in the cohort, and is contradicted by the examples in this group of people maintaining careers into their 50s and 60s. There are also others in the sample who have developed strategies for managing the disconnection between themselves as an older person, and a younger audience. For example, Tom Larkin describes how he thinks this disconnection comes about, and how having younger staff members helps him overcome it to some extent:

> You're dealing in an industry that is strongly youth-focused, for the most part. New opportunities really revolve around the tastes and whims of those under 25. So when you're older you need to rely far more on your networks and the people that are around you to be able to give you insight and connection to those developments and the cultural nuance and pathways that exist within an age range you are not a part of. We've got [a staff member] here and she's 24 years old, and she has connections that are based around the culture of the artists that are within that peer group. There is an intuitive understanding of what band member was in what previous band and what band members are listening to and how they all listen to the same records and that creates a broader collective sense of what tracks are going to work within those communities. Whereas I hear it and I hear the surface level proposition. I can listen to the songs and I can like the songs. I can look at the photos and recognise an act communicating visually and I can connect with their shows. I can also connect to the artist as a human being and buy into their vision as a supporter and partner but I'm not necessarily capable of contextualising it to the same extent that someone who's under 25 can, and how they can instinctually form the right cultural decision and have the smarts to know what's the right thing to do with an artist on that level

In this way, Tom is able to draw on the cultural capital of a younger person to prolong his connection to certain segments of the industry. Tom does note, however, that there is a difference between the 'cool' part of the industry that is associated with youth, and the still profitable older market associated with 'heritage' acts. This is also noted by another interviewee, who describes how she feels her age has become a liability when trying to break new acts:

> I think these tiny little, these new bands that are twenty and they want to get on all these blogs that are run by nineteen and twenty year olds, don't want to hear from a forty year old person about what's cool, you know what I mean?

At the same time, however, she notes that established 'heritage' artists she works with, who mainly connect with an older audience, require less work and are more profitable for her business. It may, therefore, be worth considering how perceptions about age affect what industry personnel see as being possible, and if the perception that there is an 'age barrier' in music can lead to careers being shorter than they may have been otherwise. Developing strategies to either maintain a connection to fast-paced youth trends, or to seek out other segments of the market that suit one's cultural competencies best, could keep people in the industry longer.

In terms of career limits, others talked about how the pressures of the job (as described in Section 8.1), whether emotional, physical or financial, may eventually make their career unsustainable:

> I also don't know if it's sustainable for me, long-term. Maybe I think I have got 10 years, I think before I am like "that's enough." I would like to think that maybe I could last longer than that, but it's a pretty hard industry, there is a lot to deal with all the time, especially management because you are dealing with people's lives, really. (Lorrae McKenna)

> I think it's financial. I just think — I mean, I don't know if people would say, "I'm no longer managing because I'm not making money to make it worthwhile" but I just think the reason we can keep doing it is because it's a profitable thing for us and it's a business that makes money so it can employ a couple of people and pay ourselves a wage and keep going. But if that had stopped, then I think what would happen is [my partner] would probably go back to being a lawyer and I'd try and get a job with a record label. I don't know. I might just quit the music industry altogether. (Nick O'Byrne)

However, a key finding from interviews was that despite the precariousness of all but the most successful businesses, few respondents had thought about exit strategies or put contingency plans in place. For example, one respondent described how in their 60s they are still making decisions about projects on a case-by-case basis, with a general plan to move towards retirement but no clear roadmap as to how that would happen:

> I'm heading to retirement, but that said, what am I planning? I mean I'm still working. If somebody knocks on my door and I think it's good or I can do it, I'd probably do it. I've got a couple of ideas. Have I got — like I said, going back, have I got the drive to want to fulfil them because I know, for instance, my arts idea, it will need two years set up and it will need some real money. Do I want to risk my real money? Probably not at the moment. So it's like will I — how will I go about it? (Anonymous)

Interviewees believe there is a lack of support available for those exiting the industry and for people who had left, and this was perceived as a significant risk of pursuing a music industry career:

