

**National Cultural Policy Submission**

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SJ Thewlis Pty Ltd



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Submitted by email on 25/03/26.



March 26 2026

National Cultural Policy Review  
Office for the Arts  
2 Phillip Law Street  
New Acton ACT 2601

Dear Minister Burke and the National Cultural Policy team,

**Re: Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation**

I am pleased to submit the attached discussion paper, *The Australian Event Industry: Driving Creativity, Productivity and Social Connection*, for consideration as part of the public consultation for Australia's next National Cultural Policy.

While the paper focuses on the Event Industry, its arguments go to a much broader issue: how the creative industries have fundamentally changed over the past four decades, how the role of creativity in Australian society has changed with them, and why the current policy framework does not reflect that reality. The Event Industry is used throughout as a detailed example of a major creative sector that is invisible under the current settings - but the arguments apply across many of the creative industries.

The paper is the most comprehensive document produced about the Australian Event Industry - 160 pages covering the industry's history, structure, workforce, economics, creative contribution, export capability, current policy gaps, and recommendations for national policy reform. It grew out of a submission to the Senate inquiry into the National Cultural Policy and was subsequently expanded as a submission to the Senate Select Committee Inquiry into Productivity.

It is based on six years of research and advocacy, conversations with hundreds of event colleagues, and my own experience from decades of producing events of nearly every kind.

I am submitting it to this consultation because it directly addresses the question the next National Cultural Policy needs to confront:

**What role does creativity actually play in Australia's society and economy - and is the current policy framework equipped to support it?**

I am an Event Industry professional with over 40 years of experience across event strategy, production, and industry advocacy - working across many of the creative industries throughout that time. I also advise organisations and governments on events, have been a key Event Industry witness at a number of parliamentary inquiries, and have led advocacy efforts including the landmark Save Victorian Events campaign.

## **A Threshold Issue**

A fundamental issue with the current policy - and with the consultation paper for the new one - is that the words "creative", "cultural" and "Arts" are used interchangeably throughout, even though they have very different meanings.

Is this to be a cultural policy, a creative industries policy, or an Arts policy? When it talks about "creative workers" does it really mean the workers in all creative industries, or just those in the Arts? The consultation paper talks about the \$67.4 billion economic value of the "cultural and creative sector" - but then focuses almost entirely on the Arts. Clarity is important.

These terms operate at different scales. "Arts" refers to practitioners, disciplines, and cultural expression. "Cultural" refers to identity, heritage, and societal meaning. "Creative industries" refers to the broader economic ecosystem - design, media, immersive experiences, entertainment, events, and much more. When policy language blurs these, it often leads to a mismatch: economic data reflects the full creative industries, but funding and support mechanisms narrow back to the Arts sector. That gap is exactly where many working creatives fall through.

This isn't just definitional. It determines who qualifies as a "creative worker", what kinds of work are valued, and where investment actually flows. The opportunity is to define each domain clearly, acknowledge their overlap, and design policy tools that address all three - rather than collapsing them into one and calling it a cultural policy.

In practice, the current policy is an Arts policy. It should be called one. And the broader creative industries - which include the Arts as an important subset, but extend far beyond them - need their own framework.

The attached paper explains why this distinction matters and what it means for national policy. But the starting point is simple: until the Government is clear about what it means by "cultural policy", the framework will continue to serve only the traditional Arts while the much larger creative economy remains invisible.

## **How the Creative Industries and the Role of Creativity Have Changed**

Over the past four decades, two related things have changed fundamentally. The creative industries have transformed - both economically, socially and culturally. And the role of creativity within society has changed just as profoundly.

Forty years ago, creative pursuits were the domain of a relative few. The barriers to entry were high. An eight plate Steenbeck flatbed editing table used for editing film cost more than a suburban house. A music recording studio cost even more. All required very high levels of technical experience to operate.

Access was gatekept by arts bodies, publishers, broadcasters, and record companies. The focus was on publicly funded high art and cultural institutions. The creative industries, to the extent the term was used at all, referred primarily to the traditional art forms.

That world has been transformed. What was once a small, culturally focused sector is now a central driver of innovation, employment, exports, and organisational change across the economy. Whereas once creative pursuits were something practiced by a few, they are now integral to the lives of a large proportion of the population - both as participants and consumers.

A feature film can be edited on a standard MacBook, and an iPad can do more than many 1980s recording studios. While the creative skills are still required, technical complexity is no longer a barrier.

Creativity is integral to organisations right across the economy. The scope has shifted from "Arts and culture" to broad creative industries. Access has shifted from gatekept to widely accessible. The perception has shifted from nice-to-have to strategic and essential. And entire industries have emerged around the application of creativity to business, community, and public life.

But Australia's National Cultural Policy has not kept pace with this transformation. The current framework still reflects a previous era - creativity as artistic expression, gatekept by institutions, supported through Arts funding.

During the implementation of the Revive policy, the definition of the cultural and creative sectors was reviewed and refined. The broader creative industries do not appear to have been consulted on this process - the very modest number of submissions were from the traditional Arts sector, even though the review was largely about the broader creative industries. The result was a definition that explicitly excluded the Event Industry. An event producer who conceives, designs, and delivers complex creative experiences - bringing together more creative disciplines than almost any other sector - was deemed neither creative nor part of the creative industries.

As I am one of these event producers who have been told they are not creative or a part of Australia's creative industries, this is very personal.

This is not just a definitional argument. It reveals a deeper assumption built into the current framework: that the Arts are the domain in which creative workers are engaged, and that the creative industries are essentially those that produce artistic work. That assumption belonged to a previous era. It does not reflect how creativity operates across the Australian economy and society in 2026.

### **The Distinction Between the Arts and the Broader Creative Industries**

The Arts and the broader creative industries overlap - and the Arts are an important subset of the creative industries. But they have different purposes and different roles.

The Arts are primarily concerned with cultural expression, artistic practice, and public cultural value. Much of the Arts sector relies on public funding, philanthropy, or mixed funding models. This is a legitimate and very important area of policy, and supporting it matters.

The broader creative industries extend well beyond the Arts. They include sectors where creativity is applied to generate economic, commercial, organisational, and social value across the economy. This includes experience design, industrial design, interactive and immersive media, game technology, creative technology, advertising, screen and multimedia production, architecture, the creator economy, and the Event Industry. These are largely market-based sectors that play major roles in innovation, organisational change, community connection, exports, and productivity.

Using "creative", "cultural" and "Arts" interchangeably leads to policy that is heavily focused on the Arts and cultural institutions, while much larger creative sectors remain outside formal recognition, measurement, and development frameworks.

The consequences of this conflation are visible. Screen Australia defines its purpose around compelling Australian storytelling - a legitimate Arts function. But it means the vast majority of commercial screen activity - corporate multimedia, broadcast production, real-time content, virtual production, and the creator economy - has no institutional support and no policy home. The Design Institute of Australia represents 380,000 designers, yet many of their disciplines are not even recognised in national occupation classifications. The creator economy, one of the largest and fastest-growing creative industries globally, is absent from national classifications entirely.

And the Event Industry - one of the largest creative production sectors in the country with a direct spend of over \$40 billion a year - remains invisible.

These are the parts of the creative economy most directly linked to innovation, technology adoption, and productivity growth. Yet they currently sit outside the Government's primary creative-industries policy framework.

### **What the Event Industry Actually Is**

The Event Industry is the network of people, skills, and businesses that professionally create, supply, and organise events - both in Australia and from Australia.

It is a creative industry. It brings together more creative disciplines than almost any other sector - including experience design, creative technology, screen and multimedia production, performance, music, lighting, audio, animation, content creation, brand experience, and emerging technologies - and applies them to real-world outcomes at scale. It operates through a project-based production model, assembling temporary teams of small businesses, specialist suppliers, and freelance professionals for each event - in a structure similar to film, television, and live performance.

Events are one of the few mechanisms that operate simultaneously across economic, creative, and social domains. They are how industries share knowledge and stay current. They are how businesses launch strategies, build partnerships, and drive change. They are how communities connect, celebrate, and sustain themselves. They are how regions generate economic activity and build local pride.

In regional and rural Australia, events are often among the most important things that happen in a community. They reinforce identity and pride. They support local businesses and sustain volunteer networks. They give people reasons to stay and reasons to come.

Events are far more than entertainment or logistics. They are instruments of organisational and social change - one of the most practical expressions of creativity in action. Creativity used not only for artistic expression but to engage audiences, communicate ideas, build communities, and drive change.

### **The Productivity Connection**

The consultation paper states that culture "fosters creativity, design thinking and problem-solving capabilities, and is increasingly recognised as important for innovation and productivity in the workforce." This is correct. But the current policy framework has no mechanism to act on that insight.

National cultural policy has long made token reference to innovation, productivity, and the broader economic value of creativity. Little has come of it - because the broader creative industries, like

the Event Industry, that have been actually delivering innovation, building communities, and driving productivity for decades are not recognised or engaged by the current framework.

Improving productivity ultimately depends on innovation - and innovation is, at its core, a creative process. But at the federal level, creativity and innovation are treated as separate policy domains. Creativity sits in cultural policy. Innovation sits in industry and science portfolios. The broader creative industries fall between the two - too commercial and innovation-driven for Arts policy, but not recognised within innovation and industry frameworks.

The result is that the creative industries most directly linked to productivity and economic transformation are the least likely to be supported by either policy domain.

## **Recommendations**

The attached paper sets out six practical, structural recommendations. They are not about funding new programs or creating large new agencies. They focus on foundational changes that would allow government to properly recognise, measure, and support the creative industries - and the Event Industry - as part of Australia's broader economic, creative, social, and productivity agenda.

These recommendations are designed to deliver better outcomes for both the Arts and the broader creative industries:

1. **Separate Arts policy from Creative Industries policy:** So that the Arts have a dedicated policy focused on cultural expression and artistic practice, and the broader creative industries have a policy home that recognises their role in innovation, productivity, economic development, and social outcomes. Both benefit from clarity.
2. **Bring creativity and innovation together in national policy:** Through a dedicated Creative Industries and Innovation body that sits alongside, not replaces, a dedicated Australia Council for the Arts.
3. **Recognise the Event Industry as a distinct national industry:** Reflected across industry classifications, creative industries policy, innovation and productivity frameworks, and relevant economic, skills, and regional development policies.
4. **Reform national industry and occupation classifications:** So that the Event Industry and other creative sectors are clearly and consistently identified across national datasets and policy frameworks.
5. **Establish proper economic measurement:** Including Event Industry Satellite Accounts, and properly including event activity in the Creative and Cultural Industries Satellite Accounts and the Tourism Satellite Account.
6. **Recognise the role of events across broader government policy:** Including productivity, innovation, skills and workforce development, regional development, industry transformation, and social and community policy.

Each recommendation is designed to work within existing government structures and policy processes. The purpose is not to diminish the Arts - it is to ensure that the broader creative industries have a policy home that recognises what they actually do for Australia, and to give the Arts a clearer, more focused framework at the same time.

## **The Opportunity**

The next National Cultural Policy is an opportunity to move beyond a framework designed for a previous era. The creative industries - and the role of creativity in Australian society - have changed fundamentally. The policy framework needs to reflect that.

The broader creative industries represent a practical, ready capability that government can use more effectively with relatively modest structural reform. The capability is there. The activity is there. The people are there.

What has been missing is a framework that recognises what the broader creative industries actually do for Australia - and a strategy that uses them deliberately for the benefit of all Australians.

At a time when productivity, innovation, and social cohesion are national priorities, this policy is the opportunity to get this right.

The attached document provides the full evidence base.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission and to answer any questions about the Event Industry, the broader creative industries, and their role in Australia's economic, creative, and social future.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Thewlis  
Managing Director  
SJ Thewlis Pty Ltd

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# The Australian Event Industry

**Driving Creativity,  
Productivity and  
Social Connection**

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Australia has the opportunity to take a modern, integrated approach that recognises events and the Event Industry as a core part of our economic, creative and social infrastructure.

**Discussion Paper**

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Version 3 - February 18 2026

Prepared by

**Simon Thewlis**

SJ Thewlis Pty Ltd

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australia relies on events — and the Event Industry — every day.

Events are how industries share knowledge and stay current. They are how businesses launch strategies, build partnerships, and drive change. They are how communities connect, celebrate, and sustain themselves. They are how regions generate economic activity and build local pride. And they are how organisations across every sector bring people together to learn, innovate, inspire, and adapt.

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*“We are living through a period of unprecedented change — technologically, economically, socially, and geopolitically. Industries are being reshaped. New technologies are being adopted at speed. Communities are being asked to adapt to new ways of working, learning, and living.”*

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We are living through a period of unprecedented change — technologically, economically, socially, and geopolitically. Industries are being reshaped. New technologies are being adopted at speed. Communities are being asked to adapt to new ways of working, learning, and living.

In such times, the mechanisms through which industries learn, workforces develop new skills, and communities navigate disruption are not abstract. They are practical. And events are one of the most effective of them.

This paper sets out how events, and the Event Industry that creates them, can be used more deliberately and effectively to help deliver outcomes the Australian Government already says it wants to achieve — across productivity, economic growth, jobs, skills, innovation, regional development, exports, and the creative industries. It is not proposing a new or competing agenda. **It is about making better use of a national capability that already exists.**

At 160+ pages, this is the most comprehensive document produced about the Australian Event Industry. It has been written because nothing of this scope currently exists, and because a clear, evidence-based picture of what events do for Australia — and how the industry that delivers them actually works — is a necessary foundation for better policy.

## WHAT EVENTS DO FOR AUSTRALIA

Events are one of the most powerful expressions of human creativity and collaboration. They bring people together to share ideas, celebrate culture, mark milestones, build understanding, and drive change. Governments, businesses, institutions, and communities use them to achieve outcomes that cannot be delivered in the same way through other means.

This paper demonstrates that events serve fundamentally different purposes depending on context:

- A franchise conference helps a distributed business adapt to changing market conditions.
- A medical congress ensures practitioners stay current with new treatments and technologies.
- An industry trade show functions simultaneously as education, marketplace, and innovation platform.
- A regional community festival generates local economic activity and strengthens the social bonds that allow a town to function.
- A for-purpose organisation’s national conference sustains the relationships, funding, and momentum that keep essential services viable.

