

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia Council welcomes support package for the arts

The Australia Council for the Arts has welcomed the Australian Government's commitment of \$27 million in targeted funding to support regional arts, First Nations arts and music charity Support Act.

CEO Adrian Collette AM said:

"We welcome the commitment of \$27 million of targeted support to some of the most vulnerable areas of the arts. The impact of COVID-19 has been catastrophic to the creative sector, which has been one of the industries hardest hit by the public health measures now in place."

Today's announcement will see \$10 million provided to industry charity Support Act to provide essential financial support and counselling to artists and crew who have seen their work and livelihoods dry up overnight. This is critical support for the Australian music industry which has been devastated by the restrictions on public gatherings.

The compounded impact of the bushfires and now COVID-19 has devastated regional arts which are an essential driver of regional economies. We applaud the targeted commitment of \$10 million through the regional arts fund which will support regional artists and organisations to develop new work and adapt to the changing circumstances.

As well as being more susceptible to COVID-19 than non-Indigenous communities, First Nations communities have a much greater reliance on income from arts and cultural activity, particularly in remote areas with art centres. Many art centres have closed their doors, effectively shutting off key revenue streams as well as vital health and community infrastructure. The \$7 million in additional funding allocated under the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support program will address some immediate and urgent needs in this part of the sector.

"Ours is a highly complex and diverse sector that provides enormous value – economic, social and cultural – to all Australians. We acknowledge and welcome this commitment, in addition to the potential assistance of whole of government programs such as the JobKeeper and JobSeeker legislation. These new measures mark the first step towards addressing some of the critical issues currently being faced by the creative sector. However, there remain significant gaps that need to be urgently addressed.

We continue to work closely with the Office for the Arts and our Minister to provide advice and information to assist the Government's response to this urgent crisis."

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