

STRATEGY 2020-2024

DISCUSSION PAPER

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INTRODUCTION

The Australia Council for the Arts is the Australian Government's principal arts funding and advisory body.

The arts have immense public value – from the intrinsic value of human expression, through to broader social, economic and cultural impacts – they are vital for our individual and community wellbeing. The arts contribute to our education, our health, our advancement and our international reputation. The arts give life meaning and Australians are proud of our artists.

The Australia Council is a champion for Australian arts both here and overseas. We invest in the arts by supporting all facets of the creative process, and we are committed to the arts being accessible to all Australians.

We achieve this through:

- a peer assessed grants program, fellowships and awards
- management of Government directed initiatives and frameworks
- national and international strategic activity that develops sector capacity and increases markets and audiences for Australian work
- research, evaluation and analysis
- co-investment and strategic partnership development
- advocacy for Australian arts and artists
- providing advice to the Government on matters connected with the arts.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

This discussion paper sets out our proposed strategic priorities for 2020 to 2024. These priorities will inform our future investment in the arts. We invite responses from all people and organisations with an interest in arts and culture.

To respond:

- Please read this short discussion paper.
- Go to australiacouncil.gov.au to answer questions in response to the ideas set out here.
- Please make time to complete the questions, and encourage others to do the same.

For more information contact strategy@australiacouncil.gov.au. Please let us know if we can assist with access requirements.

OUR FUNCTIONS

The functions in the *Australia Act 2013* provide a clear mandate for activities that fulfil our purpose of championing and investing in Australian Arts.

The functions are:

- a) support Australian arts practice that is recognised for excellence;
- b) foster excellence in Australian arts practice by supporting a diverse range of activities;
 - a. support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts practice;
 - b. support Australian arts practice that reflects the diversity of Australia;
 - c. uphold and promote freedom of expression in the arts;
 - d. promote community participation in the arts;
- c) recognise and reward significant contributions made by artists and other persons to the arts in Australia;
- d) to promote the appreciation, knowledge and understanding of the arts;
- e) support and promote the development of markets and audiences for the arts;
- f) provide information and advice to the Commonwealth Government on matters connected with the arts or the performance of the Council's functions;
- g) conduct and commission research into, and publish information about the arts;
- h) evaluate and publish information about the impact of the support the Council provides;
- i) to undertake any other function conferred on it by this Act or any other law of the Commonwealth;
- j) to do anything incidental or conducive to the performance of any of the above functions.

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OUR NEW STRATEGY

In 2014, the Australia Council presented its five year strategic plan *A Culturally Ambitious Nation (2014-2019)*. This plan was informed by significant bodies of consultation including the 2012 *Australia Council Review*. It responded to the new Australia Council Act which came into effect in 2013 leading to major reform.



There's a Ghost In My Suitcase, Barking Gecko Theatre.

We are now working on our new strategy for 2020–2024. Our future strategic direction has been informed by a deep and rigorous body of evidence, consultation and analysis, and builds on the achievements of *A Culturally Ambitious Nation*. Together with the Australia Council’s knowledge base drawn from our programs and engagement with the arts, it draws on thousands of industry and public responses across a range of research and consultation including:

Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey (2017), the third edition of a longitudinal study on the evolving role of the arts in Australians’ lives. The nationally representative sample was 7,500, and more than 13,500 members of the general public have been captured in the sample since 2009.

Making Art Work: An economic study of professional artists in Australia (2018), the latest iteration of a landmark longitudinal study spanning more than 30 years. It provides information about artists’ practice, earnings, career trajectories and broader lives. It continues to provide the most comprehensive picture available of professional artists in Australia.

The Australia Council Stakeholder Survey (2017), which sought feedback on a broad range of topics related to our strategic activities and priorities. It received 2,080 responses from a range of individuals and organisations including artists, arts organisations and representatives of state and territory arts funding agencies.

The Major Performing Arts (MPA) Framework, National Indigenous Arts and Cultural Authority (NIACA) and National Arts and Disability Strategy consultations (2018–2019).

Analysis of data provided by funded organisations and individuals. This includes Major Performing Arts companies, Four Year Funded organisations and grantees supported through Government directed initiatives and frameworks.

