

Creative State 2020+

Submission from Live Performance Australia

1. INTRODUCTION

Live Performance Australia (LPA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the development of Victoria's Creative State 2020+ (2020-2024).

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 music promoters, producers, performing arts centres and performing arts companies. We understand that some LPA Members have prepared their own submissions to the consultation process.

2. CONTEXT

Value of the creative industries

The creative industries underpin our national identity and reflect peoples' lives. More broadly, a strong creative sector and rich cultural life can connect individuals and promote social cohesion. It can further support greater tolerance and understanding, in a community that is proudly diverse and multicultural.

Arts and culture can also have positive impacts on health, wellbeing and education. Creativity, a key feature of the arts, is an important economic driver. Indeed, research suggests that creativity is a critical skill valued within a 21st century workforce.¹ The creative industries have significant economic, social and cultural value, deliver substantial benefits and are a critical component of a 21st century global economy.

While the scale of government investment in arts and culture nationally is declining, there is a real opportunity for Victoria to further cement its status as Australia's cultural capital by investing more in its creative industries. Great global centres have great cultural assets, dynamic creative output and diverse skills.

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

We acknowledge the government's targeted investment in Victoria's creative industries and the subsequent growth in the state's \$31 billion creative and cultural economy. In order to maintain Victoria's status as a globally recognised creative state, Creative State 2020+ needs to have a bold vision that capitalises on existing strengths. Creative State 2020+ also needs to take advantage of opportunities to reflect diversity, nurture creative talent and be an influential player in Asia.

Creative State 2020+ needs to adequately support all parts of the arts ecosystem across the state – from regional communities to city centres, from early career to established artists, from small/medium to larger performing arts companies, from venues to training providers – to ensure that it can flourish.

Arts makers and producers (independent artists, performing arts companies and festivals) need support so that they can take creative risks. They must be kept **safe and mentally well** in their work and workplaces. Accessible, quality **creative spaces** are required to develop and present work. At the same time, a sustainable creative sector must be available to offer participation and employment opportunities, and foster innovation and creative talent.

With the right investment and collaboration in each of these areas, Victoria's creative industries and its arts workers can continue to thrive, and support the broader goals of our contemporary society, such as employment, social inclusion and equality of access.

Victoria's creative industries

Victoria has built a strong reputation as an attractive global cultural destination and is renowned for its status as the 'cultural capital' of Australia. Melbourne is defined by a rich and diverse theatre and live music scene and celebrated for its production and presentation of musical theatre and world-class festivals. A range of arts and cultural festivals are now programmed throughout the year. Melbourne's major festivals include the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, which is one of the three largest comedy festivals in the world.

LPA's research confirms Victoria's standing as the leader in live performance. In 2017, Victoria:

- generated the highest share of national live performance revenue (nearly \$640 million or 34.0% of national ticket sales revenue); and
- generated the highest share of national live performance attendance (over 7 million people or 32.0% of national live performance attendance).²

LPA research also shows that contemporary music and musical theatre are the top two categories in live performance revenue and attendance in Victoria, contributing over \$450 million to the economy. It is clear that Victoria makes a significant contribution to the national cultural landscape and delivers invaluable social and cultural benefit.

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

3. KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

a. Building sustainability

Investment

The Victorian Government freeze in indexation of multi-year funding programs (Organisations Investment Program and Major Performing Arts Organisations) has placed significant pressure on the livelihood of funded organisations. The indexation freeze effectively means funding has declined in real terms. Arts organisations are forced to do the same or more with less funding, and increasingly struggle to fulfil their core objectives and meet community expectations.

Resources are becoming stretched even further due to diminished Federal investment. Arts organisations are more limited in their resources. They do not have the same capacity to create new work, foster new talent or work alongside, and support, independent artists. This compromises the stability and sustainability of the creative ecosystem in two interconnected ways. Firstly, larger arts organisations are unable to offer the same opportunities for artists and arts workers. Secondly, the small-medium sector is unable to flourish and provide opportunities to emerging artists. Larger arts organisations rely on the pipeline of talent coming through the small to medium sector; this pipeline has been severely compromised in recent years.

