



YOUTH ARTS SECTOR COVID-19 IMPACT STATEMENT



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

WE ACKNOWLEDGE ALL FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE AS THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THESE LANDS AND WE PAY RESPECT TO THEIR ELDERS PAST AND PRESENT.

ALWAYS WAS, ALWAYS WILL BE ABORIGINAL LAND

| CONTENTS |

- 3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
- 5 SECTOR MESSAGE
- 6 IMPACT SNAPSHOT
- 10 YOUTH IMPACT
- 12 STAFF IMPACT
- 14 FINANCIAL IMPACT
- 16 LONG TERM IMPACT
- 18 INDUSTRY COMMENTARY
- 20 CREDITS

COVER

Australian Theatre For Young People and Shopfront Arts Co Op. NSW | Diginty of Risk [2018]
Photo | Tracey Schramm

LEFT

Jopuka Productions, NSW
Brutal [2019] Dir. Neville Boney Willams and Amy Flannary
Photo: Kelly Maxwell



Canberra Youth Theatre, ACT
Collapse [2019] Dir. Luke Rodgers
Photo: Emma Roberts

a message from the sector

As the nation's arts and entertainment industries grapple with the impact of COVID-19, the youth arts and theatre sector is assessing the immediate and long-term effects on our activities and programming. This is a severe blow to a sector that plays an intergral role in the country's arts ecology.

The Australian performing arts sector is built upon foundations of the youth arts and theatre sector. Generations of artists and arts workers have had their start in the rehearsal rooms, workshop spaces, and performance venues of youth theatre companies across our country.

This report was compiled following research into 40 of Australia's leading companies working with young people and creating work for young audiences.

KEY POINTS

- 0% of programmed activities are running as normal
- 52% of companies have stood down core staff
- 69% of companies have stood down casual staff and contracted artists
- 48% of national workshop programs have been cut or postponed
- 52% of companies feel it is still too early to understand the long term implications of the shutdown

The positive news is the speed with which the youth arts and theatre sector has been able to adjust programs to retain engagement and maintain activity with 48% of workshop programs modified so they can work online.

Without our work today, there is no industry tomorrow.

The future of Australian arts starts with us.

INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT

40 youth arts or performing arts organisations from across Australia replied to this survey. Those companies were evenly spread between urban and regional areas. Between them they employ 196 permanent staff and 1032 casual or project artists. 85% of respondents have less than six people in their core team, and just over half have three or less. This has significant implications when organisations indicate they will have to reduce support staff in areas such as administration and accounts, as this workload will fall back on remaining staff.

One-third work within their immediate neighbourhood or city whilst two-thirds work across a region or their State or Territory. 21% extend their reach nationally and/or internationally.

Respondents work with children and young people, from infants to 30 year olds with 86% working with children aged 3-12 years and 93% working with young people aged 13-17 years. A further 76% with young adults aged 18-30 years and this often includes mentoring, training and employment.

Youth arts and theatre companies deliver programs across a variety of models that span training and mentoring, projects, and presentation.

Collectively respondents engage 114,850 young people as project participants annually, and a further 15,360 through training and mentoring, welcoming over 174,230 patrons annual.

Responses to this survey were kept anonymous

Riptide, Western Australia
The 1's, The 0's and Everything Inbetween (2018)
Photo: Zal Kanga-Parabia.

| the key numbers |

COMPANIES SURVEYED	40
FULL TIME STAFF IN THE INDUSTRY	196
CREATIVE / CAUSAL STAFF	1032
AVERAGE CORE TEAM SIZE	6
URBAN / METRO COMPANIES SURVEYED	24
REGIONAL / RURAL COMPANIES SURVEYED	16
PROGRAMS POSTPONED OR CANCELLED	250+
YOUNG PEOPLE AFFECTED**	57,426
REVENUE LOSS*	\$5,250,000
PATRONAGE LOSS**	87,097

CORE STAFF SAFE	48%
CORE STAFF ON REDUCED HOURS	33%
COMPANIES THAT WILL NEED TO STAND DOWN CORE STAFF AFTER 3 MONTHS	27%
COMPANIES WHO HAVE HAD TO STAND DOWN CREATIVES / CASUALS STAFF	68%
PROGRAMS NOW ONLINE	48%

*Please note these numbers are based on a 3 month industry closure, based on the figures provided from the 31 survey responses

**Please note these numbers are based on a 6 month industry closure, based on the figures provided from the 31 survey responses



**“THE FUTURE
OF AUSTRALIAN
ARTS STARTS
WITH US”**

| key findings |

At the time of the survey respondents were asked to address program and event impacts for the period of March – June. 24% of respondents have cancelled four to five activities for the period. 21% have cut between six and ten activities and 31% have cut more than ten activities.

