

# CONNECTING AUSTRALIANS HIGHLIGHTS

## RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL ARTS PARTICIPATION SURVEY – JUNE 2017

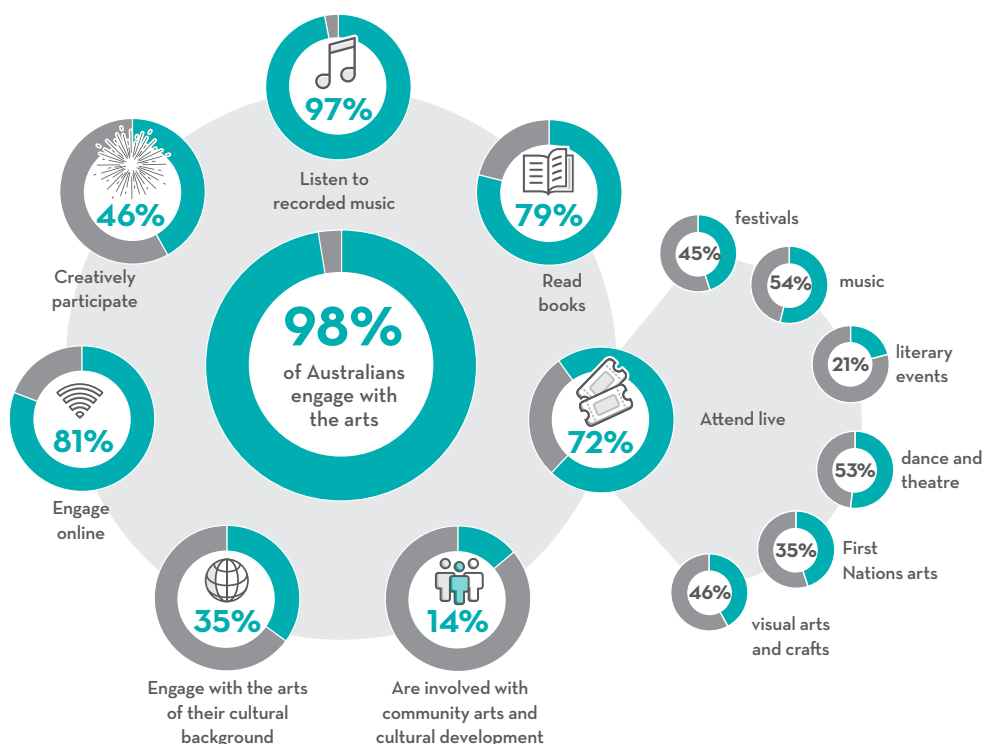
The arts have the power to inspire, entertain and unite. They connect people with ideas, emotions and stories; and spark imagination, creativity and joy. The arts are intrinsically important and contribute to individual and collective wellbeing – they play an essential role in the daily lives of Australians.

*Connecting Australians: Results of the 2016 National Arts Participation Survey* is the third in a landmark series by the Australia Council for the Arts. This research is designed to broaden the conversation about the arts, and to inform policy, programs and investment in the arts and well beyond. The findings confirm the significant and increasing personal value Australians place on the impact of the arts, and the ways in which they make our communities stronger and more cohesive.

The research demonstrates that the arts have a unique capacity to connect Australians from diverse backgrounds, and that two in three of us believe the arts help us to understand other people and cultures, and allow us to connect to others. We are highly connected digitally and yet we live in a global era of growing social, cultural and political division that is being evidenced through major social threats. Against this backdrop, the National Arts Participation Survey found that Australians increasingly believe the arts are critical to social cohesion – the arts reflect Australia’s diversity; express identity; and create empathy, understanding and connection.

98% of Australians engage with the arts and almost half creatively participate, increasingly in ways that enable them to connect with others.

**FIGURE 1: Australians’ arts engagement 2016**



# KEY FINDINGS

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## 98%

**of Australians engage with the arts** and since the 2013 survey there is substantially increased recognition of their positive impact on our wellbeing and ability to develop new ideas.

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*The Stance*, choreographed by Liesel Zink, *Performance Spaces Liveworks Festival*, 2016. Credit: Liesel Zink

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*Matilda the Musical* Australian Production, view of audience from the stage. Credit: Ze Wong

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## 7 MILLION

Australians experienced **First Nations arts** last year, double the number since the first survey in 2009. 4 in 5 believe First Nations arts are an important part of Australia's culture.

