

11. Recommendations

Our recommendations are clustered within four themes:

1. Promoting individual talent
2. Maintaining a healthy dance ecology
3. Building audiences now and in the future
4. Encouraging cooperation and providing leadership

The recommendations are presented on the assumption that additional investment can be secured for the dance sector. Given the decline in inflation-adjusted funding for non-MPAB dance in recent years, the range of issues which need to be addressed, and the lack of commercial opportunities in dance, it is questionable whether much can be achieved to strengthen the sector and build on its talents and successes without an uplift in funding.

Detailed costings have not been prepared as part of this report. However, it is estimated that between \$3 million and \$5 million would be required from government sources to address the recommendations. In the event that it does not prove possible to secure additional resources, a series of ‘fall-back’ actions is subsequently presented.

11.1 Promoting individual talent

In response to the needs identified by individual dancers and choreographers, tertiary training institutions, and small-scale project-based companies, it is **recommended** that:

- 11.1.a The Dance Board adopt a proactive and strategic approach to supporting a small number of key practitioners for the long term, rather than focusing only on relatively short-term support, such as young and emerging artist initiatives or fellowships. Support for such individuals needs to be integrated with support for the production and presentation of their work—that is, there needs to be an holistic approach to support through the value-chain of dance development and production. This implies a higher proportion of resources going to a relatively small constituency—but we take the view that it is better to nurture a few of the country’s finest, than to spread the resources equitably thinly, to no-one’s evident satisfaction. Such ‘elitism’ would pass as common-sense in Australian sport.
- 11.1.b Financial resources be allocated to encourage the growth of dance producers and dance management organisations; selected producers might be identified to play specific roles in the marketing and administration of independent dance workers, and in the support of international touring of small and medium-scale dance companies.
- 11.1.c Resources be allocated to encourage experienced ex-pat dancers and choreographers to return to Australia periodically, to initiate projects and to take project leadership roles with existing companies (ranging from MPAB companies to project-based organisations).
- 11.1.d The Dance Board, and other boards, use policy drivers and ear-marked resources to encourage both MPAB companies and other funded dance companies to engage with independent practitioners and project-based companies. Chunky Move’s Maximise program provides one model, but there are a range of possible ways in which the

resources of the funded companies could be made to benefit the ‘project’ sector (space, artistic and managerial and marketing support and advice, contacts), and ways in which the independents could enrich the funded companies (program input, new approaches, professional development contributions).

- 11.1.e The Dance Board repeat and sustain the recent Project Workspace initiative, providing affordable access to rehearsal and development space for independent practitioners.
- 11.1.f The Dance Board and Council consider ways in which the grant application process for individuals, and project-based companies, may be streamlined to reduce the burden on the applicant. This might entail the adoption of a two phase process—enabling applicants to submit a short outline proposal for initial assessment, prior to submission of a fuller application, subject to such a process being sufficiently timely. If this proves impractical, a simplified one-stage process might be instituted for projects up to an agreed value.

11.2 Maintaining a healthy dance ecology

In the light of the identified needs of the sector, it is **recommended** that:

- 11.2.a Funding levels for triennially-funded companies be uplifted to offset the recent effects of increased costs, enhance their infrastructure, and strengthen the companies’ balance sheets, within an agreed stabilisation program.
- 11.2.b The Dance Board negotiate joint funding agreements with the states and territories for triennially-funded companies. Such agreements to be linked to development and stabilisation plans, and agreed outputs, for each company. In some areas, the use of such increased investment might be ring-fenced, e.g. for expenditure on marketing infrastructure. Much of the expertise and research to inform such a program already exists within MPAB, although some variations on its procedures with the major organisations may be necessary.³⁴
- 11.2.c An assessment of key project-based and state-only funded companies be undertaken to identify whether any should be offered recurrent/triennial funding to increase the range of companies able to plan from a more stable base.
- 11.2.d The Council (through Dance Board and ATSIAB) take a lead role in the establishment of a second-tier contemporary Indigenous dance company, following consultation with Bangarra Dance Theatre, small and medium-scale indigenous theatre companies, and a full feasibility into the appropriate policies, protocols and structural arrangements for such a company.
- 11.2.e Training initiatives resulting from the Small and Medium Performing Arts Review be harnessed to the benefit of both consistently-funded and project-based companies; and, in particular, training and advice in marketing, development/fund-raising, touring (including export-readiness) be addressed; and networking support for the general managers of dance companies be prioritised—the latter might be along the lines of the UK Dance Manager’s Group.

