

Creative State 3

Submission by TNA

Theatre Network Australia

Theatre Network Australia (TNA) is a leading industry development organisation for the performing arts, prioritising independent artists and small to medium companies. A national organisation with a dedicated Victorian program, TNA serves over 630 members, and reaches and represents over 5,000 more performing arts workers through our communications and research.

Victorian members make up 56% of TNA's total membership.

TNA services a wide range of performing arts, including theatre, dance, circus and physical theatre, multi-arts, experimental arts, and children, young people and the arts.

This submission and its recommendations have been created in consultation with the sector, which has included:

- A TNA Member survey conducted in March 2024, with responses from 57 Victorian independents and 43 Victorian organisations.
- Conversations and further feedback with selected independent and organisation members, ensuring diversity.
- Feedback and input from TNA's Board, made up of thirteen national industry professionals.
- Sharing and discussion with other arts peak bodies as a part of Arts Industry Council Victoria (AICV).
- Feedback and input from professional colleagues from funding bodies and other industries.

Summary of Recommendations

Victorian Art on Victorian Stages for Global Audiences

1. Prioritise increasing annual funding for the Creative Enterprises Program (CEP) by at least 25% from 2026.
2. Improve the model, regularity, and efficiency of funding for independent artists, and raise the maximum amount available per application.
3. Annually index Creative Victoria funding against CPI.

Driving Social Change through Arts and Government Synergy

4. Broker and maintain relationships and collaborations between the creative industries and other government portfolios for mutual benefit.
5. Assist the creative industries to develop mechanisms to measure and articulate the social and economic impacts and outcomes of its activities.
6. Increase the amount of communication and connection between Creative Victoria and sector.

Leadership for Tomorrow: Building Skills to Propel the Arts Forward

7. Introduce Strong Leadership as one of the Objectives of Creative State 29.
8. Provide business, governance, and strategy advice to the creative industries through a free mentorship and support program, similar to [Service NSW's Business Connect](#).
9. In partnership with philanthropic organisations, create bursaries and scholarship programs for creative industries leaders to attend established courses.
10. Provide support and professional development to assist creative industries leaders to better/further engage under engaged communities.

Prioritise arts access and engagement for Children & Young People as Cultural Citizens

11. Introduce the focus and lens on Children and Young People as one of the Principles of Creative State, ensuring children and young people are prioritised under all Creative State Outcomes.
12. Encourage and incentivise better engagement between the professional sector and grassroots arts and cultural activities.
13. Expand existing government programs and initiatives to include arts and culture activities for the benefit of children, young people, and families.

Victorian Art on Victorian Stages for Global Audiences

The Victoria Government has long claimed the title of “our nations Creative Capital,”¹ with an identity and economy tied to our vibrant arts and cultural scene.

However, in recent years we have fallen well behind most other states and territories in terms of our investment in the performing arts. This is damaging our reputation, limiting the sector’s ability to provide creative experiences for all Victorians, and seeing talented and experienced leaders and artists leave the sector or state because of unsustainable careers.

In TNA’s 2024 Member Survey, 59% of independent artists said they have **considered leaving the arts industry**, with 33% saying they **have taken action to leave the industry** (such as retraining). The main reasons for considering leaving the industry were:

- **Burnout** (53%)
- **Lack of employment/work** (46%)
- **Seeking better pay/benefits** (43%) and **seeking a better work/life balance** (43%)

Every year since 2016 the Victorian Government has increased its investment in Performing Arts Venues, creating important places for Victorians to engage with art and culture, culminating in the significant revitalisation of the Melbourne Arts Precinct. Every single one of Victoria’s public cultural institutions relies on artists to create the content and experiences that fill their stages and galleries. If we want to avoid empty stages, and if we want to see Victorian stories told, it is essential that we invest for sustainability and growth in our independent artists and arts organisations.

