Maribyrnong
CITY COUNCIL

LIVE MUSIC ACTION PLAN

DRAFT

2026 - 2028



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Image: Jebediah performing at New Year's Eve Fireworks at Footscray Park, photo by Fiafia Art.

Cover image: Dekmantel Festival, photo by Duncographic.

Introduction

From the roar of punk bands in the ‘80s, to the warehouse raves of the ‘90s, to the rise of hip-hop in the 2000s, this city has never stayed quiet long. Legendary venues like ‘*The Totty’, Kindred Bandroom, The Reverence, Hotel Westwood, Littlefoot, Wrangler Studio, La Scala, Pride of our Footscray, Commercial Hotel, Sloth Bar, Footscray Hotel* and the *Yarraville Club* have hosted artists who went on to shape Australia’s music landscape, often before anyone knew their names.

That legacy continues today in new venues like *Mamma Chen’s, Misfits, Moondog Wild West, Anglers Tavern, Africa Town, Jambo, Footscray Records and CO-CO Bananas*; backyard gigs, festivals like, *Jazz Westside, Sleepless, Misfits In Space and Good Fest*, and countless grassroots events powered by passionate locals.

Major festivals like *West Set, Laneway,* Untiled Groups *Wool Store Series and Dekmantel* have also called Maribyrnong home, bringing international acts (live and loud) to the inner west.

Developed as a key outcome of *New Horizons: Creative Maribyrnong 2030*, Council’s new *Live Music Action Plan 2026–2028* addresses Council’s strategic initiative to see **‘Our City as Stage’** by providing real-world support for musicians, venues, promoters and audiences. This plan sets out actions across economic development, community development, planning, open space, local laws, city experience and visitation, and our arts and culture teams.

With a focus on activation, economic development, and local identity, this new plan looks to strengthen what is already here: a vibrant, DIY music culture rooted in place, community, and history and a positive expression of our diverse city. The plan will also look ahead by identifying the tools, mechanisms and partnerships we need to ensure live music remains part of daily life across our city.

Maribyrnong has always punched above its weight culturally. With the *Live Music Action Plan 2026–2028*, we are supporting our community to play on.

What is Live Music?

For the purpose of the Live Music Action Plan, live music is defined as a performance by one or more individuals using their voice and/or instruments, spanning all genres – from street busking to large-scale concerts. The plan recognises all forms of live music, including pub rock, classical, opera, hip-hop, and musical theatre. It also considers the broader music ecosystem that enables live performance. This includes venues, nightclubs, orchestras, recording and post-production studios, radio stations, sound design facilities, and music education providers, as well as businesses involved in equipment hire and sales, publishing, and music entertainment.

Together, these elements form the infrastructure that sustains a thriving live music culture.

Why Live Music matters

Live music is central to Maribyrnong's identity, economy and sense of place. It supports cultural diversity, community connection, and economic development. With over 2,797 live music events, performing to 324,200 audiences, generating $36.4 million in economic output in 2019 alone, it's a vital contributor to the local economy and social fabric. (Live Music Census 2019).

Live music plays a vital role in fostering community connection, social cohesion, and individual wellbeing. It brings people together across diverse backgrounds to share in collective experiences, strengthening bonds between residents and reinforcing a sense of belonging. Beyond entertainment, music offers a powerful platform for self-expression, especially for young people, helping them to find their voice and share their stories in meaningful ways.

Engagement with live music has been widely recognised as a form of mental health support. Research shows that attending live music events can reduce stress, alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety, and trigger feelings of joy and connectedness. (Yale Study: *Music Mindfulness May Treat Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression, Ramirez, 2025)* For young people in particular, participation in music - whether as performers or audience members - can be a form of therapy. It builds confidence, fosters emotional resilience, and provides a safe outlet for creativity and self-discovery.

In a city like Maribyrnong, where there is a relatively high concentration of gaming venues, it's more important than ever to champion healthy, inclusive alternatives for social interaction. Encouraging more venues to adopt live music programming presents an opportunity to shift cultural habits and improve community health outcomes.

By supporting live music and creating more opportunities for artists to perform, we are not only enriching Maribyrnong's arts and entertainment landscape - we are investing in our community's social and mental health. Now is the time to influence more venues, policy makers, and stakeholders to see live music not as a luxury, but as a necessity for a vibrant, connected, and healthy city.