³⁴ It is assumed that initiatives currently being undertaken following the Small and Medium Performing Arts Review can be harnessed to the benefit of the dance sector and, in some cases, may preclude the need for separate Australia Council interventions identified here

- 11.2.f The role of ‘dance animateur’ be piloted in two metro and two regional locations—providing a bridge between dance participation, education, and appreciation. Ideally, these will be co-funded by Australia Council and local and state partners.
- 11.2.g Alternative models of support agencies (such as the UK’s National Dance Agencies and the French regional model) be investigated in greater detail to determine whether piloting a support system in state and territory capitals and major regional centres would be merited and, if so, what role would be played by the Australia Choreographic Centre, Melbourne’s Dancehouse and other existing dance support agencies in Australia.³⁵
- 11.2.h The Dance Board and Ausdance National consider the parameters of Ausdance’s role in supporting the dance community. Widely respected and admired, Ausdance currently endeavours to fill roles undertaken by several agencies in other countries (education, advice, lobbying, promotion); it is possible that either additional agencies or a better-resourced (and differently structured) Ausdance may be necessary for the long-term health of the sector.

11.3 Building audiences now and in the future

Several of the preceding recommendations will contribute to audience development, including:

- support for dance producers
- investment in marketing infrastructure for triennially-funded companies
- the establishment of a second-tier Indigenous dance company
- dance companies-in-residence
- the investigation of dance agencies and dance animateurs.

Additionally, we would **recommend** that:

- 11.3.a Support be provided for a small circuit of contemporary arts centres to program and promote dance, and build the dance audience, taking further the Dance Board’s recent Mobile States initiative—possibly in conjunction with AMD or DCITA/Playing Australia. Such support might include dance companies-in-residence at sympathetic promoting venues, and might reasonably be extended to the major performing arts centres for specific program strands and audience development initiatives.
- 11.3.b The Dance Board continue to work in close liaison with AMD on the development of both domestic and international markets, and finalise its development of a jointly-approved medium-term audience development strategy for dance; such a strategy to embrace not only the cultivation of domestic audiences, but also broadcast exposure of dance, and international touring.
- 11.3.c Resources be allocated to regular audience research, and dissemination of research results throughout the dance community. Identification of market growth opportunities are of particular interest—the education sector and NESB audiences have been mentioned as possible areas for development in this study.

³⁵ A review of the UK agencies has recently been completed and may be available via the Arts Council of England

- 11.3.d The feasibility be investigated of establishing a major annual dance festival, or working with one or more of the existing major festivals to regularly profile Australian dance.
- 11.3.e Discussion be initiated between the Council/DCITA and federal and state education representatives on the means by which dance can be further integrated into the curriculum at primary and secondary levels.

11.4 Encouraging cooperation and providing leadership

In order to harness resources within the Australia Council, DCITA, and the states and territories, to greatest effect, it **recommended** that:

- 11.4.a The Australia Council develop a medium-term Dance Action Plan which provides a framework for all the boards (including MPAB), in order to align support and maximise the impact of Council funding, and consider arrangements for greater coordination of dance funding across boards; this might include a single gateway for applicants other than MPAB organisations, and protocols for joint initiatives between boards or areas of Council.
- 11.4.b The Dance Board negotiate a joint dance action plan with each of the states and territories—subject on both sides to available resources—to ensure a coordinated approach to addressing agreed key issues, recognising that these will vary from place to place.
- 11.4.c Discussion be initiated between the Council and DCITA on coordinated arrangements for supporting those aspects of dance distribution and audience development which may be of common concern—venues regularly presenting dance, companies in residence, off-setting touring costs, international touring.
- 11.4.d The Dance Board facilitate interaction between the Tertiary Dance Council, MPAB companies, and other funded dance companies, including a biennial forum (which might be managed by Ausdance or another agency).
- 11.4.e The Dance Board convene an annual round-table or joint meeting with members of the Tertiary Dance Council of Australia to advance issues of common concern, and address areas of joint policy development and implementation. In particular, joint consideration be given to improving the provision of choreographic training, and to the merits of post-tertiary support and training for Australia's leading young dance talent, along similar lines to the Australian National Academy of Music.
- 11.4.f Through Ausdance or another suitable organisation, a web-based national interchange of issues, strategies and professional expertise be facilitated, similar to Fuel4Arts, or Dance Technology Zone (www.art.net/~dtz).