The loss of infrastructure and support for creative industries are real threats to the sustainable long-term growth, employment and delivery of cultural benefits for all Victorians. Urgent attention is required to nurture a creative workforce, and to produce experimental new work. All too often, history shows us that once major hard and soft infrastructure goes, it is unlikely to return.

Recommendation 1:

That the Victorian Government provide additional investment to multi-year funding programs.

Recommendation 2:

That the Victorian Government index Victorian grants and multi-year funding programs (Organisations Investment Program and Major Performing Arts Organisations).

Capability and capacity building

Many arts organisations are experiencing increased financial and resource strain. This means that arts workers don't have the capacity or specialist knowledge to capitalise on valuable business opportunities and deepen engagement with audiences. If arts organisations were able to further develop capacity and capability internally, or afford to access it externally, this would support a well-functioning arts ecosystem.

Key areas that arts organisations would benefit from targeted investment in include 'best practice' governance and business processes; data analytics training to inform marketing and gain consumer insights; and audience development. More effective and innovative practices within arts organisations will, in turn, assure funding bodies that these organisations are sustainable and viable.

Recommendation 3:

That the Victorian Government provide targeted investment to Victorian arts organisations through support for:

- i) 'best practice' governance and business processes;
- ii) data analytics training; and
- iii) audience development.

Live music

Victoria, and the Victorian Government, has a long and celebrated tradition of nurturing live music. Melbourne hosts 62,000 live music concerts each year and Victoria has three times more live music performances than the national average.³ Melbourne is also home to more songwriters than anywhere else in the country and is increasingly attracting artists from interstate. The livelihood of both musicians and the contemporary music sector is dependent on live music. To foster the continued growth of live music, the Victorian Government must provide additional support for existing organisations to take the lead and maintain momentum within the industry.

Additional support to leverage live music in Victoria may include:

- investment in Music Victoria to champion the contemporary music sector. Since their creation in 2010, they have been the champion for Victoria's music industry and overseen the implementation of the highly regarded Music Works program
- ongoing investment in the Victorian Music Development Office, The Push, CHANGES Music Summit & Festival, and the Music Victoria Awards.

Recommendation 4:

That the Victorian Government provide additional support for live music in Victoria through:

- i) investment to further leverage Music Victoria to champion the contemporary music sector; and
- ii) ongoing investment in the Victorian Music Development Office, The Push, CHANGES Music Summit & Festival, and the Music Victoria Awards.

b. Growing audiences and markets**Collaboration**

The creative industries in Victoria employ 260,000 Victorians, who operate in a rich arts ecosystem that spans from iconic cultural attractions to artistic work in local communities. There is a unique opportunity to connect creative minds and generate great ideas for the benefit of all Victorians.

³ Music Victoria and the City of Melbourne, Victorian Live Music Census 2012
(www.musicvictoria.com.au/assets/Documents/Victorian_Live_Music_Census_2012.pdf)

The Victorian Government could take the lead on encouraging more collaboration at both an industry and a sector-level. Linking otherwise disconnected arts workers and organisations would help facilitate an exchange of ideas, resources and talent. This would target how to best engage with audiences and address emerging gaps and challenges in the creative industries. In this context, it is crucial that subsidised and commercial venues are afforded equal priority regarding any sector consultation process, given their shared goals, needs and challenges.

The Victorian Government could also facilitate opportunities for collaboration, through funding streams to incentivise co-production and co-creation. This would remove the transactional nature of producer/presenter and encourage more collaboration between Melbourne and regional areas. Specific long-term and strategic co-commissioning and co-producing artistic work, as well as opportunities for residencies and capacity building, could create a meaningful whole-of-state outcome.

Finally, there is the opportunity for the Victorian Government to pilot joint initiatives focused on live performance. Such initiatives developed across government sectors, such as health, education and multicultural affairs, would help to build community cohesion and boost the profile of the creative industries.

