

Scott Morrison pledges \$250m to revive arts sector

- **GEOFF CHAMBERS**

FEDERAL POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

[@Chambersgc](#)

VICTORIA LAURIE

FEDERAL POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

- JUNE 24, 2020

Scott Morrison will use a \$250m arts package to revive Australia's entertainment scene and work with national cabinet leaders to further ease COVID-19 restrictions and unlock music festivals, theatres, and live venues.

Some of the country's largest cultural institutions that are facing threats to their viability because of the coronavirus lockdown will be handed \$35m in direct financial support under the plan

The Prime Minister, who will announce the arts package in Sydney on Thursday, will frame the support measures as not being just for actors and performers but also for "tradies who build stage sets" and "computer specialists who create special effects".

After months of pressure from the \$112bn cultural and creative industries sector to provide additional support for venues and businesses forced to shut their doors, the Morrison government has agreed to provide loans and grants over the next year to reactivate businesses.

Mr Morrison, who last week held a roundtable with arts industry leaders including pop singer Guy Sebastian and classical artist Mark Vincent, said the government understood the long-term damage to the sector.

With social restrictions being gradually lifted under the COVID-19 economic road map, Mr Morrison will seek approval from the national cabinet to provide "greater certainty" in relation to timetables to get businesses back in operation.

The support package for the sector, which has been crippled by COVID-19 restrictions, adds to the \$100m-per-month in government support flowing to

entertainment businesses and workers through JobKeeper payments and cashflow support. The government signed-off on the package on Monday. It includes \$75m in seed investment to reactivate productions and tours stalled during the pandemic and \$90m in loans.

Other measures include \$50m to kickstart local screen productions and the establishment of a creative economy taskforce.

“We’re delivering the capital these businesses need so they can start working again and support the hundreds of thousands of Australians who make their living in the creative economy,” Mr Morrison said.

WA Youth Theatre Company artistic director James Berlyn said some of his young actors could benefit from government funding to reactivate shows that had to be cancelled. “We hope to resurrect our award-winning Perth Festival hit *Rest*, staged in a Perth graveyard — a bit like a post-COVID rebirth,” Mr Berlyn said.

Mr Berlyn said he hadn’t seen the detail of the package but “anything that helps us create work will help give these young people a future in the creative industries.”

However, Mr Morrison said the package was “as much about supporting the tradies who build stage sets or computer specialists who create the latest special effects as it is about supporting actors and performers in major productions”.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures shows almost 420,000 carpenters, electricians, finance and project managers, human resources professionals, cleaners and kitchenhands were employed in supporting creative industries.

With festivals, pubs, clubs, theatres, galleries and stadiums all heavily impacted by COVID-19, Mr Morrison said he was confident entertainment businesses would find new ways to “operate while current social-distancing measures remain in place”.