

Arts Plan for South Australia

Submission from Live Performance Australia

1. INTRODUCTION

Live Performance Australia (LPA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback into the development of South Australia's 2019-2024 Arts Plan.

LPA is the peak body for Australia's live performance industry. Established over 100 years ago in 1917 and registered as an employers' organisation under the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*, LPA has over 400 Members nationally. We represent commercial and independent producers, music promoters, performing arts companies, venues (performing arts centres, commercial theatres, stadiums and arenas), arts festivals, music festivals and service providers (such as ticketing companies and technical suppliers). Our membership spans from small-medium and not-for-profit organisations to large commercial entities.

LPA's submission is informed by feedback received from our Members, including festivals, performing arts centres and performing arts companies. We understand that some LPA Members have prepared their own submissions providing feedback into the consultation process.

2. KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

a. Ambition

The arts underpin our identity and bring joy to peoples' lives. More broadly, the arts can unite society and foster social cohesion. It can be a means for building greater tolerance and understanding, in a community that is increasingly more diverse and multicultural.

The arts can also have positive impacts on health, wellbeing and education. Creativity, a key feature of the arts, is a driver of economic growth. Indeed, research suggests that creativity is a critical skill needed within a 21st century workforce.¹ The arts are a necessity in our lives and society, worthy of government investment; not a 'nice to have'.

We acknowledge that the government is operating within a fiscally constrained environment and will need to make difficult decisions about what investments it can make in arts and culture. Nonetheless, we believe the Arts Plan needs to have a bold vision that capitalises on South Australia's existing strengths, but also takes advantage of opportunities to address skills gaps and be an influential player in the Asia Pacific region.

¹ Bureau of Communications and Arts Research (2019), *Creative skills for the future economy*, p. 5

The Arts Plan needs to adequately support all parts of the arts ecology – from emerging to established artists, from small/medium to larger performing arts companies, from venues to training providers – to ensure that it can prosper and grow.

Arts makers and producers (independent artists, performing arts companies and festivals) need support so that they can take creative risks. They need quality **venues** in which to present art and an **education and training** system that can supply a workforce that delivers and supports art making. At the same time, there needs to be a vibrant sector that can offer employment opportunities, and foster creativity and innovation.

With the right investment in each of these areas, the South Australian arts sector can be vibrant and appealing, as well as support broader economic and social goals, such as jobs, inclusion and accessibility.

b. Industry and Innovation

Competitive advantage

South Australia has built a strong reputation for producing and presenting world-class festivals, with a range of arts and cultural festivals now programmed throughout the year.

LPA's research confirms that festivals are popular in South Australia. In 2017, festivals (multi-category):

- were the most popular events in terms of attendances, attracting about 920,000 people (or 43.8% of attendances to live events in South Australia)
- generated the second largest ticket sales revenue (over \$24 million or 19.5% of ticket sales revenue to events in South Australia).²

When compared to the national average, where festivals (multi-category) contribute 8.1% of attendances and 2.9% of ticket sales revenue, it is clear that festivals make a significant contribution to the South Australian cultural landscape.

However, there are opportunities for South Australia to be known for more than being the 'festival state'. South Australia is home to some world-class theatre companies producing shows for children, young people and families, notably Patch, Slingsby and Windmill Theatre Co. These companies regularly tour their productions around Australia, as well as overseas to Asia, Europe and North America. They are showcasing Australian creativity and artistic excellence on the world stage, as well as inspiring the next generation of audiences.

There is also an opportunity to build and deepen meaningful relationships through arts and culture within the Asia Pacific region and with Asian communities within the state. The arts can help create connections and support cultural diplomacy. These relationships may lead to other opportunities for South Australia, in terms of tourism, international education, trade and investment.

Recommendation:

That there is support to maintain and cultivate South Australia's unique points of difference, such as festivals, children and youth theatre, and engagement with Asia.

² EY (2018), *Live performance industry in Australia, 2017 Ticket Attendance and Revenue report*, prepared for Live Performance Australia, 22 October 2018

Musical theatre hub

Musical theatre is a popular genre of live entertainment. According to LPA's research, musical theatre contributes the second highest share of attendance and revenue nationally, and within South Australia, it contributes the third largest share of attendance and revenue.³

There is an opportunity to capitalise on musical theatre's popularity, making it a key pillar for industry development. A bold plan could be to cultivate Adelaide into a hub where commercial musical theatre is developed and produced, underpinned by a skilled creative and technical workforce. The hub could support the experimentation of new ideas. New original productions could be tested in the South Australian market, prior to launching in larger markets. Importantly, a musical theatre hub would provide stable employment for performers, technicians and creatives, while enabling them to gain valuable experience and develop new skills. It would also provide a potential pathway for those graduating from training institutions and mitigate the flight of local talent interstate.