Arts investment from Creative Victoria has not been indexed since it was established, leading to a decline in real dollar terms of 22.8% since 2017,² and contributing to the following:

- Victoria’s total arts spend in 2021-22 was \$414.9m, with funding for Theatre, Dance, and Circus and Physical Theatre altogether totalling \$16.7m (4% of expenditure).
- Victoria’s total arts expenditure was the highest in the country until 2016-17, but since then has **fallen** below that of NSW.
- Victoria had the **fourth lowest arts spend per capita** at \$63.20 in 2021-22, after TAS, QLD, and WA. SA spent \$99.70 per capita, and NSW spent \$70.60.
- In Theatre, Victoria has the **third lowest spend per capita** (\$2.10) after QLD and ACT.
- In Dance Victoria **has consistently had the lowest spend per capita** of any state and territory since 2015-16, dropping to \$0.40 in 2021-22. NSW spends \$0.80, SA \$1.30, and WA \$3.30.
- In Circus and Physical Theatre Victoria has seen a **50% decline** to \$0.10 per capita, leaving it with the **lowest spend of any state and territory**. NSW spends \$0.20 per capita, and SA \$0.30.³

From TNA’s 2024 Member Survey, when asked how government investment should be prioritised to support the performing arts sector, the three highest priorities were:

- **Small-to-medium organisation** core/project funding
- Funding for **development of new work**
- Funding for **presentation of new work**

¹ [Victorian Budget 24/25](#)

² [Australian Bureau of Statistics, Consumer Price Index, Australia March Quarter 2024](#)

³ [Cultural funding and participation—National overview](#)

Current investment levels are creating less sustainable careers, eliminating potential for growth and ambition, disincentivising innovation and creative risk taking, and restricting the sector's ability to expand to new audiences, consumers, and new markets. TNA's consultation with members makes it clear that an uplift to basic funding for creative work to be developed and presented is what is most needed right now.

In the 2022-26 round of the Creative Enterprises Program (CEP), 78 small-to-medium organisations were funded with a total of \$20,294,638 pa for 2022-2025. Adjusted for inflation, this is an increase of \$356,912, or \$4,575 per organisation. However, this amount also includes one-off Sustaining Creative Organisations investments made in 2022 to 24 organisations, and so it is more likely that this amount represents a decrease in funding. Within this cohort, which shrank from 88 organisations in the previous round, only 16 continuing organisations received any funding increase.

For independent artists, the Creator's Fund was not renewed in the last state budget, and there have only been two rounds of the Creative Projects Fund since 2020, with grants capped at \$20,000. Rising costs, increased workloads, and competitive and precarious investment is damaging our creative workforce. New federal employment legislation (coming into effect in August 2024) will enforce better pay and conditions for creatives, but current investment levels are not high enough to meet even these minimum standards and will lead to cancelled projects and dodgy work practices.

Increasing core and project investment for Victorian artists and arts organisations is the single most important and most effective way to achieve the aims of Creative State.

Outcomes

- Maintain Victoria's reputation as a creator of and destination for world class performing arts and culture.
- Ensure arts and culture represents and can be accessed by all Victorians, not just those who can afford to.
- Improve the sustainability of creative careers, and avoid losing some of our best artists, leaders, and organisations from the sector or the state.
- Ensure there is innovative local content and experiences for our state's major cultural institutions and stages.

Recommendations

1. Prioritise increasing annual funding for the Creative Enterprises Program (CEP) by at least 25% from 2026.
2. Improve the model, regularity, and efficiency of funding for independent artists, and raise the maximum amount available per application.
3. Annually index Creative Victoria funding against CPI.

What does this look like?

For Organisations

- **A boosted Creative Enterprises Program from 2026.**
This next round should be a three year-round to align with both the new Creative State strategy and Creative Australia's Multi-Year Investment Organisations, with the funding pool increased by at least 25%.
- **A simplified process for organisations re/applying to the Creative Enterprises Program.**
This should include avoiding asking for replicated information across the application and supporting documents and aligning required information and strategic plan requirements with Creative Australia.