> And so the industry is something, too, that, for a lot of people, there's no sort of end-of-career backup financially. It kind of comes to an end. Artists particularly suffer from this, where artists spend all their years, they make money from gigs or from music sales or whatever, but unless they're investing money or putting money aside for their superannuation, it can be a very scary end to a career, and I think a lot of people within the industry — my peer group that worked through the '70s and '80s and didn't have super and so forth are finding the same thing... But there's really no retirement setup now. There are organisations that have been set up for musicians who are in trouble at that stage of their end of career and that's great, but I don't think there's any organisations that look at ex-managers or ex-record company people and ex-promotions people and what happens to them at the end of a life of working in the music industry. (Bruce Butler)

> I think that's the only thing because I know that there's always been, and continues to be a lot of support for people entering the industry. It is that older group of people in the industry that there isn't, I don't think any support for... But if I was to chuck in the towel on this publicity company because I felt like I was too old, I wouldn't have a clue what I would do. But to have that kind of support or even, I would feel like how do you go for a job at this age, you know. What kind of opportunities are there, do people just want a new group of people. So I don't think there is a lot of support for that end of the career cycle. (Anonymous publicist)

These quotes discuss a perceived lack of guidance in two areas: ensuring financial security when leaving the industry, and finding alternative employment. Some respondents were concerned that skills learned in the music sector would not be seen as valuable elsewhere, to the extent that some felt they would not be able to do anything else if their music related ventures failed. Mapping skills from the music industry against other areas may be of benefit in this area.

8.3.2. Departures

Twelve of our 27 respondents had exited the industry at some stage, with the majority returning (and three exiting a second time, permanently). Seven of these exits were abrupt and unexpected, and reasons for them included major life events such as the birth of a child or the illness of a family member. The most common cause mentioned was burnout. An anonymous respondent describes their experience with this, and their decision to not return to the industry, as follows:

> I burnt out and so I left the industry. Having said that — that sounds very cut — at the time that I went to leave, it took me a long time to come to that decision because I really didn't want to. I really loved the industry and I really wanted to stay, but I couldn't find — I didn't want to start my own business. I had already done that. And at that time in my life I was not prepared to live on the smell of an oily rag. I mean, not that your wage in a small business is anything amazing but at least it's a pay cheque, and having already been a start-up myself, already having been an entrepreneur, I knew that it was going to mean eating peanuts type thing, and I just went, "I'm too old. What about retirement? What about the future? What about — you know, I'm in my 30s — late 30s at that point? What about other aspects of my life?" (Anonymous Artist Manager)

While some other interviewees who burnt out were drawn back to the industry, in this instance a concern about long-term stability was sufficient to keep them away. This type of exit from the industry is the most disadvantageous to both the exiting professional, who can often be in a position of financial and/or emotional crisis in these circumstance, and to the industry, which loses access to that person's expertise and experience.

The interviewees who had the most clearly defined plans for either retirement or moving out of the industry were those who were in businesses that were well-established and had been stable or growing for a number of years. In two such cases — Stu Harvey and Jenny Moon — this translated to legacy planning which considered the future of businesses that these respondents saw as having the potential to continue without them, as well as their own futures as individuals:

> It's young — it needs to be young people running this label, so I want to nurture and bring through that staff. We've got a great staff of people, there's a young girl who works for us, I want her to be our General Manager. I'm very much training her up, she doesn't know that, putting in the ground work — and I think almost the same way that when I was at Mushroom, I got that job in the label side, that I didn't know I was even applying for. I got ripped out of reception saying, "You're doing this now.", not that I would do that to her, but I want to make sure that she can take over, because she's incredible. And we've got a couple of other people on the team, same thing, I want them to be able to — I want to transition out as they're transitioning upwards in my plan. (Stu Harvey)

Harvey sees this process as resulting in a 'semi-retirement' rather than a complete exit from the industry. Jenny Moon is similarly considering how she can transition out but ensure the survival of her company as a 'legacy' for her son:

> I have created Moon Mother, so it's all in my head. Everything is in my head... We're having a day today where we're just getting everything out of Jenny Moon's head. So, we have our WIP [work in progress] meetings and it's all about getting things out of Jenny Moon's head. It's like, "how do you do this, Jenny Moon?" I go, "well, Fiona, I go -" And she just goes, de de de de de. And then guess what? Then I can write a procedure on that and get someone else to do it. So, that's what we're doing at the moment. We're picking the company to pieces. Now, you can't get training in that in this industry, so it's a creative business that is - its foundations are built on magic and just on organically going, well, like the universe is doing with me is how it's been. So, to put that into a bigger concept where you have - I have five full-time staff now and 25 sub-contractors or something. All of a sudden, it's like, whoa. Like, this is great I've done this, but now how do I get myself out of this? At 65 I can't do the work pace I'm doing now.