Through detailed worked examples, the paper shows how these different event types operate under different economic models, serve different constituencies, and deliver different kinds of value. What they share is a common function: bringing people together, in the same place and at the same time, to achieve things that are difficult to achieve in any other way.

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*“This paper also explains why in-person events have become more important, not less, in the digital age.”*

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This paper also explains why in-person events have become more important, not less, in the digital age.

Events persist not because of nostalgia, but because they create conditions — immersion, emotional intensity, trust, shared meaning, and commitment — that materially affect behaviour and outcomes in ways digital formats do not. In a period of rapid change and increasing digital saturation, these qualities are increasingly valued by organisations and communities alike.

### EVENTS AS A PRODUCTIVITY AND INNOVATION MECHANISM

Australia’s productivity growth has slowed to its weakest level in 60 years. At a time of global uncertainty, demographic ageing, and rapid technological change, the mechanisms through which industries adapt and innovate deserve serious policy attention.

Events are one of the most effective of those mechanisms. They function as part of Australia’s innovation infrastructure — providing real-world environments where ideas are shared, tested, demonstrated, and adopted.

Business events, in particular, play a critical but overlooked role in training and education across a vast range of industries. Conferences, trade shows, expos, and professional forums are where industries come together to share knowledge, update skills, learn new practices, and stay current with technological and regulatory change. For many professions, business events function as a core part of ongoing professional development — complementing formal training systems rather than replacing them.

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*“This paper makes a direct, evidence-based case that recognising and supporting the Event Industry is a practical productivity reform — not a symbolic one.”*

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This paper makes a direct, evidence-based case that recognising and supporting the Event Industry is a practical productivity reform — not a symbolic one.

### SOCIAL CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY

Events are also one of the primary ways Australians come together — to celebrate, to connect, to belong, and to cope with change.

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*“In regional and rural Australia, events are often among the most important things that happen in a community.”*

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In regional and rural Australia, events are often among the most important things that happen in a community. They reinforce identity and pride. They support local businesses and sustain volunteer networks. They give people reasons to stay and reasons to come. For many communities, particularly

smaller ones, events are the primary way people come together across generations, backgrounds, and circumstances.

This social contribution is not incidental to the economic story. It is valuable in its own right. It aligns with broader government objectives around inclusion, participation, wellbeing, and resilient communities — outcomes that cannot be achieved through economic policy alone.

At the same time, social connection and economic change are deeply linked. Innovation and reform do not happen in isolation. They require shared understanding and trust. They require communities that feel connected to the changes happening around them, rather than left behind by them. Events are one of the primary ways that connection is built and maintained — across industries, across regions, and across communities.

Without that social foundation, productivity reforms stall, innovation meets resistance, and change fails. A serious national productivity strategy needs to account for this.

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*"Without that social foundation, productivity reforms stall, innovation meets resistance, and change fails. A serious national productivity strategy needs to account for this."*

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## THE EVENT INDUSTRY: A NATIONAL CREATIVE CAPABILITY

The Event Industry is the network of people, skills, and businesses that professionally create, supply, and organise events — both in Australia and from Australia.

It is a creative industry. It brings together more creative disciplines than almost any other sector — including experience design, creative technology, screen and multimedia production, performance, music, lighting, audio, animation, content creation, brand experience, and emerging technologies — and applies them to real-world outcomes at scale.

The industry has a history stretching back over 200 years, from the earliest agricultural shows through to today's complex, globally connected creative sector. This paper traces that history and explains how the industry evolved from community gatherings and international exhibitions through to a mature professional sector with deep expertise, international reach, and a highly skilled workforce.

It operates through a project-based production model — assembling temporary teams of small businesses, specialist suppliers, and freelance professionals for each event — in a structure similar to film, television, and live performance. The paper describes the core roles and disciplines that make events possible, explains the specialist nature of event expertise, and sets out why the post-pandemic contraction of the workforce — **with 15.2% fewer people working as event organisers nationally than before COVID** — represents a loss of productive capability that extends well beyond the industry itself into the many sectors that rely on events for knowledge exchange, training, innovation, and community connection.

(Data from ABS Labour Force Survey for ANZSCO Code 1493 comparing averages for the 2018/19 and 2024/25 financial years.)

Australian event professionals are well known internationally for their creativity, reliability, and ability to deliver complex events under pressure. The industry already exports its services across the country and around the world — exporting design, storytelling, experience architecture, and production know-how — making it a knowledge-based, project-driven, and internationally mobile creative services sector with significant export growth potential.

### HOW EVENT ECONOMICS ACTUALLY WORK

A significant portion of this paper is devoted to explaining how money actually flows through events and the Event Industry. This matters because current measurement frameworks capture only a narrow slice of the real economic activity, and the resulting picture significantly understates what events contribute to the Australian economy.

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*"This matters because current measurement frameworks capture only a narrow slice of the real economic activity, and the resulting picture significantly understates what events contribute to the Australian economy."*

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Through detailed, real-world budget examples — from corporate conferences and single-day events through to association conferences, trade shows, agricultural shows, music festivals, brand experiences, regional festivals, and major stadium concerts — the paper shows that the economic structure of events varies enormously by type. Each operates under a different funding model, generates value in different ways, and has different implications for policy.

The paper also demonstrates that the economic footprint of an event is geographically distributed.

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*"The places where events are conceived, designed, and produced — not just delivered — are where the highest-value economic activity and long-term industry capability accumulate."*

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The places where events are conceived, designed, and produced — not just delivered — are where the highest-value economic activity and long-term industry capability accumulate. This challenges the common policy assumption that most benefit occurs where the event is physically held, and has significant implications for how governments think about industry development, regional strategy, and where productive capability is being built.

### A WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT OPPORTUNITY

Events intersect with policy across multiple domains: productivity and innovation, jobs, skills and workforce development, creative industries, regional development and community participation, exports and international engagement, and the visitor economy. Yet at the federal level, responsibility for different aspects of events is fragmented across multiple portfolios and agencies, and there has never been a single national framework that recognises the Event Industry as a cross-cutting economic and creative capability.

This paper sets out why a coordinated, whole-of-government approach would allow Australia to use events — and the Event Industry — more deliberately to support priority sectors, strengthen industry ecosystems, build community resilience, and create conditions for sustainable growth. It explains how this aligns with a focus on long-term national capability rather than short-term stimulus.

Some state governments have already begun to shift how they frame events in policy. Queensland and New South Wales, in particular, have moved toward treating events as strategic economic tools. This paper documents these shifts and explains what they signal for national policy. It also identifies the practical risk that industry capability, talent, and companies will concentrate in jurisdictions with more coherent settings — a dynamic that is already underway.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in this paper are deliberately practical and structural. They are not primarily about funding new programs or creating large new agencies. They focus on foundational changes that would allow government to properly recognise, measure, and use the Event Industry as part of Australia's broader economic, creative, and productivity agenda:

- **Separate Arts policy from Creative Industries policy**, so that the applied creative economy — including the Event Industry — has a proper policy home alongside experience design, industrial design, interactive and immersive media, creative technology, advertising, game technology, and the many other innovation-driven creative sectors that currently sit outside the policy framework.
- **Formally recognise the Event Industry as a distinct national industry**, reflected across industry classifications, creative industries policy, innovation and productivity frameworks, and relevant economic, skills, and regional development policies.
- **Bring creativity and innovation together in national policy** through a dedicated Creative Industries and Innovation body.
- **Reform national industry and occupation classifications** to properly capture the Event Industry's workforce and economic activity.
- **Establish proper economic measurement**, including within the Creative and Cultural Industries Satellite Accounts and the Tourism Satellite Accounts, and by creating dedicated Event Industry Satellite Accounts.
- **Integrate the Event Industry across broader areas of public policy** — including productivity, innovation, skills, regional development, industry transformation, and social cohesion.
- **Work toward national harmonisation of regulatory frameworks** affecting the Event Industry across states and territories.

Each recommendation is designed to work within existing government structures and policy processes. Taken together, they represent a practical pathway to ensuring that events and the Event Industry are used as a long-term economic, creative, and social asset for Australia.

### A PRACTICAL OPPORTUNITY

Australia already has a large, mature, and internationally respected Event Industry. It already relies on events across every sector of the economy and every part of the country. The capability is there. The activity is there. The people are there.

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*"What has been missing is a framework that fully recognises what events — and the Event Industry — actually do for Australia — and a strategy that uses them deliberately for the benefit of all Australians."*

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What has been missing is a framework that fully recognises what events — and the Event Industry — actually do for Australia — and a strategy that uses them deliberately for the benefit of all Australians.

At a time when productivity, innovation, and social cohesion are national priorities, events represent a practical, ready capability that government can use more effectively with relatively modest structural reform. This paper provides the evidence base for that reform. It is intended to inform, to challenge assumptions, and to open a conversation that is long overdue.

## 1. INTRODUCTION – WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

This paper is aligned with the Australian Government's broader objectives around productivity, economic growth, jobs, skills, innovation, regional development, exports, and the creative industries.

It is not proposing a new or competing agenda. Rather, it sets out how events — and the Event Industry that creates them — can be used more deliberately and effectively to help deliver outcomes the Government already says it wants to achieve.

### 1.1 AUSTRALIA'S MOMENT OF OPPORTUNITY

Australia stands at a genuine turning point.

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*"We are living through a period of unprecedented change — technologically, socially, economically, and geopolitically. Industries are being reshaped, new technologies are being adopted at speed, and communities are being asked to adapt to new ways of working, learning, and living."*

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We are living through a period of unprecedented change — technologically, socially, economically, and geopolitically. Industries are being reshaped, new technologies are being adopted at speed, and communities are being asked to adapt to new ways of working, learning, and living.

Around the world, governments are rediscovering how events function as platforms for creativity, innovation, collaboration, skills development, and connection. Events are increasingly being used to drive productivity, economic growth, accelerate innovation, support regional participation, and build confidence and identity.

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*"Australia has the opportunity to take a modern, integrated approach that recognises events and the Event Industry as a core part of our economic, creative and social infrastructure."*

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Australia has the opportunity to take a modern, integrated approach that recognises events and the Event Industry as a core part of our economic, creative and social infrastructure. By doing so, events can be aligned more closely with national objectives around productivity, economic growth, innovation, skills, exports, and community wellbeing.

At present, however, the Event Industry itself is not clearly recognised in national policy or statistical frameworks. Government systems recognise the hotel room nights, flights, and hospitality spending that events generate — but not the industry that actually creates and delivers those events.

As a result, a large, established production sector sits largely outside the structures used to analyse productivity, plan workforces, or design industry policy.

This is an opportunity to build one of the most coherent and forward-looking approaches to events anywhere in the world — and to position Australia as a country others look to for ideas, leadership, and best practice.

### 1.2 A MAJOR NATIONAL CAPABILITY — LARGELY UNRECOGNISED

For decades, Australia has built a strong reputation in the creation and delivery of events.

The professionalism, imagination, and creative ambition developed across the country helped shape the reputation of the Australian Event Industry both nationally and internationally. Australian practitioners, suppliers, and creatives have built capability that is exported around the world.

Today, however, the industry sits at a genuine turning point.

We are living through a period of rapid technological, economic, and social change. In such times, events play a critical role — bringing industries together to share knowledge, helping organisations innovate and change, enabling workforces to adapt to new technologies, and supporting communities through periods of transition.

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*"Yet despite this, the Event Industry remains largely unrecognised within federal policy and statistics. This is not just a measurement issue. In many respects, it is an existence gap."*

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Yet despite this, the Event Industry remains largely unrecognised within federal policy and statistics. This is not just a measurement issue. In many respects, it is an existence gap. The economic activity that events generate is recognised in areas such as accommodation, transport, and hospitality, but the Event Industry itself — the people and businesses who actually create and deliver those events — is not clearly recognised as an industry within national frameworks.

Noting that this recognised economic activity is only a very small part of the overall economic activity generated by the Event Industry. The majority of this economic activity is not understood or measured.

At the federal level, the **National Cultural Policy** effectively functions as the government's overarching policy for the creative industries. However, the majority of the Event Industry is not recognised within the current definition of the creative and cultural industries, and is largely absent from that policy framework.

The federal government's main national strategy touching on events sits within the visitor economy, through the **THRIVE 2030** strategy. While THRIVE 2030 recognises the importance of events in driving visitation and regional activity, it largely treats events as tools of the visitor economy rather than recognising the Event Industry itself as a distinct production sector. As a result, the industry again appears only indirectly — through the accommodation, transport, and hospitality activity it generates — rather than as an industry in its own right.

Similarly, the main national statistical frameworks do not capture the true scale of event activity. The Tourism Satellite Accounts, for example, measure only a narrow slice of event-related spending, largely focused on accommodation and travel. The majority of event production, creative, technical, and organisational spend sits outside those measures.

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*"As a result, much of the Event Industry's real economic contribution is not measured — and therefore not well understood."*

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As a result, much of the Event Industry's real economic contribution is not measured — and therefore not well understood. The same is true of its role in innovation.

Many of the key creative industries — including the Event Industry, experience design, interactive media, industrial design, creative technology, and advertising — function as practical engines of innovation across the economy. Yet this link between applied creativity and productivity is still not well recognised in federal policy.

This invisibility has real consequences. Industries that are not properly measured or recognised are rarely the focus of coordinated policy. As a result, the Event Industry has no clear home within federal structures, no coherent national strategy, and limited recognition of the role it plays in productivity, skills, innovation, and social cohesion.

At the same time, national labour force data indicates that there are now around 15% fewer people working as event organisers than there were prior to the pandemic — despite the enormous role many event professionals play. (ABS Labour Force Survey)

This presents a clear structural challenge. At the very moment events should be playing a greater role in helping industries and communities adapt to change, the industry's core professional base has contracted and remains largely unrecognised in federal policy.

With the right recognition and coordination, however, this moment also presents an opportunity — to rebuild capability, align events more closely with national productivity objectives, and position the Event Industry as a long-term economic and creative asset for Australia.

### 1.3 WHAT EVENTS REALLY ARE

Events are one of the most powerful expressions of human creativity and collaboration.

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*“Events are one of the most powerful expressions of human creativity and collaboration.”*

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They bring people together to share ideas, celebrate culture, mark milestones, build understanding, and drive change. They are used by governments, businesses, institutions, and communities to achieve outcomes that cannot be delivered in the same way through other means.