Targeted research capturing views and experiences on a range of subjects, including First Nations arts and culture, arts and disability, international arts tourism; and Arts Futures research exploring the rapidly evolving environment for the arts and society.

Collectively, these insights from the public, the arts industry, our partners, collaborators and our staff, have shaped our thinking as we consider how to best champion and invest in Australian arts over the next five years.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

Over the lifetime of *A Culturally Ambitious Nation* (2014–2019) the Australia Council’s investment and initiatives have grown the profile and reach of Australian arts experiences.

Since 2014:

AUSTRALIAN ARTS ARE WITHOUT BORDERS

We have supported Australian artists and arts organisations to increase their engagement across Australia and the world.



Bonita Ely, *Plastikus Progressus* installation (detail), documenta 14, Athens 2017. Credit: courtesy of artist

There has been increasing international recognition, opportunity and demand for Australian arts. Strategic partnerships and collaborations have increased nationally. The arts have strengthened our international reputation, and fostered global connections and cultural exchange.

AUSTRALIA IS KNOWN FOR ITS GREAT ART AND ARTISTS

We have cultivated creativity and innovation.



Badu Gili, Sydney Opera House. Artist Alick Tipoti. Credit Daniel Boud

We have supported the development of more than 32,700 new Australian art works in an environment that supports freedom of expression and experimentation. We have reformed our grants model and diversified our pool of peer assessors and funding recipients – one in three applications are now from first-time applicants.

THE ARTS ENRICH DAILY LIFE FOR ALL

We have supported Australians' engagement with arts, culture and stories.



The Adelaide Symphony Orchestra welcoming young music students into the rehearsal studio as part of the popular *Big Rehearsal* program. Credit: Shane Reid

98% of Australians engage with the arts and more of us now recognise their positive impacts on our lives and communities.¹ Online engagement with the arts is booming – technology has created greater access and attracted new audiences for the arts.

AUSTRALIANS CHERISH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURE

We have supported First Nations artists to be at the centre of Australian arts.



Kulata Tjuta - Wati kulunypa tjukurpa (Many spears - Young fella story) by Frank Young, Anwar Young and Rhonda Dick; digital print, kangaroo tendon, kiti.

We have built the evidence base about challenges and opportunities in the First Nations arts ecology – from the creation of First Nations arts, through to programming and audience engagement. More Australians than ever are attending First Nations arts across art forms,² and there has been increasing international interest in First Nations arts and culture.

¹ Australia Council 2017, *Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

² Australia Council 2017, *Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

We have much to celebrate in the many achievements of the arts and cultural sectors, and the great benefit this has to all Australians. However, the evidence base and the rapidly changing times point to a number of issues and opportunities as we embark on our next strategy.

These include:

Australia's increasing diversity, increasing appetite for art from diverse perspectives, and the persistent lack of diversity in the arts.³

The growing value of social cohesion as a global policy consideration, and the increasingly powerful role of the arts in generating empathy, understanding and human connection.⁴

Australians increasingly recognise the impact of arts and culture on our wellbeing and happiness, in line with global trends.⁵

Growing global recognition of the value of arts and culture in our international and diplomatic relationships.

The increasingly high demand for First Nations arts and culture nationally and internationally.⁶

The growing body of evidence about the critical role of culture as the foundation of First Nations wellbeing,⁷ and increasing recognition of the importance of First Nations culture and self-determination.

3 Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2017, *Making Art Work: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*, Australia Council.

4 Australia Council 2017, *Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

5 Australia Council 2017, *Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

6 *Ibid* and Australia Council 2017, *International Arts Tourism: Connecting cultures*.

7 Australia Council 2017, *Living Culture: First Nations arts participation and wellbeing*.

Declining recognition of the public value of the arts are closely linked to narrow perceptions of what 'the arts' include. This is at odds with the value that Australians place on the arts when they are prompted to consider their full breadth - nine in ten Australians recognise the significant positive impacts of the arts on our lives and communities.⁸

The declining creative income and viability of artist careers, which is at odds with artists' increasing value to society and the future of work.⁹

The tension between the creative priorities of artists and public perceptions of elitism and a lack of accessibility.

The rapid social and technological changes that are putting pressure on traditional business structures, and affecting the making, experiencing and distribution of the arts.

