

# MAKING ART WORK

A summary and response by the  
Australia Council for the Arts



This report is the Australia Council for the Arts' summary of, and response to *Making Art Work: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia* by David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya, 2017.

November 2017

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The Australia Council for the Arts respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and cultures. Readers should be aware that this report may contain references to and images of members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community who have passed away.

The words 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander', 'First Nations' and 'Indigenous' are used interchangeably in this report to refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia, and their arts and cultures.

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ISBN: 978-0-6482152-1-9

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Front cover: Anna Laverty, Sing Sing South  
Credit: Kellie Fernando Bird

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## About this report

This report is the Australia Council's summary of, and response to *Making Art Work: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia* by Professor David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya, Department of Economics, Macquarie University.

The results of *Making Art Work* are based on responses from 826 Australian professional artists surveyed during late 2016 and early 2017. Previous editions of the survey were conducted in 2009, 2002, 1993 and 1987. A pilot, with limited scope, was undertaken in 1983.

For full results and detailed methodology see [\*Making Art Work: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia\*](#).

All data are from this source unless otherwise stated.

Due to rounding some proportions may not total 100%.

All dollar amounts are Australian dollars unless otherwise stated.

See page 30 for key terms used throughout.

# INTRODUCTION

**Artists are among Australia's greatest assets – they play an invaluable role in our country's culture, identity and workforce. They connect us, tell our stories and challenge us to experience different perspectives. They interpret our past, imagine our futures and reflect our humanity. The vast majority of Australians agree that artists make an important contribution to Australian society and are proud when Australian artists do well overseas.<sup>1</sup> However it is increasingly challenging for many artists to make a living from creative work.**

In this report, the Australia Council for the Arts presents and responds to key findings from the latest iteration of the Macquarie University study of professional artists. *Making Art Work: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia* is the sixth in this landmark series carried out over more than 30 years for the Australia Council. The series tracks trends in the careers of Australian artists, providing crucial evidence to underpin support and advocacy for their integral role in our society.

Thousands of professional artists across Australia have contributed to this study since the 1980s, providing information about their artistic practice, earnings, career trajectories and broader lives. In its sixth edition, the series continues to provide the most comprehensive picture available of practising professional artists in Australia.

**Tony Grybowski**  
Chief Executive Officer

In this companion report, the Australia Council has placed the key survey findings alongside other literature and analysis to highlight and contextualise emerging trends, and to discuss what they mean for Australian artists into the future.

Artists are explorers and navigators of the new, and they create, work and live in a connected world undergoing profound disruption. Artists are not alone in navigating changes, and this report touches on complex issues facing professionals across industries in Australia and globally. The pace and scale of global change presents particular opportunities and challenges for artists that are critical to understand given the social, economic and cultural value of the arts. Among their varied contributions, artists play a central role in creating, questioning, recording and sharing cultural knowledge, and in fostering social cohesion.

The evidence in *Making Art Work* shows that there are expanding opportunities for artists as key contributors to workforces of the future. However, the evidence also shows that artists are increasingly undercompensated for their creative work. This means that it is now more important than ever to address how we as a nation value and respect our artists through support structures, protections and remuneration that enable viable artist careers – their talent and creativity are essential to a culturally ambitious vision of our nation's future.

**Wendy Were**  
Executive Director  
Strategic Development and Advocacy

# KEY INSIGHTS

*Making Art Work: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia* highlights a number of issues and questions about current and future working conditions for artists.

## **Can artists earn a living from creative work?**

It is increasingly difficult for artists to make a living from their creative work, which is at odds with the increasing personal value Australians place on the arts, and the significant economic, social and cultural impact they have on our communities. 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. Almost eight in ten artists mix their creative practice with other work, in arts-related roles and outside the arts. Some of this involves applying creative skills in other industries, which presents opportunities for arts practice to take new and varied forms.

## **How is global and technological change impacting Australian artists and their work?**

Artists are among those who work at the forefront of technological and social change – pushing boundaries, defying conventions, imagining new possibilities. Australian artists are increasingly creating, collaborating, promoting and selling work online. While there are more opportunities than ever for artists to connect to audiences, it is also harder to get cut through in a vast sea of content, while technology increasingly disrupts and influences the ways audiences interact with the arts. This is compounded by increased audience expectations for free content, and opportunities for misappropriation and unauthorised exploitation, posing significant challenges to artists' rights and livelihoods.

## **How are artists' skills and capabilities aligned with future workforce needs?**

Artists' skills and capabilities are considered to be among those least likely to be automated and increasingly sought in the workforces of the future. It is predicted that time spent engaging with people, solving strategic problems and thinking creatively will increase for all jobs. Accelerated change is likely to prioritise transferable skills, diverse perspectives, and lifelong learning for adapting skills and building new capabilities - all embodied in artists' working lives and professional practice. Expanding opportunities to create art in new ways and industries, and apply artistic skills outside the arts, could prompt a revaluing of the crucial role of artists as professionals, and recognition of the immense growth potential of the arts more broadly.

## **What's needed to ensure artists can continue to create art?**

The arts have a place in the lives of 98% of Australians.<sup>1</sup> A range of direct and indirect measures support Australian artists and markets, and help to ensure all Australians have access to the arts. Protection of intellectual property can enable artists to control their work and receive appropriate payment from its sale and use. Support from governments, business and philanthropy is vital to fostering a vibrant artistic culture and developing work that promotes social inclusion and breaks new artistic ground. With complex and rapidly changing forces impacting artists' livelihoods, the underlying principle that artists create work that has value needs to be maintained. The decline in artist incomes, particularly from creative work, highlights the need to ensure policy and regulatory settings keep pace with change. This is underpinned by the need for greater universal acknowledgment that artists should receive fair compensation for their work and that they contribute significantly to the health and success of our nation.

## VIEWS FROM ARTISTS

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Abdul-Rahman Abdullah  
Credit: Anna Louise Richardson

Abdul-Rahman Abdullah's practice explores the different ways that memory can inhabit and emerge from familial space. Working primarily in sculpture and installation, Abdullah's own experiences as a Muslim Australian of mixed cultural heritage provide a starting point for his celebrated work.

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**“I made a pretty decent living as a full-time musician. I don't think you can do this starting out today. I lived overseas for some time, and I came back to Australia to work not just on my music but other projects. Even if I wanted to, I don't think I'd be able to earn a living solely from my music now. Music was the first field to be hollowed out, but now it's happening everywhere.”**

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**“One of the most challenging aspects of pursuing a full-time career in contemporary art is the continuous pursuit of different income streams necessary to sustain a visual art practice. Everyone's needs and capacities are so different and it's a constantly shifting landscape that we're working within. For me, it's important to recognise the different areas within the cultural industries where my specific skills and experiences can be applied outside of the studio and gallery environment.”**

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For over 40 years Australian violinist, improviser, composer, inventor, and writer, Jon Rose has been at the sharp end of experimental, new and improvised music on the global stage. He has appeared on more than 100 albums, radiophonic and media works, collaborating with many mavericks of new music.



Jon Rose playing at The Stone, New York 2015.  
Credit: David Watson



# PART 1: AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS NOW

Artists are as complex and varied as the work they create, which can defy classification or definition. However, defining the role of professional artists to track their working conditions and identify challenges and opportunities for artist careers, helps to ensure the continued benefits of artists' work to culture and society.

Many conditions have remained consistent for Australian artists over the last 30 years: low incomes, the combining of creative practice with other work and the predominance of freelancing and self-employment. Disparities around income and representation remain, based on gender, cultural background and disability. Arts organisations and other businesses, and a range of funding bodies across all levels of government, continue to provide vital support for creative work.

There also have been some key shifts in the seven years since practising professional artists were last surveyed. Cost of living pressures experienced across the community are felt keenly by artists. Total income levels have gone backwards in real terms, driven by a decrease in income from creative work. Lack of income from creative work is now the biggest perceived immediate barrier to professional development, replacing lack of time. In this environment, artists are increasingly applying their creative skills outside the arts.