When asked about how the change in programming would affect their young people, 75.86% said that young people they work with have limited access to activities and online resources. We are concerned that this gap in our programming will negatively impact their lives. 48% said their workshop programming had moved online and that their young peoples' access to it was managed, and 27.59% said the young people they work with are already working in the online space.

48.28% of respondents said they expect the absence of their programs, especially in the longer term, will affect the young people, artists and other stakeholders.

| program breakdown |

	CUT	POSTPONED OR CANCELLED	UNSURE	REDUCED CAPACITY	MODIFIED OR DIGITAL DELIVERY	N/A
WORKSHOPS	20.69%	27.59%	3.45%	-	48.28%	-
SEASONS	17.24%	55.17%	17.24%	3.45%	6.90%	-
OUTREACH PROGRAMS	13.79%	37.93%	20.69%	3.45%	3.45%	20.69%
ONE OFF EVENTS	24.14%	48.28%	10.34%	-	-	17.24%
SPECIAL PROJECTS	27.59%	34.48%	20.60%	-	6.90%	10.34%

PARTICIPANT IMPACT

| industry commentary |

“Many of the young people we work with live in remote and very regional areas with limited access to resources. Many of the young people we work with already feel isolated from the mainstream. We know when our programs are halted, it has a massive impact and takes time to rebuild the connection and relationship. We are concerned that some young people we work with will have the potential to make poor choices over the next few months without positive creative activities on offer.”

“While our program is running, online attendance at workshops has approximately halved. Some of our young people don't have access to stable internet connections, others are telling us that they are so overwhelmed with trying to adapt to schooling online they don't have the energy to connect to online drama workshops, particularly when it is very difficult to create the sense of camaraderie, physical exuberance and joy that they usually find in our workshops on a Zoom call.”

“As a regional arts org, young people come to us to meet up, engage with and build relationships with other young people. Many of them live remotely and don't always have a lot of contact with other young people.”



STAFFING IMPACT

South Australian Youth Arts
Grave Child 2017
Photo: Samantha Konicek

| key findings |

Whilst nearly half of respondents indicate that core personnel are safe, employment-wise, at this stage, nearly 30% have had to reduce staff hours or negotiate leave. 28% of respondents will need to review core staff arrangements if the current operating environment extends beyond three months.

Only 10% of respondents indicate that casual and project staff are safe from stand down at this stage. 68% of respondents have had to stand down casual and project staff, amounting to more than 700 artists.

There is concern that, for some organisations, only a portion of casual and project staff will be eligible for Job Keeper given the 12-month criteria.

| job security |

CORE STAFF ARE SAFE AT THIS STAGE	48.28%
CORE STAFF MAY HAVE HOURS REDUCED OR NEED TO TAKE LEAVE	27.59%
CORE STAFF MAY BE STOOD DOWN IF THIS EXTENDS MORE THAN THREE MONTHS	27.59%
CASUAL AND PROJECT STAFF HAVE BEEN STOOD DOWN	68.97%
CASUAL AND PROJECT STAFF ARE SAFE AT THIS STAGE	10.34%

| industry commentary |

“Already we are seeing an impact on the mental health of our staff - confusion, creative stagnation and difficulty engaging.”

“Obviously the strength of our activities is the interaction between participants in our workshops and productions. It will be interesting to see whether we will retain past members after classes close of three, six or nine months of if we need to build the entire program again.”

“As much as we are all bending over backwards to provide services to our young people, theatre is essentially an in-person art and experience. Trying to put the same energy into an online workshop is exhausting for workshop leaders and participants”.

“We have as many mental health concerns about our staff as we do out young people. For many of our creative staff, most of whom work with us on contract, they’ve had projects cancelled on them, and due to our long term plans many of those projects are unable to be rescheduled - the Job Keeper payments will help some staff, but not them, and that’s what is most upsetting so far”

FINANCIAL IMPACT

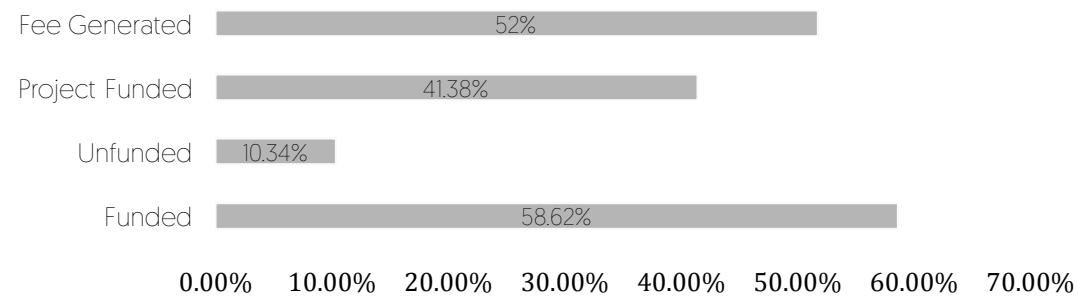
| key findings |

Survey respondents have reported varying degrees of financial impacts on their revenue, leading to a wide range of effects on their staff and young people. This report is based on the March – June financial quarter and considers the lost income as a percentage of annual budget.