Recommendation 5:

That the Victorian Government takes the lead on encouraging more collaboration at both an industry and a sector-level through:

- i) linking otherwise disconnected arts workers and organisations to facilitate an exchange of ideas, resources and talent;
- ii) facilitating opportunities for collaboration, through funding streams to incentivise co-production and co-creation; and
- iii) consideration of pilot joint initiatives developed across government sectors that focus on live performance.

c. Creative spaces and precincts (infrastructure)

Cultural infrastructure

A key element of a thriving arts and cultural ecosystem includes first-class infrastructure in which to present live performances, increase tourism potential and program for future audiences. 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-over-year attendance growth between 5% and 17%⁴
- adjust to the growth in Victoria's population, which is projected to grow to approximately 10 million people by 2051, with Greater Melbourne reaching around 8 million at the same time⁵

⁴ EY (2018), *Live performance industry in Australia, 2017 Ticket Attendance and Revenue report*, prepared for Live Performance Australia

⁵ Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2016) *Victoria in future 2016*

- include venues of varying sizes that can accommodate productions by local, commercial and interstate companies
- have the capability to stage productions, which increasingly involve greater technical requirements, in order to meet audience expectations.

Enhancing physical infrastructure benefits everyone in the community. It is important to co-invest with local government in infrastructure improvements and ensure that people of all backgrounds and abilities can enjoy live performance. Additional infrastructure or redevelopment of existing infrastructure could better support safe and vibrant live performance districts in metropolitan and regional areas. This could include development of more accessible and environmentally friendly building features, and support for programs promoting greater accessibility in venues, like *Get Skilled Access*.

Recommendation 6:

That the Victorian Government co-invest with local government in additional infrastructure or redevelopment of existing infrastructure to improve accessibility and to be more environmentally friendly.

Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation

Melbourne's arts precinct at Southbank has one of the highest concentrations of arts, cultural and creative organisations anywhere in the world – and presents up to 3000 performances and exhibitions each year. The Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation will modernise Arts Centre Melbourne's Theatre Building in its first major upgrade in 37 years, and create a new creative hub with spaces and facilities for Victoria's small to medium and independent arts sector.

Redevelopment of the Melbourne Arts Precinct is a major project that will extend the cultural footprint of Victoria in a significant way and deliver a full range of economic, social and cultural benefits. It will further enhance cultural assets and experiences for Victorians and interstate and international visitors. It will also support artists and production technicians within a thriving creative ecosystem. Securing funding from the Victorian Government for all stages of the Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation is vital to cement Victoria's status as Australia's cultural capital and as a global creative centre.

Recommendation 7:

That the Victorian Government secure funding for all stages of the Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation.

Small-medium sized venues

Having the right infrastructure is important for emerging and early career artists to experiment and trial their work, gain performance experience and build new audiences. More support is required to offer subsidised spaces that are fit-for-purpose, adaptable to different forms of artistic work and well-maintained by professional staff.

A bold aspiration would be to integrate live performance spaces into major state infrastructure projects and accommodate low-impact cultural and creative spaces into future developments or existing, vacant infrastructure. This would enable emerging and early career artists to gain exposure, develop a vibrant arts community and enhance local economies.

Recommendation 8:

That the Victorian Government co-invest with local government in subsidised live performance spaces for emerging and early career artists to experiment and trial their work, gain performance experience and build new audiences.

Cultural hubs

The process of bringing an idea to life can often take many years, and support should be available for arts makers across Victoria. Access to active creative spaces is integral to the creative process and provides more opportunities for exposure and collaboration. It is therefore crucial that these spaces are available across the state for arts makers to experiment, learn, expand and diversify their work in both the short-term and long-term.

There is an opportunity to invest in the development and/or revitalisation of infrastructure to establish cultural hubs in regional and outer metropolitan areas of Victoria. Cultural hubs would improve the liveability of communities and help to stimulate commercial and communal activity, including through local and international tourism. Encouraging cultural engagement, recognition and support among arts makers and audiences in regional and outer metropolitan areas would also feed into the wider creative ecosystem and stimulate Victoria's live performance revenue.

Recommendation 9:

That the Victorian Government support local government to establish and maintain cultural hubs in regional and outer metropolitan areas of Victoria.

d. Equality of access**Regional touring and access**

The Touring Victoria fund enables Victorian arts and cultural organisations or arts makers to tour a professional production, performance, exhibition or program to regional and outer-metropolitan Victoria. Regional touring enables Victorians to access cultural experiences and expands the audience reach of professional Victorian-based presenters, arts companies, and arts makers.

