AI and Data Centres Survey and Consultation Summary 2026

In August 2026, TNA conducted a consultation process with artists, organisations, and arts workers in the performing arts to prepare our submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into AI and Data Centres. We sought to understand how artificial intelligence (AI) is used in the performing arts sector, and how working conditions are changing because of the technology.

We received 32 valid responses to an online survey and spoke to 25 people during a Zoom session. The summary below represents perspectives from artists, arts workers and organisations across Australia who engaged with our consultation process.

Participants' experiences show AI's impact across income, intellectual property, workplace practices and community wellbeing. Grant writers and voiceover artists reported shrinking work and increased exploitation risk. Graphic designers described AI eroding jobs and creative quality. Multiple participants reported their creative work being scraped by large language models without consent. We heard about AI in institutional settings reducing human contact and leading to job losses. Concerns were also raised about data centres approved without community or First Nations consultation, citing pollution, water use and reliance on non-renewable energy.

TNA is eager to keep this conversation open with the performing arts sector. If you would like to share your ideas, perspectives, and feedback on this topic, please contact us at info@tna.org.au.

AI is impacting the work and income of artists and arts workers

This is what participants told us:

- AI is used by artists and arts workers to write grant applications, and by funding bodies in the assessment process.
    - AI has been used to write feedback to grant applicants.
    - AI has replaced work previously provided by contracted grant writers.
- Artists are hesitant to post their work online fearing it will be used to train AI models without consent, attribution or compensation.
- AI is used for administrative tasks and as an assistive technology, particularly as organisations and arts workers navigate limited resources, high output expectations as well as barriers to access in the workplace.
    - AI used to generate policies and meeting minutes.
    - AI is used more frequently in marketing for shows, generating both copy, schedules, and graphic design assets.
    - It was noted that the current low cost of AI is a motivating factor for its use.
- Organisations are struggling to implement up-to-date policies on AI use because the technology is advancing so quickly.
- There is limited protection for voice over artists.
    - MEAA's Voiceover Industry Rate Card is not used by all major voice over companies, requiring artists to work with the risk that their voices will be used to train AI models.
- AI use in creative practice among participants of TNA's consultation process is limited.

- Many emerging and student practitioners are concerned about AI being used to replace them and their work.
- AI is increasingly used in design, including graphic design and spatial design modelling (eg. set/stage design).

Data centres are impacting communities and the environment

This is what participants told us:

- Communities are unsure what data is being collected and why.
- There is a low degree of literacy around the legality of data centre construction and operations in Australia.
- Communities are not being consulted or informed as much as they would like about data centre development in their local area.
- Engagement with First Nations people and Traditional Owners around data centre construction and operation is almost non-existent.
- Communities worry that the speed of data centre rollout is ignoring due process, including consultation, environmental assessments, and planning controls.
- Communities are concerned about environmental impact and resource use of data centres, particularly the use of diesel generators in or near residential areas, the impact on water and electricity supplies and prices, and increased light and air pollution.