Recommendation:

That a plan be developed to make Adelaide a hub for the development and production of commercial musical theatre in Australia, including construction and technical servicing.

c. Arts makers and producers

Funding stability

Arts makers are innovators and risk takers. The process of bringing an idea to life can often take many years, and support should be available to enable arts makers to take creative risks. Funding support should be available to all – from independent artists through to small, medium and large companies. Companies, in particular, need funding certainty and stability so that they can plan for the long term, take risks and secure investment from non-government sources. It is therefore critical that companies have access to multi-year funding. If companies are expected to reach new audiences or engage with audiences in regional and remote areas, they should be adequately funded to do so.

Recommendation:

That there is continued support for South Australian companies through multi-year funding and funding for audience engagement and regional access.

Removing barriers

Some of South Australia's key cultural institutions and performing arts organisations are government statutory entities, which must comply with government policies and processes. Some of these requirements may not be the most cost effective or make efficient use of an organisation's limited resources – for example, use of government approved service providers. Organisations need these barriers removed so they can direct limited funds into areas that need it most and that fulfil its core purpose – that is, art making.

³ ibid

There also exists a tension between some of South Australia's art organisations, where the objectives of one organisation may not support the objectives of another – yet all are part of South Australia's arts ecology. These competing objectives may mean that some parts of the sector are unable to meet their full potential. This ultimately will impact the cultural experience offered within South Australia.

Recommendation:

That a review be undertaken of government policies and the objectives of performing arts organisations, with a view to eliminating barriers, ensuring the needs of the arts sector are met and better supporting cultural objectives.

d. Venue infrastructure

A key element of a thriving arts and cultural ecology includes first-class infrastructure in which to present live performances. The suite of infrastructure assets needs to:

- accommodate the growth in current and future audience numbers. Between 2013 and 2017, attendance at live performances has grown 40%, with year-on-year attendance growth between 5% and 17%⁴
- include venues of varying sizes that can accommodate productions by local, commercial and interstate companies
- have the capability to accommodate productions, which increasingly have greater technical requirements in order to meet audience expectations.

Our Members are telling us there is a shortage of suitable venues in South Australia. In particular, there is a need for:

- a concert hall
- first-class theatres with audience capacity between 250 – 300 seats, as well as 500 – 650 seats
- rehearsal spaces.

A bold aspiration would be to build a single fit-for-purpose home for the State Theatre Company of South Australia, that is connected to the wider performing arts sector. Unlike many of its counterparts in other states, the State Theatre Company does not have its own theatre space to present and rehearse productions. A new facility would enable the company's administration, production and technical teams to be housed under the one roof. The benefits of the new facility would not be confined to the State Theatre Company alone; the facilities could be made available for use by other local companies that need appropriate venues in which to present and rehearse productions. It would also free up capacity at existing venues.

In addition, having the right infrastructure is important for ensuring South Australia is included in the national touring circuit. After touring the eastern seaboard, many productions look to see if there is an opportunity to come to South Australia. However, the lack of venue availability often makes it

⁴ ibid

challenging to schedule the tour in South Australia. Subsequently, South Australian audiences miss out on the opportunity to see quality productions within their own state.

Recommendation:

That there is a comprehensive arts and culture infrastructure plan, which includes investment in existing and new performing arts infrastructure.

e. Skills, education and training

A key challenge for many performing arts companies is being able to access the right skills. Many performers and arts workers move interstate to pursue opportunities in larger markets.

While it can be challenging finding suitably qualified performers in South Australia, the skills that are particularly in short supply are those of technicians (i.e. lighting, sound), company managers and stage managers.

Due to the limited talent pool locally, companies often need to import skills from interstate to work on productions. This can be a significant cost burden on companies, which are already operating on very streamlined budgets.

There is a need to develop and nurture talent locally, while at the same time giving them reason to stay – that is, having a thriving performing arts sector where there are enough opportunities to sustain a career.

Having a quality arts workforce is dependent upon having training institutions that can produce talent that meets industry needs. There is an opportunity for South Australia to be the epicentre of quality arts graduates through the establishment of a performing arts academy that is located on one campus with one faculty.

Ways in which the academy could be differentiated from other training providers around Australia include by offering:

- a specialist musical theatre training course
- an enhanced technical training course
- an Asia-focused curriculum, that is able to attract international students to study at the academy and to ensure that Australian arts graduates are 'Asia ready'.

Recommendation:

That a review of the performing arts training sector be undertaken with a view to creating a single high-class performing arts academy located on one campus with one faculty.