Moon describes how going through this process of ensuring others could take on the tasks she had been responsible for involved learning new skills, as well as emotional management around 'handing over my knowledge but not feeling disempowered in it'.

For most other respondents, however, leaving the industry is not about preserving a legacy, but ensuring their own ongoing security and happiness. Several respondents who had left or were considering leaving saw the public sector and not-for-profit organisations as being places that their skills would be transferrable to. Bernard Galbally, for example, has slowly transitioned out of successful businesses, either winding them down or leaving them to others, while developing a new pathway in the not-for-profit sector:

> I guess for about four years, four or five years, I've wanted to get out of it. You just lose the joy. I needed new challenges, and I had identified that maybe about four or five years ago, and I'd always been interested in the not-for-profit area. The music industry — although you could class it as a not-for-profit area - and so I started winding down Mana Music, and then I realised — I spoke to Chris, and I've been very fortunate to have a terrific partner like Chris — but I spoke to him about 18 months ago and I said, 'I think I've just got to make a complete cut.' And that meant resigning as a director of Native Tongue and sell my shares in Native Tongue. And downscaling Mana Music, move it back just to work I want to do, and then really actively start to look for where I'm going to go. I'm 55 now, and I'm right in the middle of that transition, it's gone very, very well.

One notable aspect of Galbally's movement out of the industry is the way it resembles the patterns of mixing music industry work with non-music industry work that characterises many interviewees' entry into the industry. Other interviewees described a similar situation. This was sometimes done, as with Galbally, as a deliberate strategy to gain new skills and connections while still having the backup of the income from music ventures, but in other cases was a financial necessity when these ventures did less well than hoped or where there was no exit strategy in place.

A relatively common strategy in these situations was for people to start teaching at a higher education institution. The part-time, ad hoc nature of sessional teaching in these institutions, where the skills gained in music work are a direct advantage, is ideal for many in our cohort, and can provide a pathway to full-time employment. Bruce Butler notes how common a move into education is among his peers:

> At Collarts, where I teach, the majority of the teachers are ex-record industry people. It's kind of - it's a retirement village for the music industry. And I think that's good and I think it's possible that one should look at maybe having the educational background to be able to transition into teaching at some point in the future as a fallback in retirement, to look after yourself financially during your career.

There is a tension here between higher education institutions being seen as potential employers of skilled industry personnel, and some of the negative attitudes towards the formalisation of music industry education expressed in Section 6.5. How the presence of those with industry experience impacts on the outcomes for students in these institutions, and whether this is an effective way to prevent the loss of industry knowledge, are questions that it may be beneficial to pursue.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

The participants in this research project were some of the most experienced music business professionals in Victoria. They participated with great enthusiasm in this undertaking because they believe in the value and importance of the industry they work within, but also recognise that greater support is needed for those working in the types of roles they have undertaken during their careers. What emerged from their stories is a picture of an industry that is to a large part maintained by the entrepreneurialism and passion of people like those we interviewed. These people find their jobs rewarding, but at the same time they risk burn out and are engaged in constant gambling with their financial security in an industry that runs to a large degree on luck, timing and public sentiment, and where many of the places where security could be previously maintained are eroding. Finding ways to reduce risk and improve wellbeing outcomes for this group, while supporting their love of what they do, is therefore central to ensuring the ongoing health of the Victorian music industry.

Recommendations are presented here in terms of what is being done well and should be maintained, what our cohort have indicated is needed by professionals, and what emerged as areas where more information is needed.

What is being done well:

- Industry-led training sessions, conferences and mentorship programs that are currently being run are highly regarded and should be maintained if not increased.

- Government funding for the music industry is sending a message about the importance of the sector, in addition to facilitating important activities.

- Industry professionals to a large extent provide support for one another through the networks that are foundational to the industry.