For Independent Artists

- **Creative Projects Fund rounds should be open twice a year with consistent timelines and milestones across years that are published well in advance.**
Artists must plan their work commitments many months (but more often years) in advance, balancing numerous jobs, projects, and partnerships. Having confirmed, advance notice of grant round application and announcement dates is an essential part of this planning, both in terms of budgeting and work planning.
- **Increase the maximum amount available per application for the Creative Projects Fund from \$20,000 to \$80,000.**
A higher funding cap will contribute meaningfully to the development of innovative work and supporting sustainable careers. WA caps their grants at \$80,000 to facilitate this.
- **Efficiencies in application processes should be found by aligning support material requirements with Creative Australia, and removing the requirement for support letters.**
It is challenging for funding agencies to fully align their application and reporting processes, which would streamline and reduce the workload for artists. However, there are some small changes that would make a huge difference to artists:
 - Align support material requirements with Creative Australia applications, including the length of support video material required.
 - Remove or reduce the requirement for support letters, which add little value to the assessment process but add to the unpaid workload of artists.
- **The funding allocation for development and project grants rounds should be increased annually by at least CPI.**

Note: TNA is preparing a separate set of recommendations in consultation with members for a revised grants program, which will be more specific than the recommendations above.

Driving Social Change through Arts and Government Synergy

Engagement and participation in arts and cultural activities contributes to better social outcomes, reducing the likelihood and frequency that people require acute services such as hospitals, prisons, and family violence services. Our arts and cultural sectors have a role to play in contributing to early intervention, health, education, multicultural affairs, and other portfolios.

Facilitating better connections and collaborations between the creative industries and other portfolios has long been on the agenda, but to date this has not filtered down to the sector level.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

It is now estimated that over [two in five Australians aged 16–85 will experience a mental illness](#) at some point in their life. Young people are particularly at risk, with the prevalence of mental ill health in young people increasing by [more than 50% from 26% in 2007 to 39% in 2020–21](#). Poor mental health costs the Victorian economy \$14.2 billion. If Victoria could reduce current service demands on the mental health by 15%, this could deliver in order of \$1.1 billion in additional economic activity for Victoria annually.⁴

The arts have a key role to play here. There is a growing body of evidence that recognises the crucial role arts and creativity can play in promoting positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes. Arts and creativity have been shown to support improved mental and physical wellbeing,⁵ combat anxiety and depression,⁶ and decrease loneliness and promote social inclusion.⁷ Over half of Australians recognise the benefits of engaging with arts to improve our health and wellbeing. Australians are increasingly acting on that belief and attending arts and cultural events to improve their wellbeing.⁸

The Productivity Commission's [Mental Health Inquiry Report \(2020\)](#) recommended mental health reform to support a people-centred mental health system that can meet changing community need. The report identified a disproportionate emphasis on clinical services and a lack of attention to the social determinants of mental health. We currently have a distinct opportunity to better connect our healthcare system with arts practitioners, and so to foster thriving, cohesive and resilient Australian communities.

Education

There are clear benefits to educational outcomes for children and young people from participating in arts and cultural activities.

- An [Australian longitudinal study of over 600 students](#) showed that arts engagement significantly predicted class participation, educational resilience (the ability to deal with academic setbacks and adversity), and educational aspirations (e.g., intention to finish school).

⁴ Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System Interim Report, Chapter 12, page 311.

⁵ Fancourt D and Finn S 2019, 'What is the Evidence on the Role of the Arts in Improving health and Well-being? A scoping review', Health Evidence Network Synthesis Report, 67. Davies C, Knuiman M and Rosenberg M 2015, 'The Art of being Mentally Healthy: A study to quantify the relationship between recreational arts engagement and mental well-being in the general population', BMC Public Health, 16:15.

⁶ Sumner RC, Crone DM, Hughes S and James DVB 2021, 'Arts on Prescription: Observed changes in anxiety, depression, and well-being across referral cycles', Public Health, 192.

