



THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP

Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts

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\$9 million reallocated to the COVID-19 Arts Sustainability Fund

An additional \$9 million has been allocated to COVID-19 Arts Sustainability Fund, giving the Morrison Government a continuing capacity to support Australia's systemically important arts and cultural organisations to sustain themselves through the pandemic.

This funding has been reallocated from the Supporting Cinemas' Retention Endurance and Enhancement of Neighbourhoods (SCREEN) Fund, out of the surplus which remained after the promised grants were provided to all eligible cinemas nationwide which applied for funding.

Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, said with most of the \$50 million Sustainability Fund already allocated, it is important to maintain the capacity to provide support to leading arts organisations, given the continuing financial consequences from ticket revenues being devastated for two years in a row after venues have been closed and seasons cancelled.

"More than \$43 million has already been allocated under the Sustainability Fund to support 16 arts organisations across the country. The provision of this additional \$9 million takes to \$15.6 million the total amount remaining available to be allocated from the Sustainability Fund," Minister Fletcher said.

"The Sustainability Fund was designed to assist significant Australian Arts organisations deemed as facing a risk to their sustainability over the next 12 months due to COVID-19. The funding it provides supports the viability of these organisations across the nation and the specialised creative jobs they sustain."

The original funding allocation to the SCREEN Fund, announced in March 2021, was determined based on advice from Independent Cinemas Australia (ICA) that around 390 cinema sites would apply for assistance. In fact, the number of applications was well short of that number.

Under the SCREEN Fund, more than \$10 million has been provided to 196 independent cinemas across Australia to support their return to normal operations since applications opened in April 2021. All eligible cinemas that applied for a grant under the SCREEN Fund were successful.

"The SCREEN Fund has been a vital lifeline for independent cinemas during a time of unprecedented crisis and served the purpose for which it was designed," Minister Fletcher said.

"The Fund was designed to provide one-off grants to support independent cinema sites which were dealing with the effects of COVID-19 on their business continuity, particularly the problem that distributors were not releasing Hollywood movies to cinemas in Australia.

With COVID-19 restrictions being rolled back, states and territories opening up, and Hollywood movies now in theatres, the business circumstances that created the need for this exceptional support are now in the past - as is confirmed by recent public statements by cinema sector leaders provided below.

"Audiences will have their work cut out for them as they try to keep up with the plethora of new releases." – *Cinema Nova CEO Kristian Connelly, November 2021*

“Excitingly, we’ve just witnessed November box office numbers matching the same period in 2019 and with the pent-up demand of many films previously held back now unleashed, we’re forecasting this summer will be the biggest yet.” – Val Morgan Cinema Managing Director Guy Burbidge, December 2021

The Morrison Government is investing a record \$1 billion into the arts and creative sector in 2021-22.

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