Events take many forms, including:

- **business events** that generate **ideas, partnerships, investment, and innovation**
- **public events and festivals** that showcase Australia's **creative and cultural life**
- **community and regional events** that build **belonging, resilience, and local pride**
- **major events** that demonstrate Australia's **capability, confidence, and imagination** to the world

Together, these form an interconnected ecosystem that touches almost every part of Australian life — economic, creative, educational, and social.

Events connect industries, audiences, and ideas in ways that few other activities can.

In this sense, events function not only as moments in time, but as part of Australia's economic, creative, and social infrastructure.

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Critically, the Event Industry is itself a creative industry.

It brings together more creative disciplines than almost any other sector — including experience design, environment design, creative technology, screen and multimedia production, music, performance,

lighting, audio, content creation, brand experience, and emerging technologies — to produce live, public outcomes.

Unlike many creative industries that focus on discrete outputs, the Event Industry integrates creativity, technology, logistics, and human behaviour to drive change, learning, participation, innovation, and productivity in real time.

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To understand why events have been consistently misclassified, it is important to distinguish between the Arts and the broader creative industries as there is often confusion about this.

This table outlines some of the key differences between the Arts and the broader creative industries that the Event Industry is very much a part of:

ASPECT	THE ARTS	CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
Scope	Traditional art forms (performance, visual, literary)	Broad set of cultural + commercial creative domains
Purpose	Cultural enrichment, identity, heritage	Economic growth, innovation, cultural impact
Funding Model	Often subsidised or philanthropic	Mix of commercial markets + some subsidies
Value	Intrinsic, expressive, social	Economic, social, cultural, and strategic
Policy Lens	Arts policy (support, access, preservation)	Industry policy (growth, trade, innovation)

In short, the Arts are primarily about cultural expression; whereas the creative industries are about the application of creativity across the economy.

The Event Industry — just like advertising, design, video production, and fashion — are not the Arts, but they are certainly creative industries that deserve recognition and support.

### 1.4 WHY EVENTS ARE NOT TOURISM

Tourism can benefit from events, but it is not the primary purpose or benefit of most events.

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*“Most events exist to inspire, connect, educate, solve problems, build skills, or drive change within organisations, industries, and communities.”*

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Most events exist to inspire, connect, educate, solve problems, build skills, or drive change within organisations, industries, and communities. While some events generate visitation and accommodation spend, these outcomes are often secondary — and for many events, they are minimal or non-existent.

Viewing events primarily through measures such as hotel room nights captures only a narrow slice of their value. It works reasonably well for a small subset of large, visitor-focused events, but it overlooks the majority of events that deliver their benefits locally and regionally — through knowledge exchange, workforce development, innovation, community participation, and creative activity.

As a result, much of the Event Industry's real economic, social, and cultural contribution remains largely invisible under current policy settings.

Recognising this distinction is fundamental. It changes how events are supported, how their impact is measured, and how they are integrated into broader economic, innovation, creative industry, and regional development strategies.

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*“Events should be understood as part of Australia’s creative and economic engine — not as a subset of the visitor economy.”*

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Events should be understood as part of Australia's creative and economic engine — not as a subset of the visitor economy. When events are understood as part of Australia's creative and economic engine — rather than as tourism products — their full contribution becomes visible: as drivers of innovation, workforce development, applied creativity, export capability, and social cohesion.

Under current settings, the majority of this value is neither measured nor strategically leveraged. This creates a blind spot in national productivity, workforce, and innovation policy.

### 1.5 A WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH

At the federal level, the Event Industry has never had a clear or coherent policy home.

Responsibility for different aspects of events sits across multiple portfolios and agencies, each engaging with events for valid reasons. However, there has never been a single national framework that recognises the Event Industry as a cross-cutting economic and creative capability.

As a result, events are typically viewed through narrow functional lenses — as tourism, culture, marketing, or logistics — rather than as an industry that contributes simultaneously to productivity, innovation, skills, exports, regional development, and social cohesion.

A whole-of-government approach at the federal level would allow:

- Economic development objectives to align with event-driven innovation, business growth, and exports.
- Creative industry policy to fully harness all of Australia's creative talents to help drive innovation and change.
- Regional and local communities to use events as practical tools for participation, renewal, and economic resilience.
- Education and training systems to support clear workforce pathways into the Event Industry, and to recognise the critical role that events play in training and up-skilling workforces.
- Community programs to ensure events strengthen inclusion, wellbeing, and social connection.

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*“... Australia can capture the full value chain of the Event Industry — from concept and creation through to delivery, capability building, and long-term legacy.”*

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Through this alignment, Australia can capture the full value chain of the Event Industry — from concept and creation through to delivery, capability building, and long-term legacy.

The Event Industry relates to many areas of government policy, including:

### ECONOMIC GROWTH AND INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

The Event Industry has a direct role to play in delivering national productivity, economic growth, and industry development objectives.

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*“Events ... are platforms where industries come together to collaborate, commercialise ideas, attract investment, and build confidence.”*

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Events are not just endpoints or showcases; they are platforms where industries come together to collaborate, commercialise ideas, attract investment, and build confidence. Business events in particular support productivity by accelerating connections between firms, researchers, investors, and markets.

By treating the Event Industry as an industry in its own right — with capability, workforce, and supply chains — government can use events more deliberately to support priority sectors, strengthen industry ecosystems, and create conditions for sustainable growth. This aligns with a focus on long-term national capability rather than short-term stimulus.

### JOBS, SKILLS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Event Industry is a significant employer and a skills-intensive sector, offering pathways into project management, technical production, creative technologies, logistics, design, safety, and operations. It provides opportunities for young people, career-changers, and regional workers, and often acts as a gateway into broader creative and technical careers.

Business events, in particular, play an often overlooked but critical role in training and education across a vast range of industries. Conferences, trade shows, expos, and professional forums are where industries come together to share knowledge, update skills, learn new practices, and stay current with technological and regulatory change.

For many professions, business events function as a core part of ongoing professional development and informal education — complementing formal training systems rather than replacing them.

A coordinated Event Industry strategy allows workforce development, training, and skills policy to be aligned with how learning actually occurs in practice. It creates the opportunity to rebuild capability lost during the pandemic, support clearer career pathways within the Event Industry itself, and better recognise the role events play in up-skilling the broader Australian workforce.

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*“... events can contribute directly to the Government’s objectives around jobs, skills development, workforce participation, and lifelong learning.”*

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In doing so, events can contribute directly to national objectives around jobs, skills development, workforce participation, and lifelong learning.

### INNOVATION AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Innovation does not happen in isolation. It happens when people, ideas, and industries intersect — and events are one of the most effective mechanisms for making that happen at scale. Conferences, trade shows, expos, and industry forums are where new ideas are tested, partnerships are formed, and innovation is taken up into practice.

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By recognising events as part of Australia’s innovation infrastructure, government can better leverage them to support collaboration between research, industry, and the public sector. This strengthens the impact of existing innovation policy by providing real-world platforms for experimentation, demonstration, and adoption.

### CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND THE EVENT INDUSTRY

The Event Industry is one of the largest and most integrated creative industries in Australia, sitting at the centre of the creative economy rather than at its margins.

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*“Events are where creative disciplines converge and are translated into real-world outcomes — economic, social, cultural, and educational.”*

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Events are where creative disciplines converge and are translated into real-world outcomes — economic, social, cultural, and educational. They provide the primary pathway through which much of Australia’s creative capability is applied, commercialised, and experienced by the public.

Recognising the Event Industry as a core creative industry enables stronger alignment with creative industry policy, funding, skills development, innovation, and export initiatives. It also reflects the contemporary reality that creativity is increasingly collaborative, cross-disciplinary, and embedded in applied industries — not confined to traditional art forms.

Government approaches to creativity have not kept pace with how creative industries now operate.

### REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Events are one of the most effective tools government has for reaching regional and rural communities.

They generate local economic activity, support jobs, strengthen identity and pride, and create opportunities for participation that are not otherwise available.

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*“For many communities, events are the primary way people come together to celebrate, learn, and connect.”*

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For many communities, events are the primary way people come together to celebrate, learn, and connect.

Aligning the Event Industry with regional development policy allows events to be used more deliberately as drivers of participation, resilience, and renewal — particularly in areas facing economic transition or population change.

This ensures that the benefits of events, and of government investment in them, are felt well beyond the major capital cities.

### EXPORTS, TRADE AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

The Event Industry contributes to Australia’s export objectives in two distinct ways.

First, it is an export industry in its own right, with Australian event professionals, suppliers, and creative capabilities delivering work internationally.

Second, events are platforms that help other industries export — by supporting trade missions, international showcases, delegations, and business-to-business engagement.

Aligning events more closely with national export and trade objectives allows them to be used strategically to open markets, attract investment, and strengthen international relationships, while also growing Australia's event capability as a global service offering.

### VISITOR ECONOMY AND PLACE MAKING

Events play an important role in Australia's visitor economy, but their contribution extends well beyond visitor numbers alone.

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*“Events shape how places are perceived — as a places that are creative, capable, welcoming, and confident.”*

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Events shape how places are perceived — as a places that are creative, capable, welcoming, and confident.

A whole-of-government approach ensures that visitor-economy objectives are supported by strong event capability, rather than relying solely on attraction and marketing.

By strengthening the Event Industry itself, Australia improves the quality, diversity, and resilience of the events delivered across the country, which in turn supports visitation, repeat engagement, and long-term place reputation. In this way, an Event Industry strategy complements — rather than competes with — existing visitor-economy policy.

### SUMMARY

Taken together, these areas illustrate that events are not a niche activity, but a cross-cutting national capability. They sit at the intersection of industry development, skills, innovation, creativity, regional participation, exports, and community life.

When recognised and coordinated at a whole-of-government level, the Event Industry becomes a practical tool for lifting productivity — by accelerating knowledge exchange, supporting workforce development, strengthening industry ecosystems, and building the social licence needed for economic and technological change.

## 1.6 A VISION WORTH PURSUING

Creating national Event Industry Policy is about more than structural reform.

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*“It is about recognising events as one of Australia's strengths, and using them deliberately to support economic growth, innovation, skills development, regional participation, and creative leadership.”*

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It is about recognising events as one of Australia's strengths, and using them deliberately to support economic growth, innovation, skills development, regional participation, and creative leadership.

It is about giving the Event Industry the recognition, stability, and support it needs to do what it already does well — and to do more of it, more consistently, and with greater impact.

This is not simply about events as cultural or tourism activities. It is about recognising a major national capability and using it more deliberately to support productivity, innovation, skills, and regional development.

### 1.7 THE CENTRAL ROLE OF THE EVENT INDUSTRY

The Event Industry is the industry that creates, organises, and delivers events — from the smallest community celebration to the largest international showcase.

It holds the deep practical knowledge of how events work: how they are conceived, designed, delivered, regulated, and evaluated; how risk is managed; how capability is built; and how legacy is created.

This expertise must be embedded at every stage — from early policy development and planning through to delivery and evaluation.

When the Event Industry's experience is not involved early and meaningfully, projects become more bureaucratic, opportunities are missed, and valuable capability and innovation are lost.

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*“The Event Industry must be central to the development and execution of any serious event strategy.”*

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The lesson is straightforward: The Event Industry must be central to the development and execution of any serious event strategy.

Without that capability at the centre, governments risk designing policies and programs that overlook one of the key practical mechanisms for driving innovation, skills development, and productivity across the economy.

### 1.8 REAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The economic stakes are real.

Across Australia, events generate tens of billions of dollars in direct economic activity each year, while also supporting innovation, skills development, exports, regional participation, and community connection.

Yet much of this activity is still poorly measured or understood in national statistics.

Large parts of event-related production, creative, technical, and organisational spend sit outside existing frameworks such as the Tourism Satellite Accounts and the Creative and Cultural Industries Satellite Accounts.

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*“With better measurement, clearer recognition, and more deliberate policy alignment, the Event Industry represents a significant opportunity to strengthen national capability and generate substantial economic and productivity gains.”*

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### 1.9 LEARNING FROM STATE POLICIES

Across Australia, state governments have taken different approaches to events, but all recognise their economic and social value to different degrees.

New South Wales has built a strong position in business events, supported by major venues, international attraction strategies, and sustained investment in event-led economic activity.

Queensland has made significant gains in business events and now has the additional opportunity presented by Brisbane 2032, using events as part of a broader strategy around regional development, infrastructure, and global engagement.

These examples demonstrate that events are not just cultural or tourism activities. At a state level, they are already being used as practical tools for economic development, industry engagement, skills development, regional participation, and international positioning.

What has been missing is a coherent national framework that recognises the Event Industry as an industry in its own right, and aligns these activities with federal objectives around productivity, innovation, skills, exports, regional development, and social cohesion.

### 1.10 THE CASE FOR RECOGNITION AND ENGAGEMENT

#### THE FIRST ESSENTIAL STEP IS RECOGNITION

Australia must formally acknowledge the Event Industry as a distinct creative and economic sector — one that plays a central role in delivering outcomes across economic growth, innovation, skills, productivity, exports, tourism, and community development.

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*“... the Event Industry ... plays a central role in delivering outcomes across economic growth, innovation, skills, exports, productivity, tourism, and community development.”*

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Recognition should place the Event Industry firmly within Australia’s creative-industry, innovation, and industry-development frameworks — alongside experience design, interactive and immersive media, industrial design, creative technology, architecture, advertising, and the many other applied creative sectors that drive innovation across the economy. This ensures access to programs that support skills development, innovation, and export growth.

### THE SECOND STEP IS ENGAGEMENT

The people and businesses who work in the Event Industry understand how events actually function in practice. Their experience must be actively engaged in policy development, planning, delivery, and evaluation.

When government and industry work together in this way, events become safer, more effective, more innovative, and more valuable — and the industry becomes a long-term economic and creative asset for Australia.

Recognition and engagement are not symbolic steps. They are practical productivity reforms that allow government to better use one of its most versatile economic and creative capabilities.