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**3 in 4** Australians believe the arts are an important way to get a **different perspective** on a topic or issue.

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More Australians now believe the arts reflect Australia's **cultural diversity** and that they shape and express Australian **identity**.



Installation view 2016 *Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Magic Object*, Art Gallery of South Australia, featuring Hiromi Tango, *Breaking Cycle (Lizard Tail)*. Credit: Saul Steed

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*Festival of the Brolga 2016*, *Beyond Empathy*. Credit: Raphaela Rosella

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8 in 10 people engage with the **arts online** up from 5 in 10 in 2009, with music streaming the largest contributor to this growth. Online activity is creating new opportunities to collaborate and share, and connecting artists and audiences directly.

## YOUNGER AUSTRALIANS

(15-24 years) create and experience the arts at the highest rates; are most likely to give time or money to the arts; they are big festival and First Nations arts attenders; and over half engage with the arts as part of their cultural background.



Sydney Writers' Festival. Credit: Prudence Upton

## 9 MILLION

Australians attended an **arts festival** in 2016. Arts festivals are diverse and accessible, bringing local communities together in immersive experiences and encouraging regional and international tourism.

Three quarters of us think the arts are an important part of the **education** of every Australian and are proud when Australian artists do well overseas.



Malak Community Dinner, Darwin Community Arts. Credit: James McDougall

## 27%

of Australians give time or money to the arts.

**Music** is the most popular art form, with 97% of Australians listening to recorded music and more than half attending music live.



Opera in the Park.

Credit: James Rogers for West Australian Opera



This survey saw a substantial increase in the number of Australians attending **theatre or dance** from 2013 (42% to 53%). There were increases for **visual arts and craft**, and data available for the first time shows 1 in 5 Australians attend **literary** events such as book clubs, talks and festivals.



For the first time the survey gathered specific data on **community arts and cultural development** – and the data shows 14% of Australians were involved in CACD activities in 2016.



# EXPERT COMMENTARY

Megan Brownlow (Partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers), media and entertainment industry specialist provides expert commentary on the arts and online transformation in *Connecting Australians*:

***'The democratisation of arts and entertainment realised by the internet is another theme illustrated beautifully by the National Arts Participation Survey. Anyone can become a creator and share their work with the world... How does one determine where the artist ends and the arts lover begins? A key trend to watch and perhaps a subject for future research, is this blurring of the two.'***

Pino Migliorino, leading commentator on multicultural policy and founder of the Cultural Perspectives Group, provides expert commentary on the arts and cultural diversity in *Connecting Australians*:

***'Arts participation as a facet of own-culture connection is a breakthrough question in the 2016 participation survey. The culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community behaviour demonstrates significant cross cultural arts participation and this can only be a positive indicator for both social cohesion and intercultural empathy.'***

Dr Rebecca Huntley, social researcher and commentator, explored attitudes to the arts in relation to the national mood for *Connecting Australians*:

***'The broader public conversation in Australia is one that is fraught with anxieties about the medium-to-long-term future... And yet even among the most disengaged there is an appreciation that the arts tell an important story and play an important role in national life.'***

## THE NATIONAL ARTS PARTICIPATION SURVEY

The 2016 National Arts Participation Survey follows two surveys conducted in 2009 and 2013. This third survey was conducted with a nationally representative sample of Australians aged 15 years and over in November 2016. For a deeper understanding of the survey findings, *Connecting Australians* incorporates data from two stages of qualitative research based on focus group discussions. This series provides a comprehensive picture of Australians' evolving relationship with the arts in their daily lives. It encompasses engagement with the broad gamut of arts offerings across Australia, including from both commercial and not-for-profit organisations; engagement with free accessible public art; and creative participation at all levels from the hobbyist to the arts professional.

The report provides new data not previously available on a national level about festival attendance, attendance at literature events, engagement with the arts as part of Australians' cultural backgrounds, and engagement with community arts and cultural development.

For the full report and online resources please visit [australiacouncil.gov.au/research](http://australiacouncil.gov.au/research)

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