- The Victorian music industry, and the Melbourne scene in particular, are regarded as vibrant and exciting to be a part of.

What music business professionals need:

- Training and resources in relation to exit and succession. This could include providing information to industry professionals on:

  o where and how music industry skills are transferrable to other industries and how to translate what they do for other audiences, and liaising with those industries so these opportunities are obvious and appreciated.

  o how to plan for retirement, and for this to be targeted at professionals at all stages of their careers.

  o how to engage the next generation of managers in a business through formalisation of processes and sharing of knowledge in addition to the mentoring activities that are already taking place.

  o utilising professional expertise from outside the music sector on best practice in this area.

- A healthier work environment. Strategies for achieving this include:

  o disseminating information on how to recognise and prevent burn out in themselves and their staff.

  o increasing and normalising discussions around mental health issues, including the provision of mental health first aid training.

  o starting a discussion about how the cultural norms of the music industry are contributing to poor health, particularly in regards to workload expectations and substance use.

- A greater understanding of sustainable career strategies, which could be achieved through an application of the lessons learned from our respondents, including:

  - How to use portfolio career approaches to balance risky but high pay-off income streams with ventures that provide predictable income (including from outside the music sector).

  - Encouraging emerging professionals to think about their key motivations for being in the industry (for example, are they more interested in establishing a successful business venture that will outlast them, or helping to create great art?) and to tailor their careers and expectations accordingly.

  - how to recognise new opportunities in a changing industry that is no longer only focused on youth.

- More high-level advice tailored to those looking to grow already established careers and businesses.

What we need to know more about:

- The current opportunities and risks in relation to education, particularly:

  - The role higher education institutions, both in terms of how they ensure students are being provided with the right skills for the industry, and their function as a career pathway for professionals exiting the music industry.

  - Developing a better understanding of the opportunities offered by industry training and its effectiveness — for example, mapping what is going on across all the different opportunities offered by different bodies, and what specific impacts these events have on business practices.

- How professionals who emerge through grassroots music communities can be identified and supported in a way that doesn't impose on or disrupt these communities.

- How various aspects of identity can impact on pathways in the industry.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Identifiable Participants

Name	Key Roles	Key Affiliations Over Career
Zac Abroms	Management, publicity and promotion	Forum 5, Viceroyalty (Director)
Bruce Butler	Management, record labels, marketing, promotion	CBS, Epic, Virgin, The Push, BB Management
Jaddan Comerford	Labels, management	Unified Music Group (CEO)
Damian Costin	Agent, label CEO, manager	123 Agency (CEO), Creative Entertainment Agency and VVV Agency (Director), Premier Artists
Steve Cross	Labels, manager, promoter, publicist	Remote Control Records (Co-founder)
Bernard Galbally	Management, promoter, venue operator, event co-ordinator	Mana Music (Managing Director), Native Tongue
Paul Gildea	Manager, post-production, teacher	Paul Gildea Artist Management, Australian Insitute of Music, Box Hill Institute
Roger Grierson	Labels, manager, publishing, promoter	Festival Mushroom Records (Chairman), various artists
Stuart Harvey	Labels, manager, marketing manager	Cooking Vinyl Australia (Co-Managing Director)
Catherine Haridy	Labels, manager	Festival Mushroom, Cath Haridy Management (Director), Executive Director of the Association of Artist Managers
Tom Larkin	Agent, labels, manager	VVV MGMT (Founder), SIGNAL, Homesurgery Recordings
Carolyn Logan	Manager, promoter, publicist	Penney & Logan PR/Management (Co-Director)
Lorrae McKenna	Manager, record label, publicist	Our Golden Friend (General Manager)

Name	Key Roles	Key Affiliations Over Career
Jenny Moon	Events Management	Moon Mother Productions (CEO)
Nick O'Byrne	Label, manager, teacher	Look Out Kid Artist Management (Co-owner and Director)
Leigh Treweek	Manager, publishing	The Music, Handshake MGMT (Director)
Chrissie Vincent	Agent, promoter, publicist, teacher	Chrissie Vincent Publicity, Collarts
Jonathan Williamson	Label, manager, marketing	Zervos Lawyers, Sony (former Director of Marketing)