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*"Recognition and engagement are not symbolic steps. They are practical productivity reforms that allow government to better use one of its most versatile economic and creative capabilities."*

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## 2. THE EVENT INDUSTRY: A HISTORY OF INNOVATION AND IMPACT

### EARLY FOUNDATIONS: AGRICULTURAL SHOWS AND COMMUNITY GATHERINGS (1800s–1950s)

Australia's Event Industry has roots that stretch back hundreds of years. The first agricultural shows emerged in the early 1800s as practical gatherings where farmers could compare livestock, share knowledge, and trade goods. The Royal Hobart Show was first held in 1822, making it one of the oldest continuously running events in the country.

These early shows were more than agricultural displays — they were major community events that brought people together from across vast distances. They combined education, commerce, entertainment, and social connection in ways that would become hallmarks of the modern event industry.

By the mid-1800s, agricultural shows had spread across every state and territory. The Royal Melbourne Show (first held in 1848), the Royal Adelaide Show (1839), and similar events in Brisbane, Perth, and Sydney and countless rural and regional centres became annual fixtures in Australian life. They created the infrastructure, expertise, and public appetite for large-scale gatherings that would support more complex events in the decades ahead.

The international exhibitions of the late 1800s marked another significant milestone. The Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880–81, held in the purpose-built Royal Exhibition Building, attracted over a million visitors and showcased Victoria as a global centre of innovation and culture. These exhibitions required sophisticated planning, international coordination, and integrated design — skills that would later define professional event production.

### THE MELBOURNE OLYMPICS: A TURNING POINT (1956)

The 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games represented a watershed moment for Australia's event capability. It was the first Olympics held in the Southern Hemisphere and required unprecedented coordination across government, industry, and community.

The Games demanded new levels of infrastructure development, international protocol management, broadcast coordination, and visitor experience design. Australian organisers had to master complex logistics, manage global media attention, and deliver an experience that would be judged by the entire world.

The success of the Melbourne Olympics demonstrated that Australia could deliver world-class events. It built confidence, established new standards for event management, and created a generation of professionals who understood what large-scale event delivery required.

Perhaps more importantly, it showed that major events could reshape cities, drive economic development, and project national identity on the world stage. The legacy of 1956 would influence how Australia approached major events for decades to come.

### THE EMERGENCE OF A PROFESSIONAL INDUSTRY (1960s–1970s)

Following the Olympics, a more formalised event sector began to emerge. The Melbourne Convention Bureau was established in 1966 to promote Melbourne as a destination for conventions and business meetings — the first dedicated event marketing organisation in the country.

In 1973, the Australian Convention and Exhibition Association (ACEA) was formed to represent the growing meetings and conventions sector. This marked the beginning of industry self-organisation and the development of shared professional standards.

During this period, hotels, venues, and specialist suppliers began to see business events as a distinct market opportunity. Purpose-built conference facilities were developed, catering companies expanded their capabilities, and new technical service providers emerged to support increasingly sophisticated event requirements.

The 1970s also saw the growth of community festivals and cultural events. The Adelaide Festival of Arts (established 1960) had shown that arts festivals could attract international attention and drive cultural tourism. Cities and regional centres across Australia began to invest in festivals and events as tools for community development and destination marketing.

### **BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL CREATIVE INDUSTRY (LATE 1970s–1990s)**

The Event Industry has always been about creating moments that bring people together — moments that inspire, connect, and change the way we see the world.

When our industry first began to take shape as a recognisable sector in Australia, it was known as the Special Events Industry. That name mattered. It recognised that what we do is not routine or transactional — it is the creation of special one-off experiences designed, produced, and delivered with imagination and care; events that matter to people and to communities.

From the late 1970s through to the 1990s, a group of pioneering companies helped define what would become the modern Australian Event Industry. Companies such as Cameron Vernon Weston, AAV Australia, Wavelength, Australian Business Theatre, and Photomation brought together creative direction, film production, staging, and new technologies in ways that had never been seen before.

Their work on large-scale corporate events, business meetings, and brand launches — including the stadium-level automotive launches of the early 1980s — set new benchmarks for creativity, production quality, and audience engagement.

At the same time, Australian expertise in major public events was gaining international recognition.

Following his success as producer of the opening and closing ceremonies of the 1982 Brisbane Commonwealth Games, Ric Birch was appointed producer of the opening and closing ceremonies of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. This appointment marked a pivotal moment — it was the first time Australia's creative event capability had been sought at the highest level of international competition. Birch's work in LA would establish a tradition of Australian event professionals and supplier working on major events worldwide.

As the industry grew through the 1980s and 1990s, the word 'special' quietly disappeared from common use. The sector became simply 'the Event Industry'. But the essence of what we do never changed. We still create special events — from community celebrations and festivals to international summits, brand activations, and major sporting spectacles — special one-off experiences.

The skills, creativity, and commitment that defined those early years remain the foundation of the industry today.

### **PROFESSIONALISATION AND INDUSTRY IDENTITY (1980s–2000s)**

Alongside this creative growth came the development of professional networks and associations.

A decade after its formation, ACEA evolved into the Meetings Industry Association of Australia (MIAA) as the industry broadened beyond conventions alone. By the early 2000s it became Meetings & Events Australia (MEA) — reflecting the maturing of the wider Event Industry.

For nearly fifty years, MEA played an essential role in professional development, training, standards, and advocacy before going into voluntary administration in 2024. Its long history is a powerful reminder that ours is not a new industry but a mature and well-established profession that has been central to Australia's creative and economic life for decades.

A further milestone came in the late 1990s with the formation of the Australian Chapters of the International Special Events Society (ISES) in both Sydney and Melbourne. It brought together creative and production professionals from across every part of the industry — producers, designers, technical specialists, caterers, venues, and educators — and connected them with the international community of event professionals.

This reflected the strength, maturity, and creative ambition of Australia's event scene, and it helped shape the sense of identity that still defines the Event Industry today.

### INTERNATIONAL CONNECTION AND CREATIVE EXPORT (1990s–2000s)

From the earliest community festivals to internationally broadcast major events, Australia's event professionals developed new ways of thinking and new ways of working. They created the production systems, design standards, and creative approaches that still underpin the industry across Australia.

Many of those same people went on to take their skills around the world — producing events throughout Asia, the Middle East, and beyond — making Australia a true exporter of event creativity.

Major events such as the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games, and countless international conferences and exhibitions showcased Australian event expertise to global audiences. Australian companies and professionals became sought after around the world for their creative vision, technical capability, and ability to deliver complex projects under pressure.

### A MATURING INDUSTRY: SCALE, SOPHISTICATION, AND ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE (2000s–PRESENT)

The 2000s marked a new phase in the industry's evolution. Production capabilities reached unprecedented levels of scale and sophistication. Events that once seemed impossible became routine. Technical standards, creative ambition, and professional expertise all continued to advance.

The Event Industry's economic significance grew substantially. What had once been seen primarily as a service sector revealed itself as a major economic force — generating billions in direct spend, supporting tens of thousands of jobs, and driving outcomes across trade, education, community development, and tourism.

The Event Industry itself has always been a complex ecosystem blending art, design, technology, logistics, and storytelling. It sits squarely within the creative industries while simultaneously serving commercial, cultural, civic, and social purposes. The more recent evolution into hybrid and digital formats has added new dimensions to this capability without changing its fundamental character.

What changed most was the level of professionalism and the recognition of events as essential infrastructure for a modern economy and society.

### FROM VISIBILITY TO INVISIBILITY — AND BACK AGAIN

Despite this growth, the Event Industry gradually slipped from visibility within government structures and was lost in statistical frameworks. As the industry evolved, it no longer fit neatly within old categories — and so, in many ways, it disappeared from view.

The consequences of this invisibility became evident with the 2026 Victoria Commonwealth Games. When the project was developed without drawing on the established expertise of the event industry, fundamental planning failures led to its eventual cancellation — a stark reminder that event strategy and delivery is a professional discipline requiring specialised knowledge and experience.

Yet the Event Industry's influence continued to grow. Today, events touch almost every part of Australian life: shaping culture, generating innovation, building pride, and strengthening the economy.

The next step in the Event Industry's evolution is to regain that visibility — to once again be recognised as one of Australia's great creative and economic strengths. By creating a dedicated national Event Industry policy, Australia can ensure that the future of the Event Industry is as visionary, innovative, and proudly 'special' as its past.

## 3. WHAT IS THE EVENT INDUSTRY

### 3.1 DEFINITION

Australia's Event Industry is the network of people, skills, and businesses that professionally create, supply, and organise events — both in Australia and from Australia.

The Event Industry is a creative industry.

It brings together more creative disciplines than almost any other sector — including experience design, environment design, creative technology, screen and multimedia production, performance, music, lighting, audio, animation, content creation, brand experience, and emerging technologies — and applies them to real-world outcomes at scale.

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*“The Event Industry ... brings together more creative disciplines than almost any other sector...”*

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Unlike many creative industries that operate within a single discipline, the Event Industry is inherently interdisciplinary. It integrates multiple creative practices into cohesive, live experiences that are economic, social, cultural, and commercial in purpose.

It encompasses the full ecosystem that makes events possible: from early concept development and creative design, through planning, production, and technical delivery, to evaluation, legacy, and capability building. This includes producers, organisers, designers, technicians, project managers, venues, suppliers, and specialist service providers whose work underpins events of every scale and type.

The Event Industry contributes directly to many of the Australian Government’s core policy priorities, including economic growth, jobs and skills, innovation, regional development, exports, and the creative industries. It supports business development, workforce training, knowledge exchange, community participation, and international engagement — making it a practical delivery mechanism for a wide range of government objectives.

Importantly, the Event Industry is not confined to events that happen within Australia. Australian event professionals and businesses export their expertise, products, and services to events delivered across Australia and internationally. In this way, the Event Industry operates both as a domestic economic contributor and as an export-oriented services sector.

This is what fundamentally differentiates the Event Industry from the tourism industry.

Tourism is primarily concerned with attracting people to a place and supporting their visitation. The Event Industry is concerned with creating the experiences that bring people together — to learn, to collaborate, to celebrate, to innovate, and to connect — regardless of where those events take place.

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*“The Event Industry is concerned with creating the experiences that bring people together — to learn, to collaborate, to celebrate, to innovate, and to connect — regardless of where those events take place.”*

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Understanding this distinction is critical. When events are viewed solely through a tourism lens, their broader economic and creative value is obscured. When the Event Industry is recognised as an industry in its own right, its full contribution to Australia's economy, workforce, and communities becomes clear.

## 3.2 PURPOSE OF EVENTS

To understand why the Event Industry matters, it is important to understand the purpose of events themselves.

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*“Events are not simply gatherings or tourism attractions — they are powerful instruments for communication, connection, economic development, and change.”*

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Events are not simply gatherings or tourism attractions — they are powerful instruments for communication, connection, economic development, and change.

### FOR BUSINESSES AND ORGANISATIONS

Events bring stakeholders, clients, and teams together to inform, inspire, and connect.

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*“They build culture, raise morale, launch strategies, and secure engagement on major change.”*

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They build culture, raise morale, launch strategies, and secure engagement on major change.

Increasingly they are about embracing creativity, innovation, and new technologies, business models, and approaches.

They also promote products and services to new or existing markets.

### FOR NOT-FOR-PROFITS AND CHARITIES

Events raise awareness, educate members, and often provide the main source of revenue through fundraising and sponsorship.

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*“They are essential to sustaining the work of many charitable and community organisations.”*

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They are essential to sustaining the work of many charitable and community organisations.

### FOR COMMUNITIES

Community and regional events build inclusion, connection, and pride.

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*“They help communities come together, strengthen the social fabric, and deal with change.”*

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They help communities come together, strengthen the social fabric, and deal with change.

Federation Square in Melbourne provides a striking example — a place built around events that became the heart of civic life.

### FOR MARKETING AND TOURISM

Some events are designed to promote a place — such as the Australian Open in Australia — yet even these depend on the Event Industry’s creativity and delivery capability.

The experiences, entertainment, and storytelling created by event professionals define how audiences perceive the event and the place behind it.

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*“There has never been a time when events have been more needed or more valuable — for rebuilding connection, fostering creativity and innovation, and helping people and communities navigate rapid change.”*

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There has never been a time when events have been more needed or more valuable — for rebuilding connection, fostering creativity and innovation, and helping people and communities navigate rapid change.

In this sense, events function as one of the primary ways creativity is translated into economic, organisational, and social impact.

### 3.3 THE WAY EVENTS HAVE CHANGED

The Event Industry has always been dynamic, but the nature of that change has accelerated and deepened over the past two decades.

What has shifted is not just the format of events, but the economics, risk profile, audience behaviour, and expectations that sit behind them.

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*“Events today operate in a very different environment to the one in which most current government frameworks were designed.”*

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Events today operate in a very different environment to the one in which most current government frameworks were designed.

### FESTIVALISATION: FROM SINGLE-PURPOSE EVENTS TO EXPERIENCE ECOSYSTEMS

One of the most visible changes is the festivalisation of events.

Major events such as the Australian Open are no longer singular activities built around one core purpose.

They have become complex ecosystems of experiences — combining elite sport with brand activations, business events, entertainment, public programming, hospitality precincts, community engagement, and cultural activity.

In practice, this means a single major event now involves many different parts of the Event Industry: creative agencies, producers, technical suppliers, content creators, brand specialists, hospitality operators, educators, and community organisations.

These elements are not add-ons. They are deliberately designed to:

- broaden audiences
- extend dwell time
- create emotional connection
- generate multiple revenue streams

- deliver outcomes that go well beyond attendance alone

This same design logic now applies across many event types — not just major sporting events.

### **RIISING COSTS, STATIC WILLINGNESS TO PAY, AND INCREASED RISK**

Across all event categories, costs have risen sharply.

Labour, infrastructure, compliance, insurance, logistics, and technical production are all significantly more expensive than they were a decade ago. At the same time, audience willingness to pay has not increased at the same rate, except for a narrow band of ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ or premium experiences.

This has fundamentally altered the risk profile of events.

Promoters and organisers are carrying higher upfront costs while facing:

- later ticket purchasing behaviour
- less certainty about final attendance
- and reduced tolerance for price increases

Late buying has become the norm rather than the exception. This forces event organisers to make major financial commitments without knowing demand until very late in the cycle, greatly increasing the financial risks.

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*“This forces event organisers to make major financial commitments without knowing demand until very late in the cycle, greatly increasing the financial risks.”*

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The result is a highly uneven landscape:

- the very top tier of events and acts are performing strongly and setting records
- while second-, third-, and fourth-tier events are experiencing volatile and often unsustainable outcomes

The recent cancellation of many festivals is not simply about taste or programming — it reflects structural pressures within the modern event economy.