State and Federal Government support

The State and Federal governments play complementary roles in supporting Australia's live music sector through a mix of funding programs, regulatory reforms, and strategic planning. The State Government, through Creative Victoria and the Department of Transport and Planning, has prioritised both direct venue support and systemic protections. A key initiative is the proposed Cultural Precinct Planning Overlay, which aims to safeguard existing live music venues from redevelopment pressures, particularly in high-growth urban areas.

The Department of Transport and Planning's 2024 *Planning for Live Music* report recognises the central role of councils in driving such reforms. It highlights the urgent need for better planning tools, clearer precinct-based policy, and simplified regulatory settings to protect and grow live music across Victoria. These findings reinforce Council's role in piloting place-based planning and activation strategies, particularly in Creative Neighbourhoods like Footscray.

This plan also reflects the goals of *Creative State 2025*, particularly its commitment to fair pay, creative workforce development and investment in cultural infrastructure. Nationally, it advances the principles outlined in *Revive: Australia's National Cultural Policy*, by ensuring access to live music, supporting artist wellbeing, and connecting the sector to funding and participation pathways. These

insights, combined with the Live Music Office's national best practice model, underpin this Plan's strategic intent.



Image: Dekmantel Festival, photo by Duncographic.

Maribyrnong City Council's role

Maribyrnong City Council plays a key role in fostering a vibrant live music scene through a range of events, strategic support, and partnerships. Signature events such as *West Set*, *Jazz Westside, Deck Out West*, and the annual New Year's Eve concert at Footscray Park highlight Council's commitment to showcasing diverse music genres and transforming public spaces into dynamic cultural destinations. These events help activate the night-time economy and strengthen Maribyrnong's identity as a hub for contemporary music experiences.

Council also manages the Bluestone Church Arts Space which is run as a dedicated arts and performance venue available for hire, as well as the Bunker Recording Space - a small space created specifically for recording and editing music for and by young people.

Council's 2023-2026 Triennial Arts Partner funding supports two dedicated producers of music in the *Footscray Yarraville City Band* and *Hyde Street Youth band*. A further grant recipient, *Footscray Arts* also champions live music, in particular first nation's performers and those from the CALD and BIPOC communities.

Council provides targeted funding and professional support to artists, venues, and event organisers through its *Festivals and Activation Framework 2022–2026* and *Creative Maribyrnong 2030* strategy.

These frameworks support place-based activation and the growth of music in both formal and informal settings.

From time to time Council also collaborates with major festivals and commercial producers to bring high-quality programming to the west, including past support for Laneway Festival, Dekmantel, and Untitled Group's dance music events at the Wool Store in Tottenham.

In addition to financial and strategic support, Council plays a regulatory role by managing noise, issuing event permits and supporting the extension of extended trading and temporary liquor licences, ensuring live music can occur safely and with community benefit.

Through the Live Music Action Plan, Council will endeavour to make it easier for music to flourish in local venues, public spaces, and entertainment precincts.



Image: West Set Festival, photo by Phillip Gao.

Why do we need a Live Music Action Plan?

In the 2024 Creativity Strategy engagement, live music was identified as the most requested area for increased investment**,** with 65 per cent of survey respondents selecting it as a priority. A lack of access to live music was the most cited barrier to cultural participation in Maribyrnong, particularly among younger residents and artists. Community feedback from that same consultation emphasised the need for more all-ages events, street-level activations, and promotion of local talent to better reflect the rich diversity and creativity of the municipality.

While live music does contribute significantly to our local economy, there is a lot of room to grow. In comparison to other inner-Melbourne municipalities, Maribyrnong's live music sector is still lagging behind (See table below). Given the rapid population growth in the Western Melbourne Region there is a real opportunity to cement Maribyrnong's reputation as the heart of live music heart in Melbourne's west and grow the size of the local sector to compete with other inner-Melbourne cities and service the rapidly growing population of the West.

Comparison Data

Live Music Output Comparison 2019: Inner-Melbourne Municipalities (source: Music Victoria, Live Music Census)

Council region	Maribyrnong	Melbourne	Port Phillip	Darebin	Merri-Bek	Stonnington	Yarra
No. of music venues	25	189	52	37	49	48	77
Number of Gigs	2,797	48,213	8,816	8,400	12,390	11,649	19,980
Attendees	324,000	8,489,447	1,720,055	1,346,752	1,715,400	928,520	2,473,805
Revenue / Spending ($millions)	$36.4	$893.3	$106.2	$85.6	$142.9	$52.3	$173.1