The current Touring Victoria guidelines limit funding to net touring costs and do not cover costs associated with core marketing, administration and organisational overhead functions. Therefore, regional areas not only suffer from the tyranny of distance, but also from a lack of capability and capacity. For example, staff at regional venues are often 'jacks of all trades' and do not have the resources to adequately market a show. This may result in not enough tickets being sold to make a regional tour viable.

Bringing live productions to regional communities would be more successful if marketing and audience development capability existed in the producing company to support regional venues, or if regional venues could access a subsidy on the fees charged by the producing company to bring the work to the regional venue. Consideration should be given to expanding Touring Victoria's funding criteria to include audience development and a subsidy for sell-off fees or high-risk work.

Recommendation 10:

That the Victorian Government increase funding for Touring Victoria and expand funding criteria to include core marketing, administration and organisational overhead functions.

e. Diversity at all levels

There are opportunities for Victoria to continue to build and diversify audiences, employees, consumers and markets, and fortify their creative ecosystem. Victoria is home to more than six million people, who hail from over 200 countries, speak more than 220 languages and dialects, and follow more than 120 faiths. The artistic works of Victoria's First Peoples showcase extraordinary sophistication. About one in five Victorians has a disability. This richness of diversity should be mirrored in the creative industries to ensure artistic work and cultural experiences are reflective of the audience's own stories and voices. This will not only serve to showcase the genuine breadth of creative expression and storytelling in Victoria, but also attract, empower and inspire future generations of audiences and arts workers alike.

For example, the success of a new Australian play, *Counting and Cracking*, highlighted the power of diversity, inclusion and imagination in the creative industries. S. Shakthidharan's play about four generations of a Sri Lankan-Australian migrant family was lauded in sell-out seasons as a provocative and illuminating work. At the 2019 Helpmann Awards, *Counting and Cracking* won seven of the eight categories it was nominated in, including Best New Australian Work, Best Production of a Play and Best Direction of a Play.

Creating and staging culturally diverse work is often costly and requires arts organisations to be flexible in their processes. Accommodating cultural needs is often at odds with standard operating models, which are structured to minimise both financial cost and time pressure. Contingency to address cultural protocols and other cultural needs, including in rehearsal spaces, would help support culturally diverse work and attract more diverse arts workers and audiences.

Recommendation 11:

That the Victorian Government support Victoria's arts workers, inclusive of First Peoples, LGBTIQ+ Victorians, people with disability, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, to showcase the diverse stories and voices of audiences in artistic work.

Recommendation 12:

That the Victorian Government ensures there is flexibility within funding structures and models to account for cultural protocols and other cultural needs where government funding is provided to support culturally diverse programs.

f. Engaging globally

International touring

Significant major arts and cultural organisations based in Victoria are unable to apply for touring support from the Victorian Government. These organisations are consequently not building demand from international presenters and within the lucrative international market. Strategic support of Victorian major performing arts companies would help leverage these organisations, build global awareness of our creative industries and companies, and promote us internationally as Australia's premier cultural destination.

Recommendation 13:

That the Victorian Government establish a funding program to support international touring activities and international promotion of significant major arts organisations based in Victoria.

Cultural diplomacy

The arts can help create connections and support cultural diplomacy. Victoria's creative industries exports are currently worth around \$1.5 billion. Global demand for creative exports is rising, and there is continued strong growth in Asian economies. Cultural tourism from China alone could be worth \$1-2 billion annually for Victoria by 2025.⁶ Initiatives such as Art Asia TOPA (Asia-Pacific Triennial of Performing Arts), which was created by Arts Centre Melbourne, engage audiences through a celebration of Asian-focused performance and culture. There is an opportunity to further build and deepen meaningful intercultural relationships through arts and culture within the Asia Pacific region and with established and emerging Asian communities in Victoria. These relationships may lead to other opportunities for Victoria, in terms of tourism, international education, trade and investment.