## KEY FINDINGS

- There are 48,000 **practising professional artists** in Australia – a relatively steady number since the 1990s.
- Creative work has historically accounted for around half of artists' **working time** and income. It is now taking 57% of working time but generating only 39% of income.
- Average **total annual income** for artists is \$48,400 – 21% below the workforce average. Average **creative income** is \$18,800 – down by 19% since the last survey.
- Artists of **non-English speaking background** account for 10% of artists compared to 18% of the workforce.
- Overall 9% of artists identify with **disability** – roughly half the proportion of the Australian population reporting disability. Artists with disability earn 42% less overall than artists without disability, compared to only 8% less in the last survey.
- On average, female artists earn 25% less than male artists – greater than the workforce **gender** pay gap of 16%. Female artists also earn 30% less from their creative work.
- Artists draw on a range of structures and entities to **support creative work** – 30% report applying to the Australia Council between 2010 and 2015, 26% to state and territory governments and 24% to arts organisations.
- Half of all Australian artists are now applying their **creative skills outside the arts** (51%), up from around a third in 2009 (36%).

## PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS IN AUSTRALIA

Defining what it means to be an artist and capturing data about artists are challenges the world over, especially as the nature of arts careers evolve. National labour force<sup>a</sup> statistics provide baselines, but are often not responsive enough to capture the breadth of ways in which artists work.

*Making Art Work* focuses on 'serious, practising professional' artists, defined by the following:

- **Serious:** is based on a self-assessed commitment to artistic work as a major aspect of the artist's working life, even if creative work is not the main source of income.
- **Practising:** refers to artists currently working or seeking to work in their chosen occupation.
- **Professional:** refers to a level of training, experience or talent and a manner of working that qualify artists to have their work judged against the professional standards of the relevant occupation.

A series of criteria<sup>b</sup> were applied to identify a random sample of artists that satisfy this definition, drawing on memberships of arts organisations.<sup>c</sup>

Most **models**<sup>2</sup> used in Australia and around the world to map and quantify artistic occupations across the economy are based around a defined set of creative or artistic occupations and a broader range of cultural or arts-related occupations. They consider artists working within arts or cultural industries, and those embedded in other industries.

## Numbers

Using information drawn from the 2011 Census, the *Making Art Work* survey and other sources, it is estimated that there are 48,000 professional artists in Australia, an increase of 9% since the last survey in 2009. During the 1990s the artist population grew substantially and has since remained reasonably steady.

The high numbers of creative arts **graduates**<sup>3</sup> and significantly lower numbers of practising professional artists suggest that many apply their training outside formal artistic practice, including industries such as advertising and digital games. The Australian film, television and digital games sector employs 1,300 animation, computer generated imagery (CGI) and visual effects specialists.<sup>4</sup>

The Australian **Census** gathers occupation data based on the main job held by the respondent in the week the Census is taken. The 2011 Census reported 23,600 people employed in artist occupations as their main job.<sup>d</sup> With most artists combining their creative practice with other work, the Census omits large numbers whose main job was in a different occupation at the time of collection. *Making Art Work* found that 43% of practising professional artists identified working in a non-artistic occupation in the 2016 Census.

Some arts **organisations** provide indications of the numbers involved in their art form. For some artists, informal networks and artist-run initiatives provide an alternative to professional membership organisations. The informal nature of these networks and initiatives mean that their extent and coverage are difficult to measure.<sup>5</sup>

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a The labour force is the group of people who contribute to, or are available to contribute to labour supply during a given period. They include both employed and unemployed people, but do not include those who are not available to work.

b Specific criteria are set out in the Methodology appendix in the full *Making Art Work* report.

c Over 200 organisations were approached and 63 released their data for the purposes of the survey. The 63 organisations are listed in the full *Making Art Work* report.

d Occupation-level results of the 2016 Census are scheduled to be published in late 2017.



## Arts practice areas

In *Making Art Work* artists are identified according to their principal artistic occupation, being the occupation they are 'engaged in most these days in terms of time'. Around 120 occupations are grouped into eight classifications: actors/directors; community arts and cultural development (CACD) artists; composers; craft practitioners; dancers/choreographers; musicians; visual artists; and writers.

Since the last survey, the estimated numbers of actors, writers, dancers, composers and musicians have continued to grow, while the numbers of craft practitioners and CACD artists have declined. Musicians and visual artists account for the highest estimated numbers of artists overall.

## Demographics

The population of artists is split fairly evenly between **males and females**, compared to the labour force which has a higher proportion of males. Females tend to dominate in most artistic occupations, with the exception of actors, musicians and composers where males outnumber females. The survey included options for artists who do not identify as male or female – none in the sample selected these options.

The Australia Council has collected data on applicants choosing to identify as **gender diverse** for over ten years. Approximately 1% of applicants consistently identify this way.

Recent studies have highlighted disparities in the representation of **females** across some areas of arts practice. A 2012 report on Australian theatre identified significant variability in the representation of Australian female playwrights in large theatre companies, as well as representation in creative leadership roles.<sup>6</sup>

The University of Sydney found that females are 'chronically disadvantaged' in the music industry on everything from festival line-ups and radio playlists to industry awards, and that even wider disparities exist for more technical roles.<sup>7</sup>

*Making Art Work* captures data on **cultural diversity** using the category 'non-English speaking background' to remain consistent with previous surveys and track trends over more than three decades. This definition may not capture a wider group of people who identify as being culturally and linguistically diverse – the broader definition now more commonly used to consider cultural diversity.<sup>e</sup>

Since the first survey in the 1980s, artists identifying as being from a non-English speaking background have consistently been under-represented compared to the Australian workforce – 10% of artists and 18% of the workforce in 2016.

There has been an increase in the number of artists of non-English speaking background who feel their background has a negative impact on their arts practice: 19%, up from 15% in 2009. While the majority (54%) still see the impact of their background as more positive than negative, this shift is concerning.

The *Making Art Work* findings highlight a continuing debate in Australian arts and culture about whether Australia's artists reflect its wider diversity. Recent research on the diversity of cultural expressions in Australia highlighted the need to move beyond a narrow 'multicultural arts' perspective that sets the artistic work of artists from diverse backgrounds apart from a cultural 'mainstream'. The research drew attention to the importance of Australia's cultural diversity as an asset, essential to sustainable development and a central dimension of culture in an increasingly interconnected, globalised world.<sup>8</sup>

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e The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) developed Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity in 1999. ABS definitions used in the Census capture additional variables such as ancestry, country of birth of parents, and year of arrival in Australia. The Australia Council requests that grant applicants self-identify with being from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

About 9% of artists identify with **disability**, roughly half of the proportion of the wider population reporting disability (19% in 2015).<sup>9</sup> The majority (89%) report their disability impacts on their creative practice: 55% report effects sometimes; 15% most of the time; and 19% all of the time. Some artists identify their disability in positive terms as a vector for creativity.

The National Arts Participation Survey found that people with disability are active participants in the arts.<sup>10</sup> However, the under-representation of artists with disability is a continuing area of concern, and research suggests that a range of barriers inhibit pathways to professional arts practice.<sup>11</sup> There is also a growing body of literature considering disability beyond access and inclusion. It suggests artists with disability open up new avenues of creative and aesthetic possibility, further amplified when the creative process considers how audiences (including those with disability) will engage.<sup>12</sup>

On average artists are **older than the labour force**, even more so than reported in the 2009 survey of practising professional artists. Writers and craft practitioners have the oldest average and median ages and dancers the youngest. Many artists continue to practice well into and beyond the retirement age of their contemporaries in other industries, including many First Nations artists (see page 12). Some are 'late bloomers', adopting an artistic profession as their second or later career.

Most artists identified the age at which they became established as being in their mid-thirties. Performing artists become established at a younger age on average. Writers, visual artists and musicians tend to become established when they are older.

While the ageing of artists reflects an ageing Australian population and a broader global trend, Australia's diverse population is ageing in different ways. Migrants who have arrived more recently have significantly younger profiles. Australia's Indigenous population is also younger than the non-Indigenous population, with much larger proportions of children and young people and smaller proportions of older people.<sup>13</sup>

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## VIEWS FROM ARTISTS

Emma J Hawkins is an actress, dancer, singer and circus performer. Standing at just over a metre she is definitely one of a kind. She has worked with many professional companies as an actress, including Sydney Theatre Company, Arena and Windmill Theatre Company.



Emma J Hawkins  
Credit: Amy Cater Photography

**“I am proud that I’ve been able to make a professional living in this industry for over 15 years, mostly working in the independent and small companies. I have had to think outside the square to continue working, as it has been difficult to continually fight stereotypes and even get a foot in the door with mainstream auditions. Diversity is now being included in many conversations and I’m looking forward to see how that will impact the industry in the short and long-term futures.”**

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Some young Australians in the arts are applying their skills in new ways and reinventing the definition of ‘practising professional artists’. There are new types of artist-run initiatives working outside traditional art forms, social enterprises that blur commercial and non-profit boundaries,<sup>14</sup> as well as international and online work.