### **BRAND EXPERIENCES AND TAKING EVENTS TO PEOPLE**

Another major shift is the growth of brand-led experiences.

Rather than expecting audiences to come to brands, brands are increasingly taking experiences to where people already are — embedding themselves within existing events, public spaces, and cultural moments.

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*“... brands are increasingly taking experiences to where people already are...”*

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This has blurred the traditional boundaries between:

- events
- marketing
- placemaking
- community activation

For the Event Industry, this has expanded both opportunity and complexity.

For policy, it challenges narrow definitions of what constitutes an ‘event’ or a ‘business event’ and where its value is generated, and what its real benefits are.

### **BUSINESS EVENTS: EXPERIENCE, OUTCOMES, AND TRUST**

These changes are particularly pronounced in business events.

Traditional conference models built around long programs of static presentations and keynote lectures are increasingly ineffective. Audiences now expect experience first design, where content, environment, interaction, and emotion are deliberately shaped.

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*“Traditional conference models built around long programs of static presentations and keynote lectures are increasingly ineffective.”*

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Key shifts include:

- a stronger focus on measurable outcomes and return on investment, not just attendance
- recognition that live events provide authenticity and trust in a time when people are increasingly sceptical of online content, media, and digital communication
- a greater emphasis on emotional resonance as a driver of engagement, learning, and behaviour change

Personalisation has also become central. Attendees increasingly expect the ability to shape their own experience — choosing sessions, formats, levels of participation, and networking pathways.

### **NETWORKING IS NOW DESIGNED, NOT ACCIDENTAL**

One of the clearest indicators of change is how networking is approached.

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*“It is no longer enough to place people in a crowded room with alcohol and assume that connection will happen organically.”*

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It is no longer enough to place people in a crowded room with alcohol and assume that connection will happen organically. Networking now has to be intentionally designed, facilitated, and curated.

This has led to:

- structured matchmaking
- facilitated conversations
- curated small-group interactions
- a rise in exclusive, invitation-only and micro-events

Increasingly, companies are also choosing to piggyback on larger events — holding smaller, more focused offsite events nearby rather than having a large presence within the main event itself.

### **THE HOLLOWING OUT OF THE MIDDLE**

Another significant structural shift is what some event people now describe as the ‘hollowing out of the middle’ of the event industry.

The phrase refers to a change in the shape of event activity rather than total volume. It is particularly evident in business events.

Before the pandemic, the event ecosystem broadly had three layers:

- at the **top end**, very large corporate conferences, global summits and flagship brand events — high-budget, production-intensive events
- at the **lower end**, simple conferences, meetings, town halls and training days — typically delivered in hotel and convention centre meeting spaces using in-house AV and standard venue packages
- in between, a large **middle tier** of mid-scale, professionally produced events with higher production values — often 300 to 600 people — including conferences, product launches, awards nights, and multi-day corporate off-sites.

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*“This middle layer was the industry’s commercial backbone. It provided regular work for freelancers, steady income for production companies and suppliers, and the main training ground for emerging talent.”*

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This middle layer was the industry’s commercial backbone. It provided regular work for freelancers, steady income for production companies and suppliers, and the main training ground for emerging talent.

Since COVID, a different pattern has emerged.

High-end flagship events have largely returned and, in some cases, grown. At the lower end, small and medium conferences and meetings continue to occur in high volumes and remain visible in official data.

The biggest change is in the middle. Mid-scale professionally produced events with high production values appear to be happening less frequently, or being delivered with lower production values, shorter durations, or smaller teams.

This shift does not show up neatly in headline statistics, which typically measure total events, delegates or spend. It is a qualitative but widely shared observation across agencies, suppliers, freelancers and venues.

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*“Costs have increased substantially — across labour, freight, insurance, compliance, venue charges and technical production — while client budgets have generally not increased in line, and in many cases have fallen in real terms.”*

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Costs have increased substantially — across labour, freight, insurance, compliance, venue charges and technical production — while client budgets have generally not increased in line, and in many cases have fallen in real terms.

The practical result is a viability squeeze: many events that once sat comfortably in the middle tier now cost materially more to produce, but clients are less willing or able to fund that increase.

The full causes of the shift are still being actively debated within the industry, and there is no single agreed explanation.

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*“... the concern is not about prestige events at the top of the market. Those will always attract attention and investment.”*

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From a policy perspective, the concern is not about prestige events at the top of the market. Those will always attract attention and investment. The concern is about the weakening of the industry's productive core.

### VIRTUAL, HYBRID AND LIVE STREAMING: WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

Early in the pandemic there was widespread confidence that virtual and hybrid events would replace physical ones. That did not occur.

Virtual and hybrid collapsed into a small, specialised niche, while live streaming quietly became a basic communications tool.

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*“The original promise around virtual events was ambitious: full online conferences, digital expos, immersive platforms and sophisticated networking environments.”*

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The original promise around virtual events was ambitious: full online conferences, digital expos, immersive platforms and sophisticated networking environments.

In practice, engagement was low, exhibitor outcomes were weak, and production costs were high relative to the value created. Most organisations quickly discovered they were getting much of the cost and effort of an event without the benefits of an event.

Many virtual event platforms either collapsed or pivoted. They were built on the assumption that events are primarily about content. In reality, events are about presence, trust, energy and relationships — none of which translate well into a grid of faces on a screen.

Hybrid formats survived, but mainly as a support layer for accessibility, risk management and recording. They are rarely revenue models and almost never drivers of engagement.

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*What genuinely scaled was live streaming as basic communications infrastructure.*

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What genuinely scaled was live streaming as basic communications infrastructure.

Simple formats — a single speaker, an interview or a small panel — streamed via Zoom or Teams replaced many small physical events: briefings, updates, policy launches, internal town halls and thought leadership sessions.

What once required a venue, catering and AV can now be delivered by one person, one camera and one link from their home or office.

Live streaming worked where virtual events failed because it is honest about what it is. It does not pretend to be immersive or social. It is simply broadcast communication — which is what many of those small events always were in practice.

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*“The real structural shift is not physical versus virtual, but experience versus information.”*

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The real structural shift is not physical versus virtual, but experience versus information.

Events that continue to justify physical presence are those that offer genuine shared experience: high emotional value, strong social energy and deliberate design.

Events that are primarily about information are now increasingly delivered through live streaming.

What disappeared is not events themselves, but the assumption that information alone justifies bringing people into a room. That assumption no longer holds — and that is the real change in how organisations now use events.

### BEHAVIOURAL SHIFTS: TIME, WORK, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Broader social changes have also reshaped events.

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*“Work-from-home arrangements mean that attending an event is no longer just time away from work — it is often time away from home and personal commitments.”*

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Work-from-home arrangements mean that attending an event is no longer just time away from work — it is often time away from home and personal commitments. As a result, events now need much stronger value propositions to justify attendance.

This has contributed to:

- business events concentrating into Tuesday to Thursday windows
- increased pressure on venues and suppliers during compressed periods
- heightened competition for attention

Sustainability is also increasingly central — both in how events are delivered and in how attendees judge whether they should travel at all. Events are now expected to demonstrate environmental responsibility, not simply claim it.

And these are just some of the multitude of changes in more recent years. With many more to come.

### WHY THIS MATTERS FOR POLICY

For the Event Industry, these changes have required new skills, new business models, and new creative approaches.

For government, they highlight a deeper issue.

Many existing policy frameworks still reflect an era when events were:

- simpler
- cheaper
- lower-risk
- largely judged through a narrow tourism or attendance lens

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*“That approach no longer reflects how events actually function — or the full range of benefits they now really deliver.”*

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That approach no longer reflects how events actually function — or the full range of benefits they now really deliver.

Understanding how events have changed is therefore essential to understanding why the Event Industry must be recognised and supported as a modern, professional, creative, and economically significant industry — and why a contemporary policy framework must move beyond outdated assumptions to reflect the reality of today’s event landscape.

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*“These shifts mirror much broader changes across the creative industries — where creativity is now embedded in business, technology, services, and innovation, not confined to traditional cultural production.”*

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These shifts mirror much broader changes across the creative industries — where creativity is now embedded in business, technology, services, and innovation, not confined to traditional cultural production.

### 3.4 MAIN ROLES WITHIN THE EVENT INDUSTRY

The Event Industry comprises a wide range of specialist roles and businesses. They include:

**ORGANISERS** – event companies, professional conference organisers, creative event agencies, experiential agencies, and exhibition organisers.

**SUPPLIERS** – audio-visual, lighting, rigging, staging, theming, stand builders, expo hire, guest-management systems, content creators, performers, transport and logistics, and amusements.

**PROFESSIONAL SERVICES** – environment and experience designers, creative producers, stage and show directors, production and site managers, risk managers, graphic designers, editors, animators, MCs, facilitators, musicians, and speakers.

**VENUES AND CATERERS** – convention and exhibition centres, hotel conference venues, event spaces, and caterers.

Together, these disciplines form a uniquely integrated creative-technical workforce — a sector that applies design, logistics, technology, and storytelling to every kind of event.

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*“The vast majority of the economic activity and employment within the Event Industry comes from small businesses, contractors, and freelancers...”*

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The vast majority of the economic activity and employment within the Event Industry comes from small businesses, contractors, and freelancers — highly skilled professionals who provide the industry’s flexibility, innovation, and creative capability.

### 3.5 AN INDUSTRY THAT OPERATES ACROSS ALL SCALES AND SECTORS

Unlike many sectors, the Event Industry operates across every part of the economy and community.

The same people and businesses often work on:

- a community festival one week
- a business conference the next
- a major international event soon after

It is important to note that there is one Event Industry supply chain that underpins all events — not separate ones for ‘major events’ or ‘community events’ as suggested by some.

When the Event Industry is supported, the benefits flow across every region, every event scale, and every community.

Efforts to develop just a ‘major-event supply chain’ risk overlooking this reality.

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*“The Event Industry should be supported and engaged as a single, cohesive sector — one that strengthens Australia's creative, cultural, business, and community outcomes simultaneously.”*

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The Event Industry should be supported and engaged as a single, cohesive sector — one that strengthens Australia's creative, cultural, business, and community outcomes simultaneously.

### 3.6 AN EXPORT INDUSTRY

As Australia continues to build its Event Industry, there is considerable scope to grow its export value.

Many Australian-based event companies and suppliers already export their creativity and services across the country and around the world. Yet the Event Industry is rarely recognised as an export industry.

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*“While the Tourism Industry is about bringing people to a place, the Event Industry is also about creating and exporting services and experiences to other places...”*

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While the Tourism Industry is about bringing people to a place, the Event Industry is also about creating and exporting services and experiences to other places — whether interstate or overseas.

After the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, many Australian event companies leveraged that experience to build international reputations and deliver work around the world.

This export activity is fundamentally creative in nature — exporting experience design, creative direction, production design, technical production, and event management expertise, not physical goods.

### 3.7 THE EVENT INDUSTRY BY THE NUMBERS

Below is a summary of the direct spend of key parts of the Event Industry in Australia prior to the pandemic.

The following figures illustrate the national scale of the Event Industry — showing the relative size of each segment based on direct spend (pre-pandemic).

<b>SECTOR</b>	<b>DIRECT SPEND</b>
Business Events (conferences, exhibitions, incentives)	\$35.7 b
Professional Weddings	\$4.3 b
Major Events	\$3.0 b
Festivals & Concerts	\$2.9 b
Community & Public Events	\$1.2 b
Mass Participation Events (fun runs, triathlons, etc.)	\$1.1 b
Agricultural Shows	\$1.0 b
<b>Total Direct Spend</b>	<b>\$49.2 billion per year</b>

### NOTES

- Business Events figures drawn from EY study for Business Events Council of Australia in 2015 and 2019 update.
- Major events, festivals and concerts data is drawn from EY study for Live Event Industry Forum 2021. An estimate partially based on data from Australian Festivals Association that this is fairly evenly split between concerts/festivals and other parts of the live performance sector.
- Professional weddings is from industry data provided to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Support for the Tourism and Events Sectors by the weddings industry.
- The mass participation events data came from the Australian Mass Participation Sports Events Alliance.
- The agricultural shows data came from the Agricultural Shows Australia.
- Noting, we don't have accurate estimates for the direct spend of Community and Public Events as well as a number of other types of events. These events play an extremely important role in our communities.

While exact post-pandemic data are still emerging, the national Event Industry is estimated to generate more than \$90 billion in combined direct and indirect economic impact each year — making it one of Australia's most significant creative and experience-based industries.

### 3.8 THE EVENT INDUSTRY — A GLOBAL INDUSTRY

The Event Industry is now a genuinely global industry — and Australia's Event Industry is a highly respected part of it.

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*“Australian event professionals, creative producers, designers, and technical specialists work internationally as readily as they do across states.”*

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Australian event professionals, creative producers, designers, and technical specialists work internationally as readily as they do across states.

Australian event people have delivered major projects in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and North America, while many leading international practitioners come here to collaborate on our major events, festivals, and cultural programs.

The creative and technical standards are shared globally, and Australian event professionals are well known for their creativity, reliability, and ability to deliver complex events under pressure.

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*“Australian event professionals are well known for their creativity, reliability, and ability to deliver complex events under pressure.”*

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Just as importantly, Australian event people are closely connected with their counterparts around the world.

It has never been easier to share knowledge and innovation — through the many online Event Industry forums and social-media groups, through global publications and online platforms, and through international associations such as the Events Industry Council (EIC), International Live Events Association (ILEA), International Festivals and Events Association (IFEA), UFI – the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM), and the World Experience Forum.

These bodies, and the networks they support, enable collaboration across creative design, logistics, sustainability, safety, and technology.

This global connection is one of the Event Industry's greatest strengths. Ideas and innovations now circulate almost instantly. New approaches to creative production, digital engagement, and sustainable practice move quickly between continents.

For Australia, this means not just access to global best practice but also the opportunity to contribute to it — positioning Australia's Event Industry as a leader in creativity, innovation, and capability.

### **3.9 WHY THIS MATTERS FOR AUSTRALIA**

Recognising Australia's Event Industry as a central creative and economic sector — not an ancillary one — is the first step toward realising its full potential to drive innovation, productivity, exports, and community connection across the country.

