

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

Organisation: Victorian Major Arts Festivals Alliance

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Inquiry into the cultural and creative industries in Victoria – Submission

Victorian Major Arts Festivals Alliance, January 2025

This submission is by the Victorian Major Arts Festivals Alliance. We are: Melbourne Fringe, Melbourne International Comedy Festival, Melbourne International Film Festival, Melbourne International Jazz Festival, Melbourne Writers Festival, and Midsumma Festival. This submission was prepared collaboratively by the Festivals.



Introduction

Victorian Major Arts Festivals are critical soft infrastructure in the Victorian arts ecology, vital to sustaining the state's cultural and creative industries by supporting, developing and presenting work by independent artists and the small-to-medium sector. Through connecting artists, venues and ideas, our festivals bring people together locally, nationally and internationally to celebrate Victoria's extraordinary creative cultures.

Our Festivals are major economic drivers in the arts through employment and training, leveraging state assets, growing audiences, and delivering significant financial returns to the State.

Festivals are for everyone. We are inclusive and accessible and bring art to the people through free programs. We build community cohesion and engagement in metropolitan Melbourne and, with further investment, could increasingly reach the outer-metropolitan areas and regions.

World-Class Australian Artists and Artworks

Victorian Major Arts Festivals commission and support the development of home grown works by local artists that would not otherwise see the light of day. Our festivals are the single biggest driver of new works in Victoria. The success of these works on the local stage are often backed up by exporting the works internationally, thus amplifying the voices of Victorians around the world. Local artists frequently get their first break through our festivals, before moving onto successful careers here and overseas. This pipeline for the nurturing of emerging talent is critical to the arts ecology in Victoria. It's not only new talent that we nurture; our festivals also present work by established artists at the peak of their careers, ensuring bold, ambitious works are commissioned and presented on Victorian stages.

Accessible Art for Everyone

Victorian Major Arts Festivals are key to making art and culture accessible to all Victorians. Our festivals are inclusive and accessible. We also ensure Victoria's state assets and civic spaces are leveraged for cultural purposes for the benefit of its citizens. Through expanding open access and free programs, and by touring work to the outer suburbs and regional areas, festivals can reduce barriers to access for all Victorians. We all have a specific focus on increasing access for people living with a disability and for our First Nations community.

A Thriving Cultural and Creative Sector

Creative organisations are attracted to Victoria because of its innovative and thriving creative sector. Our high-achieving, successful festivals are a key part of sustaining this ecology. Closer collaboration between festivals will strengthen our collective efforts, maximise our limited resources, and grow our capacity for innovation. Post-Covid workforce shortages are still reverberating through the festivals sector. Sector-wide initiatives to train and retain festival workforces are necessary to meet immediate and emerging resourcing demands and to ensure that festivals thrive. Innovation requires an investment in the digital capacity of Victoria's Major Arts Festivals, particularly to maintain robust websites and ticketing infrastructure to ensure our resources remain secure and up to date.

Sustainable Creative Careers

Victorian Major Arts Festivals invest in sector development, commission and present work by independent artists and the small-to-medium sector, and train and develop Australian artists and staff, contributing to sustainable creative careers. Festivals make the cultural calendar richer, artists are better skilled, more developed, better connected, and financially better off, making it possible to sustain a creative career in this state.

Challenges to Pandemic Recovery and Adaptation

The core costs of delivering festivals in Australia are now up to 40% more than pre-COVID. This is having a major impact on the sector. Festivals around the country are pausing, closing and shrinking. Our iconic major festivals are facing a crisis and the arts sector's critical soft infrastructure is at risk unless there is new investment. To further exacerbate matters, the current cost of living crisis is affecting consumer behaviour. Audiences are buying tickets at the last minute, so additional investment in marketing to enable responsive strategies is needed to increase ticket sales and reach our full audience potential.

Our Combined Impact

1.52m Attendance	11,161 Victorian performances
\$29.6m Ticket sales	\$6.2m Artist fees

800+ New works premiered	10,388 Artists engaged
\$38.5m Total income	\$229m Partial economic impact

Impact Highlights:

Job opportunities and employment pathways

Generating **\$12m** in employment for **879** people*

Creative innovation

800+ new works premiered (**7.5%** of all festival events were world premieres)

Industry stability and growth

Paying **\$8.2m** directly to **10,388** artists in fees and box office revenue

11,161 Victorian performances and **727** exhibition days presented in Melbourne

Generating **\$29.7m** in ticket sales

Every **\$1** from Creative Victoria was leveraged **39 times** increasing participation and impact

Attended by **1.52m** people

Equitable access to the cultural and creative industries

Significant emerging artist, First Nations, Deaf and disability, CALD and gender diversity arts development and support programs

New audiences and markets

Significant presenters of international tours, artist exchanges and collaboration

Enabling interstate and international visitation with an average of **15%** of audiences coming from outside Melbourne

**Direct employment only. Employment of artists and indirect employment such as contractors not included.*