



EXPLICIT

**REPORT ON THE LABELLING CODE OF PRACTICE
FOR RECORDED MUSIC PRODUCT CONTAINING POTENTIALLY
OFFENSIVE LYRICS AND/OR THEMES
1 JULY 2024 – 30 JUNE 2025**



1. ABOUT ARIA AND AMRA

ARIA

Australian Recording Industry Association Limited (**ARIA**) is the peak trade body for the recorded music industry in Australia. It is a national industry association proactively representing the interests of its members. ARIA has more than 190 members ranging from small "boutique" labels typically run by 1-5 people, to medium sized organisations and very large companies with international affiliates. ARIA is active in many key areas of the music industry including:

- acting as an advocate for the industry, both domestically and internationally;
- supporting Australian music, and creating opportunities to help it be heard;
- playing an active role in protecting copyright and making submissions to Government on issues affecting the industry;
- compiling and publishing the [ARIA charts](#) using data provided by retailers and data suppliers across the country;
- managing the Labelling Code of Practice; and
- staging the highly prestigious annual ARIA Awards.

ARIA's primary objective is to advance the interests of the Australian recording industry. The role of ARIA is not to monitor, supervise or intervene in the pricing or other commercial decisions of its members.

AMRA

The Association of Music Retailers Australia (**AMRA**) was established in 1993 by a group of leading independent and specialty music chain stores to represent the interests of music retailers in Australia. Its purpose was to provide a forum for music retailers through AMRA's network of members. AMRA did not have any role in the trading relationships of its individual members and their suppliers, but it did support its industry partners in respect of a range of industry issues, including (previously) co-managing the ARIA AMRA Labelling Code of Practice with ARIA.

On 22 May 2023, AMRA advised ARIA that the AMRA Board had resolved to close down AMRA due to a lack of resources. As AMRA no longer exists, music retailers no longer have an entity that administers and oversees compliance with the Code on their behalf. ARIA now solely manages the Code on behalf of all ARIA members.

Due to the dissolution of AMRA, this report does not include any information from AMRA or any information regarding the compliance by music retailers with the Code.

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and the Arts (the **Department**) was advised by ARIA of the dissolution of AMRA in June 2023. ARIA will continue to liaise with the Department in respect of this and the ongoing operation of the Code.



2. OVERVIEW OF THE CODE

For 30 years, Australia has had a voluntary code in place which provides a framework for advising consumers about potentially explicit or unsuitable content on physical recorded music products (i.e. CDs, vinyl records and cassettes). This code is known as the *Labelling Code of Practice for Recorded Music Product Containing Potentially Offensive Lyrics and/or Themes* (the **Code**).

The Code was first implemented in late 1996 and subsequently revised in 2003 to align the advisory labels used on physical recorded music products with the classification tiers used by the Office of Film & Literature Classification (**OFLC**) which was in place at the time. The Code was again revised in 2020 following consultation with ARIA and AMRA members along with the Classification Branch of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.

The current version of the Code, which took effect from **1 July 2020**, is available on the ARIA website: <https://www.aria.com.au/industry/labelling-code>

Under the current Code, the **‘Explicit’ label** is required to be affixed to physical recorded music products containing potentially explicit or offensive content:



In accordance with the Code, the ‘Explicit’ label could potentially apply to content that includes:

- strong, offensive or coarse language;
- representations or portrayals of violence or abuse;
- sexual content;
- drug or substance abuse; and/or
- representations of social issues such as crime, suicide, drug and alcohol dependency, death, serious illness, family breakdown and racism.

There are some products that include content that is too gratuitous to be given an EXPLICIT label. These recordings are not permitted to be released and/or distributed by ARIA members or sold by participating music retailers. This includes products which contain lyrics which promote, incite, instruct, or exploitatively or gratuitously depict revolting or abhorrent activity in a way that causes outrage or extreme disgust to most adults.

Code Principles

The principles underlying the Code aim to balance the interests of consumers, artists, record companies and retailers, namely:

- (a) Adults in a democratic society should be free to listen to what they wish.**
- (b) Creative artists should be free to express themselves without fear of intervention.**
- (c) Consumers should be supplied with sufficient information so that they can choose to avoid exposure to material which may offend them and make informed purchasing decisions in relation to Product which is not suitable for minors.**
- (d) Record companies and recorded music retailers operate under a commercial imperative to respectively release sound recordings and make them available for sale to members of the public.**

Compliance and Reporting

ARIA publishes information regarding the Code on its website and distributes an information sheet annually to its members to reinforce awareness of the obligations prescribed in the Code. Information about the Code is also included in the materials that are sent to all new ARIA members.

The Code includes a reporting process whereby ARIA is required to compile an annual report as follows:

- (a) ARIA and AMRA will publish on their respective websites, an annual report on the following:**
 - The operation of the Code classification scheme during the Reporting Period outlining the operation of the Code during the Reporting Period; and**
 - The number of complaints and outcome of any complaints received during the Reporting Period.**
- (b) When the annual report is published, ARIA and AMRA will advise the relevant Australian Government department responsible for classification, which will then advise state and territory departments responsible for classification.**

This report satisfies the reporting obligation pursuant to the Code.