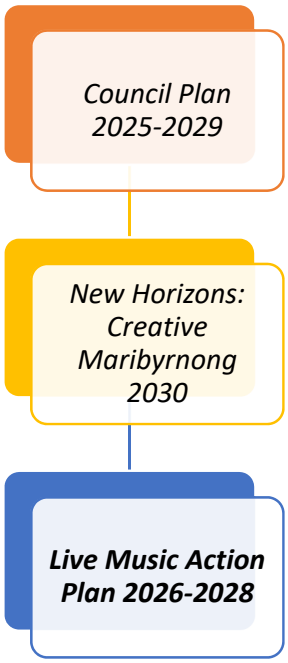
**Note: The differences between municipalities are largely driven by the number of commercial live music venues that regularly host ticketed live music events, and some councils deliver their own major music events. (For example, St Kilda Festival.)*



Image: West Set Festival, photo by Phillip Gao.

Strategic Alignment

The Council Plan 2025-2029 guides Council's priorities for a four year period. This Live Music Action Plan is aligned as a sub-action under the *New Horizons: Creative Maribyrnong 2030 Strategy*:



Council Action Plan 2025-2029
Strategic Objective 5: Connection Community
Action 5.3: Provide and promote arts and cultural experiences to enhance community connectedness
Strategic Initiative: Implement the Creativity Strategy to ensure Maribyrnong is a thriving arts hub, where creativity flourishes and culture enriches the lives of all

What the community told us

This plan has been shaped by comprehensive engagement with artists, audiences, venue owners, young people, promoters, and music industry bodies. Much of the engagement was undertaken through the development of Maribyrnong's Creativity Strategy in 2024/25, which provided rich insight into what residents and creatives value - and where the gaps are. Over 500 community members contributed to the consultation, with live music emerging as both one of the most loved and most requested areas for growth.

Key early priorities identified the need for more support for local venues in particular in the areas of marketing and programming, infrastructure investment, regulatory reform and policy consistency. Whilst showing incredible resilience, local venues and performers have identified critical gaps between ambition and resourcing.

Key themes from Community Engagement

- **Support for local talent**: There is strong demand for local music opportunities and greater visibility for Maribyrnong artists. In the Creativity Strategy engagement, 65 per cent of respondents said, they wanted to see more live music in the area, making it the most requested creative activity. However, multiple venues cited significant challenges with staging live music performance i.e. reduced discretionary income, reluctance for people to pay door prices for local gigs, insurance affordability and (without external programming grants to subsidise costs) the ability to make any real financial return for the business.

- **Reduced regulatory complexity**: There is a perception among some promoters and venues that the current planning and regulatory environment is a barrier to growth. Respondents emphasised a lack of clarity around timely approvals for Place of Public Entertainment (POPE) permits, planning, liquor licensing, and confidence in Council's commitment to supporting live music in a rapidly growing city. Only 15 per cent strongly agreed that they could access the kinds of creative activities they wanted locally.

- **Support for small and mid-sized venues and infrastructure**: Stakeholders highlighted the shortage of appropriate performance and rehearsal spaces. Survey responses and creative conversations revealed a clear need for more fit-for-purpose infrastructure, particularly for ensembles and orchestral performers.

- **Investment in marketing and promotion**: Artists and operators identified the need for better promotion of local music. Promotion, coordination and communication were noted as key barriers to participation, with residents often unaware of what live music events were taking place.

- **Prioritisation of Footscray and near surrounds**: Community and industry stakeholders see Footscray and near surrounds as the ideal pilot for precinct-based activation. Live music was noted as underrepresented in Footscray compared to other inner Melbourne precincts despite the area's cultural strengths. Some venues and promoters believed that live music audiences from inner city councils perceived Maribyrnong as being 'too far' compared to City and Northside precincts, despite comparable accessibility.

- **Value of participation and belonging**: 85 per cent of respondents said supporting local artists was important, and 77 per cent said participating in creative activities increased their sense of belonging, reinforcing the role of live music in social connection and wellbeing.

Key outcomes

This plan proposes a series of actions over a three-year period to realise four key outcomes.

Outcome 1: A music-friendly city with clear pathways for venues, artists and industry professionals to operate, develop new work, perform and prosper.

Outcome 2: A live music scene, which reflects the City's rich cultural diversity and builds belonging, wellbeing, and participation across all communities.

Outcome 3: A thriving night-time economy powered by live music in traditional and non-traditional spaces.

Outcome 4: Melbourne's inner west becomes known as the *go to* destination *for* discovering new talent and experiencing high-quality, diverse and innovative musical performance.



