

# Struggling arts sector gets \$250m lifeline

The grants and low-interest loans are designed to help arts and entertainment companies get back on their feet as social distancing measures are eased.

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Jun 24, 2020 – 10.30pm

The Morrison government will offer [\\$250 million in grants and low-interest loans to help the struggling arts, film and entertainment sectors](#) get back on their feet, in the latest industry-specific COVID-19 support package.

The sectors, among the worst affected by the coronavirus lockdown, will receive funding to help restart stalled productions, stage new events, and to remain sustainable while social distancing restricts audience sizes.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who will launch the 12-month package on Thursday, hopes it will encourage states and territories to relax restrictions that are currently keeping venues closed.

Notwithstanding the current outbreak in Victoria, Mr Morrison will make this point to state and territory leaders when the national cabinet meets on Friday.

Signed off on Tuesday night by the government's expenditure review committee, the package includes four key components. The first is \$75 million in grants of between \$75,000 and \$2 million to help "production and event businesses to put on new festivals, concerts, tours and events as social distancing restrictions ease".

The second is \$90 million in "show starter loans", which are Commonwealth-guaranteed concessional bank loans to fund new productions and events.

Another \$50 million in grants will be dedicated to a temporary interruption fund, set to be administered by Screen Australia and designed to help local film and television producers secure finance and restart filming and production.

Finally, \$35 million will be spent on direct grants to Commonwealth-funded arts and culture organisations facing threats to their viability because of the pandemic disruption.

[That will include theatre, dance, circus, music and other creative fields.](#)

A new creative economy taskforce will be established, made up of a ministerial taskforce to work with government and the Australia Council for the Arts to implement the Coalition's JobMaker plan for the creative economy.

Members of the taskforce will be named in coming days, with guidelines and eligibility rules for the grants and loan programs also yet to be detailed.

"This package is 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," Mr Morrison said.

"Many in the sector will find a new way to operate while the current social distancing measures remain in place, and while that won't be easy, I know there's a strong desire among all Australians to see the return of gigs, performances and events."

Labor and leaders of Australia's creative sector have called for urgent assistance since the start of the coronavirus downturn, with many artists and workers ineligible for JobKeeper unemployment assistance, and arts businesses forced to close their doors due to physical distancing requirements.

This week [the National Gallery of Australia](#) announced plans to cut about 10 per cent of its workforce amid a major funding shortfall. About 30 jobs will go, following years of the Coalition's public service efficiency-dividend budget cuts.

National Association of Visual Arts executive director Esther Anatolitis this week warned venue closures and a huge drop in sales had made it very difficult for artists to earn a living.

"Any arts package must be made available, openly and fairly, to everyone in the arts industry, including university art schools who've also been excluded," she said.

"The list of who's been excluded in the visual arts, craft and design sector is lengthy and troubling."