⁷ Perkins R, Mason-Bertrand A, Tymoszyk U et al 2021, 'Arts Engagement Supports Social Connectedness in Adulthood: Findings from the HEartS Survey', BMC Public Health, 21:1208.

⁸ Creative Australia 2023, [Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participations Survey](#)

- An evaluation of the [Creative Arts Indigenous Parental Engagement](#) program, involving 155 Indigenous students, found that the program ‘closed the gap’ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students’ NAPLAN scores by more than 20% in reading and 17% in writing.
- Since the 90s, there’s been a [strong international evidence base](#) to suggest that arts participation is associated with higher academic performance – including literacy, numeracy, and higher-order problem-solving skills.
- [Systematic reviews](#) of the literature show that arts participation builds resilience and contributes to confidence, self-esteem, self-expression, happiness, mindfulness, improved coping mechanisms, and higher life satisfaction.
- A study by [Cirkidz and Uni SA](#) of 54 young people found that participating in circus improved stress levels, self-esteem, confidence, and socialisation – and calculated that for every \$1 invested in youth performing arts, \$7 could be generated in social return.

The Victorian Government is making significant investments in education, with a clear focus on providing opportunities for all young Victorians. Performing arts programs that align with educational outcomes are already well positioned to compliment this priority. Boosting collaborations between education and the creative industries will lead to better outcomes for children, young people, and families, while also significantly contributing to sustainable employment, skills development, and audience development for the creative industries.

Social Cohesion

The [2023 Mapping Social Cohesion Report](#) found that in the previous 12 months, the Scanlon-Monash Index of social cohesion declined to the lowest score on record. In 2023, only 38% of Victorians believed that the state government could be trusted all or most of the time. Other key findings included:

- **Resilience and Decline:** Social cohesion in Australia has shown resilience but is under pressure and declining in some areas. Declines in national pride and belonging have been ongoing for several years. Discrimination and prejudice remain common, contributing to weaker social cohesion.
- **Multiculturalism and Diversity:** Support for multiculturalism and the positive contributions of immigrants remains strong. However, experiences of discrimination are still prevalent, particularly among migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds.
- **Trust and Governance:** Trust in government has eroded since the COVID-19 pandemic, returning to pre-pandemic levels. Lower trust in government correlates with lower social cohesion and increased feelings of isolation and pessimism.
- **Local Community Engagement:** Despite national challenges, strong connections and sense of belonging at the neighbourhood level persist. Community support and social group involvement remain high, contributing positively to local social cohesion.

The report made a number of recommendations, including investing in community programs that foster local engagement and support networks, and encouraging participation in social, community, and civic groups to build stronger local bonds. The creative industries is ideally positioned to:

- Bring people together to connect and collaborate,
- Engage and showcase Victoria’s diverse population, including their stories and perspectives.
- Discuss and address social issues such as discrimination, inequality, and mental health.
- Foster dialogue between communities and government, enhancing civic engagement.
- Give communities a voice, helping to rebuild trust in institutions.

Measuring Outcomes and Economic Impact

While there is overwhelming research (as presented above) to indicate the potential value and benefits of the creative industries, artists and organisations in the performing arts sector have extremely limited capacity to provide such evidence at a project/local level. To successfully initiate and maintain cross-portfolio collaborations, the sector will need support to build capacity to set expected outcomes and outcome measures, collect and interpret data, and estimate the avoided/saved costs.

Outcomes

- Reduces demand for acute services and costs associated with poor social outcomes.
- Creates efficiencies and greater return on investment across all portfolios including the creative industries.
- Increases the ease, speed, and capacity of the creative industries to identify, implement, and evaluate initiatives that advance government priorities.

Recommendations

4. Broker and maintain relationships and collaborations between the creative industries and other government portfolios for mutual benefit.
5. Assist the creative industries to develop mechanisms to measure and articulate the social and economic impacts and outcomes of its activities.
6. Increase the amount of communication and connection between Creative Victoria and sector.

