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To the Australia Council Music Panel,

This letter is in support of Woodford Folk Festival's application for 4-year funding. I am very familiar with Woodford, having played there with four different acts (Violent Femmes, Spirit of Churaki, The Break and solo Japanese music) over the years. Of course one of the pleasures of attending Woodford as a performer is to experience other artists in action.

The programming at Woodford is massive and comprehensive. I suspect it is the biggest music festival in Australia and one of the biggest in the world. They cast a very wide net and feature one of the widest range of artists of any festival I have attended, anywhere in the world. Shrewdly Woodford features some populist acts to draw in and reassure the masses, while their side stages range from fun audience-participation all the way through to very deep folk roots and classical music of many regions such as India, Indonesia and Africa. Woodford also has a massive and meaningful commitment to First-Nations music. Not only our Australian and Torres Strait musicians, dancers and storytellers but also those of the Americas, Arctic region, Pacific Islands and more.

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Furthermore their model includes having the artists perform in various configurations, for example solo and band, in collaboration with local musos, in groupings by instrument like fiddle workshops, musicians and dancers. This creates a real festival vibe for both performers and audience, so much more satisfying than the typical rock fest fly-in fly-out routine.

This stellar programming is enabled by the diverse crowd Woodford attracts. People of all ages and races enjoying music and entertainment together. Despite the huge crowds Woodford attracts there are very few incidents. This is a testament to the quality of the musical engagement on offer. People are respectful and don't want to trash something they regard as their festival. Audience has ownership.

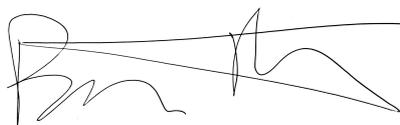
In summary, as an extremely experienced performer, festival organiser and festival attendee, I rate Woodford Folk Festival in the highest echelon of musical excellence and festival experience available in Australia or anywhere. They are well deserving of assistance from Australia Council. To improve an already fine festival and to increase the spotlight they shine on Australian musicians, including the opportunity to perform with and alongside artists from around the globe. It's a healthy musical world Woodford creates every year.

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Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Brian', written over a horizontal line.

brian@mona.net.au