

## Tasmanian State Budget Community Consultation

### Submission by Theatre Network Australia

[Theatre Network Australia \(TNA\)](#) is the leading national industry development organisation for the contemporary performing arts, with a particular focus and priority on supporting independent creative practitioners and small to medium companies.

TNA 588 active members nationally, made up of 212 organisations and 376 individuals. Of those, 12 Tasmanian organisations are TNA members. This submission was created in collaboration and consultation with our Tasmanian members.

The professional arts sector in Tasmania comprises numerous organisations across all state electorates, representing the art forms of theatre, dance, circus, music, literature, puppetry, and multi arts/hybrid work. Most organisations are not-for-profit and utilise public investment to provide essential, accessible, and low-cost essential services for Tasmanian communities, some specialising in particular demographic such as First Nations people, young people, disabled people, etc.

### Budget Recommendations

1. An increase to arts and cultural investment via [Arts Tasmania's grant programs](#), providing the equivalent of indexation on "organisations" funding since 2021-2022 of \$920,000.
2. Ongoing annual indexation for Arts Tasmania's grant programs.
3. Renewed investment for the [Tasmanian Strategic Touring Fund](#) of \$220,000 per annum.

### Arts and Cultural Investment

State investment into arts and culture via Arts Tasmania grant programs (Arts Grants) provides the financial foundation for the state's broad ecology of arts and cultural institutions, programs, and projects.

[Data from that ABS](#) indicates that in 2021-22 **Tasmania has the lowest Arts expenditure per capita of any state or territory**. The Tasmanian government invested \$4.90 per capita (\$27.9m total) into the Arts, which was \$1.73 lower than the combined national investment of \$6.63 per capita.

Low investment levels from state government contribute to ongoing strain, contraction, and poor conditions for the arts sector. Arts Grants also do not currently receive indexation, and so the value is eroded away in real terms over time. The impact of this was shown in the drop in number of organisations funded from **38 in 2008-09 to 23 in 2017-18**.

An increase to \$3,788,426 for Arts Grants funding for organisations in 2020-21 was welcomed, and many organisations in that year received a much needed and overdue increase in investment. In that year, 30 organisations were funded and then 30 again in the following year (2021-22).

Now, in 2023-24, only 19 organisations have received [program](#) or [four-year](#) funding.

This means there has been a real loss to the community to the equivalent of 11 organisations. While a peer-assessed, competitive grant process is important to maintain quality, with a static pool of funds, peers giving warranted increases to some organisations whose costs are increasing in real terms, has meant that others receive no funding at all. In many cases these are organisations that have used the investment from Arts Tasmania successfully, developing programs of high quality and leveraging other funding to provide much needed employment opportunities for artists and arts workers. The sudden cessation of funding for these organisations that necessarily plan one or two years ahead is inefficient and wasteful.

Building the knowledge, infrastructure and audiences for a company take time, and more is lost from our community than just the program for that year, if an organisation closes due to lost funding.

The pool of funding for project, program, and four-year funding shrank to \$3,517,595 from its 2020-21 height of \$3,788,426. Had the organisations grants been increased by CPI, since the 2021-22 year to 2023-24, there would have been an estimated additional \$479,000 in funding for 2023-24, and in 2024-25, if investment levels remain the same, that gap will increase to \$920,197. This would have funded another three arts organisations in 2023-24, and potentially six in 2024-25.

Without indexation, there will be more organisations lost in the coming years, and already scheduled increases for 2024-25 of \$258,491 will likely mean that another two to three organisations will receive no funding in that year.

It is noted that in 2023-24 another 9 organisations received project funding, through a new “Organisations - projects” separation of organisations funding of nearly \$400,000. In previous years only one or two project-like applications were funded each year due to competition from program applicants in the same assessment.

**In the 2024-25 Budget we are recommending:**

- 1. An increase to arts and cultural investment via Arts Tasmania's grant programs, providing the equivalent of indexation on "organisations" funding since 2021-2022 of \$920,000.**
- 2. Ongoing annual indexation for Arts Tasmania's grant programs.**

## **Tasmanian Strategic Touring Fund**

The Tasmanian Strategic Touring Fund was supported under COVID-19 additional funding, and has addressed a significant gap in the Tasmanian performing arts industry. Investment in the program ended in X, however continued investment would be of great benefit to the arts and cultural sector and Tasmanian communities.

Previously very few organisations were touring their work outside of their home town/city, because of the costs involved in supporting performers and arts workers with accommodation and travel allowances when away from home. This program provided benefits for producers, presenters, and audiences, because Tasmanian stories were able to be shared more widely across the state, and performance work could be honed for potential interstate touring. Touring also creates a significantly larger return on investment for new works.

The Fund – managed by TASPAC (Tasmanian Performing Arts Centres) members – has strengthened partnerships between the presentation venues and producers and has already led to cross promotion of Tasmanian work across the state. It provides a substantial and significant all-of-industry connector that can only build on its current multiple benefits if renewed beyond 2024.

Federal touring funding through Playing Australia specifically excludes support for touring within your home state, and equivalent state funding programs are established in NSW, QLD, SA, VIC and WA, meaning that Tasmanian organisations are disadvantaged when compared to their interstate peers.

**In the 2024-25 Budget we are recommending:**

- 3. Renewed investment for the Tasmanian Strategic Touring Fund of \$220,000 per annum.**



ADVANCING THE  
PERFORMING ARTS

## Contact

For more information please contact:

**Joshua Lowe**

General Manager, TNA

[josh@tna.org.au](mailto:josh@tna.org.au)

0408 660 748