Monday 1 April 2019

Attn: Relevant Assessment Officers
Australia Council

To Whom It May Concern,

The Mushroom Group of Companies is Australia’s largest and most successful independent music and entertainment group. Since the Group’s inception in 1973, Mushroom has grown to become a collective of nearly two dozen specialist brands who are leaders in their own right across the music and entertainment industry, incorporating international and domestic touring, booking agencies, record labels, merchandising, music publishing, creative and market services, venues, exhibition and event productions, and film and television production.

I have been aware of the tremendous achievements and influence of the Woodford Folk Festival for a long time. Many of our signed artists have cut their teeth at Woodford and have gone on to outstanding careers in the music industry, returning to the festival when their schedules allow. Woodford is an important festival in Australia not only as it has a much wider appeal socially, politically and intellectually, but also for developing the careers of artists and musicians.

In the 34 years that the festival has been operating, they have provided opportunities for thousands of artists to develop or reach loyal and enduring audiences. Many artists, at many career levels, recognise the importance and benefits of being a part of the Woodfordian community. Though committed to their origins as a community-based organisation, Woodfordia has a reputation for diverse, quality programming and well-delivered events that combine the best of a community and professional approach.

As an entrepreneurial organisation ourselves, we recognize and admire the pioneering nature of Woodford. As the first Australian festival to navigate and secure their own future through the purchase and operation of their own land, they have ensured their tenure in a changeable industry, and become an often-cited case study where other Australian and international festivals have wished to follow suit.

We have seen the rise and fall of many festivals in Australia over the past fifteen years. The Woodford Festival has managed not only to endure, but to thrive, forming a brand synonymous with quality, integrity and resilience. They have continued to adapt to a changing market by making appropriate change within their key event, and by identifying opportunities for market development through their Festival of Small Halls programme, which partners with other Australian events for mutual benefit and supports the growth of a robust environment for Australian music and Australian audiences.
Bill and I have discussed plans for the future: the possibility of an iconic stage at the Woodford site that will give life to a new kind of event structure in Australia – one-night concerts with a camp-over option. I am also aware of the organisation’s development of online members-based streaming service featuring live performances from the festival and other content that may be of interest to their members. This is a future-focused organisation with a deep understanding of their responsibility to their community, which includes their volunteers, audiences, artists and other industry who rely on an event of this scale and nature’s existence within the Australian landscape.

Woodfordia rarely undertakes an activity where it will be the sole beneficiary; there is an altruistic and holistic industry approach present in their work that ensures benefits for a multitude of stakeholders. As a future focused organisation not averse to risk, managed with integrity, I assert that any investment in Woodfordia will add value to the Australian industry.

Should you see fit to provide funding for the continued ambitions of Woodfordia, I commend the professionalism of Woodfordia’s people and their determination to succeed.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me should you require any further information to help with this process.

Yours sincerely,

MICHAIL GUDINSKI AM
Chairman of the Mushroom Group and Managing Director Frontier Touring