Image: Dekmantel Festival, photo by Duncographic.

Actions

Outcome 1

A music-friendly city with clear pathways for venues, artists and industry professionals to operate, develop new work, perform and prosper.

Action	Measures of success	Timeline

Create a live music working group engaging promoters, programmers, venue owners, artists, and other music industry professionals to advise Council and share ideas on how to create a music friendly city.	• Number of new music partnerships and stronger local networks per annum. • Increase in live music events in local venues, Council venues and at VU per annum. • Higher profile music scene reflected in increased mentions in music media per annum. • Number of new music enterprises/performers coming to Maribyrnong (census industry employment data).	2026
Pilot Live Music Support Fund which delivers matched funds (between $2,000 and $5,000 per applicant) for the purpose of programming fees (local artists for local venues), sound equipment, acoustic consultants, live music license fees, loading zones for live music venues and/or parking permits, and insurance offsets.	• Increase in live music programming in local venues per annum. • Number of new music premises. (planning permit data) per annum. • Number of venue parking permits issued per annum.	2027-28
Create and maintain a 'Live Music in Maribyrnong' page on the "Love Your West' website that is a point-of contact for local live music industry including: list of venues, a registry of local musicians and key suppliers, and list of music related government grants. This page would also include links to regulatory information regarding commercial noise, EPA guidelines, liquor licensing, live music licenses, and occupancy permits.	• Reduced noise complaints per annum. • Faster processing of Council permits – POPE permits, event permits and extended trade permits. • Growth in live music performances in public realm per annum. • Annual percentage increase in website visits.	2026
Bid for a major music industry conference for Melbourne's West at the new Civic Precinct and Community Hub – utilising the function room, Community Park and Blue Stone Church. This will include industry panels by day and performances after hours at local venues like Kindred, Mamma Chen's and MisFits. And/or pilot our own music industry professional development weekend targeting local venue stakeholders.	• Delivery of major conference or professional development weekend. • Number of delegates. • Increase in local music collaborations. • Number of music media mentions per annum.	2027
Working closely with City Development team, approach State Government, Music Victoria, and consultants (as required) to explore the possibility of establishing a live music precinct in Maribyrnong. Include the establishment of Cultural Precinct Planning Overlay (CPPO) and/or the establishment of Live Music Precincts in our longer list of advocacy priorities to the state government.	• Precinct mapping completed. • Identification of pilot precinct. • Draft Report to Council.	2028

Educate live music venues, neighbouring residents and businesses, and licensees on noise regulatory environment/liquor licensing changes dispute resolution process.	• Number of hits per annum on Live Music in Maribyrnong Page on the Love Your West website. • Annual percentage decrease in noise complaints from live music.	2026
In consultation with Victoria University BA Music program, develop a low-cost music hub/space for early and mid-career music workers to develop new work. Explore a greater partnership approach with Victoria University for additional collaboration opportunities.	• Audit completed • Key spaces identified • Complete financial analysis of fit out • Consider Budget BID submission and/or apply for grants from Creative Vic • Additional collaboration opportunities created.	2027
Develop an updated busking and public performance guide and online application process.	• Increase in quality busking in city spaces (especially Footscray Central Precinct) per annum. • Increase in perceptions of safety.	2028



Image: Bumpy performing at the New Year's Eve Fireworks, photo by Bakri Mahmoud.

Outcome 2

A live music scene which reflects the City's rich cultural diversity and builds belonging, wellbeing, and participation across all communities.

Action	Measures of success	Timeline
Collaborate with Phoenix Youth Centre, Amplify (formerly FReeZA), The Push, VU and local schools to develop more frequent	• Establishment of Amplify Committees for Maribyrnong.	2026