As AMRA is no longer operating, the Code and the Code report are only published on the ARIA website. Furthermore, compliance by 'bricks and mortar' music retailers with the Code is no longer overseen by any entity. Until otherwise agreed with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and the Arts, the Code will continue in its current form, but without the reporting and compliance reporting from music retailers.

3. YEAR IN REVIEW: REPORTING PERIOD 1 JULY 2024 – 30 JUNE 2025

ARIA members are responsible for the assessment and classification of recorded music products that they sell or distribute in Australia, in accordance with the Code.

For the purpose of this report, ARIA obtained release and classification data from a large sample group of its members including MGM Distribution, Mushroom Group, Sony Music Entertainment Australia, Universal Music Australia (inclusive of EMI Music Australia), Warner Music Australia, Inertia and other independent labels. The reports provided to ARIA by some of these larger record companies and distributors often include titles distributed on behalf of smaller independent labels that are also ARIA members.

It is worth noting that some ARIA members only release and distribute their titles in a digital format. The Code relates to physical recorded music products, not digital products such as downloads and streams.

Due to the nature of this data collection process, the statistics below should not be viewed as a detailed analysis of the Australian recorded music market, but instead as an indication of general patterns in the market.

Snapshot of the period occurring between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025



**Approx number of Physical
Recorded Music Products
Released by a sample of
ARIA Members**

12,509



**Approx number of Physical
Recorded Music Products
Classified by a sample of ARIA
Members**

1,832

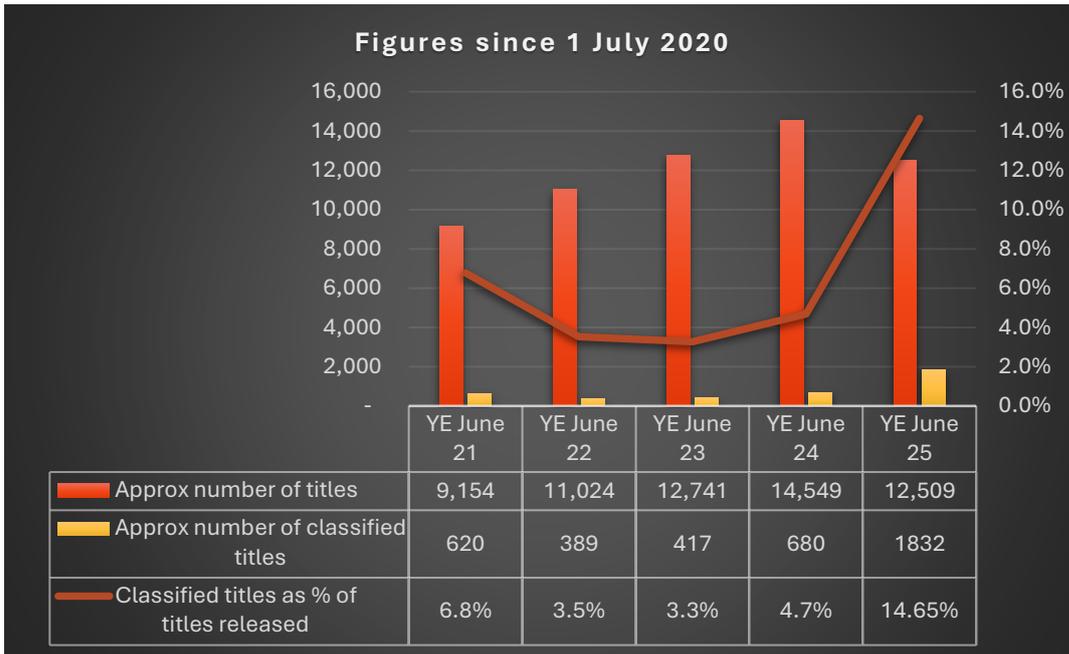


**Approx number of Physical
Recorded Music Products
Classified by a sample of
ARIA Members as a %**

14.65%

A list of these classified titles is available on the [ARIA website](#).

Figures since 1 July 2020



The percentage of classified titles in the current reporting period is almost ten percentage points higher than the previous reporting period, due in part to at least two ARIA members reporting a significantly higher percentage of classified titles as compared with previous years. At this stage, it is not yet clear whether the relatively high percentage represents a statistical anomaly, or whether it is part of an ongoing trend. However, it follows on from steady percentage increases in the past two reporting periods. The variances in reported data tend to be cyclical and can be due to a number of factors. For example, the overall number of titles released can fluctuate from year to year, depending on artist release schedules, marketing and touring campaigns. The size of the sample data can also vary from year to year.

