

**INQUIRY INTO THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN
VICTORIA**

Organisation: Theatre Network Australia

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Submission by TNA

24 January 2025

Theatre Network Australia

Theatre Network Australia (TNA) is a leading industry development organisation for the performing arts, prioritising independent artists and small to medium companies. A national organisation with a dedicated Victorian program, TNA serves over 650 members and reaches and represents over 5,000 more performing arts workers through our communications and research. TNA services a wide range of performing arts, including theatre, dance, circus and physical theatre, multi-arts, experimental arts, and children, young people and the arts.

Victorian members make up 56% of TNA's total membership.

The economic and social impact of the Commonwealth Government's Australian cultural policy, Revive, on Victoria's arts and cultural industries including, in particular, Victoria's share of national arts and cultural spending.

TNA is confident that the relevant Federal departments and agencies will readily provide the most accurate data to address this part of the inquiry.

As a general indication of Victoria's share of national arts and cultural spending, TNA has examined funding from Creative Australia. Using [publicly available data on grant funding awarded by Creative Australia](#) and population data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the funding-population discrepancy can be demonstrated for each state/territory for each year between 2015 and 2024. The average discrepancy for this period is:

ACT	0.1%
NSW	-0.5%
NT	4.8%
QLD	-6.6%
SA	1.0%
TAS	1.2%
VIC	2.9%
WA	-3.0%

This data indicates that on average over the last decade, against population, Victoria has received a proportionally larger share of national arts and cultural spending from Creative Australia (+2.9%), second only to the Northern Territory.

It is worth noting that proportion according to population size is only one measure, and there are many other factors that impact funding allocation. These include how many and what kind of applications are

received from any given jurisdiction in any given funding round, investing in underserved areas with equity in mind, considering the differences in geographical scale in jurisdictions and how that affects costs and servicing needs, targeted strategic initiatives, and more.

[TNA's 2025-26 Federal Pre-Budget Submission](#) outlines what we believe are the most pressing areas of investment that the Federal Government needs to address through Revive. This includes tax reform to incentivise giving and alleviate financial stress for creatives, support for national touring, exchange, and regional development, and support for children, young people and the arts.

Regional Victoria's share of national arts and cultural spending.

TNA is confident that the relevant Federal departments and agencies will readily provide the most accurate data to address this part of the inquiry. TNA also refers to the inquiry submission made by Regional Arts Victoria as a reliable source of information and perspective in this area.

The ongoing financial sustainability of the seven national performing arts training organisations including whether Victoria's share of this funding is adequate.

In May 2024, a year after this inquiry was announced, the Australian Government [announced an additional \\$115.2m over four years](#) to support the financial sustainability of the eight National Arts Training Organisations. A further \$36.4 million in funding will be indexed and ongoing from 2028–29 to ensure the viability of the organisations into the future. Of the eight organisations three are based in Victoria, four are based in New South Wales, and one (Australian Youth Orchestra) is based in both Victoria and New South Wales. None are based in any of the other six states and territories and so receive no funding as a part of this program.

Whether the Revive policy and relevant state government policies and spending provide sufficient support and impetus to rebuild and sustain Victoria's cultural and creative industries following the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector.

In August 2024 [TNA made a submission](#) as a part of the Victorian Government's public consultation process for the state's next creative industries strategy, Creative State 3.

In this submission, TNA outlined how Victoria has fallen well behind most other states and territories in terms of our investment in the performing arts. This is damaging our reputation, limiting the sector's ability to provide creative experiences for all Victorians, and seeing talented and experienced leaders and artists leave the sector or state because of unsustainable careers.

In TNA's 2024 Member Survey, 59% of independent artists said they have **considered leaving the arts industry**, with 33% saying they **have taken action to leave the industry** (such as retraining). The main reasons for considering leaving the industry were:

- **Burnout** (53%)
- **Lack of employment/work** (46%)
- **Seeking better pay/benefits** (43%) and **seeking a better work/life balance** (43%)

Arts investment from Creative Victoria has not been indexed since it was established, leading to a decline in real dollar terms of 22.8% since 2017,¹ and contributing to the following:

- Victoria's total arts spend in 2021-22 was \$414.9m, with funding for Theatre, Dance, and Circus and Physical Theatre altogether totalling \$16.7m (4% of expenditure).
- Victoria's total arts expenditure was the highest in the country until 2016-17, but since then has **fallen** below that of NSW.
- Victoria had the **fourth lowest arts spend per capita** at \$63.20 in 2021-22, after TAS, QLD, and WA. SA spent \$99.70 per capita, and NSW spent \$70.60.
- In Theatre, Victoria has the **third lowest spend per capita** (\$2.10) after QLD and ACT.
- In Dance Victoria **has consistently had the lowest spend per capita** of any state and territory since 2015-16, dropping to \$0.40 in 2021-22. NSW spends \$0.80, SA \$1.30, and WA \$3.30.
- In Circus and Physical Theatre Victoria has seen a **50% decline** to \$0.10 per capita, leaving it with the **lowest spend of any state and territory**. NSW spends \$0.20 per capita, and SA \$0.30.²

Current investment levels are creating less sustainable careers, eliminating potential for growth and ambition, disincentivising innovation and creative risk taking, and restricting the sector's ability to expand to new audiences, consumers, and new markets. TNA's consultation with members makes it clear that an uplift to basic funding for creative work to be developed and presented is what is most needed right now.

In the 2022-26 round of the Creative Enterprises Program (CEP), 78 small-to-medium organisations were funded with a total of \$20,294,638 pa for 2022-2025. Adjusted for inflation, this is an increase of \$356,912, or \$4,575 per organisation. However, this amount also includes one-off Sustaining Creative Organisations investments made in 2022 to 24 organisations, and so it is more likely that this amount represents a decrease in funding. Within this cohort, which shrank from 88 organisations in the previous round, only 16 continuing organisations received any funding increase.

For independent artists, the Creator's Fund was not renewed in the last state budget, and there have only been three rounds of the Creative Projects Fund since 2020, with grants capped at \$20,000. Rising costs, increased workloads, and competitive and precarious investment is damaging our creative workforce. New federal employment legislation (introduced in August 2024) will enforce better pay and conditions for creatives, but current investment levels are not high enough to meet even these minimum standards and will lead to cancelled projects, sham contracting, and underpayment.

TNA encourages this inquiry committee to read [TNA's submission in full](#) and push for the Victorian Government to adequately resource Creative Victoria, as well as the priorities outlined in the new Creative State strategy when it is released.

More Information

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¹ [Australian Bureau of Statistics, Consumer Price Index, Australia March Quarter 2024](#)

² [Cultural funding and participation—National overview](#)