Recommendation 14:

That the Victorian Government provide support to further build and deepen meaningful intercultural relationships through arts and culture within the Asia Pacific region and with established and emerging Asian communities in Victoria.

g. Technology and its impact

Digital content

Increasingly, arts organisations are in the business of creating both live and digital content to expand their operating models and audience reach. Digital content helps build engagement with audiences, builds company brands (locally and internationally) and is a vital component of the creative ecosystem. Practicable or environmentally sustainable digital theatre also has a role to play when physical touring is not feasible. Investment in infrastructure to further develop and enhance the creation and delivery of digital content would improve accessibility and establish a larger audience in interstate and intrastate rural and regional areas, including in schools and community centres.

⁶ Boston Consulting Group (2017), *Melbourne as a Global Cultural Destination*, prepared for Creative Victoria

Recommendation 15:

That the Victorian Government invest in infrastructure to further develop and enhance the creation and delivery of digital content to support companies' business development activities and to improve accessibility and establish a larger audience in rural and regional areas.

h. Safety and wellbeing

Maintaining the safety and mental wellbeing of arts workers is a key challenge in the creative industries. Arts workers often operate under significant stress, due to the nature of their roles, funding challenges and job insecurity. Research indicates that many suffer from anxiety, burnout and stress.

The Arts Wellbeing Collective is an Arts Centre Melbourne initiative that started as a pilot in 2017. Now the Arts Wellbeing Collective comprises a consortium of more than 100 Victorian arts and cultural organisations, including independent companies, small to medium organisations, regional and rural centres, and major institutions. Its vision is to effect better mental health and wellbeing for performing arts workers and in creative workplaces across the industry.

Membership to the Arts Wellbeing Collective is free and open to all performing arts workers and organisations. Initiatives championed by the Arts Wellbeing Collective include tailored face-to-face workshops, Mental Health First Aid, practical resources and a new pilot program, the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline, which is a free and confidential 24/7 phone service. It is critical that the Victorian Government provide funding for the Arts Wellbeing Collective to expand its work as it is rolled out across 2020-2021.

Recommendation 16:

That the Victorian Government provide investment to further support and expand the work of the Arts Wellbeing Collective in 2020+.

i. The next generation

Expansion of the Creative Learning Partnerships program

The current Creative Learning Partnerships program is available to all Victorian schools and fosters hands-on practical skills and creative talent. Exposure to diverse and challenging learning experiences also helps build a captive arts audience from childhood. Successful funding recipients of the Creative Learning Partnerships program host working artists, such as musicians, actors, visual artists, who work alongside teachers and students in classrooms.

All schools should have the opportunity to explore how creativity can enhance and advance education outcomes across the curriculum. Currently, funding is not permitted over consecutive years for recipients of the Creative Learning Partnerships program, irrespective of outcomes. Expansion of the program to allow for consecutive funding would help to capitalise on existing work and successes, which is particularly crucial for projects that engage Aboriginal or diverse creative professionals or organisations.

Recommendation 17:

That the Victorian Government expand the Creative Learning Partnerships program to support more Victorian schools and allow artists to be eligible for funding for consecutive years.

Skills gaps

A key challenge for many performing arts companies is being able to access certain skills. It is crucial to foster skills in those areas where there is a skills gap. From an industry perspective, skills and qualifications that are particularly in short supply in Victoria are those of technicians (i.e. lighting, sound) and company managers. There is a need to develop and nurture a skilled creative and technical workforce locally, while at the same time giving them reason to stay – that is, having thriving creative industries that offer attractive and sustainable career prospects.

There is a great opportunity to renew focus on industry-based training in the creative industries and target areas of greatest need. Early exposure to the creative industries, through arts-based work experience programs, industry-based training and mentoring programs, are all means to gain valuable skills and encourage talent. Further supporting and scaling up Arts Centre Melbourne's Technical Training Services via their Registered Training Organisation is one means to address a serious skills gap and develop the next generation of technical production professionals.

Recommendation 18:

That the Victorian Government provide further support to address key skills gaps through industry-based training through scaling up Arts Centre Melbourne's Technical Training Services.