Trends in recorded music sales during the reporting period

In the 2024/2025 reporting period, the Australian recorded music industry experienced its sixth consecutive year of growth, reaching \$717 million in revenue,¹ and was the 11th largest music market globally.²

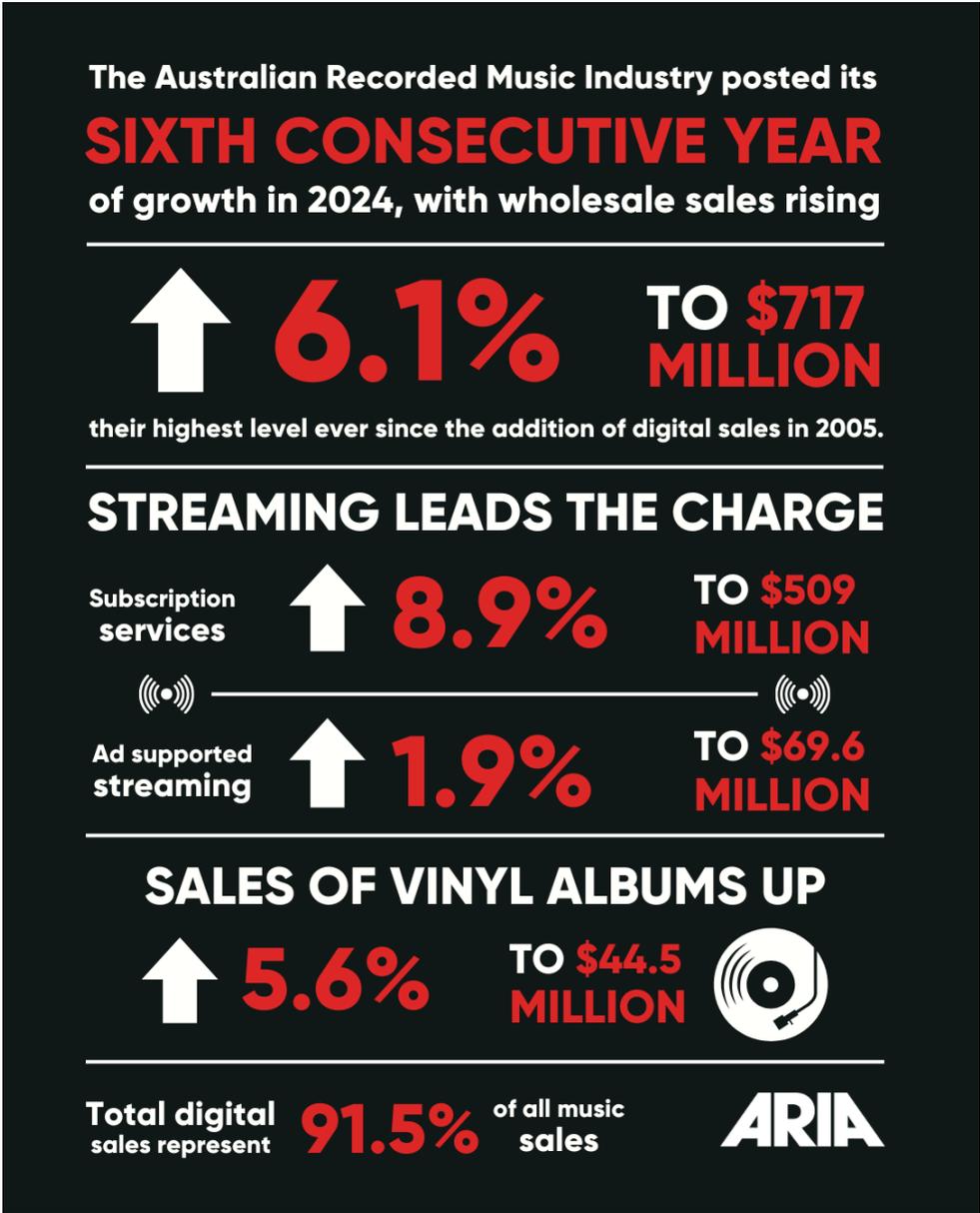
The industry growth was fuelled by both physical and digital sales, with total digital sales outpacing physical at 6.5% compared to 2.1%. The digital market now represents \$656 million, or 91.5% of the total market.

Online music subscription services increased their market share by two percentage points to represent 71.0% of Australia's total music market, or \$509 million, a figure 8.9% larger than 2023. Ad-supported music streaming models slowed dramatically however, from a 15.3% jump in revenue in 2023 to just 1.9% growth in 2024.

¹ ARIA, ARIA Yearly Statistics 2024, see <https://content.aria.com.au/documents/2024-aria-sales-figures.pdf>

² IFPI, Global Music Report 2025, see https://www.ifpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/GMR2025_SOTI.pdf

Vinyl albums continue to lead physical sales, growing 5.6% in revenue despite a slight decline in the quantity of sales of 0.5%. Vinyl represented 72.8% of total physical sales by dollar value and 45.7% of physical sales by volume.



4. CLASSIFICATION ENQUIRIES AND COMPLIANCE

ARIA Enquiries

ARIA received two enquiries during the reporting period, both from members of the public. One enquiry related to the applicability of the Code, while the other enquiry related to the availability of the list of classified titles on the ARIA website.

ARIA Member compliance

ARIA did not have any compliance issues with any ARIA member during the reporting period.



5. COMPLAINTS

Since 1 April 2018, ARIA and AMRA have not received any actionable complaints in accordance with the Complaints Handling Service prescribed in the Code. ARIA did not receive any complaints during the reporting period.