What this looks like

Connecting the creative industries with government initiatives

- Regular forums/roundtables held between Creative Victoria and the creative industries (artists and organisations) to promote ongoing dialogue about needs and opportunities. This should include curated groupings (such as art form specific) to address specific opportunities and challenges.
- Investigate opportunities to engage with the Victorian Government's Early Intervention Investment Framework, working with the arts and cultural sector to build evidence-based submissions to the budget process.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

- Promote research on the benefits of arts and culture for mental health and wellbeing to encourage government initiatives addressing mental health and wellbeing to activate collaborations with the creative industries.
- Investigate a Social Prescribing Scheme that includes arts and cultural activities and specified pathways for mental health referral.

Education and Children, Young People & Families

- Ensure dance and circus are included in financial relief measures, such as

- The \$400 School Saving Bonus announced in the last state budget, which helps cover school-related expenses including extracurricular activities like camps, excursions and sporting events.
- Active Schools and Get Active Kids vouchers announced in the last state budget, which supports schools to implement physical education and sports programs, and provides vouchers worth up to \$200 to help eligible families cover the cost of sports.
- See below for more recommendations in this area.

Social Cohesion

- Activate collaboration between Creative Victoria, Multicultural Affairs (DFFH) and other relevant departments to enable the arts and cultural sector to better contribute to social cohesion.
 - Integrate arts and culture into broader social policy frameworks, recognising its role in enhancing social cohesion.
 - Collaborate with arts organisations to develop programs that address specific social issues and community needs.
 - Encourage partnerships between arts organisations, local governments, and community groups to co-create projects.
 - Unlock funding for community arts projects that promote social cohesion and cultural diversity.

Measuring Outcomes and Economic Impact

- Increase the ASL of Creative Victoria to employ staff who are dedicated to research and can assist the creative industries to better communicate its value proposition.
- Use the data provided in acquittals by funded artists and organisations to publish reports on the reach and impact of the creative industries.
- Provide artists and organisations with evaluation frameworks and guides, as well as one-on-one support for project and evaluation design that is better understood by other portfolios.

Leadership for Tomorrow: Building Skills to Propel the Arts Forward

Create State 25 set a number of ambitious targets for the creative industries, and the discussion paper for Create State 3 builds further on these. It sets goals and expectations of the sector, including:

- Contributing to Victoria's global reputation and visitor economy by resourcing, creating, positioning, marketing, and delivering innovative, world class creations.
- Improving equity and access to facilitate greater participation in arts and culture for all Victorians, including under-represented communities.
- Contributing to building greater social cohesion and intercultural understanding.
- Sustaining high levels of creative workforce employment and managing its own training pathways and career development.
- Reaching new audiences, consumers, and markets, and working with other industries.
- Responding quickly to changing operating environments.

The greatest challenge for the sector in achieving these expectations stems from a lack of financial resourcing, which impacts the capacity, training, and skills of the workforce. Within the creative industries, it is now essential for artists to have a huge array of business and administrative skills to maintain a sustainable creative career, and commonplace to expect that they develop these independently, using their own money. Even within our small to medium arts organisations, leaders often rise up from junior positions with no formal training but are expected to demonstrate high levels of business acumen to survive in an extremely competitive and complex landscape. Extremely low salaries and poor working conditions exacerbate this, with the sector struggling to recruit and/or maintain experienced talent at all levels, including within board governance.

There are numerous financial, logistical, and cultural barriers within the creative industries in terms of professional skills development, including:

- No or low professional development budgets/opportunities due to incredibly lean operating budgets.
- No or little time to undertake professional development due to understaffing and the large (and growing) number of deliverables required to sustain basic income levels.
- No or little financial support or reimbursement for independents/sole traders to undertake professional development, which is further exacerbated for people with additional caring and/or cultural responsibilities, access needs, and who need to travel from regional locations. This applies also to formal education (e.g., tertiary).

