



**THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP**  
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

22 March 2020

### **The Cultural and Creative Sector and COVID-19**

Measures announced today by the Prime Minister and Treasurer under the government's \$66 billion COVID-19 package will be very important in supporting workers and organisations in the cultural and creative sector, said Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP.

Many casuals and sole traders in the cultural and creative sector face a loss of income for a significant period. They will benefit from the income support measures announced today.

The Government has temporarily waived the asset test and waiting periods for the Jobseeker allowance, while a new, time-limited Coronavirus supplement will be paid at a rate of \$550 per fortnight to both existing and new recipients. This effectively doubles the current JobSeeker allowance.

Small and medium sized arts organisations such as theatre companies, aboriginal art centres, small venues and many others may be able to draw on business support measures announced today.

The Government is providing payments of up to \$100,000 to eligible small and medium sized businesses, and not-for-profits (including charities) that employ people, with a minimum payment of \$20,000. These payments will provide cash flow support to help eligible businesses and not-for-profits keep operating and retain staff. This includes creative and cultural businesses and not-for-profits.

A loan guarantee scheme will also support small to medium-sized businesses. There are no charges for accessing the scheme, and it will be repayment-free for six months. The maximum loan is \$250,000, for a term of up to three years. Creative and cultural businesses are eligible to apply. This complements \$8 billion in measures announced by Australian banks last week to support small business by deferring small business loan repayments for six months.

Further details about the measures announced today can be found at:

<https://treasury.gov.au/coronavirus>

In addition to these economy wide measures, both the Australia Council and the Office for the Arts have been given discretion under Commonwealth Grant Rules to provide reporting and other grant condition relief to organisations with existing Australian Government funding arrangements. These include:

- Removing requirements on meeting audience KPIs
- Bringing forward payments
- Delaying or removing reporting requirements

- Varying the purposes and outcomes of funding
- Extending timelines for projects
- Allowing organisations to use money provided for a deliverable to be repurposed to pay essential bills such as wages, rent or utilities.

Organisations are encouraged to speak with their program officer about options that can provide flexible support during these difficult times. Information is available at [www.arts.gov.au/funding-and-support](http://www.arts.gov.au/funding-and-support).

“The cultural and creative sector plays a vital part in our economy, contributing \$112 billion – just over 6 per cent to our Gross Domestic Product every year. Over 800,000 people work in cultural and creative occupations,” Minister Fletcher said.

“By acting now, the Government is helping businesses to remain solvent, protecting jobs and Australia’s rich creative and cultural sector during these difficult circumstances.”

From Tuesday 24 March, the Office for the Arts and Australia Council will begin a weekly COVID-19 Support workshop with sixteen peak arts bodies. This week, representatives from the COVID-19 Business Liaison Unit, the Australian Banking Association and the Department of Social Services will provide information on support available for creative and cultural organisations and their people.

Creative and cultural organisations wishing to raise concerns or seeking further information can get in touch with the Office for Arts by emailing [COVID-19@arts.gov.au](mailto:COVID-19@arts.gov.au). A dedicated 1800 number will be released in coming days.

Members of the creative and cultural sector can also visit the Office for the Arts website for further information and links to relevant Government announcements: <https://www.arts.gov.au/covid-19-update>.

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