## Locations

The spread of artists across **states and territories** roughly aligns with the distribution of the Australian population: for example 35% of artists are based in NSW compared to 32% of the population; 26% in Victoria compared to 25% of the population; and 18% in Queensland compared to 20% of the population.<sup>15</sup>

While Australia’s artists are geographically diverse, living and working in all parts of the country, there continues to be a concentration in **urban areas**. Three quarters (74%) live in cities, compared to two thirds of the Australian population. This urban concentration is greater for some areas of practice, such as performing arts.

The concentration of cultural infrastructure in Australia’s **major cities** evolved over a long period of time, and continues to play a vital role in shaping urban artistic and wider cultural and economic activity.<sup>16</sup> For some art forms, networks and professional opportunities remain primarily in key urban locations.<sup>17</sup>

However, rising cost of living and declining housing affordability in cities such as Sydney and Melbourne<sup>18</sup> have affected artists, small-to-medium organisations and artist-run initiatives,<sup>19</sup> displacing many from increasingly dense and contested inner-urban areas.<sup>20</sup> While artists and the cultural activity they generate enhance local attractiveness and liveability, many are being priced out of the areas they have helped to transform. Richard Florida’s follow-up to his thesis that the ‘creative class’ are the drivers of jobs and economic growth<sup>21</sup>

suggests that the most attractive and desirable of these ‘creative cities’ have also become the most unequal.<sup>22</sup> Recent literature on cultural regeneration highlights the need for critical approaches to culture in cities, and understanding of how developments in towns and regional areas intersect.<sup>23</sup>

**Regional artists** are critical to a vibrant arts sector that reflects Australia’s depth and diversity. Since the last survey, negative perceptions about the impact of being a regional artist have increased: 42% of artists in regional locations say their location has a more negative than positive impact on their practice, up from 25% in 2009. Slightly fewer (37%) say their location has a more positive than negative effect. There may be a range of factors influencing these perceptions, making this a trend to watch in order to understand the degree to which artists can maintain practice in regional Australia.

Creativity is strong in **Australia’s regions**, where residents are as likely to creatively participate in the arts as those in metropolitan areas, and more likely to create visual arts and craft.<sup>24</sup> In recent decades, cultural development and investment have provided new opportunities for artists and arts workers in suburban, outer urban<sup>25</sup> and regional Australia.<sup>26</sup> Research suggests that regional cultural development creates benefits for local communities and economies.<sup>27</sup> The touring of artistic work also provides benefits for artists (including extending or generating income from their work), and adds to the creative offerings available in both cities and regions.<sup>28</sup>

**Mobility** for artists overall broadly reflects that of the wider workforce, with 45% of artists having changed their place of residence in the previous five years, compared to 42% of the wider workforce.

# FIRST NATIONS ARTISTS

There is no single source of representative data on First Nations artists and their working conditions. David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya are currently leading a national survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in remote communities, aimed at understanding the conditions of art and cultural production in this context.<sup>29</sup> In 2018, the Australia Council will publish *Creating Art: Mapping First Nations performing arts* to understand the range of work created by First Nations performing artists, the paths which creative works take to find audiences, and the experiences of First Nations creatives in bringing their work to audiences. In the meantime a range of other sources provide some indicative information about First Nations artists and their working conditions.

## Numbers

Data from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) published in *Living Culture*<sup>30</sup> indicates that 18,500 First Nations Australians – or 4.2% of the population – earn money from the arts.<sup>f</sup> This includes 8.8% of First Nations people in remote Australia (8,600 people). A network of around 90 Indigenous art centres in remote Australia represents thousands of artists and community members.<sup>31</sup>

## Arts practice areas

*Living Culture* indicates that 11,100 First Nations people earned income from sales of paintings or art works in 2014–15, 7,300 from arranging or participating in cultural dances or performances, and 3,900 from sales of other arts and crafts (weaving, dyed cloth, sculptures, pottery, wooden art and craft).

There are 1,236 First Nations members of the collecting society for Australasian music copyright holders, APRA AMCOS, or 1.2% of total membership. A number of peak organisations have also formed in recent years to support and advocate for First Nations artists, such as the First Nations Australia Writers Network,<sup>32</sup> and Blakdance whose membership currently features over 70 independent contemporary choreographers.<sup>33</sup>

## Demographics

*Living Culture* found that First Nations females, those in remote areas, and those aged over 65 are the most likely to be earning income from the arts. The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Economies* project by the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation found that artists over 55 account for 31% of all artists in remote Indigenous art centres, but generate 55% of sales, despite large falls in sales for older artists.<sup>34</sup> These findings highlight the important contribution of arts and culture to the livelihood and wellbeing of older First Nations Australians, and the importance of supporting Elders to pass on cultural knowledge to younger generations.

## Income

*Integrating Art Production and Economic Development in the Kimberley* reports on an early stage of Macquarie University's National Survey of Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists. It shows that for many remote communities, arts and cultural production is 'likely to be one of the most important means for providing a viable and culturally-relevant

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<sup>f</sup> Note that economic participation does not correlate to the definition of practising professional artist used in the survey, and does not capture all art forms covered in *Making Art Work*.

livelihood for members of the community'.<sup>35</sup> Median income for First Nations artists in the Kimberley is \$25,000 – significantly less than Australian artists and the Australian workforce overall, but higher than the median for all First Nations people in the region (\$15,700).<sup>36</sup>

## Funding

First Nations artists are not only applying for funding to the Australia Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts panel, but also to the general art form and multi-art form panels, where they are competing successfully.

Among successful applicants to the Australia Council's Four Year Funding program 2017–2020, 14% are First Nations organisations, up from 8% representation in multi-year funded programs from 2014–16.

## Challenges

The 2007 Parliamentary Inquiry into Indigenous Visual Arts highlighted a range of issues for Indigenous artists that informed measures such as the Indigenous Art Code and Artists in The Black to promote ethical dealings with artists.<sup>37</sup> Ten years on, initial findings from Macquarie University's National Survey of Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists demonstrate the importance and interconnectedness of cultural, social and economic development, and the significant numbers of artists able and willing to work in culture but unable for various reasons to do so.<sup>38</sup>

A 2010 research project, *Song Cycles*, highlighted barriers to market entry, limited opportunities, and the challenges of working life for Indigenous musicians.<sup>39</sup> Research by the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA) also highlights a range of challenges shared by Indigenous artists in other countries including Canada, New Zealand, Mexico and Peru – such as cultural maintenance, copyright protection, promotion and infrastructure.<sup>40</sup>

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## VIEWS FROM ARTISTS

“Being innovative in my artistic practice whilst maintaining the integrity of my peoples’ ancient cultures, is challenging but keeps me grounded. Representing my mob in the most honest and valuable way possible is important to me. So to have the support of my elders and community with what I am doing, is a real privilege and I am more than grateful. For without this, I have nothing. Because of their generosity, I am able to share my experiences with audiences from around the world.”

Rita is a Kulkalgal and Kawrereg woman from the Torres Strait Islands. Winner of the British Council's Accelerate Leadership award and a 'Most Potential to Scale' award at an Innovation Business Startup, she is also founding director of Baiwa Dance Company and Pryce Centre for Culture and Arts in Cairns.



Rita Pryce  
Credit: Jorge de Araujo



## VIEWS FROM ARTISTS

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“As an emerging artist, the aim is always to be as flexible as possible if you want to be noticed. That means working 10 times harder if you want a theatre company to consider you over a well established artist. And while you’re doing that, there are still a hundred other responsibilities you need to take care of. At the end of the day, you gotta eat. But you can’t eat from being commissioned once or twice a year. Now, you have to find a part time job to pay your bills and while you’re focusing on that job, you’re losing the next chance of being noticed. So, you can sometimes find it hard to balance your creativity or generating the next idea that would wow an artistic director with the needs to sustain your daily life.”

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Future D Fidel  
Credit: Damien West

Future D Fidel is a Queensland based artist born in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Fidel’s practice includes African modern dance, music and theatre. His debut play *Prize Fighter* was co-produced with La Boite Theatre Company and featured in the Brisbane Festival to great acclaim.

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Melissa Lucashenko. Credit: Sahlan Hayes

Melissa Lucashenko is an award-winning novelist of Goorie and European heritage. Melissa’s most recent novel, *Mullumbimby*, was awarded the 2013 Queensland Literary Award for Fiction, won the 2014 Victorian Premiers Prize for Indigenous Writing, and was longlisted for both the Stella Prize and Miles Franklin Award.