Technology creating greater access and attracting new audiences to the arts rather than replacing existing ones. More Australians now engage with the arts online rather than in person, and this is *additional* engagement.¹⁰

Important conversations taking place, both in the arts sector and across society, about the need to address sexual harassment, discrimination and safe working environments.

8 Australia Council 2017, *Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

9 Australia Council 2017, *Making Art Work: A summary and response by the Australia Council for the Arts*.

10 Australia Council 2017, *Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.



VASSY performing with Tiësto. Credit: Jordan Loyd

These factors have shaped our strategic priorities for the next strategy:

Memorable
arts experiences
for everyone



New Breed 2018, *Telopea* by Pedro Grieg.
Credit: Daniel Boud

Our arts
reflect us



Beep, A Windmill Theatre coproduction.
Credit: Luke Cardew

First Nations
arts and cultures
are cherished



Ursula Yovich in *Dubboo - life of a songman*,
Bangarra 2018. Credit: Daniel Boud

Arts and
creativity
are thriving



Brayden Gallucci 2018 recipient of the Marten
Bequest Travelling Scholarship for Ballet.

Arts and creativity
are valued



Contact Zone workshop four.
Credit: Nazar Jabur

MEMORABLE ARTS EXPERIENCES FOR EVERYONE



Memorable arts experiences can inspire, entertain and enrich us and spark imagination, creativity and joy. They help us understand our past and present and imagine our future.

The arts help us understand one other. The majority of Australians believe the arts help us get a different perspective on an issue, help us express our identity and understand other people and cultures.

Experiencing the arts is not an elite pastime. Our research shows that 98% of Australians engage with the arts;¹¹ however many of us participate without realising we are doing so. Screen based technologies continue to provide additional opportunities to engage with arts and culture. We tend not to recognise the things we enjoy most frequently as art, such as reading, listening to music and going to festivals.

This narrow view of the arts is an international challenge. Along with our international counterparts, we recognise that there is critical work to be done to shift public perceptions about the full range of the arts. This is so that everyone can feel a point of connection to creative life in Australia, but also to enable a better understanding of the significant value that the arts bring to all Australians, every day.

To do this we will:

- **Enhance peoples' experience of the arts** through a more tailored approach to targeting new and existing audiences nationally and internationally across the breadth of arts offerings.
- **Expand opportunities to engage with the arts** by ensuring there are more ways for creators and audiences to connect, and for more people to engage with the arts more often.
- **Reimagine artworks to reach more people** here and overseas by transforming successful work in new forms, formats or through use of digital platforms.
- **Promote arts experiences in everyday life** by increasing opportunities to experience arts outside of traditional venues.

¹¹ Australia Council 2017, *Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

OUR ARTS REFLECT US



The arts have a unique capacity to connect people from diverse backgrounds. Australians believe the arts help us get different perspectives, express our identity and understand other people and cultures.¹² While digital platforms have made the world more connected than ever, divisions in society appear to be growing. Against this backdrop, the arts have an increasingly powerful role in promoting social cohesion.

Australia has one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse populations in the world. One in three Australians were born overseas, more than 300 languages are spoken in Australian homes and almost one in five Australians live with disability.¹³ Yet Australia's diversity is not yet fully reflected in our arts.

Artists with disability and artists of non-English speaking background continue to be underrepresented compared to the Australian population.¹⁴ There is increasing audience appetite for work from diverse perspectives, and an increasing willingness from programmers and presenters to program diverse work. However barriers remain and enabling diverse peoples' creative leadership and control is critical.¹⁵

There is a continuing need to actively foster diversity and equality in the arts – including in leadership and arts practice – to ensure our arts truly reflect the breadth of our people and culture.

To do this we will:

- **Enable activity that connects communities** here and globally, to increase empathy, understanding and social cohesion through the arts.
- **Support the creation and presentation of works that reflect contemporary Australia** by addressing barriers and building capacity so there are clear pathways from art creation to audience engagement and reach.
- **Support a diverse workforce in the arts**, including leadership positions across gender, cultural background, geography, age, ability and personal circumstances.
- **Embrace diversity across all Australia Council activities**, demonstrating good practice in decision-making, strategies and operations, and accountability through public reporting.