Support for the workforce to develop in the following areas is needed if the sector is to deliver on the ambitions of Creative State:

- Supporting our organisations' Boards in their recruitment and practices to enable skilled and diverse governance and leadership.
- Marketing and brand management so that our artists and organisations can better position their work and target specific audiences, but also reach new and underserved audiences.
- Small business operations support to enable independent creatives to learn the skills they need to manage a sustainable career in a competitive environment.
- Support to find efficiencies and administration and finance processes to reduce workloads.

Outcomes

- More resilient, resourceful, and effective creative industries organisations and projects.
- More diverse leaders that represent and can connect with more Victorians.
- Better strategies to reach under engaged communities.
- Reduced burnout and mental ill-health of the workforce.

Recommendations

7. Introduce Strong Leadership as one of the Objectives of Creative State 29.
8. Provide business, governance, and strategy advice to the creative industries through a free mentorship and support program, similar to [Service NSW's Business Connect](#).
9. In partnership with philanthropic organisations, create bursaries and scholarship programs for creative industries leaders to attend established courses.
10. Support and professional development to assist creative industries leaders to better/further engage under engaged communities.

What this looks like

A commitment to Strong Leadership

- A Creative State strategy that acknowledges the need for strong leadership for both government and industry to be able to achieve the other aims of the strategy.
- A considered theory of change that identifies where stronger leadership is needed, and a commitment to building that leadership through resources and support.

Business advice, guidance, and support for the creative industries

- Creating a service similar to [Service NSW's Business Connect](#) under The Victorian Small Business Commission and/or Business Victoria. This service would engage an organisation such as [Creative Plus Business](#) to connect creative industries workers with specialist advisors/mentors. Sessions are free-of-charge, and cover a range of topics including finance, marketing, communications, operations, etc.

Prioritise arts access and engagement for Children & Young People as Cultural Citizens

Children and young people have the right to play, to access culture, to self-expressions and to engage with rigorous and complex performing art. Not only does art created for and with and by children and young people have intrinsic impact, it has an evidenced impact on their holistic selves, on community cohesion, mental health and well-being, and on their sense of possibility and view of the world. Performing arts for, with and by children and young people is significant as an art form in itself, and has an added significance for our performing arts ecology, affecting exploration, pathways and the sustainability of the arts in Australia.

Children and young people are marginalised groups, and often neglected in an adult-focused world. They have little opportunity to express their voice or to assert power. They are often doubly marginalised by societal structures and systems that fail to adequately recognise and address their unique needs and rights. They are a deeply intersectional demographic. The ages of 0 - 24 make up 30% of Australia's population.

The Australian Government's [Measuring What Matters](#) framework offers a comprehensive approach to evaluating societal well-being through five key categories: Healthy, Secure, Sustainable, Cohesive, and Prosperous. These categories provide a structured lens for assessing the wide-ranging benefits of arts participation for children and young people:

- Participation in the arts enhances mental and emotional health, fostering improved self-confidence, self-awareness, and connections with others.
- Engaging in the arts helps address social issues, build resilience, explore challenges such as bullying and violence, and create nurturing environments for self-expression.
- Arts programs for young people support sustainable community development and give them a platform to voice concerns on important issues, including the climate crisis.
- Arts participation strengthens community cohesion by fostering connections between young people and their communities, enhancing empathy and social bonding.
- The arts help develop crucial skills needed for the 21st-century workforce, such as confidence, leadership, communication, creative problem-solving, and teamwork. Participation in the arts also boosts academic achievement and school engagement, reducing the likelihood of young people falling behind.

Participation in the arts is decreasing

However, arts participation is on the decline. [The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported a concerning decrease in children's creative participation and attendance](#) between 2017-2018 and 2021-2022, which can be attributed in part to the impact of COVID-19:

- 59% of children participated in a creative activity, down from 63%, with decreases seen in creative writing (23% to 19%), dancing (17% to 13%), singing or playing a musical instrument (23% to 19%), drama activities (8% to 5%), and reading for pleasure (79% to 72%). Participation in screen-based activities remained steady at 90%.
- Attendance at cultural venues or events among children fell from 94% to 80%, with the majority (67%) attending the cinema. Only 33% visited a library or archive, 20% attended a gallery, 12% attended a music concert, 9% attended the theatre, 8% attended dance performances, and 7%

attended a musical or opera. Attendance at at least one performing arts event dropped from 57% to 31%.