“Growing up poor I was obsessed with Aesop’s fox who chose to live hungry but free. Over twenty years I’ve done Uber driving, bar work, blue collar jobs of all sorts, to sustain my writing. In 2008 a friend challenged - ‘no guts, no glory’ - and so I went freelance in the midst of the GFC. After six novels, two Australian Council grants and a CAL Fellowship, I’ve now earned slightly more than I would have on the dole. Is the ‘dream of wearing shorts forever’ worth it? Bloody oath! Baked beans, anyone?”

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## MAKING A LIVING

### Working patterns

It has long been common for artists to mix their creative practice with other income-generating activities. For some, this is a positive, and flexibility can be an attraction of a career in the arts.<sup>41</sup> However only 32% of practising professional artists are happy with the amount of time they spend on creative work, with 66% stating they would like to spend more time.

*Making Art Work* tracks working patterns in three categories: **creative work**, **arts-related work** and **non-arts work**. On average, artists spend around half of their working time on creative work, a consistent pattern since 1987. Around a quarter (23%) spend their time solely on creative work – most commonly dancers/choreographers and writers.

Although the proportions of female and male artists who have had children under their care at some point in their career are similar (52% of females and 49% of males), substantially more females (38%) than males (18%) feel that this has restricted their work as an artist ‘significantly’.

### Time and money

Artists work an average of 45 hours per week in total<sup>g</sup>. Previous surveys found the proportion of **income** earned from creative practice roughly aligned with the proportion of **time** spent on it – for example creative work accounted for 46% of total income and 47% of working time in 2009. Artists are now spending an average of 57% of their working time on creative work, and it is generating only 39% of total income, pointing to an increased reliance on income from other work and decreasing earnings from artistic work.

Some of this other work involves proficiencies developed through artistic practice, as artists are increasingly applying their creative skills in a

range of settings outside the arts. Approximately half (51%) of all artists are doing this, up from 36% in 2009. Of that 51%, most (83%) are earning income from their creative skills outside the arts. This is discussed further in Part 2.

### Types of employment

While arts-related work and non-arts work takes a range of forms, artists predominantly work on a **freelance** or **self-employed** basis in their principal artistic occupation – 81% are doing so, up from 72% in 2009. The biggest shifts have been for CACD artists (72% are freelance or self-employed, up from 42% in 2009) and musicians (86%, up from 67%). The shifts align with a long-term trend seen across the workforce more generally.

[A national survey of arts and disability organisations, arts workers and artists with disability was conducted by arts and disability organisation DADAA in 2012. It found that just over 50% of people with disability working in the arts were self-employed, and 50% also worked part time. The research also found nearly 60% of all arts and cultural organisations did not currently employ a person with disability, or were unable to report.](#)<sup>42</sup>

### Support for creative work

Financial and other support for artists involves a complex interplay of stakeholders including the arts sector, the wider marketplace, all levels of government, private foundations and individual philanthropists. The three most common sources of **financial assistance** artists report applying for between 2010 and 2015 are the Australia Council for the Arts (30% of artists), state and territory governments (26%), and arts organisations, companies or industry bodies (24%). Approximately half of those applying to each of these sources report receiving funding.

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g This estimate does not include hours spent on unpaid activities such as studying or voluntary work.

The total **Australian and state and territory governments' spend** on making, presenting and accessing core arts was \$1.1 billion in 2015–16.<sup>43</sup>

**Australia Council funding data** indicates that artists rely on and generate multiple sources of income, when supported by a grant. For individuals who received and acquitted Australia Council core grants – the open, competitive grants with applications assessed by panels of peers – between 2015 and 2017, other sources accounted for 43% of total cash income related to the funded activity. (see Figure 1)

One in four Australians **gave time or money** to the arts in 2016, including 11% who donated money and 9% who contributed to crowd funding.<sup>44</sup> While there has been an overall downward trend in the proportion of Australians donating money, the proportion donating to the arts has remained stable since 2013, and the proportion contributing to crowd funding increased from 7%. Recent research indicates increasing numbers of private donors

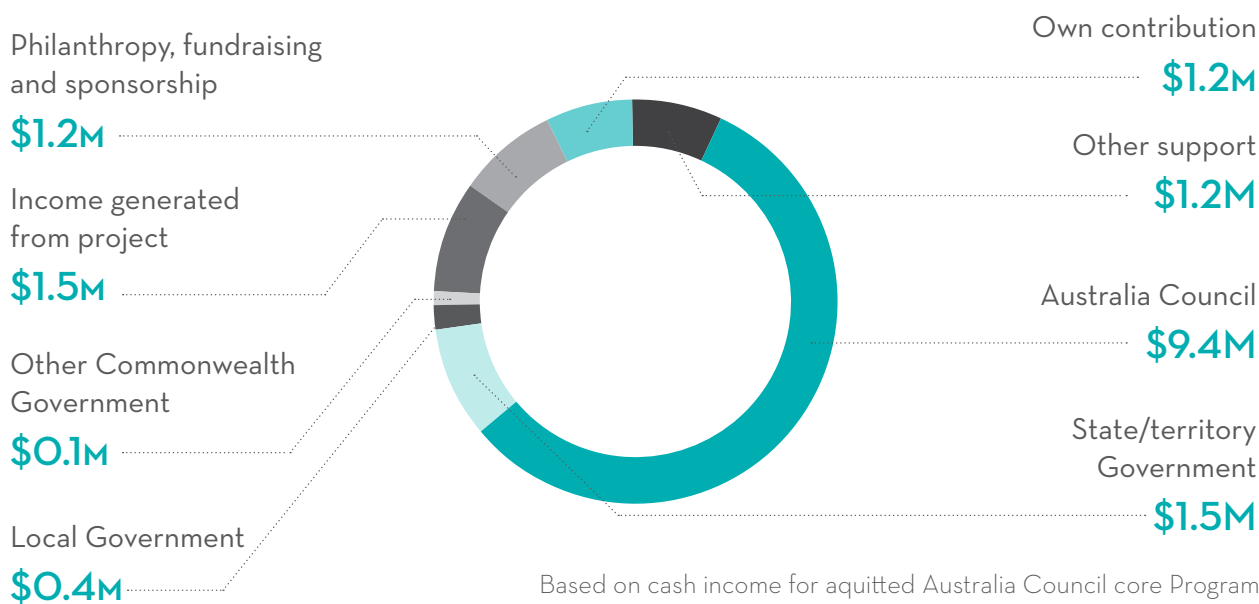
giving to large performing arts companies, and small to medium not-for-profit arts and culture organisations drawing a significant proportion of their income from non-government sources.<sup>45</sup>

More **female than male** artists reported applying for grants, fellowships, prizes, or other financial support between 2010 and 2015 (62% compared to 48%), with overall reported success rates similar (66% and 68% respectively). The exceptions are state/territory government, local government, and arts organisation funding, where fewer females are successful despite more applying.

Australia Council funding data indicates that, on average, **males** tend to request higher amounts than **females** when making grant applications. Based on successful applications to Australia Council core grants (Individuals) between March 2015 and June 2017, male applicants requested approximately 7% more than females on average. Among successful applications over the same period, individual male applicants were awarded grants that were on average 4% more than female applicants.<sup>h</sup>

**Figure 1**

**Sources of income for funded activities  
Australia Council grants to individuals, 2015 to 2017**



<sup>h</sup> These figures are indicative only, based on simple averaging of the amount requested across all successful grants awarded to individual (not group) applicants in Projects and Development Grants for Individuals and Groups categories.

Twice as many artists of **non-English speaking background** than others nominate lack of access to funding or other financial support as the most important immediate factor inhibiting professional development (18% compared to 9%). While the same proportion of artists of English and non-English backgrounds report applying for funding (55%), fewer from non-English speaking background report success in receiving it (60% compared to 68%).

In the Australia Council’s core grants programs in recent years, there have been increasing rates of application and success from individuals who identify as being from **culturally and linguistically diverse** (CALD) backgrounds. The proportion of CALD individuals among applications received has increased slightly across the seven rounds, from 20% in March 2015 to 23% in June 2017. Over the same period, the proportion of successful CALD applicants has increased from 19% to 29%. (see Figure 2)

Australia Council funding data indicates that 7% of applicants to core grants programs (Individuals)<sup>i</sup> identify with **disability**, compared to 9% of artists in *Making Art Work*.