## 4. THE EVENT INDUSTRY AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Often in government policy the Event Industry gets lumped under the tourism industry or what some call the ‘visitor economy’. However, the Event Industry is only viewed and valued for hotel room nights and side trips to the penguins it generates for the tourism industry.

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*“However, the Event Industry is only viewed and valued for hotel room nights and side trips to the penguins it generates for the tourism industry.”*

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This is even though these tourism benefits are only a byproduct of events. And, only of a small proportion of events. It is not the primary purpose of the vast majority of events.

The majority of events have no tourism benefits.

Similarly, tourism policy rarely engages with how events are created, or with the people and businesses that make them possible.

Or, in the fact that the Event Industry is an export industry. While the tourism industry is about bringing people to a place, the Event Industry exports its events and services across Australia and to the wider world.

### 4.1 THE ARTS AND TOURISM

It is also worth noting that the tourism industry also includes a lot of the visual and performing arts as being a part of the tourism industry. Again, because of their ability to generate hotel room nights and side trips to the penguins.

Just as it would be absurd to suggest that the Australian Ballet is primarily a tourism business, so it is with the Event Industry. They both do generate some benefits for the tourism industry, but it is not their primary purpose.

Here is a clear breakdown of the differences between the Event Industry and the tourism industry:

### 4.2 PRIMARY FOCUS

#### EVENT INDUSTRY

The Event Industry focuses on the creation, planning, and delivery of events. These include:

- **Business events** (conferences, exhibitions, product launches, brand experiences)
- **Cultural events** (festivals, performances, art fairs)
- **Social events** (weddings, private parties)
- **Government and civic events**

#### TOURISM INDUSTRY

The tourism industry focuses on people traveling away from their usual environment, typically for leisure, business, or other purposes. It includes:

- **Transport** (airlines, buses, trains)
- **Accommodation** (hotels, motels, B&Bs)
- **Attractions and experiences** (theme parks, guided tours)
- **Travel services** (travel agents, tour operators)

## 4.3 ECONOMIC PURPOSE

### EVENT INDUSTRY

The Event Industry generates value by designing and staging events and experiences. Some events may attract tourism, but that's just a byproduct. The industry's output is the event itself and its direct impact — e.g. economic, cultural, social, brand-related.

### TOURISM INDUSTRY

Whereas the tourism industry generates value from the movement of people and their spending while traveling.

Events may contribute to tourism, but tourism is about the visitor economy more broadly.

## 4.4 INDUSTRY STRUCTURE

### EVENT INDUSTRY

The Event Industry Includes:

- Event organisers and producers
- Production and staging companies
- Venues and event spaces
- Creative designers (lighting, sound, sets)
- Caterers, security, logistics, ticketing, etc.

### TOURISM INDUSTRY

The tourism industry includes:

- Hotels and resorts
- Airlines and transport providers
- Travel agents and tour companies
- Tourism offices and destination marketers
- Tourism attractions

## 4.5 CREATIVE COMPONENT

### EVENT INDUSTRY

Highly creative, and in fact creatively driven. The Event Industry involves experience design, environment design, creative technology, multimedia production, brand experience, performance, and audience engagement.

### TOURISM INDUSTRY

May include creative aspects (e.g. tour design, experience curation), but is more focused on logistics, hospitality, and destination services.

## 4.6 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO INDUSTRIES

### OVERLAP

- Events can be tourism drivers (e.g. major international festivals or business events).
- Tourists may attend events as part of their experience.

### DISTINCTION

- You can have an event without tourism (e.g. a local corporate event).
- You can have tourism without events (e.g. a beach holiday).

## 4.7 SUMMARY TABLE

FEATURE	EVENT INDUSTRY	TOURISM INDUSTRY
Main Output	Events and experiences	Travel and destination experiences
Primary Customer	Event attendees	Travellers and tourists
Revenue Sources	Event owner, event fees, sponsorship, ticketing, exhibitors	Accommodation, transport, attractions
Main Actors	Event professionals, creatives, specialist event suppliers, venues	Hotels, airlines, travel agents
Core Skillset	Creative development, project management, logistics	Hospitality, logistics, service delivery
Orientation	Outbound - exports creative, strategic and technical services	Inbound - attracting people to visit

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*“While the Event Industry and the Tourism Industry often intersect, the Event Industry is a standalone sector with its own purpose, economic structure, operational models, creative workforce, and strategic impact.”*

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While the Event Industry and the Tourism Industry often intersect, the Event Industry is a standalone sector with its own purpose, economic structure, operational models, creative workforce, and strategic impact. It must be recognised and supported as such in policy, funding, and industry development frameworks.

## 5. UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE AND REAL BENEFITS OF EVENTS

To understand why the Event Industry matters, it is important to first understand the purpose of events themselves.

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*“At their core, events are a way of bringing people together, in the same place and at the same time, to achieve things that are difficult to achieve in any other way.”*

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At their core, events are a way of bringing people together, in the same place and at the same time, to achieve things that are difficult to achieve in any other way. They are used deliberately to build shared understanding, shape behaviour, communicate meaning, and support change.

In this sense, events are not incidental activities. They are a core mechanism through which organisations, communities and governments operate.

### 5.1 BROADER CATEGORIES

We will come back to more detailed examples, but starting with the broader categories:

#### BUSINESSES AND ORGANISATIONS

For businesses and institutions, events bring stakeholders, clients and teams together to inform, engage and align.

They are used to:

- build organisational culture and identity
- communicate strategy and major change
- raise morale and motivation
- support learning, innovation and collaboration
- launch products, services and new initiatives

Increasingly, they are also a key way organisations experiment with new technologies, creative formats and business models — using live experience to test ideas, shape narratives and accelerate adoption.

#### FOR-PURPOSE ORGANISATIONS

For the not-for-profit and for-purpose sector, events play a key role.

They are a primary mechanism for:

- raising awareness and educating members and supporters
- building communities around shared causes and values
- generating revenue through fundraising, sponsorship and partnerships

For many organisations, events are not an add-on. They are central to organisational sustainability and the ability to deliver real services in the community.

#### COMMUNITIES

For communities and regions, events create shared experiences that build social connection, inclusion and local identity.

They help communities:

- come together around common interests and values
- strengthen social bonds and trust
- celebrate place, culture and diversity
- cope with disruption, uncertainty and change

Federation Square in Melbourne provides a powerful example — a public space deliberately designed around events that has become a focal point of civic life, protest, celebration and collective memory.

### MARKETING, TOURISM AND PLACE

Some events are explicitly designed to promote a destination — such as the Australian F1 Grand Prix or major cultural festivals.

But even in these cases, it is the Event Industry's creative, technical and production capability that shapes the experience itself. The storytelling, atmosphere and emotional impact of events are what ultimately define how people perceive a place.

Events therefore function as a form of place-making, not just place-promotion.

## 5.2 THE PURPOSE AND VARIOUS BENEFITS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF EVENTS

One of the reasons the Event Industry is often misunderstood is that events are still commonly described using very broad or outdated categories — such as 'business events', 'public events', or 'tourism events'.

They are also viewed almost exclusively through a tourism lens, rather than through the lens of the organisations that are actually holding the events.

In practice, this doesn't reflect how events actually operate.

There is now a large amount of overlap between different types of events. A single event may involve business activity, community engagement, cultural expression, public participation, marketing, fundraising and place promotion at the same time.

A major event like the Australian Open illustrates this clearly. It is a global sporting event, but it also includes large-scale brand experiences, business events, corporate hospitality, community programs and public activities. This crossover is not limited to major events. It exists across the entire industry.

### THREE DISTINCT LAYERS

To properly understand events, it is critical to separate three quite different things:

- **The Purpose of the Event:** Why the organisation is holding the event in the first place.
- **The Key Benefits of the Event:** The outcomes the organisation and its stakeholders are seeking to achieve with the event.
- **The Broader Community Benefits:** Why that event, or that type of event, should matter to government and the public — for example through broader economic benefits, productivity and innovation, employment and skills development, social outcomes, and tourism and place impacts.

These three layers are often assumed to be the same. In reality, they are usually very different, and they vary greatly from one type of event to another.

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*“A business, for example, does not hold an event in order to generate hotel room nights or visitor spend.”*

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A business, for example, does not hold an event in order to generate hotel room nights or visitor spend. It holds an event for the benefit of the business and its stakeholders — such as aligning staff, training people, launching a product, raising funds, building relationships, or changing behaviour.

The economic and social benefits that flow to the host city or state are secondary effects, not the primary reason the event exists.

### WHY THIS DISTINCTION MATTERS FOR POLICY

Most government frameworks and evaluation models focus almost entirely on just some of the third layer — the public economic impact — while paying little attention to the first two.

This leads to systematic misunderstanding of:

- why organisations invest in events at all
- what makes an event succeed or fail from the organiser’s perspective
- and what policy settings actually influence event growth

For example, a company may bring several hundred staff to Melbourne for a national conference.

From the organisation’s perspective, the purpose of the event is to align staff on strategy, improve performance and drive internal change.

From the government’s perspective, the same event may be viewed primarily through accommodation, venue hire and visitor spend.

Both perspectives are valid, but they are not the same thing.

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*“The company is not holding the event because of tourism outcomes, and the tourism outcomes tell us almost nothing about whether the event achieved its real purpose.”*

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The company is not holding the event because of tourism outcomes, and the tourism outcomes tell us almost nothing about whether the event achieved its real purpose.

It is also important for government to recognise that the broader public benefits of events extend well beyond immediate visitor spend.

When an organisation grows, adapts, develops its staff, improves productivity, or becomes more resilient as a result of an event, those outcomes create longer-term benefits for the state.

They support:

- more stable and successful businesses
- stronger employment and skills development
- better service delivery
- higher productivity and competitiveness over time

These benefits are real, but they are rarely captured in conventional event evaluation models, because they do not show up as short-term tourism impact.

In a lot of cases, they matter far more to the long-term health of the Australian economy and community than the direct spend associated with the event itself.

## FROM CATEGORIES TO FUNCTIONS

A more useful way to think about events is not by surface labels, but by function:

- Who is the organiser trying to influence?
- What change are they trying to produce?
- What problem does the event exist to solve?
- What system does it affect — organisational, economic, cultural or social?

## EXAMPLES OF TYPES OF EVENTS AND THEIR PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

The examples that follow apply this framework to a diverse range of event types, showing how very different purposes and benefits sit underneath the same word: 'event'.

Together, they demonstrate that events are not a single industry product, but a set of practical tools used across business, government, community, culture and the economy to make change happen.

### EXAMPLE 1: FRANCHISE CONFERENCE / DEALER CONVENTION

A conference where an organisation brings together their franchisee community or their dealer network.

#### PURPOSE (ORGANISER)

To help a large, distributed business adapt to changing market conditions and remain relevant.

The organisation holds the event to bring franchisees or dealers together around new strategies, operating models, technologies and expectations, so change happens in a coordinated way rather than piecemeal.

#### MAIN BENEFITS (ORGANISER AND PARTICIPANTS)

Franchisees clearly understand what is changing, why it is changing, and what they need to do differently.

The event:

- supports faster adoption of new systems, products or standards
- builds confidence to invest, employ and update practices
- strengthens trust between head office and local operators
- reduces uncertainty and mixed messages across the network

Participants leave with clearer priorities and greater confidence to make decisions in a shifting business environment. And are inspired and motivated to make change.

#### BROADER COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Local businesses adapt and grow and develop.

This leads to:

- more resilient small and medium enterprises
- more stable employment in communities
- higher productivity and service quality
- and businesses that continue to invest in their future

From a public policy perspective, these events support economic adjustment, regional business resilience, and long-term competitiveness.

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*“... these events support economic adjustment, regional business resilience, and long-term competitiveness.”*

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### EXAMPLE 2: ACCREDITED MEDICAL OR SCIENTIFIC CONGRESS

A congress that brings together people from an area of medicine or a branch of science.

#### PURPOSE (ORGANISER)

To help professionals stay competitive, relevant and effective in a field that is changing rapidly.

Medical and scientific bodies hold these congresses so practitioners can understand new techniques, technologies, treatments and standards, and apply them in their own work.

The purpose is not simply to share information, but to help professionals improve how they practise, how they run their businesses, and how they deliver outcomes for patients.

#### MAIN BENEFITS (ORGANISER AND PARTICIPANTS)

Doctors and practitioners attend because they want to be better at what they do.

They use these events to:

- learn about new techniques, tools and products
- compare their own practice with peers
- identify better ways of diagnosing, treating and managing patients
- build professional networks and referral pathways
- strengthen the reputation and credibility of their practice

Participants leave with practical knowledge they can apply immediately, and with greater confidence in their professional judgement and commercial decisions.

#### BROADER COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Better-run practices and better-performing professionals across the health system.

This leads to:

- improved quality of care for patients
- earlier adoption of safer and more effective treatments
- reduced long-term health costs through better outcomes
- stronger and more viable medical services, including in regional areas

There are also important benefits for the host city and state.

Hosting major professional congresses positions Australia as a leader in that field. It strengthens links between international experts and the local health and research community, supports knowledge exchange, and helps attract talent, investment and future events.

Over time, this builds local capability, reputation and networks that extend well beyond the life of any single event.

From a public policy perspective, these congresses contribute to system improvement, workforce development and place-based innovation — not just visitor economy outcomes.

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*“... these congresses contribute to system improvement, workforce development and place-based innovation — not just visitor economy outcomes.”*

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### EXAMPLE 3: MAJOR INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

A conference that brings together people from right across an industry.

#### PURPOSE (ORGANISER)

To help an industry understand what is changing and agree on how to respond.

Industry bodies and leading organisations hold these conferences so businesses can make sense of new technologies, regulations, market conditions and customer expectations, and adjust their strategies accordingly.

The purpose is not simply to share information, but to help an entire sector innovate and change, remain competitive, and avoid falling behind.

#### MAIN BENEFITS (ORGANISER AND PARTICIPANTS)

Businesses attend because they need to understand where their industry is heading and what they need to do differently.

They use these events to:

- learn about emerging trends, risks and opportunities
- see what competitors and peers are doing
- identify new business models, partnerships and markets
- update skills and professional practice
- make investment and strategic decisions with better information

Participants leave with a clearer sense of direction, greater confidence to change, and a better understanding of how to position their own organisation in a shifting environment.

