

Draft Core Skills Occupations List

Submission from Live Performance Australia

1. About Live Performance Australia

Live Performance Australia (LPA) is the peak body for Australia's live arts and entertainment industry. Established over 100 years ago in 1917 and registered 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.

2. Industry Context

The live arts and entertainment industry is a vast ecosystem reflecting a diverse range of art forms and comprises small, medium and large businesses, sole operators and tens of thousands of performers, artists, creatives and technical crew.

Our industry supports performing arts companies and a wide range of workers across commercial businesses (i.e. producers; promoters; ticketing companies; technical suppliers, such as those that provide stage lighting, special effects, staging, audio, audio-visual and other performance technologies; and other service providers, such as crewing companies and security providers). Our industry also employs workers in business support roles, such as marketing and communications, public relations, philanthropy, finance, accounting, and IT.

As highlighted in previous submissions to Jobs and Skills Australia via the Skills Priority List process, the live arts and entertainment industry is experiencing skills shortages in technical and production roles. While the 2023 Skills Priority List acknowledges that sound and lighting technicians are in national shortage, industry feedback suggests that skills shortages extend to roles such as stage managers, production managers, staging technicians, technical directors and other specialist technical and production roles.

The live arts and entertainment industry is trying to rebuild capacity and capability, after having lost many skilled workers during the pandemic for increased job security, while trying to compete for skilled workers from other industries that can offer more attractive salaries.

3. Summary of Recommendations

LPA has consulted with a wide range of Members on the draft Core Skills Occupations List (CSOL). The table below outlines the occupations that were identified as necessary for inclusion in the Confident On

list. The primary reasons for these recommendations are then summarised in *Section 4: Details and Evidence*.

In essence, LPA advocates for the broadest range of occupations possible to be included on the Confident On list. While the number of people brought into Australia using the current range of employer sponsored visas is small, it is an avenue that some employers in the live arts and entertainment industry (such as dance companies and orchestras) look to when all other options have failed to find a suitable local candidate. The ability to recruit skills from overseas must remain open, otherwise the business activities of those employers that need overseas workers to fill skills gaps are placed in jeopardy.

ANZSCO	Occupation	LPA recommendation
Confident On		
111111	Chief Executive or Managing Director	Retain on Confident On list
139911	Arts Administrator or Manager	Retain on Confident On list
212111	Artistic Director	Retain on Confident On list
212317	Technical Director	Retain on Confident On list
Confident Off		
149311	Conference and Event Organiser	Move to Confident On list
211111	Actor	Move to Confident On list
211112	Dancer or Choreographer	Move to Confident On list
211113	Entertainer or Variety Artist	Move to Confident On list
211199	Actors, Dancers and Other Entertainers nec	Move to Confident On list
211211	Composer	Move to Confident On list
211213	Musician (Instrumental)	Move to Confident On list
211214	Singer	Move to Confident On list
211299	Music Professionals nec	Move to Confident On list
212112	Media Producer (excluding Video)	Move to Confident On list
212311	Art Director (Film, Television or Stage)	Move to Confident On list
212312	Director (Film, Television, Radio or Stage)	Move to Confident On list
212399	Film, Television, Radio and Stage Directors nec	Move to Confident On list
232311	Fashion Designer	Move to Confident On list
393213	Dressmaker or Tailor	Move to Confident On list
399514	Make Up Artist	Move to Confident On list
399515	Musical Instrument Maker or Repairer	Move to Confident On list
Targeted for Consultation		
149912	Cinema or Theatre Manager	Move to Confident On list
211212	Music Director	Move to Confident On list
212316	Stage Manager	Move to Confident On list
212318	Video Producer	Move to Confident On list
399513	Light Technician	Move to Confident On list
399516	Sound Technician	Move to Confident On list
399599	Performing Arts Technicians nec	Move to Confident On list

4. Details and Evidence

Other migration pathways are limited due to salary thresholds

The occupations that LPA has recommended for inclusion on the CSOL predominantly fall within the salary range of \$70,000 to \$135,000 per annum. For example, salaries for members of an orchestra will commonly range from approximately \$75,000 for Tutti musicians through to \$107,000 for an Associate Concertmaster (see **Attachment 1: Example Musician Salary Table**).