performance opportunities for young people (all ages gigs).	• Successful grant application to The Push. • Annual percentage increase in all ages performances in public and private realms. • Annual percentage increase in loans of Council's live music kit to young people in Maribyrnong.	
Continue to support NAIDOC Family Day with a focus on First Nations musicians.	• Number of First Nations artists programmed per annum.	2026 – Ongoing
Engage with priority cohorts to create a database of local performers from culturally diverse backgrounds. This includes • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. • Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)/migrant communities. • Young people • Older people • People with disability • LGBTQIA+ community	• Annual percentage increase in bookings of performers from diverse backgrounds at Council events.	2027
Provide support for rehearsal room access and promotion, including Kindred Studio's existing infrastructure.	• Annual percentage increase in Kindred Rehearsal bookings. • Increase in articles/social media posts on Kindred music spaces and services per annum. • Trial a pilot hire of Council's Function Room as a rehearsal space for community orchestras, choirs and singing groups.	2026
Advocate for Council's Signature and Annual grant recipients to program local musicians as part of their festival offering (Yarraville Festival, Diwali and East Meets West etc.)	• Percentage increase in local musicians programmed across Signature and Annual festivals each financial year.	2026
Explore participation opportunities for musicians from priority cohorts across days of significance like Seniors festival, refugee week, cultural diversity week, IDAHOBIT.	• Annual percentage increase of local musicians programmed across Council recognised Days of Significance.	2026
Ensure Council's major events, NYE and West Set KPIs include programming of artists from diverse cultural backgrounds, inclusive of CALD and BIPOC communities.	• Annual percentage increase in local musicians programmed across West Set and NYE fireworks event.	2027
In consultation with Arts and Libraries teams, explore the feasibility of a return of Council's West Set Festival with a focus on diverse	• Increase in venues from previous festival.	2028

programming of mid-career artists and Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities. (Festival scale subject to funding).	• Increase in local performances per annum. • Increase in performers from BIPOC communities per annum. • Increase in spend map and pedestrian data for key precincts at night per annum.	



Image: Discovery Daft Punk Show at New Year's Eve Fireworks, photo by Bakri Mahmoud.

Outcome 3

A thriving night-time economy powered by live music in traditional and non-traditional spaces.

Action	Measures of success	Timeline
Optimise Council-owned indoor and outdoor facilities for use as live music and performance venues by augmenting existing settings with appropriate sound, lighting, power and seating infrastructure.	• Increase in accessible live music programming/events in public spaces per annum.	2026-2027
Negotiate with private landlords to facilitate the activation of vacant spaces with live pop up music performance.	• Annual percentage increase in after-hours events in vacant spaces. • Percentage increase in spend map and pedestrian counts in activity centres per annum. • Reduction in vacancy rates per annum.	2026
Expand and grow partnerships with Melbourne International Jazz Festival and Fringe Festival partnerships.	• Percentage increase in venue participation in Jazz Westside per annum. • Percentage increase in audience attendance for Fringe and Jazz programs per annum. • Percentage increase in media mentions per annum.	2026
Continue to support live music programming though an extension of the Place-Based grants program to allow "*For Profits"* Organisations to apply.	• Number of grants allocated to live music activation per financial year.	2027



Image: Dekmantel Festival, photo by Duncographic.

Outcome 4

Melbourne's inner west becomes known as the go to destination for discovering new talent and experiencing high-quality, diverse and innovative musical performance.

Action	Measures of success	Timeline
Further position Footscray Park's Western and Eastern Lawn as a preferred space for major national and international music Festivals. Position Yarraville Gardens as a venue for boutique commercial and community music festival in partnership with local venues (Kindred).	• 1x major commercial live music festival at Footscray Park Eastern or Western Lawn per annum. • 1 x boutique community or commercial music event/festival at Yarraville Gardens per annum.	2026-2028
Partner with Western Bulldogs to pilot a mid-size commercial twilight concert at Whitten Oval.	• Delivery of pilot concert in either November or January. • Percentage increase in local spend in Footscray and West Footscray hospitality traders (via Spendmapp on day of concert).	2026-2027
Launch a 'Footscray Live' Instagram campaign to promote local music stories.	• Number of hits and shares across Council platforms per annum.	2026
Launch "myth-busting" marketing campaign to address negative perceptions of distance and access to Footscray from other parts of Melbourne.	• More music media mentions on Maribyrnong's live music venues/scene per annum.	2026
Develop a list of key commercial music events in the marketplace that align with the Council's values and prepare a bid document for their staging in Maribyrnong. *Note: Incentives for promoters can be in the form of in-kind support/reduced venue hire or POPE fees, promoter friendly regulatory process, concierge support.*	• One major commercial music event per annum in strategic greenfield site. • Positive media mentions in regard to live music scene in Maribyrnong. • Increase in spending in adjacent hospitality areas during major event staging.	2027
Pilot west-wide online gig guide And/or add music listings section to Love Your West page with potential radio sponsorship tie-ins (e.g. West Side Radio)	• Increase in number of visits to 'Love Your West' website.	2027
Seek funding for more prominent 'live music wayfinding' at key arrival points live music venues in the City.	• Increase in patronage to live music venues.	2028