¹² Australia Council 2017, *Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

¹³ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017, *Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia, Stories from the Census 2016* (cat. no. 2071.0).

¹⁴ Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2017, *Making Art Work: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*, Australia Council.

¹⁵ Australia Council 2018, *Creating Pathways: Insights on support for artists with disability*.

FIRST NATIONS ARTS AND CULTURES ARE CHERISHED



At the heart of our nation's identity are the uniquely Australian stories of the longest continuous art and culture makers on earth. More Australians than ever are engaging with First Nations arts and culture.¹⁶ First Nations arts are also in high demand overseas and attract international tourists, especially those who travel outside capital cities. Over 820,000 international tourists engaged with First Nations arts while in Australia in 2017, an increase of 41% since 2013.¹⁷

In contrast with Australia's ageing population, more than half of First Nations Australians are under the age of 25 and less than 5% are aged 65 or over.¹⁸ This highlights the importance of supporting intergenerational cultural transmission, and of investment to engage young First Nations people in the arts – one of the fastest growing and at risk segments of our population.

We will continue to build on our long term commitment to First Nations arts and culture, at all times recognising the importance of First Nations peoples' self-determination, cultural authority and leadership.

To do this we will:

- **Strengthen and embed First Nations arts and culture** through activity that recognises achievement and develops appropriate support structures.
- **Grow experiences of First Nations arts and culture** by supporting the presentation of First Nations work to a wide range of audiences here and overseas.
- **Invest in First Nations young people to practice and experience their culture** ensuring intergenerational transfer of artistic and cultural knowledge.
- **Empower First Nations arts and cultural practitioners** through continuation of First Nations-led decision making on strategic direction and grant making.

¹⁶ Australia Council 2017, *Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

¹⁷ Australia Council 2017, *International Arts Tourism: Connecting cultures*.

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017, *Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia, Stories from the Census 2016* (cat. no. 2071.0).

ARTS AND CREATIVITY ARE THRIVING



The Australia Council has a unique leadership role in fostering a vibrant arts sector and promoting artistic freedom of expression. Giving artists the opportunities to develop, create and present work is central to a thriving arts sector, which in turn has major economic, social and cultural benefits.

However, our research shows that artists' careers are becoming increasingly less viable, with total income 21% below the workforce average. Average income from creative work is down 19% since 2013, with the median creative income just \$6,000. Four in ten professional artists are not meeting minimum living costs.¹⁹

Advocating for viable artists' careers is a key priority in line with what our stakeholders have told us. Existing business models are coming under increasing pressure, while new and emerging technologies and structures present opportunities to enhance public engagement, generate income, and build viable careers.

With complex and rapidly changing forces impacting artists' livelihoods, the underlying value of creative work needs to be recognised, protected and championed.

To do this we will:

- **Support viable careers and business models**, including appropriate funding models, support structures and harnessing opportunities of emerging technologies.
- **Enable risk taking and experimentation in the realisation of new works**, while ensuring freedom of expression.
- **Develop partnerships to strengthen the arts** working with government, and across industries and global networks.
- **Promote wellbeing and a safe environment for people working in the arts** to protect and nurture the human resources behind our arts and culture.

¹⁹ Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2017, *Making Art Work: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*, Australia Council.

ARTS AND CREATIVITY ARE VALUED



The arts and creativity provide immense public value. They make our individual lives better and build stronger, more cohesive communities. They contribute to our health and wellbeing, as well as our education, advancement and innovation. They help us express and understand who we are. They shape how we are seen and understood by others, and our international reputation.

With the rapidly increasing influence of technology – including artificial intelligence, machine learning and automation – human creativity will become even more valuable to our workforce and economy.

However, our research shows a decline in recognition of the public value of the arts.²⁰ As a priority, advocacy for the value and broad relevance of arts and creativity must be elevated in Australian public life and policy-making.

To do this we will:

- **Advocate for the public value of arts and culture** to increase recognition, partnerships and investment across government and the private sector.
- **Advise on arts matters to inform government policy development**, including drawing on our evidence base and deep arts knowledge.
- **Lead public discussion about matters relating to arts and creativity** and their essential role in a competitive, future focused nation.
- **Develop evidence that increases understanding of the arts** through responsive research and analysis that informs decision making.

²⁰ Australia Council 2017, *Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.



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