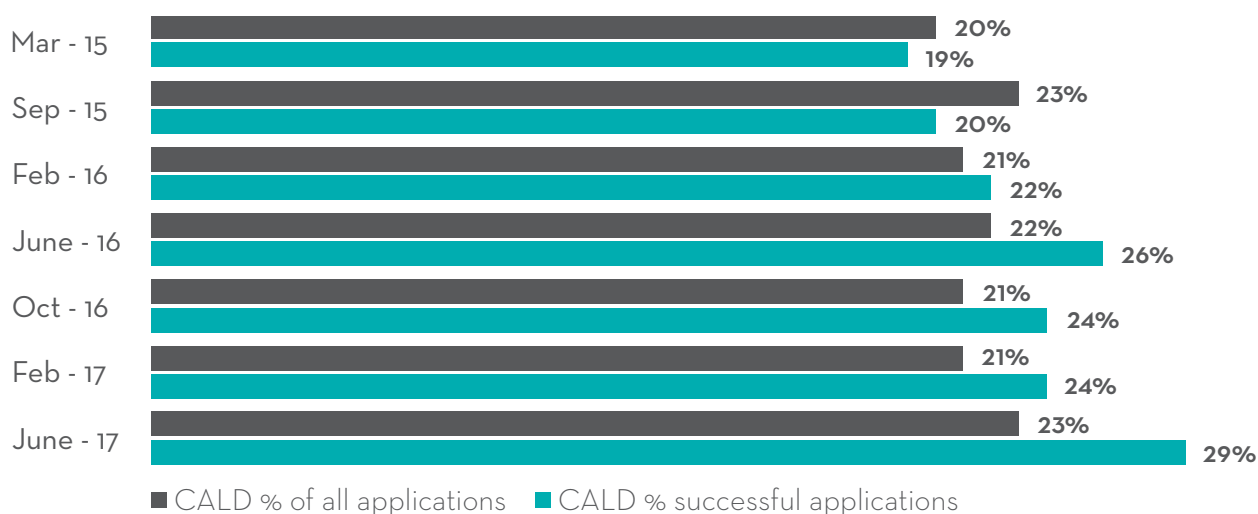
## Copyright

Protection of intellectual property is fundamental to artists controlling their work and is critical to economic survival for many. The impacts of digital distribution – including greatly increased opportunities for infringement and actions to address this – have raised general awareness of copyright among creators, distributors and audiences.

Overall, 82% of artists believe they hold **copyright** in their work, up from 76% in 2009. More than half (53%) are members of one or more copyright **collecting societies**, a significant increase from one third in 2009 and one quarter in 2001. One third (33%) report having received payment through a collecting society, more than double the 15% in 2009.

**Infringement** remains an issue for a number of artists. Around a quarter of artists report their copyright has been infringed in some way (26%), and one fifth their moral rights (21%) – similar levels to 2009 and 2001. Of those reporting copyright infringement, 37% have taken action (up from 31% in 2009) and 59% report these actions have been successful (similar to 2009 levels, 56%).

**Figure 2** CALD applicants as % of all applications and successful applications  
Australia Council grants to individuals, 2015 to 2017



Based on Australia Council core grants to individuals, January 2015 to June 2017

i Applicants to Arts Projects and Development Grants (including Arts and Disability Funding program), 2015-17.

In any given year, at least 50% of members of the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA) - a copyright collecting society for the music industry - have some level of royalty earnings. These can be as little as a few dollars, through to hundreds of thousands of dollars.<sup>46</sup>

In recent years **copyright** organisations including collecting societies have undertaken awareness-raising activities about copyright, partly in response to policy activity in this area. Issues of copyright, **fair use** and **intellectual property** have particular impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. In August 2017 a Government inquiry commenced into the growing presence of inauthentic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'style' art and craft products and merchandise for sale across Australia. The protection of work by cultural groups, communities or Traditional Owners - as well as the underlying stories, styles or methods of art - are areas where current laws do not provide substantial intellectual property rights.

While copyright enables financial returns to creators for the public performance, broadcast, communication and reproduction of their work, the **Artists' Resale Royalty Scheme**<sup>47</sup> provides separate property rights specifically to visual artists, and highlights the importance of continuing copyright measures to protect and extend the earning capacities of artists. The scheme requires reporting on all commercial resales of artworks<sup>48</sup> for \$1,000 or more, and the payment of a 5% royalty on some resales. Since its commencement on 9 June 2010 until 3 July 2017, the scheme has generated \$5.2m in resales for more than 1,440 artists. Over 63% of artists receiving payments through the scheme are from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.<sup>49</sup>

## INCOME

### How much are artists making?

Average **gross annual income** for artists (from all sources) is \$48,400. When adjusted for inflation, average incomes have fallen by 4% since 2009. While income and cost of living are growing concerns for Australians from all walks of life, average annual incomes for artists are 21% lower than the average for the Australian workforce, and even lower than those of similarly qualified practitioners in other industries: 41% lower than 'professionals' and 47% lower than 'managers'. With artists working an average of 45 hours per week, that represents an average hourly rate of just \$21 (before tax), despite high levels of skills and education as discussed in Part 2. The current national minimum wage is \$18.29 (before tax).

At the lowest end of the income scale, 58% of artists are earning less than \$10,000 per year from their creative work (56% in 2009), and 19% are earning less than \$10,000 per year from all income sources (16% in 2009).

Artists nominated an average of \$42,900 (after tax) as the minimum required to meet **basic annual living costs**, excluding costs associated with maintaining arts practice. Costs to maintain arts practice average \$10,700 annually (ranging from \$7,500 for writers to \$15,500 for craft practitioners). More than four in ten artists are not currently meeting the average minimum nominated by artists of their art form, including 66% of writers.

Average annual **income earned from creative work** has declined by 19% in real terms since 2009, while artists continue to spend around half of their working time on their creative practice. Lack of income from creative practice is now the biggest perceived barrier to current professional development, replacing 'lack of time for creative work' in 2009.

## Who earns what?

**Female** artists continue to earn less overall than their male counterparts. While the gap between the earnings of male and female artists has narrowed since the last survey, at 25%<sup>j</sup> it is significantly more than the gender pay gap of 16% across the Australian workforce.<sup>k50</sup> The gap is even greater for creative practice. Males and females spend a similar amount of time on creative work, but on average, females earn 30% less from it than males. This is despite higher educational attainment by female artists overall, in comparison to males.<sup>l</sup>

Average total annual income for artists of **non-English speaking background** is similar to that of other artists, as is average annual income from creative practice. However they earn 27% less for arts-related work (which tends to principally be teaching), and 19% more for non-arts work.

Artists with **disability** earn on average 42% less in total annual income than artists without disability. An even lower median income suggests that there is a significant concentration of artists with disability in the lower end of the income distribution. Average income from creative practice is 51% less for artists with disability than those without disability. *Making Art Work* notes

that artists with disability are more likely to be female, suggesting gender may be a contributing factor to this pay gap.

Artists living in **the regions** earn almost a third (29%) less than their city counterparts for their creative work, and 15% less overall. It is difficult to compare these trends to general workforce incomes in metropolitan and regional Australia, due to the impact of high wages in some regional areas related to activities such as mining.

## Getting by

The majority of artists (67%) continue to report some **reliance on a spouse or partner's income** to support their creative work, with 32% considering it extremely important. While there has always been a significant barrier to a career in the arts for people who do not have an alternative means of support, the increasing financial challenges raise questions about equality of access to arts careers into the future.

Artists commonly experience annual income fluctuations, for example with a large commission or advance one year followed by a year or two of much lower income. Some artists are managing these fluctuations through the provision of **income averaging** in the Australian tax system, allowing incomes and associated tax liabilities to be averaged out over several years. Just under one in five artists (17%) report benefiting from tax averaging, with a further 19% unsure if they have benefited or not.

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j To ensure comparability to general workforce statistics, the pay gap reported here is calculated based on the method used by the WGEA (Workplace Gender Equality Agency). The difference between female and male mean income is expressed as a percentage of male income. This is a different approach to that taken in *Making Art Work*, which expresses female income as a percentage of male income.

k The gender pay gap has fluctuated between 15 and 19% over the last two decades. It was 16% when the *Making Art Work* survey commenced in August 2016, and 15% in September 2017.

l *Making Art Work* shows more female artists have an academic degree (83% compared to 70% for male artists, with a notably larger proportion of females than males having completed a Master's degree or above), and a higher proportion of female artists are still engaged in studies.

Working predominantly on a freelance or self-employed basis reduces **access to benefits** of more secure working arrangements, such as regular superannuation payments from employers and leave benefits. This type of work also requires skills related to running a small business. Half of artists believe their **business management skills** are 'good' or 'excellent', but 37% describe their skills only as 'adequate', and a further 11% regard their business skills as 'inadequate'. Many (65%) indicate that they are likely to improve their skills in the year ahead.