#### BROADER COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Industries modernise more quickly and consistently.

This leads to:

- higher productivity and competitiveness
- better-quality goods and services
- more resilient businesses and supply chains
- stronger employment and skills development

When industries fail to coordinate and adapt, change happens unevenly and inefficiently. Some firms move ahead, while others drift or collapse, creating job losses, market instability and wasted capability.

From a public policy perspective, major industry conferences function as part of the country's economic adjustment infrastructure. They help entire sectors respond to structural change in a coordinated way, rather than through isolated and fragmented decisions. This can lead to the expansion of businesses and increased employment.

Hosting leading industry conferences positions Australia as a centre of expertise in that sector. It strengthens connections between local firms, global players, research institutions and government, and supports long-term reputation, investment and innovation.

In many cases, the strategic and productivity benefits to the economy far outweigh the short-term visitor spend associated with the event itself.

### EXAMPLE 4: FOR-PURPOSE ORGANISATIONS NATIONAL CONFERENCE

#### PURPOSE (ORGANISER)

To inspire, motivate and equip people to deliver the organisation's mission in a changing and increasingly complex environment.

Not-for-profit organisations hold national conferences to bring together staff, volunteers, members and partners so they can build momentum, renew commitment, and strengthen their ability to respond to new needs, funding conditions, policy settings and community expectations.

The purpose is to energise the organisation and its wider network, so people feel confident, capable and motivated to do their work better.

#### MAIN BENEFITS (ORGANISER AND PARTICIPANTS)

Participants attend because they want to make a real difference and be better at what they do.

They use these events to:

- gain practical skills and tools
- learn from others facing similar challenges
- reconnect with the organisation's purpose and values
- build confidence and professional identity
- feel part of something bigger than their individual role

The event also plays a critical financial role.

It typically:

- raises significant funds through registrations, sponsorship and donations
- promotes the organisation's services and messages
- strengthens long-term supporter and partner relationships

For many not-for-profits, the annual conference is one of the main mechanisms through which they sustain their workforce, volunteer base and operating model.

#### BROADER COMMUNITY BENEFITS

More motivated, capable and resilient people delivering services across the community.

This leads to:

- higher quality support for people in need
- stronger and more stable community organisations
- better coordination across the sector
- earlier intervention and better long-term outcomes

From a public policy perspective, these events strengthen the human capacity of the for-purpose sector.

They help ensure that social services continue to adapt, innovate and respond to changing needs — not just through funding and regulation, but by building the confidence, skills and commitment of the people doing the work. They build connections between organisations, policymakers and practitioners, and support knowledge exchange that improves outcomes well beyond the life of any single event.

The long-term public value of these events lies not in visitor spend, but in stronger people, stronger organisations, and stronger communities.

## EXAMPLE 5: REGIONAL COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

### PURPOSE (ORGANISER)

To drive economic activity, strengthen local networks, and build a cohesive and confident community.

Regional communities hold festivals to bring together local businesses, community organisations, councils and residents around a shared project that generates economic activity, builds capability, and reinforces social bonds.

The purpose is to activate the local economy and, at the same time, strengthen the relationships that allow the community to function and adapt.

### MAIN BENEFITS (ORGANISER AND PARTICIPANTS)

Local businesses, community groups and residents participate because they want their town or region to thrive.

They use these events to:

- attract visitors and spending into the local economy
- collaborate with other businesses and organisations
- showcase local products, services and talent
- build practical experience in organising and delivering large projects
- strengthen trust and cooperation across the community

For organisers, the event builds local leadership, project management skills, and the confidence to take on future initiatives.

Participants experience their town as active, supportive and forward-looking. People meet, reconnect, and work together in ways that rarely happen through everyday life.

### BROADER COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Stronger regional economies and stronger social fabric.

This leads to:

- increased local employment and business revenue
- more resilient and coordinated local organisations
- higher levels of social trust and participation
- communities that are better able to support each other during periods of stress or change

From a public policy perspective, regional community festivals function as both economic development tools and social infrastructure.

They help small communities build momentum, capability and confidence — not just through money and markets, but through people working together around shared goals.

Their long-term value lies as much in stronger relationships as in stronger local economies.

### EXAMPLE 6: MASS PARTICIPATION EVENT (RUN / WALK / RIDE)

#### PURPOSE (ORGANISER)

To operate a large-scale participation business that motivates people to take part in a shared challenge, while generating commercial revenue and supporting social causes.

Many mass participation events are run by professional event companies. They are commercial operations designed to attract large numbers of participants, sell registrations, sponsorship and merchandise, and operate at scale.

At the same time, most are linked to one or more charities, using participation as a way to raise funds and awareness for good causes.

#### MAIN BENEFITS (ORGANISER AND PARTICIPANTS)

Participants sign up because they want to do something positive, meaningful and achievable.

They use these events to:

- set personal goals and challenge themselves
- improve their physical and mental health
- feel part of a collective effort
- raise funds for causes they care about
- experience a sense of achievement and belonging

For organisers, these events create:

- sustainable commercial revenue
- strong brand loyalty and repeat participation
- long-term supporter and customer bases

Participants leave with confidence, motivation and momentum that often translates into ongoing behaviour change.

#### BROADER COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Healthier, more active and more connected communities.

This leads to:

- increased levels of physical activity
- improved mental wellbeing
- significant funds raised for charitable causes
- reduced long-term health system costs
- stronger community participation and social connection

From a public policy perspective, mass participation events are highly effective tools for large-scale behaviour change.

They align commercial incentives with public outcomes — using business models to deliver health, social and fundraising benefits at a scale that would be extremely difficult for government to achieve on its own.

### EXAMPLE 7: BRAND EXPERIENCE

#### PURPOSE (ORGANISER)

To create powerful, memorable experiences that change how people perceive a brand, product or organisation in a highly competitive and crowded environment.

Brands use live experiences because traditional advertising is no longer enough. They need people to feel something, interact with something, and talk about something — not just see it.

These experiences operate both as standalone activations and as a major component of larger events, where they help bring the event to life and shape how people experience the broader precinct or city.

#### MAIN BENEFITS (ORGANISER AND PARTICIPANTS)

Participants take part because they are curious, interested, or attracted by something happening in public space.

They use these experiences to:

- interact directly with products or ideas
- learn through doing rather than being told
- share experiences with others
- create memories that last beyond the event itself

For organisers, these experiences:

- build brand recognition and loyalty
- generate media and social reach
- accelerate product adoption
- differentiate the brand from competitors

They are also a major source of commercial revenue.

For event organisers and venue operators, brand activations generate significant income through sponsorship, licensing and partnerships. In many cases, this revenue directly supports the cost of delivering the broader public event or maintaining major precincts.

#### BROADER COMMUNITY BENEFITS

More active, engaging and financially sustainable public spaces and event precincts.

This leads to:

- increased use of city centres and civic spaces
- stronger night-time and visitor economies
- public spaces that feel safer and more welcoming
- major events that are better funded and more accessible to the public

From a public policy perspective, brand experiences play a dual role.

They help animate cities and events, and they provide a commercial model that allows public places and large-scale events to be delivered at a higher quality and lower public cost.

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*“They help animate cities and events, and they provide a commercial model that allows public places and large-scale events to be delivered at a higher quality and lower public cost.”*

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### EXAMPLE 8: AGRICULTURAL SHOW

#### PURPOSE (ORGANISER)

To run a large, community-led event that supports local industry, education, business and community life all at the same time.

Agricultural shows exist to bring together farmers, producers, suppliers, educators, families, volunteers and the broader public around a shared regional project.

They are designed to:

- support agricultural and regional industries
- transfer skills and knowledge
- provide market access and commercial exchange
- sustain community organisations and leadership
- and create a major shared cultural and entertainment experience

Their strength is not that they focus on one purpose, but that they deliberately combine all of these functions in a single, long-running format.

#### MAIN BENEFITS (ORGANISER AND PARTICIPANTS)

Different groups take part for different reasons, and all of them are essential to how the show works.

Farmers and producers use shows to:

- demonstrate livestock and produce
- access buyers, suppliers and new markets
- learn new techniques and technologies
- compare their own practices with others

Businesses and suppliers use them to:

- launch and demonstrate products
- build relationships and reputation
- generate sales and service contracts

Families and the public attend for:

- entertainment and enjoyment
- learning about food, farming and regional life
- connection to their community and place

Volunteers and organisers gain:

- leadership and governance experience
- project and asset management skills
- long-term community roles and identity

The entertainment is not separate from the “serious” activity. It is what draws people in and makes the whole system work.

#### BROADER COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Stronger regional industries and stronger regional communities.

This leads to:

- faster adoption of new technologies and practices

- more viable and productive farming businesses
- stronger local economies and employment
- better connections between industry, education and community
- greater social cohesion and community pride

There are also important long-term infrastructure benefits.

Showgrounds are often used as:

- emergency evacuation centres
- disaster response hubs
- community gathering spaces
- training and education facilities
- sporting and recreation venues

Maintained by local show societies and volunteers, often on very limited budgets.

From a public policy perspective, agricultural shows are not just events. They are one of the main ways regional communities organise themselves, transfer knowledge, support industry and maintain shared civic spaces.

### SUMMARY

Taken together, these examples show that events are not a single type of activity, and they are not held for a single reason.

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*“Across very different contexts — business, health, industry, community, charities, marketing and agriculture — events are used as practical tools to help organisations and communities respond to change, improve performance, build capability, and remain viable.”*

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Across very different contexts — business, health, industry, community, charities, marketing and agriculture — events are used as practical tools to help organisations and communities respond to change, improve performance, build capability, and remain viable.

In every case, three distinct layers are at work:

- the purpose of the event, from the organiser’s perspective
- the main benefits for the organisation and its stakeholders
- and the broader economic, social and place-based benefits for the community and state

These layers are related, but they are not the same.

Most events are not held because of their public economic impact. They are held because organisations are trying to solve real problems — aligning people, changing behaviour, improving practice, raising funds, building relationships, or developing new markets.

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*“The public benefits that flow from these activities are substantial, but they are usually indirect, long-term and poorly captured by conventional evaluation models.”*

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The public benefits that flow from these activities are substantial, but they are usually indirect, long-term and poorly captured by conventional evaluation models.

When events are viewed only through a tourism or visitor economy lens, most of their real value is missed.

What the examples demonstrate is that events function as part of how the economy, the public sector and civil society actually work.

They are one of the main ways:

- industries coordinate and modernise
- businesses adapt and grow
- professionals improve how they practise
- communities build resilience and identity
- and social and economic change is made real

In this sense, events are not discretionary or peripheral activities. They are core mechanisms through which change happens in practice.

Understanding this is essential if governments are to design effective event policy, invest in the right parts of the system, and measure success in ways that reflect how events actually create value.

## 6. LIVE EVENTS AND EXPERIENCES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

### 6.1 EVENTS IN TIMES OF CHANGE AND CHALLENGE

It's not an exaggeration to say we are living through a period of unprecedented change. At the same time, we are seeing major shifts in technology (especially AI), in how we produce and use energy, in the environment and climate, in social structures and social cohesion, and in geopolitics.

What makes this moment different from previous periods of change is not just the scale of each shift on its own, but the fact they are all happening simultaneously and reinforcing each other. Technology is reshaping work and communication, climate and energy transitions are reshaping economies and infrastructure, social change is challenging long-held norms and institutions, and geopolitical tensions are reshaping global trade, security and alliances.

The result is a world that feels more uncertain, more complex and more fragmented than at any time in recent history. Organisations, governments and communities are all being forced to adapt faster than they ever have before – often without clear precedents or playbooks to follow.

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*“Organisations, governments and communities are all being forced to adapt faster than they ever have before – often without clear precedents or playbooks to follow.”*

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In this environment, change is no longer just a way to get ahead. For almost every organisation – whether commercial, for-purpose or government – significant change is now required simply to stay relevant and viable. Business models, workforce skills, ways of engaging with customers and communities, and even the core purpose of many organisations are being challenged.

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*“Standing still is no longer a neutral option; it is effectively a decision to fall behind.”*

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Standing still is no longer a neutral option; it is effectively a decision to fall behind.

This is also why events and in-person experiences are becoming more important, not less. In a period of constant disruption, they provide one of the most effective ways to bring people together to make sense of change, to have real conversations about what it means, and to build trust in an increasingly fragmented world.

For organisations, events are powerful tools for driving innovation, aligning teams, and supporting cultural and strategic change.

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*“For communities, they are one of the few remaining spaces where people can come together physically to understand what is happening around them, maintain social cohesion, and build the shared resilience needed to cope with ongoing disruption.”*

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For communities, they are one of the few remaining spaces where people can come together physically to understand what is happening around them, maintain social cohesion, and build the shared resilience needed to cope with ongoing disruption.

### 6.2 WHAT IS STRUCTURALLY UNIQUE ABOUT IN-PERSON EVENTS

In-person events are not simply a delivery channel for information. They are a distinct form of interaction that alters behaviour, attention, memory, and decision-making in ways that digital formats do not.

These differences are observable, persistent, and increasingly valued by organisations operating in digitally saturated environments.

#### IMMERSION AND ATTENTION

When people are physically together in the same space, their attention is naturally more focused.

Participants are immersed in a shared environment rather than intermittently observing it. Unlike screen-based interaction, which competes with parallel tasks and distractions, in-person experiences are difficult to partially engage with. This concentration materially affects learning, persuasion, and retention.

Immersion also increases emotional intensity. Messages delivered in person are experienced as events rather than content. This leads to stronger recall, clearer prioritisation, and higher likelihood of follow-through — outcomes that are consistently weaker in digital formats.

#### EMOTIONAL INTENSITY AND BEHAVIOURAL IMPACT

In-person events generate higher emotional intensity than digital communication. This is not incidental; it affects behaviour. Emotional intensity improves memory formation, strengthens motivation, and increases commitment to decisions made during the experience.

These effects are amplified when people are physically surrounded by others responding in real time.

Emotional contagion — the spread of affect through a group — is significantly stronger in shared physical environments. This contributes to alignment, momentum, and shared understanding in ways that are difficult to reproduce digitally.

