

AUSTRALIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

SUBMISSION TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE
OF WORK AND WORKERS

FEBRUARY 2018

Committee Secretary
Senate Select Committee on the Future of Work and Workers
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

The Australia Council for the Arts welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission for the Inquiry into the Future of Work and Workers.

As the Australian Government's principal arts funding and advisory body, the Council: invests in artistic excellence through support for all facets of the creative process; increases awareness about the value of the arts; and is committed to the arts being more accessible to all Australians. Conducting, commissioning and publishing research into, and about, the arts is a key function under the 2013 Australia Council Act¹.

Central to the research undertaken is a commitment to build deeper understanding and gather evidence around the role and place of the arts and artists in society of today and predicted futures.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you.

Yours sincerely,



Tony Grybowski
Chief Executive Officer
Australia Council for the Arts

SUBMISSION

1. INTRODUCTION

This submission is to make the Committee aware of the impact and opportunities enabled by technological and other changes on the future of work and workers, from an arts and culture perspective. This response will draw on recent, intersecting research authored and published by the Australia Council as well as other related sources where relevant.

This submission addresses:

- The arts and artists in the future work
- Future earnings, job security, employment status and working patterns in the arts
- Adequacy of Australia's laws (as they relate to the arts), specifically intellectual property and piracy
- Impact of technological and other change on Australians, particularly on regional Australians
- Skills and capabilities aligned with future workforce needs

The arts and artists in the future of work

*Connecting Australians: Results of the 2016 National Arts Participation Survey*ⁱⁱ, found that 98% of Australians engage with the arts, with 17 million Australians (86% of the population 15 years and over) acknowledging the positive impact of the arts on daily lives and in communities. The arts are recognised by the public as enabling connection, empathy and social cohesion. People have the opportunity to see themselves and their worlds authentically represented in all their complexity, and to gain insights in to the lives of others in ways not possible via other means.

Artists in the future of work

There is widespread international consensus that the future of work will be driven by creativity and innovation. A key element in predictions of a sustainable and liveable future is the need for a set of creative and social skills that prioritise the place of human creative capacityⁱⁱⁱ. A future in which artistic occupations are potentially growing^{iv} and the skills and capabilities central to the work of artists identified as those that may be increasingly sought in workforces of the future. These assertions are supported in recent reporting and commentary from organisations ranging from the Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA)^v and PwC^{vi} to the World Economic Forum^{vii}, OECD^{viii} and Nesta^{ix}.

Research on the impact of automation on jobs and industries^x reinforces the work of artists as safe and necessary in future workforces. It highlights the need for greater continuing investment in research and development in this area. The effect of automation on jobs will be varied and are reliant on 'technical feasibility'.^{xi} While there are reported accounts of computers as able to replicate or automate the mechanics of particular art forms, the capacity of computers to be creative is limited. Predictions indicate public preference will continue to be for art created by humans that authentically expresses the human experience^{xii}, further reinforcing opportunity for artists in future workforces.

Future earnings, job security, employment status and working patterns in the arts

It is increasingly difficult for artists to make a living from their creative work. This is at odds with the increasing personal value Australians place on the arts, and the significant economic, social and cultural impact they have on communities. *Making Art Work: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*^{xiii}, released by the Australia Council for the Arts in November 2017, provides in-depth analysis of the present economic state of practicing professional artists. The companion report, *Making Art Work: A summary and response by the Australia Council for the Arts*^{xiv}, places the key findings alongside other literature and analysis to highlight and contextualise emerging trends, and discuss what they mean for Australian artists into the future.

Making a living

Making Art Work^{xv} found that average total incomes for artists remain 21% below the Australian workforce average, and income from creative work has decreased by 19% over the last seven years. Disparities also remain between different groups of artists depending on demographic and diversity characteristics.

Artists have experience managing working lives and professional practice, challenged, shaped and driven by technological change. Creative work is predominantly and increasingly undertaken on a freelance or self-employed basis (81% of artists, up from 72% in 2009), with artists blending creative, arts-related and non-arts work. Eight in ten artists are mixing their practice with other work within and outside the arts with some applying creative skills in other industries. This is creating opportunities for arts practice to take new and varied forms, helping shape the future of work and workers.

Managing disruption

The ongoing experiences of artists and arts organisations in managing and navigating disruption provide significant learnings relevant to this inquiry. Artists are among those who work at the forefront of technological and social change. They have also been among the first to face challenges of digital disruption to business models and income streams. Artists, arts businesses and the public are continuing to experience a range of positive and negative impacts from disruptive technologies, and to adapt the way they engage and make a living.