At the time of answering this survey many respondents who are funded either via federal, state, regional, local government, or private funding were unsure of their grant status and allowance for deferrals.

Australia Council for The Arts had yet to make any announcements.

| organisational structure |



| second quarter income loss percentage |

LOSING 18-30% OF INCOME	45%
LOSING 40-55% OF INCOME	39%
LOSING 80-100% OF INCOME	6%

| industry commentary |

“Our organisation is built on youth led projects, however this new separation has made direct engagement near impossible and I am struggling to find viable workarounds. We are still waiting to hear feedback from our funding body, as well as our ability to receive the JobKeeper funding as that will determine how damaging this will be.”

“The issue we are facing is all the big orgs who are funded can afford to put stuff up for free so why would anyone pay for what we are offering? Income insecurity is huge for us. We are likely to close without assistance.”

“For a number of our Young People this is their only safe social and creative outlet, the impact on them will be significant from a mental health and safety point of view. For a number of the artists we work with we are already seeing them slip below the poverty line. JobKeeper will hopefully help, but many of them are independent artists who will need to navigate eligibility themselves”

“We are also concerned that parents with reduced employment/income will no longer prioritize arts as an expense in their budgets.”



| key findings |

Survey respondents were asked to score on a scale of 1 – 100 on how confident their organisation was about their future, 0 being strong, ready to ride it out, 40-60 middle ground and 100 dreadful, we are ready to shutdown. 47% of respondents sit between 0 and 35. This is most confident third of the range. One third sit in the middle band and 20% indicate less confidence in their organisation's robustness.

24% of respondents we're planning a week or a month ahead at the time of answering, 59% looking six to nine months ahead, and the remaining were undecided.

Although half the respondents think it is too early to predict the long term impact on young people, artists and other stakeholders. Respondents raised a number of observations and concerns and these comments are placed through out this document.

At the time of the survey 200 events, projects, workshops, outreach programs, and special events had already been cancelled. These numbers are expected to grow dramatically.

| industry commentary |

"This is a difficult one to answer but we are optimistic the absence of our program will encourage an increase in engagement once the isolation lockdown ceases - that is if we can survive this current situation. Conversely this absence may be the end of the organisation. There will be an increase in online activities etc which will be accessible and our children and young people may wish to engage in creative activities on line rather than travel to access these opportunities."

"Many of the young people we work with live in remote and very regional areas with limited access to resources. Many of the young people we work with already feel isolated from the mainstream. We know when our programs are halted, it has a massive impact and takes time to rebuild the connection and relationship. We are concerned that some young people we work with will have the potential to make poor choices over the next few months without positive creative activities on offer."

"We anticipate a huge impact on their mental health, creatively and economically."

"Severe impacts on mental health; Reduced employability; Financial burden; Reduction of participation; Skills deficit."

"Our main concern is the lag on future projects, about impact lasting well into 2021 and beyond."

LONG TERM IMPACTS

Outback Theatre For Young People NSW
"The Echo in Our Walls" at Bishops Lodge, Hay NSW
Photo: Victoria Anderson



FURTHER COMMENTARY

“We are getting increasing feedback from parents [and some of our older participants] that the sudden cut off of activity is negatively impacting participants, mental health, confidence, opportunities to be creative and also physically interact with their peers. Parents are concerned to be able to provide their children with meaningful activity and are looking for ways to stay connected to our program to support their children. There is also an important cohort who have not been in contact with us and we are worried that they are still in shock from the speed and complexity of societal change. We are hoping to be able to reach this community through online resources. However many families will be struggling with sharing limited digital resources at this time. It is a concern that that network built up over a decade of significant investment and hard work may take several years to recover.”