With a high proportion working on a freelance or self-employed basis, **future financial security** is a critical concern for artists. Around 5% have no arrangements in place, down from 14% in the last survey. However, less than half (46%) believe their arrangements will be sufficient. Around half (47%) are accruing superannuation through a scheme with an employer (most likely associated with part-time or casual employment outside the arts), 32% are members of industry superannuation funds, and 55% are relying on personal savings and investments. Almost a third

(29%) are relying on support of a partner or family for future financial security.

In addition to the tax averaging provisions noted above, some other **financial and workplace relations structures** can impact artists' financial position. Superannuation benefits for low income earners can assist artists on low incomes. At the same time, the intermittent nature of some arts work may present challenges in meeting mutual obligation requirements related to income support.<sup>51</sup>

Income support and other government policy measures can impact the range of options available to **artists with disability**. Access to essential disability support is a factor for artists when considering choices and options for work.<sup>52</sup> It is important that policies and programs intended to support people with disability to participate equitably in the workforce and society – such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme – take into account the needs of those who seek to work as artists, and enable participation of people with disability in the cultural and creative industries more broadly.

## VIEWS FROM ARTISTS



Honor Eastly  
Credit: Courtesy of the artist

**H**onor Eastly is an artist, podcaster and professional feeler of feelings. Her work explores human distress, relationships, sex, psychology and the meaning of it all. Recently Eastly's work has been shown at Melbourne Now, The National Gallery of Victoria, The Gallery of NSW, the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, and at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. Eastly is the creator of the *Starving Artist* podcast which debuted at #1 on iTunes Arts and #10 on iTunes Australia overall.

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“Learning how to make the art + money equation work has been one of the biggest challenges of my life, let alone my creative career. It’s why I finally took all my blood, sweat, and worry, and turned it into the *Starving Artist* podcast. For many artists making money creatively is either a mystery, or hidden behind a big banner reading ‘SELL OUT!’ I wanted to change that. What I found is that artists make it work in many different ways, but one of the most helpful things for sustaining a creative career is to have radically honest conversations about this delicate topic.”

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# A NOTE ON DIVERSITY IN THE ARTS

The majority of Australians believe the arts help us express our identity, get different perspectives on an issue, and understand other people and cultures.<sup>44</sup> For the arts to provide this value, it is important that our artists reflect the diversity of Australia. *Making Art Work* shows that disparities between different groups in the arts persist, reflecting those in society more broadly. International reports, while not using directly comparable measures, indicate that disparities also persist for artists in countries such as the UK<sup>53</sup> and the USA.<sup>54</sup>

Diversity, by definition, has many dimensions that overlap and intersect. Acknowledgement of the value of diversity, and issues of inequality and representation feature increasingly in media and public discourse in Australia and around the world.<sup>55</sup> Technology has opened new avenues for cultural expression, enabling diverse voices to find new platforms, creative connections, visibility and influence. These same technologies also contribute to polarisation.

Since 2005, the *UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* has been ratified by more than 140 countries, including Australia in 2009, providing a framework for the development of new approaches to support cultural diversity during times of rapid change.

An important element shaping diversity in the arts is leadership, in varying definitions and aspects. A recent report by the Australian Human Rights Commission, *Leading for Change*, found that while Australia celebrates its cultural diversity, this diversity is not reflected in leadership ranks.<sup>56</sup>

These findings are echoed throughout the arts and creative industries. Recent research into gender inequality in the music industry

identified under-representation of women on the boards of decision-making bodies.<sup>57</sup> Screen Australia research identified under-representation of a number of Australia's minority groups and marginalised communities in Australian TV drama,<sup>58</sup> noting the importance of a diversity of backgrounds among decision-makers and producers to facilitate diversity in commissioning and content production.

In the UK, Arts Council England's (ACE) 2016 report, *Diversity, Equality and the Creative Case* indicated that there is significantly lower representation of cultural diversity in the senior roles of Chair, Artistic Director and Chief Executive within ACE funded organisations.<sup>59</sup>

Indicative findings from a current evaluation of the Australia Council's capacity building programs suggest the need to distinguish between leadership and seniority, and reinforce the importance of confidence, connections and networks for arts leaders. This is backed up by research from the Diversity Council Australia which found that in order for leadership to be truly reflective of diversity, there is a need to reconsider the forms that leadership can take.<sup>60</sup> Applications to the Australia Council grants programs are assessed by panels of peers with relevant arts practice and industry expertise. The Australia Council considers and monitors diversity of peer panels across a range of characteristics.

Arts leaders make decisions that shape cultural tastes, and inform how, and which artists and their creations, are nurtured to reach wider audiences. The Australian arts sector is in the early stages of collecting comprehensive data on leadership diversity which will inform future work in this area.

## VIEWS FROM ARTISTS

Courtney Collins is a novelist and screenwriter. Her first novel, *The Burial*, was shortlisted for numerous literary prizes in Australia and overseas and is currently being developed as a feature film. Her second novel, *The Walkman Mix*, will be published in 2018. For the past two and a half years, Courtney has been living in South East Arnhem Land researching a series for television.



Courtney Collins  
Credit: Lisa Madden

“My research explores a number of fundamental themes that underpin the intersection of art and science; namely life and death and cybernetics. I consciously approach processes capable of transforming bodies or living biological material from artistic, philosophical and ethical perspectives, and I make use of new scientific and cybernetic technologies to create artworks that re-evaluate understandings of life and the human body. I use biotechnologies in a subversive way, attempting to problematize them by putting forward absurd and futuristic scenarios.”

“Storytelling is the great frontier. Old models based on three-act structures and the ‘Hero’s Journey’ are no longer an adequate response to the complexity of living. Different approaches are emerging and one of them, one that has enormous personal appeal for me, is based on truth of character. From experience, if I can discover the truth of a character, all good things can come from that – the book deal, the film option, the audience. What is more difficult to quantify is the inner reward that kind of storytelling gives to the storyteller. And that is the thing that sustains you to keep going, to discover more.”

Guy Ben-Ary is a Perth based artist and researcher. Recognised internationally as a major artist and innovator in science and media arts, Guy specialises in biotechnological artwork, which aims to enrich our understanding of what it means to be alive. He currently works at SymbioticA, an artistic laboratory at the University of Western Australia.



Guy Ben-Ary working in the SymbioticA lab, University of Western Australia  
Credit: Dr. Stuart Hodgetts

# PART 2: AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS IN THE FUTURE

Change is the stock in trade for many artists. They forge new connections across sectors, subjects and ideas, imagining and creating the new. In an age of accelerated change on a global scale – social, economic, cultural and technological – much research and commentary predicts a work future of increasing casualisation and adoption of portfolio careers. Predictions about automation of jobs highlight the value of lifelong learning for adapting skills and building new capabilities. Exponential growth of digital platforms, unprecedented access to information, and big data analytics are continuing to transform many aspects of life.

Much of this speculation about the future suggests that artists are well-placed to respond to changing social and workforce needs. Many of the predicted working conditions and required capabilities have long been the foundations of artists' challenging working lives and *Making Art Work* confirms this increasing reality. Accelerated change will further impact the work of artists. It will expand opportunities to create art in new ways and industries, and apply artistic skills outside the arts. It will also pose new challenges in navigating careers and livelihoods. Valuing the crucial role of artists as professionals, and recognising the immense growth potential of the arts more broadly in predicted future workforces, will be critical to sustaining artistic practice in an increasingly uncertain future.

## KEY FINDINGS

- A willingness to obtain **new skills** is considered essential as workforces prepare for jobs that have not yet been imagined. Artists increasingly embody a sense of **lifelong learning** with seven in ten artists (at all career stages) still engaged in training (72%, up from 37% in 2009).
- Over half (51%) of artists **work across more than one art form**, up from 43% in 2009. Some crossovers are more predictable (47% of composers also play music or sing), and others less so (28% of dancers also create visual art).
- Interdisciplinary thinking is one of the skills considered essential for innovation and future workforce needs. Artists increasingly apply their **artistic skills in a range of other industries**. CACD artists are the most likely to do so (69%), most commonly in education, the non-profit sector and health and welfare.
- Artists often work at the forefront of technological change. At least 65% of artists regularly use **technology** in the process of creating art, and 27% use the **internet to create** collaborative or interactive work with others
- Digital platforms are driving new business structures. Four in ten artists are **selling work online** through their own site (41%), and the same proportion are selling through a third party's site (39%).<sup>m</sup>

<sup>m</sup> These measures are not mutually exclusive – there may be some overlap.