- The use of digital technology by artists has been captured in a number of studies around the world^{xvi}, and at least 65% of Australian practicing professional artists regularly use some form of technology in the process of creating art.
- Digital platforms are driving new business structures, with younger artists in particular developing and navigating new distribution mechanisms and channels.
- Across all age groups, the vast majority of Australian artists (70-80%) are using the internet to promote their work. Four in ten are selling work online through their own site (including 50% of visual artists and craft practitioners), and a similar proportion are selling through a third party's site (including 50% of musicians and 64% of composers).

New income opportunities are arising through economic transaction technologies like the blockchain^{xvii} with an increasing volume of commentary referencing the arts as one area that will continue to be disrupted.^{xviii} The opportunities and challenges presented by digital platforms are allowing artists in some instances to better address and manage intellectual property and digital rights. The experience of artists in navigating these technological changes positions them as

essential voices when considering earnings, job security and employment within the future of work.

Adequacy of Australia's laws (as they relate to the arts), specifically intellectual property and piracy

New opportunities to distribute, commercialise or monetise content arising from technological change and disruption, highlight issues of intellectual property and fair use. Protection of intellectual property can enable artists to control their work and receive appropriate payment from its sale and authorised exploitation.

New online copyright infringement research published by the Department of Communications and the Arts^{xix} showed that while more Australians are using streaming services to access content legally, one in four Australians consumed illegally downloaded or streamed content in the past three months. *Making Art Work*^{xx} found that one in three Australian writers, visual artist and composers have experienced copyright infringement at some point in their career.

These research findings suggest that artists' livelihoods continue to be negatively impacted by audience expectations of free content, misappropriation and unauthorised exploitation of their work enabled through digital technologies. This highlights the need to ensure policy and regulatory settings keep pace with change. They should be underpinned by the principles that: artists create work that has value; that artists contribute significantly to the health and success of the nation; and that artists should receive fair remuneration for their work. It is essential that intellectual property issues inform a consideration of the future of work and workers.

There are particular implications for the work of cultural groups, communities and Traditional Owners where current laws do not provide substantial protection of intellectual property rights. In recent years, rapid technological change has increased the potential for misappropriation of First Nations art and craft products, as well as their commercialisation and mass reproduction. The online availability of Indigenous designs has facilitated unauthorised reproduction and enabled Indigenous 'style' designs to be produced at a fraction of the cost of authentic works. Considering almost one in ten First Nations people (8.8%) in remote Australia receive income from First Nations arts, the inadequacy of current intellectual property rights has significant economic and social impact^{xxi}.

Impact of technological and other change on Australians, particularly on regional Australians

Technological change is increasing reliance on digital mechanisms and distribution channels. This impacts public engagement, access to the arts and the work of artists irrespective of location. *Connecting Australians*^{xxii} found that residents of regional Australia are as likely to attend and create art as residents of metropolitan Australia, and living in a regional area does not substantially affect overall arts attendance. Creativity is strong in regional Australia. With regional artists integral in sharing the stories of regional and remote communities and reflecting the nation's depth and diversity, there is opportunity for them to play a central role in regionally specific challenges associated with technological change and the future of work and workers.

Making Art Work^{xxiii} identified that one in six professional Australian artists live in regional cities or towns, and one in ten live in rural, remote or very remote areas. Over time there has been a shift in the reported impact of location on practice with a larger proportion of regionally based artists now reporting a negative rather than positive impact. While there may be a range of factors influencing

the experience of regional artists, there is some indication that difficulties encountered in accessing the internet in regional areas^{xxiv} could be a partial explanation of this turnaround, given the increasing importance of internet access to artistic practice. It is imperative to understand the degree to which technological change is influencing this trend to ensure artists can maintain practice and sustainable working lives in regional Australia.

Skills and capabilities aligned with future workforce needs

Technological change is expanding opportunities for artists to create art in new ways and in diverse industries with many adapting and exploring new ways of working. Accelerated change is likely to prioritise transferable skills, diverse perspectives, and lifelong learning for adapting and building new capabilities. A willingness to gain new skills is considered essential for preparing workforces for jobs yet to be imagined^{xxv}. An emphasis on lifelong learning is already a reality in the arts. Seven out of ten Australia artists are still engaged in training with just over three quarters of artists holding a university degree^{xxvi} - significantly higher than the labour force as a whole (20%)^{xxvii}.

Given the acknowledged social, economic and cultural value of the arts^{xxviii}, and artists' contribution to the health and wealth of the nation, it is imperative to consider them in the exploration of technological change and the future of work and workers.

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