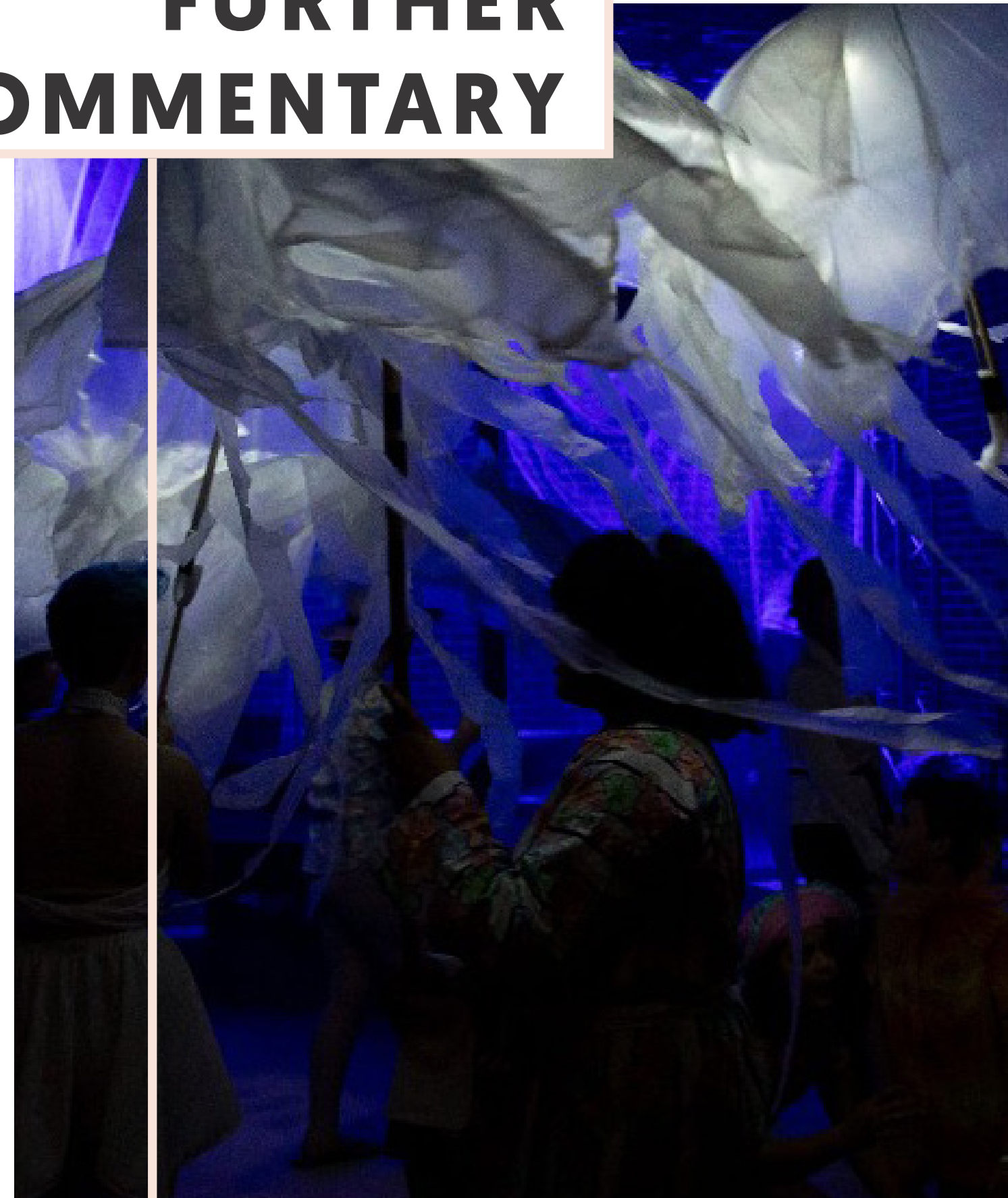
“Gains we were making in terms of trust, confidence and integration of marginalised, queer and disabled young adults into the group will be set back. For some with mental health issues, it is their only safe outlet to be themselves and to open up. The lack of contact and connection is devastating.”

“We are the only youth theatre provider in our region - without us there is no youth theatre in a region of 300'000 people”

“Our programs have always focused on providing arts access for those living in geographic isolation. For those in our remote region, although there are online programming possibilities, it is likely that for many - especially the most disadvantaged - the isolation will only be exacerbated. Other notes: engagement and employment numbers vary; we have given 2019 numbers. For programming we are mostly planning for the next three months, but when considering what happens to projects and how we defer some funding, we are thinking beyond 2020 in order to plan strategically.”

“Our numbers have dropped and while, theoretically our funding is currently secure, there is a danger that if we can't keep up participant numbers the organisation that funds us may decide the program is a poor use of their diminishing funds.”

“The absence or limitation of programming involves people's ability to express themselves creatively and artistically, maintain and increase skills, and maintain good mental and physical health.”





CREDITS

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TOP LEFT Shopfront Arts Co Op NSW | Ingle by Harry McGee.

Part of ArtsLab: Uncanned, 2019. Photo: Tim da-Rin.

TOP RIGHT Cirkidz SA | Fear Not 2020 | Photo Aaron Herczeg

MIDDLE St Martins Youth Victoria | For the Ones Who

Walk Away [2017 | Photo: Amanda Carr

BOTTOM Backbone, Queensland | Candy Social Club |

Photo Joel Deverux

BACK COVER: Corrugated Iron (NT) Photo: Connor Askham

ATYP

Australian Theatre
for Young People

Corrugated Iron
YOUTH ARTS

MSTYP

MARIAN ST THEATRE
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

JOPUKA
[PRODUCTIONS]

