

National Cultural Policy Submission

West Australian Ballet

Submitted: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation

First Nations

Dance is one of the oldest forms of storytelling and has been central to First Nations people and culture for more than 100,000 years. Dance (and the arts generally) is deeply embedded in First Nations identity, community and knowledge; the entire nation has much to learn from this millennia-old practice in meaningfully placing dance in the centre of peoples' lives.

Challenges and Opportunities

- 1.1 Fund First Nations dance at levels at parity with all other introduced forms of dance, noting there are only three First Nations professional dance organisations currently federally funded. For the First Peoples of this land, it is a human right to have access to and the opportunity to maintain and innovate dance as a cultural and contemporary practice.
- 1.2 Ensure authentic representations of the form, led by First Nations peoples and self-determined First Nations organisations, with sustainable investment into cultural processes. A self-determined way of working is an obligation of First Nations dancers, choreographers and First Nations companies.
- 1.3 Invest in First Nations choreographers, including
 - Enabling independent choreographers to move from project-based funding to multi-year funded dance companies. This will strengthen the ecology for the First Nations dance sector by guaranteeing leadership and a pipeline of First Nations work, increasing professional paid work for dancers and providing employment and training pathways for arts workers.
 - Creating a First Nations Commissioning Fund to provide First Nations choreographers opportunities to make work on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous ensemble companies, and to make works of scale for festivals and touring.
- 1.4 Develop and secure funding for a 10+ year plan that builds capacity of First Nations companies and dance professionals – including performers, choreographers, directors, class teachers, producers, designers, technicians, production managers, arts administrators. Currently there are no significant, ongoing, well-funded pathways/opportunities to support this critical work.

A Place for Every Story

Dance, in all its forms, fosters an inclusive, equitable and diverse society. It has the capacity to tell story like no other medium. Its transcendent qualities – beyond the verbal and intellectual and through the body – are inarguably its greatest power. Story is not always a narrative, it can be an exchange of understanding and knowledge, connected to and of the land, the 'telling' of peoples and making of place together. Through dance, story is embodied in diverse minds and bodies and finds a voice in different languages, outside of language.

Challenges and Opportunities

- 2.1 Ensure all activities within creative organisations are culturally safe, genuinely self-determined and adhere to best-practice ICIP protocols, particularly when organisations are not First-Nations led; *"we must consider every hand that touches a creative work, until it's a Blak hand, it's not*

really self-determined.” Daniel Riley, ADT. This will require investment to ensure a sustainable practice of learning, engagement, training and leadership across the sector.

- 2.2 Provide resources to establish, maintain, and deliver, comprehensive inclusion strategies and access services. Access must include the development of effective opportunities to participate in the arts for First Nations people, individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Australians identifying with disability and neurodiversity, and Australians in disadvantaged circumstances.
- 2.3 Enable more sustainable dance careers with more connected and longer-term pathways, and better employment structures and conditions for individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Australians identifying with disability and neurodiversity, and Australians in disadvantaged circumstances. We also acknowledge that organisations specifically focusing on artists from within these communities have limited or no current representation within the federally funded dance sector.
- 2.4 New works or reaching a new audience can be risky and expensive. Enable innovation, adaptation, and new market reach. Ensure there is support and investment available for dance makers and presenters to take artistic, creative, and business risks to develop new works, practices, processes, platforms, and audiences. Support the development of artistic, creative, and business skills and capabilities, processes, and infrastructure to minimise and manage risk.

The Centrality of the Artist

The cultural sector is of clearly demonstrable significance to the Australian economy. It employs more than 350,000 people and generates \$17 billion in economic activity per annum (2018-19) [Analysis & Policy Observatory]. At its core it celebrates and showcases the place of artists and arts workers. This is the moment to work across many sectors (government, media, industry, philanthropy, education) to build the case that a viable and sustainable career in the arts is achievable; That it is not a hobby or pastime, that performers and creatives are as central to the form and the ecology as administration, technical and production staff.

Challenges and Opportunities

- 3.1 Undertake a thorough review of arts training across the tertiary education sector to determine what is really required in those areas and where. Create fast-tracked programs (e.g., micro-credentials) to address training needs and attract workers in areas of key post-pandemic skill gaps, particularly for production managers, producers and technical crew. Consult with the broader sector to identify longer-term requirements and initiatives.
- 3.2 Address mental and physical health needs of individuals in the sector to ensure retention of artists, creatives and all arts workers. The instability of careers, poor employment conditions, lack of regulation, inconsistent and reduced funding, COVID-19 impacts, changing environments, and insufficient infrastructure and systems have affected the wellbeing of all personnel working in the sector.
- 3.3 Empower the critical role the artistic, creative and cultural sector plays in the care economy. Develop programs across government that would benefit other portfolios (e.g Health and Aged Care, Social Services, Education, Veteran's Affairs), including to address the significant impacts of COVID-19 on general physical and mental health.
- 3.4 Enable artists to have the confidence to commit themselves to a career in the artistic, creative, and cultural sector. Change perceptions that a career in the sector isn't viable, establish long-term policies that make the arts more accessible and attractive, create greater engagement in

and with the artistic, creative, and cultural sector, and promote and demonstrate the value of artistry, creativity, and culture in society.

3.5 Develop a mechanism to support the precarious and uneven nature of project employment to help protect and advance individual rights, conditions, and entitlements for artists, creatives and other arts workers who earn a living through a portfolio of engagements and in the gig economy and are often contracted casually or self-employed.