Similarly, young people aged 15 to 24 experienced a significant decline in attendance over the same period, with library visits falling from 36% to 28%, gallery attendance dropping from 25% to 17%, and performing arts venue attendance plunging from 56% to just 27%.

This trend, driven by the effects of COVID-19, shifting technology use, the cost-of-living crisis, and broader cultural changes, highlights the need for urgent intervention to reverse the decline in participation. If left unaddressed, this could negatively impact literacy, social cohesion, and health, with significant consequences as children and young people grow up and enter the workforce.

A grassroots opportunity

Many sports (primarily among them AFL) create clear connections from grassroots activities all the way through to professional and elite careers, securing a healthy workforce and audience pipeline. This is almost non-existent within the creative industries, even when there seems to be strong opportunities in art forms like dance.

Dancing is the [third most popular physical activity for children aged 0-14](#) after swimming and soccer, and in 2020 Ausdance VIC estimated there to be between [1,000 and 1,200 dance studios operating within Victoria](#). However, these huge numbers do not translate to a lifelong engagement with dance, and there is little to no connection between dance studios and the professional dance sector.

TNA agrees with the [Fact Sheet: Participation Pathways for Australian Dancers \(2023\)](#) by Pattern Makers and The Australian Ballet, which recommends a long-term sector strategy to coordinate action on participation pathways. Many of the issues the sector is currently facing around workforce and audience development and diversity could be solved in the medium- and long-term by such a strategy.

Outcomes

- Reduced barriers for children and young people accessing creative experiences that value their agency, participation, and cultural needs.
- More children and young people engaging with our creative industries, contributing the sector's viability and sustainability through audience and workforce development.
- Better social outcomes for Victorian children and young people, including in education, skills development, mental health and wellbeing, resilience, and social connectedness.

Recommendations

11. Introduce the focus and lens on Children and Young People as one of the Principles of Creative State, ensuring children and young people are prioritised under all Creative State Outcomes.
12. Encourage and incentivise better engagement between the professional sector and grassroots arts and cultural activities.
13. Expand existing government programs and initiatives to include arts and culture activities for the benefit of children, young people, and families.

What this looks like

Children and young people are prioritised across Create State 3

- Children and Young People are considered as a key demographic that must be addressed to achieve the set Objectives of Creative State.

Connecting dance from grassroots to professional

- Incentivise suitable performing arts venues to provide subsidised venue hire to for dance studio performances in exchange for the dance studio purchasing tickets for their students and families to attend that venue's professional dance program of performances.
- Incentivise and support dance studios and professional organisations and artists to create reciprocal relationships, connecting young dancers to a broader engagement with dance.

Make it easier for children, young people, and families to engage with creative activities

- Adding Dance and Circus added to eligible active recreation activities for [Get Active Kids Voucher Program](#), with TNA and Ausdance VIC as national membership organisation
- Adding Circus alongside Dance as an example of [eligible active recreation activities for Active Schools Grants](#)
- Investigate the potential to create a Creative Schools program based on the [Active Schools program](#) to support and incentivise schools to provide creative experiences for students. Such a program could encapsulate existing programs such as the [Blended Arts Education \(Dance and Drama\)](#) program.
- Adjusting the Schools Mental Health Fund and Menu:
 - Listing arts activities explicitly as a [Tier 1 menu category](#).
 - Collating an evidence base that validates arts activities for inclusion in the menu, advocating that there are benefits not just from arts therapy or art with explicit mental health content, but from all types of participating, creating and attending as audience.
 - Provide practical support for arts organisation to successfully [tender for inclusion on the next update](#) of the Menu - including compiling relevant research and resources, interdepartmental education/relationship building, and application assistance.

More Information

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