LPA's Members have noted that the average salaries for technical production roles are between \$80,000 for a Stage Manager through to \$130,000 for Director of Production Services. Average salaries for costume/wardrobe roles range from \$63,000 for a Costumier through to \$105,000 for Head of Costume and Executive Producers are likely to earn a salary of around \$125,000. However, some junior technical and production roles may pay less than \$70,000.

Although our Members can currently use the Temporary Skill Shortage (Subclass 482) visa for occupations within these salary parameters, this visa will be replaced with the new Skills in Demand Visa (Core Skills Pathway). In most cases, these occupations will not be eligible for the proposed Specialist Skills Pathway (\$135,000+ per annum) or Essential Skills Pathway.

Similarly, many will be unable to access the existing Global Talent (Subclass 858) visa (formerly the Distinguished Talent visa) due to the high-income threshold of \$167,500+ per annum.

The Temporary Activity (subclass 408) visa may be used for certain events, but will not adequately address skills shortages or provide the migration outcomes/benefits possible under a longer term visa.

While the new Skills in Demand Visa (Core Skills Pathway) may not be used very often for some of the roles recommended for inclusion, it is necessary for an option to remain available where required.

Australia has a shortage of performing arts technicians and industry leaders

LPA's Members have consistently noted significant industry-wide skills shortages across Australia, particularly for a range of technical and production roles. While the critical shortage of lighting and sound technicians has now been recognised in the 2023 Skills Priority List, many other shortages remain unrecognised by the Australian Government.

LPA's Members have specifically noted a lack of workers with strong industry experience. This is attributed to the large number of experienced workers who left the industry throughout the pandemic for reasons such as increased job stability - exacerbating already critical skill shortages across the industry. This has reduced the number of qualified candidates for more senior roles. The lack of experienced workers is placing extra pressure on those that remain in the industry. These roles are critical to the successful presentation of a live event, and without someone filling the role, the show cannot go on. Therefore, these experienced workers often bear the brunt of the workload (including supporting less experienced workers), which then leads to burnout and people leaving the industry, which further exacerbates skills shortages.

Evidence of these shortages are provided in LPA's submission and report regarding the JSA Skills Priority List Survey (February 2024).

In addition, research undertaken by SaCSA on education enrolments confirms a decline in enrolments for performing arts technicians and sound technicians. While there was a very modest growth in stage manager enrolment, there was a low completion rate.

It is vital that migration pathways allow for overseas workers to help mitigate these shortages and help to train Australian workers who are new to the industry.

Australia needs access to highly specialised performers

Many performers employed at LPA Member companies (such as The Australian Ballet, WA Ballet, Sydney Dance Company, symphony orchestras and chamber orchestras) operate at an elite level, with strong international reputations. The talent pool for musicians and dancers at these elite levels is small.

Roles within dance companies and orchestras are very specific and highly skilled. For example, while there may be many skilled violin players within Australia, it can be much harder for a symphony orchestra to fill all bassoon and viola roles domestically to the required level of excellence.

Similarly, overseas dancers are used to bring diversity to Australian dance companies (in terms of cultural background, dance style and skills) and upskill Australian trained dancers. Dancers employed at dance companies on Temporary Skills Shortage visas typically earn a salary of \$75,000 - \$105,000 per annum (see **Attachment 2**), which is higher than the median annual salary for dancers and choreographers (\$41,600-\$51,999).¹

In terms of migration outcomes, our Members that have brought dancers or musicians into Australia under the Temporary Skills Shortage visa report that these dancers and musicians remain working in the profession.

As such, LPA strongly recommends that the following roles be included on the CSOL to account for specialisation needs:

- Dancer or Choreographer
- Musician (Instrumental).

¹ 2021 Census data