3.6 Implement well-funded, ongoing programs that create sustainable employment opportunities

- Embed specialist dance teachers in schools, offering immediate employment but also signalling pathways for students.
- Coordinate a year-round national touring circuit for works of all scales that ensure the mobility of dance works.

3.7 Develop and support career retraining programs supporting physical artists once they are no longer performing.

Strong Institutions

The dance sector is a thriving ecology made up of independent artists; small, medium and large institutions; commercial arts businesses; arts education institutions; venues, presenting and touring partners. Each of these facets of the sector interconnect, support one another and contribute to the overall health of the sector.

We particularly note that the dance sector is significantly underfunded compared with other artforms. This is at odds with the artform being one of the most popular, diverse and significant ways Australian's engage with the arts, including Australian research that shows that 430,000 children aged between 0 - 14 participate in dance.

Challenges and Opportunities

4.1 Enhance the overall level of investment in the sector and maintain it beyond the electoral cycle.

This would allow for sustainable rebuilding of capability within the sector, the scaffold to support and nurture ongoing development of artists and artform, and an ability to deliver on commitments to inclusion, equity, accessibility, and diversity. This approach should include:

- return federal funding to the arts, at a minimum, to reach pre-2012 levels, indexed to 2022
- longer term funding arrangements across the sector to enable long-terms strategic planning
- pathways for smaller organisations to grow their level of support
- an appreciation of the specific challenges in regional areas to attract, develop and retain workforces
- the ability for multi-year funded organisations to seek project-based funding for strategic projects, developing and enhancing organisational capability with broad sector reach
- funds for programs with long-term benefits for the sector (artists, participants, audiences) that extend past their premiere season or may not have any presentation outcome
- supporting activities and contexts that allow for risk-taking to create space for innovation (art making is very exposing and vulnerable and requires specific contexts that are private and consistent)
- a wide range of measures aimed at harnessing substantial private investment in the arts and cultural sectors.

- 4.2 To be sustainable, Government funding must keep pace with rising expenses, rather being indexed at less than CPI. The sector's organisations cannot continue with partially indexed funding from government funding partners. This damages the ability to maintain standards, to employ artists and arts workers, to maintain infrastructure and to keep ticket prices affordable and audiences diverse.
- 4.3 Empower a coordinated national approach to policy development and funding across federal, state and local jurisdictions, and across portfolios (eg Health, Education, Trade, Investment). Create real mechanisms designed to broker cross-portfolio connections, not just at a Ministerial level, but at a bureaucratic level across peak organisations from different areas and across sector organisations and individuals.
- 4.4 Ensure supporting structures and processes are efficient and effective for companies and artists
- Harmonise reporting across jurisdictions.
 - Consider that meaningful engagement and impact needs sophisticated metrics of measurement.
 - Create a national Working with Children Check, avoiding multiple applications for touring organisations.
 - Ensure the tax and welfare systems are responsive to the needs of the sector, reflecting the varied nature of artists' income generation within years and over different years.
 - Strengthen the legal framework of copyright and traditional protocol to ensure that the income generated is fairly distributed between the creators, institutions and entrepreneurs who make it available.
- 4.5 Support the capacity and capability of Boards across the sector, providing dedicated training on the roles and responsibilities within the specialised industry context.

Reaching the Audience

Audiences are integral to the artwork itself. Artists and audiences are at the heart of dance organisations engaged in professional performances, expressed through a dense program of major works, commissions, collaborations, residencies, workshops and public and professional classes. These fundamental activities extend the art form and influence the public realm. It increases the visibility of dance as an everyday art form. Audience development is critical to meet the needs of arts organisations to develop future audiences and nurture ongoing relationships with audiences.

Challenges and Opportunities

- 5.1 Create a National Audience Development Strategy and implementation plan to
- Provide organisations a framework to develop individual development plans
 - Develop an 'Audience Finder' online resource to access national insights and audience development tools
 - Create Audience Development measurement tools that are not based on numbers alone.
- 5.2 Through adequate ongoing support, empower a broad range of dance organisations and independent dance practitioners to continue their work providing a diverse offering of performance, immersion, education, celebration and participation within the broadest possible context of Australian communities.
- 5.3 Resource dance organisations to have the infrastructure and skills to leverage new technologies effectively, efficiently, and safely. The power of digital tools to maximise connectivity with

audiences, students and other participants in the dance sector was demonstrated throughout the pandemic. However, this is challenging to maintain, and requires investment and expertise. Support to collaborate with experts in the field, such as in the screen sector, as well as to manage risks such as cyber security, is critical to the ongoing exploration, development, and use of technology.

- 5.4 Invest in existing cultural spaces and develop new, much needed performance venues which include specialist spaces to support the needs of individual communities. This should include a long-term commitment to programming investment to ensure their ongoing success and relevance.
- 5.5 Provide ongoing, targeted support for a national, integrated and sustainable touring network that sees works of all scales performed across Australia, and particularly outside Melbourne and Sydney, including securing multiyear programming investment for venues managed through Councils and Local Government Areas. These venues are critical to sustainable touring networks for companies of all sizes and enable the breadth of work created in Australia to be seen on stages locally, regionally and remotely.
- 5.6 Invest and underwrite the export of Australian performance and artist exchange into international markets that have cultural and economic relevance. This expands the power of valuable soft diplomacy whilst recognising that there is demonstrable market demand and meaningful history with Europe and North America.