## ARTISTS AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

Artists have long contended with income pressures and unpredictability in their working lives, and *Making Art Work* confirms this trend has intensified. With a growing body of research into the much wider landscape of upheaval and technological change, it is important to understand opportunities and challenges for artists in **predicted future workforces**.

Times of significant economic, technological, demographic and social change come hand in hand with **workforce disruption**<sup>61</sup> and a sharper focus on workforce capabilities. It is predicted that all jobs in the future will see a reduction in manual tasks; and an increase in the time workers spend engaging with people, solving strategic problems and thinking creatively.<sup>62</sup>

The need for a set of **creative and social skills** that prioritise the place of the human and their creative capacity<sup>63</sup> is a key element in predictions for the future – a future in which artistic occupations are an area of potential growth.<sup>64</sup> To understand the artist and what role they might play within this possible future ‘knowledge economy’,<sup>65</sup> there is a need to look at opportunities to draw on *both* artistic skills – artists working as artists – and the transferable skills they can offer a changing workforce. This is important whether framed alongside a consideration of megatrends<sup>66</sup> and automation;<sup>67</sup> or considered within broader ‘transferable enterprise skills’,<sup>68</sup> STEM,<sup>o</sup> communication, or technical skills.<sup>69</sup>

## Artists and skills development

Global trends highlight the need for the development of **transferable skills** in predicted future workforces.<sup>70</sup> Education and training of artists continues to evolve to reflect a balance of art form learning and additional skills to compete and survive. Skills development for artists have three key components: ‘general education’ which provides a wide range of knowledge and competency; the ‘specific training’ for a particular art form; and the ‘ongoing learning’ that takes place, both formal and informal.

The artist population is more **highly educated** than the workforce at large with many training in more than one area of practice. Just over three quarters of artists hold a university degree (76%, up from 65% in 2009) – significantly higher than the labour force as a whole at just over 20%.<sup>71</sup> A quarter of composers have completed a doctorate, and 44% of writers and 37% of visual artists have a Postgraduate Diploma or Master’s degree. These high levels of formal education provide artists with a balance of general and art form specific skills, assisting their ability to work across multiple industries.

More than three quarters of professional artists (77%) have had **formal training** in their art form, including 96% of dancers, 93% of craft practitioners and 83% of both visual artists and CACD artists. Formal training was considered the *most important* type of training by four in ten artists (39%).

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n Megatrends refers to the forces reshaping society and the world of work – technological breakthroughs, demographic shifts, rapid urbanisation, shifts in global economic power and resource scarcity/climate change.

o Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

A willingness to gain new skills is considered essential as workforces prepare for jobs yet to be imagined.<sup>72</sup> An emphasis on **lifelong learning** is already a reality in the arts with seven out of ten Australian artists still engaged in training (72%). Artists increasingly identify the importance of ongoing skill improvement through self-education and learning on the job. These are most important to writers, composers and CACD artists.

Artists' engagement in lifelong learning is a trend evident in Australia Council funding data. Analysis of approved applications to Australia Council core grants for individuals (from March 2015–June 2017) indicates that **skills development** is a specific component in approximately six out of ten funded projects.<sup>73</sup>

### Artists in a complex, creative and innovative landscape

Understanding opportunities for artists in a predicted future workforce requires consideration of the role of the arts alongside innovation more broadly. This is not a new space for the arts, but provides opportunity for a different or enhanced role in a **digital and automated future**. Artistic occupations are considered as having high growth potential,<sup>74</sup> providing artists opportunities to explore less obvious or new industries in which to work as artists. There is also growing recognition among businesses of the value artists can add in interdisciplinary and diverse workplaces.<sup>75</sup>

There is an increasing trend for artists to undertake *creative work* in **more than one art form**. More than half have been seriously involved at some point in their career in an art form other than their principal artistic occupation: 26% have worked across one other art form, 13% across two other art forms and 12% across three or more. Almost half (47%) of dancers/choreographers are involved in acting/directing and there has been an increase in their involvement in visual arts – rising from 10% in 2009 to 28% in 2016. This is a trend to watch and indicates the emergence of less predictable intersections between art forms.

Some more natural, or predictable, crossovers between art forms follow longer term trends: close to half of all composers play a musical instrument or sing, and similar numbers of actors/directors also write. CACD artists have the highest incidence of working across multiple art forms with almost seven in ten involved in acting/directing (69%), and close to half participating in writing (48%), up from 17% in 2009. These shifts are making it increasingly difficult for artists to identify within one principal artistic occupation, and reinforces the importance of understanding and supporting cross- and multi-art form ways of working.

There is a significant increase in the number of artists applying their **artistic skills in other industries**. Just over half of all artists have used their artistic skills outside the arts (51%), with more than four in five (83%) of these artists generating income from that work. Of those artists who apply artistic skills in other industries, four in ten work in education (including teaching) and research (39%), with this number rising to seven in ten for CACD artists (70%). Writers are most likely to apply their artistic skills in media, press and broadcasting (37%, up from 24% in 2009).

*The Making Art Work* findings reinforce international trends<sup>76</sup> demonstrating an increase in **multi-art form and interdisciplinary arts practice**. The establishment of the Australia Council's Multi-art form Panel in 2015 emerged in recognition of the need for a specific avenue of support for the interconnected nature of contemporary artistic practice. Recognition of fluidity both in the nature of creative practice and employment across art forms and industries, raises the question of what is driving this movement and whether it is a response to current societal and technological change, or a deliberate choice by artists. It reinforces the importance of maintaining flexibility in the way we articulate and define the nature of artistic practice, and the artists themselves.

The diversification of skills aligns with a **portfolio career** and predictions about growth occupations,<sup>77</sup> with the significant trend toward 'career fluidity' indicating there may be even greater numbers of artists working this way in the future.

Skills required for **innovation**<sup>78</sup> are being expanded beyond initial considerations of STEM<sup>p</sup> to centralise the role of interdisciplinary thinking and the humanities, arts and social sciences.<sup>79</sup> Creativity, design and cross-cultural skills are considered essential components for innovation<sup>80</sup> along with social skills including persuasion and emotional intelligence.<sup>81</sup> These align with capabilities well recognised as central to an artist's work. When considering the move toward interdisciplinary, cross- and multi-art form creative practice by artists in Australia and internationally,<sup>82</sup> the established ability of artists to work in diverse teams and across industries positions them to contribute powerfully to predicted, or unpredicted, new and innovative ways of working.

## THE ROLE OF THE ARTIST IN TIMES OF TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

Technological change encompasses more than just digital technologies. Its influence on the way individuals work and connect with others and impact on societies and employment has been witnessed across history.<sup>83</sup> It is unsurprising that significant increases in the number of artists using **technology and the internet** in their creative practice have occurred alongside the global technological revolution. Technological change has had a range of impacts including: how business is done by artists and arts organisations;<sup>84</sup> the way impact is measured; and the emergence of opportunities for new intersections across industries.

### Technological change and creative practice

The role of technology in enabling exploration and risk taking has been found to provide positive impact for arts and culture organisations.<sup>85</sup> Artists are often at the forefront of using technology – within both business and artistic practice. *Making Art Work* indicates an increase in the number of artists using technology overall, and a continued focus is required to support and enable experimentation in its application in creative practice across all settings.

A focus on the use of **digital technology** by artists has been captured in a number of studies around the world.<sup>86</sup> There has been a significant increase in the way artists are taking risks and embracing new ways of working through digitally-enabled technologies. These include motion capture, virtual and augmented realities or creation alongside robotics. Some artists are combining multiple technologies to explore a range of opportunities for engagement and creation.

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p Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.



*Making Art Work* found that at least 65% of artists use some kind of technology regularly in the **process of creating art**. Over a quarter are using the internet<sup>q</sup> to create collaborative or interactive art with other artists (27%), up from 14% in 2009. CACD artists lead the way with 52% collaborating online, up from 19% in 2009. There has also been an increase in the number of artists collaborating and creating with non-artists and using the internet to create artistic work in virtual environments.

Approximately one quarter of artists use **social networking** websites to create artistic work – 24%, up from 13% in 2009. This is an evolving area of rapid growth and exploration. Actors and directors are now the biggest users with four in ten using social networking for creation.

High quality, inexpensive tools and specialised software programs used in arts creation are increasingly accessible to more than just practising professional artists. Technology is continuing to **reduce barriers** to the creation and distribution of art, and blurring the boundaries between professional and amateur. A number of charting singers in their late teens and early twenties achieved their start through YouTube<sup>87</sup> and platforms such as Etsy are providing opportunities for amateur artists to compete in global online markets.<sup>88</sup> This blurring is contributing to the shifts and challenges in defining and tracking practising professional artists.

## Technological change and the business of artists

New technologies and globalisation are creating both **opportunities and challenges** for artists. Younger artists are part of the generation of digital natives and many are natural entrepreneurs who, as explained by Megan Brownlow, *'...understand and leverage the concept of 'beta', sharing unfinished work in order to 'crowdsource' feedback and fast-*

*track improvement in their skills...'*<sup>89</sup> Digital technologies are changing distribution mechanisms and providing additional opportunities to commercialise or monetise content and make audience or 'consumer' trends visible.

*Making Art Work* found that 70–80% of artists **use the internet to promote their work** via their own or another company's website and/or social media. Approximately 40% of artists **sell their work online** through their own website, with comparable numbers selling through a third party.<sup>r</sup>

Ever-increasing amounts of information and generation of **'big data'** provide new possibilities for learning, collaboration, connection, taste-making and commercialisation.<sup>90</sup> Artificial intelligence, machine learning and data visualisation are informing curation, with computer image algorithms and tags allowing intersections between millions of art works to be explored by colour, degrees of separation or time.<sup>91</sup> The possibilities for the arts in this area need to be further explored for continued enhancement of creative practice and exploration of connections.

The continued rise of consumer subscriptions to music and video streaming services drove growth in royalties for songwriters in 2016–17.<sup>92</sup> New income opportunities are arising through economic **transaction technologies** like the blockchain.<sup>93</sup> Technology has also introduced new challenges to artists' livelihoods. These include the management of rights, and increased opportunities for misappropriation and unauthorised exploitation. It is also increasingly challenging to establish large audiences and derive sufficient income from creative output amid the quantity of content in a global market.

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q The internet was a specific focus in this research to maintain a time series of data from the 1980s.

r These measures are not mutually exclusive – there may be some overlap.

## VIEWS FROM ARTISTS

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**“It is a challenge to sustain a creative practice in music and also earn a living to provide for a family. I have not yet found any kind of balance in this space. Creatively I am committed to only pursuing the type of musical practice that is important and fulfilling to me, but this has meant that for most of my career it has been necessary to have another income in arts administration to cover the cost of living. This juggling act places enormous and frustrating time constraints on my creative practice. Finding the time to be an artist, when the cost of living continues to rise is very hard.”**

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Ross McHenry is an award winning composer, bass player and record producer based in Adelaide. Ross’ work reflects the unique and changing cultural landscape of Australian creative music and he has performed extensively around Australia and at leading international arts festivals.



Steve Mayer-Miller is the Artistic Director/CEO of Crossroad Arts Mackay and has spent 35 years in community arts and cultural development. He has developed more than 40 new works with the Indigenous communities, seniors and people living with disability and has collaborated with marginalised groups throughout Australia and the Asia Pacific Region.

**“Advances in technology have given artists opportunities to communicate to a much wider audience, yet it has made it even more imperative that we take the time to make that cup of tea and sit down with people to listen to their stories.”**

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Steve Mayer-Miller with teacher Mariko Fujiwara in Sendai Japan listening to school children tell their stories about the paintings of Suzuka Yoshida based on the 2011 great earthquake and tsunami.  
September 2017.  
Credit: Suzuka Yoshida





Michelle St Anne  
Credit: Clare Hawley

Michelle St Anne is the Artistic Director, the Animateur and the founder of The Living Room Theatre. She has produced over 18 ambitious productions which have been performed in various venues in Sydney and Melbourne, and in her spare time she is the Deputy Director of the Sydney Environment Institute.

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**“The challenge and opportunity for me and my art, has always been finding a place to call home. Is it theatre? Is it academic knowledge translation? Is it art? Categories and labels are so important in this industry. Traversing multiple art forms leaves you homeless but sometimes it can open extraordinary doors.”**

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## NEXT STEPS

The Australia Council has a long history of championing and supporting Australian artists at key points in their careers – nurturing new talent, providing opportunities for emerging artists to innovate and flourish, sustaining and developing mid-career artists, and celebrating and backing established artists.

*Making Art Work* presents important trends for artists in Australia and this paper places a number of them in context with broader Australian and global developments. Many of the issues raised point to opportunities for further exploration and ongoing dialogue across Australian society.

Further research planned by the Australia Council and Macquarie University includes a detailed analysis of pay gaps among artists and a comparison of trends and conditions for

artists in other countries. The Australia Council is currently reviewing data collection systems to enable clearer monitoring and reporting on funding outcomes and impacts, and is working towards collecting comprehensive data on diversity of arts leadership. The Australia Council’s research on the creation of First Nations art will complete the series started with *Building Audiences* (2015) and *Showcasing Creativity* (2016).

The Australia Council will continue to identify and address evolving and emerging needs for information and analysis about working conditions for Australian artists, and will continue to support and advocate for individual artists as the lifeblood of the Australian arts sector.

# KEY TERMS

**PRACTISING PROFESSIONAL ARTIST** - those who satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- in the last three to five years, have had a significant artistic achievement in their art form (such as a work published or professionally shown or performed);
- have been engaged in the last five years in creating a serious and substantial body of work;
- have undertaken full-time study in their art form; and/or
- have received a grant to work in their art form from a public or private grant-giving agency.

**PRINCIPAL ARTISTIC OCCUPATION** - nominated by survey respondents as the occupation they are 'engaged in most these days in terms of time'.

**ACTOR (combined with DIRECTOR throughout report)** - includes live-stage actor (scripted and improvised), physical theatre/circus performer, film actor, television actor (drama, comedy), radio actor, variety artist, voice-overs actor, puppeteer, mime artist/clown, TV commercial actor, stunt actor, comedian, actor - new/digital media, other actor/performer.

**CHOREOGRAPHER (combined with DANCER throughout report)** - includes resident choreographer/artistic director with a major company, resident choreographer/artistic director with a smaller company, independent/freelance choreographer, commercial choreographer (television, music-video, events), other choreographer.

**COMMUNITY ARTS AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (CACD) ARTIST** - includes self-identified CACD artists across art forms: primarily writer, primarily visual art/craft practitioner, primarily theatre/physical performance, primarily musician/singer, primarily dancer/choreographer, primarily film/video/sound, multi-art form CACD artist, CACD artist - new/digital media, other CACD artist.

**COMPOSER** - includes composer/songwriter (jazz, folk, rock, pop, hip hop, other contemporary music, country, film, television or radio (not commercials), advertising, new music), composer - classical/contemporary classical or new music, composer/sound builder - new/digital media, arranger of traditional music, arranger of other music, improviser (other than jazz) sound designer, other composer/songwriter/arranger.

**CRAFT PRACTITIONER** - includes ceramic artist/potter, fibre/textile artist, leather worker, glass artist, metal worker or jeweller, wood worker, paper maker, craft practitioner - other material, craft practitioner - new/digital media, craft practitioner - mixed media, other craft practitioner.

**DANCER (combined with CHOREOGRAPHER throughout report)** - includes dancer (classical, contemporary, Indigenous, traditional, new/digital media), musical theatre/cabaret dancer, commercial dancer (television, fashion, music video, events), other dancer.

**DIRECTOR (combined with ACTOR throughout report)**

- includes theatre director, theatre deviser, film director, television director, director - new/digital media, radio producer, festival director, other director.

**MUSICIAN**

- includes conductor, instrumental player/singer (classical, contemporary classical or new music, jazz, rock, pop, country, hip hop, other contemporary music, folk, traditional, music theatre, non-Western traditional or classical, non-Western contemporary, new digital/media), instrumental player (film or broadcast music, circus, improvised music (other than jazz), Indigenous music), instrumental player/sound artist - new/digital media, other instrumental musician, choir singer or chorister in a *capella* group, vocalist, Indigenous song man or song woman, other singer.

**VISUAL ARTIST**

- includes painter (including drawing), muralist, sculptor, printmaker, photographer, video/film maker, performance artist, illustrator, cartoonist/ animator, calligrapher, graphic artist, installation artist, set designer/ costume designer, visual artist - new/digital media, light artist, collage artist, visual artist - public art, visual artist - mixed media, other visual artist.

**WRITER**

- includes novelist, short-story writer, poet, playwright for live stage, dramaturg, screenwriter, scriptwriter for radio, children's/ young adult writer, non-fiction writer, critic, storyteller (cultural preservation), writer - new/digital media, other writer.

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