#### TRUST AND SOCIAL SIGNALLING

Trust formation is accelerated in environments where behaviour can be observed continuously and informally. In-person settings allow participants to assess credibility, confidence, and intent across multiple interactions, not just formal exchanges.

The effort required to attend — time, travel, and opportunity cost — also acts as a signal of seriousness and commitment. This signal has economic value. It reduces uncertainty, lowers transaction costs, and supports faster coordination, particularly across organisational or sectoral boundaries.

#### SHARED EXPERIENCE AND COLLECTIVE MEANING

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*“In-person events create shared experiences rather than parallel individual ones. Participants are not merely receiving the same information; they are experiencing the same moments together.”*

---

In-person events create shared experiences rather than parallel individual ones. Participants are not merely receiving the same information; they are experiencing the same moments together. This shared reference point supports alignment and ongoing collaboration after the event.

The uniqueness of the experience matters. Knowing that not everyone has access to the same experience increases its perceived value and salience. This sense of rarity strengthens engagement and long-term recall, and reinforces the status of decisions or commitments made during the event.

### SURPRISE, NOVELTY, AND LEARNING

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*“In-person environments allow for surprise and unplanned interaction. Participants encounter ideas, people, and perspectives they did not actively seek out.”*

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In-person environments allow for surprise and unplanned interaction. Participants encounter ideas, people, and perspectives they did not actively seek out. These moments are a key driver of learning and innovation, particularly across disciplines or sectors.

Digital formats, by contrast, are optimised for efficiency and personalisation. While effective for targeted delivery, they reduce exposure to the unexpected, limiting creative spillover, informal knowledge exchange and collaboration.

### MULTI-SENSORY ENGAGEMENT

In-person experiences are multi-sensory. Sound, space, movement, proximity, and physical context all contribute to how information is processed and remembered. Multi-sensory input improves comprehension and retention, particularly for complex or abstract concepts.

Screen-based interaction compresses experience into primarily visual and auditory channels, reducing depth of engagement and increasing cognitive fatigue.

## 6.3 THE MARKET SIGNAL: GROWTH AT THE TOP END OF LIVE EXPERIENCES

These structural characteristics align closely with an observable market trend: growth is increasingly concentrated at the top end of live events, concerts, festivals, and immersive experiences.

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*“Despite higher prices, travel costs, and time commitment, demand for premium live experiences has increased.”*

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Despite higher prices, travel costs, and time commitment, demand for premium live experiences has increased. Audiences are demonstrating a willingness to pay more — not less — for experiences that are immersive, distinctive, and emotionally intense.

This behaviour is inconsistent with a view that digital access is a substitute. It is consistent with the view that live experiences offer something fundamentally different.

### WHY GROWTH IS CONCENTRATED AT THE TOP END

Premium live events maximise the characteristics that digital formats lack:

- total immersion, rather than partial attention
- high emotional intensity, rather than passive consumption
- shared experience, rather than individual viewing
- scarcity and uniqueness, rather than infinite replay
- multi-sensory engagement, rather than screen-based interaction

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*“These events are not competing on convenience or price.  
They are competing on impact, memory, and meaning.”*

---

These events are not competing on convenience or price. They are competing on impact, memory, and meaning. The fact that demand is strongest where cost and friction are highest is a strong signal about underlying value.

### **SCARCITY, MEMORY, AND PERCEIVED VALUE**

Top-end live events are defined by scarcity. They occur at a specific time and place. Attendance cannot be replicated later or fully captured through recordings. This scarcity increases perceived value and long-term recall.

Participants remember these experiences for years, not because of the content alone, but because of the intensity and distinctiveness of the experience.

### **SOCIAL SIGNALLING AND STATUS EFFECTS**

Attendance at premium live events also carries social and professional signalling value. Being present confers status, shared identity, and belonging to a defined group. This reinforces engagement, commitment, and post-event discussion.

Digital access flattens these signals. Live attendance concentrates them.

### **SURPRISE, DELIGHT, AND THE LIMITS OF OPTIMISATION**

High-end live experiences deliberately incorporate surprise, scale, and sensory impact. These elements are difficult to optimise algorithmically or deliver predictably through digital channels. Their value lies precisely in what was not expected or scripted.

This matters because innovation, learning, and cultural influence often arise from exposure to the unanticipated — a condition that digital systems, optimised for efficiency and personalisation, tend to suppress.

## **6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EVENT INDUSTRY**

The growth of premium live events is not a cultural anomaly. It reflects a rational reallocation of spending toward experiences that reliably deliver emotional impact, shared meaning, and long-term value.

This reinforces the argument that the Event Industry is not competing with digital platforms. It is operating in a different value domain — one centred on immersion, trust, memory, and behaviour change.

## **6.5 THE CRITICAL CAVEAT: NOT ALL EVENTS WILL SURVIVE**

The persistence and growth of in-person events does not apply uniformly. Events that merely replicate digital formats can do in physical space are declining, and in many cases should decline.

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*“Events that merely replicate digital formats can do in physical space  
are declining, and in many cases should decline.”*

---

If an event consists primarily of:

- sequential presentations
- passive audience consumption
- generic content
- incidental networking

then it offers little that cannot be delivered more efficiently through a live stream or digital platform. In these cases, physical attendance imposes cost and friction without creating commensurate value.

The market is already making this distinction.

### THE END OF LOW-VALUE PHYSICAL REPLICATION

Events designed around continuous PowerPoint presentations, with limited interaction and unstructured networking, are structurally vulnerable. Digital tools perform these functions well: they deliver content at scale, enable basic interaction, and allow participants to opt in and out at low cost.

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*“Where in-person formats do not materially change behaviour, learning, or outcomes, they no longer justify the expense of physical convening.”*

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Where in-person formats do not materially change behaviour, learning, or outcomes, they no longer justify the expense of physical convening.

### WHAT SURVIVING AND GROWING EVENTS DO DIFFERENTLY

Events that continue to attract investment and attendance are:

- experience-led, not presentation-led
- intentionally designed, not agenda-driven by default
- targeted to a defined audience, not broadly generic
- outcome-focused, not content-heavy

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*“They use physical presence deliberately — to create immersion, intensity, shared experience, and interaction that cannot be replicated digitally.”*

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They use physical presence deliberately — to create immersion, intensity, shared experience, and interaction that cannot be replicated digitally.

### VALUE CREATION, NOT ATTENDANCE

The relevant metric is no longer attendance numbers or content volume. It is whether the event produces outcomes that justify physical convening, such as:

- accelerated decision-making
- trust and relationship formation
- capability development
- behavioural commitment
- innovation adoption

Events that do not produce these outcomes will continue to be displaced by digital alternatives.

### 6.6 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

For government, in-person events function as enabling infrastructure rather than discretionary activity.

They underpin:

- effective stakeholder engagement
- policy adoption and implementation
- workforce capability development
- innovation and change
- system-wide coordination during periods of change

Support for events should therefore be based not on format, but on whether an event:

- uses in-person interaction for high-value purposes
- delivers measurable organisational, economic, or social outcomes
- justifies physical convening in a digital-first environment

This applies equally to business events, industry forums, cultural events, and publicly supported programs.

### CONCLUSION

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*In-person events persist not because of nostalgia, but because they create conditions — immersion, emotional intensity, trust, shared meaning, and commitment — that materially affect behaviour and outcomes.*

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In-person events persist not because of nostalgia, but because they create conditions — immersion, emotional intensity, trust, shared meaning, and commitment — that materially affect behaviour and outcomes.

At the same time, the market is enforcing discipline. Events now compete on value, not habit. Those that are immersive, targeted, and outcome-driven will continue to grow. Those that merely reproduce digital content in physical space will not.

For policy, this distinction is critical. In a digitally saturated economy, live events are becoming more selective, more strategic, and more economically consequential — not less.

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*“In a digitally saturated economy, live events are becoming more selective, more strategic, and more economically consequential — not less.”*

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## 7. THE MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF EVENTS

Australia hosts a very diverse event industry — spanning every state and territory and almost every sector of the economy.

Events in Australia are not a single uniform activity. They are organised by very different types of institutions, for very different purposes, and operate under very different economic and governance models. Even within commonly used labels such as ‘business events’, ‘cultural events’, or ‘regional events’, there is substantial internal diversity.

Across the state, event activity can be broadly understood across the following major systems of event production.

### 7.1 COMMERCIAL AND CORPORATE EVENTS

Events organised by commercial organisations primarily to support business performance, internal change, or commercial relationships. These include:

- Corporate staff conferences and national internal meetings
- Franchise and dealer conventions
- Leadership summits and executive off-sites
- Sales kickoffs and national sales conferences
- Client or user conferences
- Supplier and partner summits
- Investor and analyst briefings
- Corporate hospitality programs linked to major events
- Brand experiences and experiential activations — including pop-ups, public-space activations, festival activations, immersive brand experiences
- Incentive travel and reward programs — including domestic and international incentive events and recognition programs

These events are typically privately funded, commercially driven, and form a major part of the professional services and experiential marketing economy.

### 7.2 INDUSTRY AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION EVENTS

Events organised by industries, professions, or sector bodies to support knowledge, standards, coordination and market functioning. These include:

- Major industry conferences and summits
- Professional congresses and accredited CPD events
- Trade exhibitions and B2B expos
- Hosted buyer and deal-making forums
- Product launches and industry roadshows
- Innovation challenges and hackathons

These events play a direct role in how industries modernise, how skills are maintained, and how markets operate.

### 7.3 FOR-PURPOSE AND CHARITY EVENTS

Events organised by charities, advocacy organisations, community services and social enterprises to support mission delivery. These include:

- Annual conferences
- Fundraising galas and major donor events
- Mass participation fundraising events
- Cause-related awareness events
- Advocacy rallies and campaign activations
- Volunteer engagement and supporter summits

These events are often essential to the funding, visibility and effectiveness of the for-purpose sector and its services.

### 7.4 CULTURAL SECTOR EVENTS

Events organised by arts and cultural institutions, cultural producers and festivals to present creative work and cultural experiences. These include:

- Major arts and cultural festivals
- Music festivals and curated live performance events
- Public art and night-time activation programs
- Cultural heritage and identity festivals

These events are primarily artist-led or institution-led, rather than commercially branded or community organised, and are distinct from both corporate activations and local community events.

### 7.5 MAJOR EVENTS

Major Events are large-scale, one-off or time-limited events that sit outside normal operations and require a bespoke, temporary overlay of systems, infrastructure and coordination.

They are characterised by:

- additional or temporary venues and infrastructure
- cross-agency planning and approvals
- whole-of-precinct or whole-of-city operations
- broadcast and media overlays
- significant transport, security and crowd management requirements

Major Events include, but are not limited to:

- International sporting events and championships
- Major cultural festivals and large public celebrations
- Global touring concerts and one-off mega-shows
- State occasions, civic celebrations and major commemorations

Major Events are 'special events' in the professional sense: they sit outside routine operations and require a dedicated delivery model.

Routine fixtures, performances or operations that occur as part of normal venue and organisational activity — such as regular season sporting matches or standard theatre seasons — are not Major Events, even where they involve large audiences.

### 7.6 PUBLIC, CIVIC AND GOVERNMENT EVENTS

Events organised by or involving public institutions, focused on governance, public engagement and civic life. These include:

- Government open days and public engagement events
- Policy summits and reform forums
- Stakeholder and sector congresses
- Civic commemorations and memorial services
- State occasions and major public celebrations

These events support accountability, trust, system coordination and democratic participation.

### 7.7 COMMUNITY EVENTS

Events organised at a community level primarily to support social connection, volunteering and local identity. These include:

- Local community festivals and celebrations
- School fetes and local fundraisers
- Neighbourhood cultural events
- Small civic and community gatherings

These events are typically volunteer-led and operate on very different scales and risk profiles to other parts of the industry.

### 7.8 MASS PARTICIPATION

Events organised around large-scale public participation, often linked to health, fundraising or brand platforms. These include:

- Marathons, fun runs and mass cycling events
- Charity participation events (walks, rides, challenges)
- Corporate or branded participation series
- Community-wide sporting challenges

These events involve large operational systems but are structurally different from both professional sport and community festivals.

### 7.9 PROFESSIONAL WEDDINGS AND LIFE-CYCLE EVENTS

Events organised for individuals and families, delivered commercially by professional suppliers. These include:

- Professional weddings and wedding festivals
- Large private celebrations and milestone events
- Culturally significant family events delivered at scale
- High-end private functions and social events

These events support a substantial small-business ecosystem and represent a major part of the commercial event economy that is usually invisible in government frameworks.

## 7.10 REGIONAL EVENTS

Regional Australia hosts all of the above event systems rather than a single generic category of ‘regional events’.

In regional areas, events include:

- Agricultural shows and field days
- Regional business conferences and trade events
- Cultural festivals and touring performances
- Major events and participation events
- Community festivals and civic events

Regional events therefore span commercial, cultural, sporting, civic and for-purpose systems, each with different purposes, economics and policy needs.

### WHY THIS MATTERS FOR POLICY

Taken together, these event systems form a complex, year-round ecosystem of activity across Australia.

Different event systems involve different organisers, workforces, approval processes, funding structures, risk profiles and public benefits. Understanding these structural differences is essential for effective policy, investment, regulation and industry development.

Treating ‘events’ as a single homogeneous category obscures how the industry actually functions and leads to poorly targeted and ineffective government interventions.

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*“Treating ‘events’ as a single homogeneous category obscures how the industry actually functions and leads to poorly targeted and ineffective government interventions.”*

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## 8. THE EVENT INDUSTRY WORKFORCE

### 8.1 UNDERSTANDING THE SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES OF THE EVENT INDUSTRY

Events are often viewed by government primarily through a tourism lens – in terms of hotel room nights, visitor spend, and destination marketing. This leads to a common assumption that events are largely administrative exercises: about booking venues, managing registrations, and organising travel and accommodation.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Event Industry is a complex creative and production sector, made up of many highly specialised professional, technical and creative roles. Delivering even a modest event involves a wide range of specialist skills, experience and judgement that are built up over many years.

Similarly, 'event management' is often treated as a single generalist skillset, as if one type of event manager can easily move between any type of event. In practice, the industry is dominated by specialists, not generalists.

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*"This misunderstanding is not just semantic. It creates a serious blind spot in national skills, workforce, and productivity policy."*

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This misunderstanding is not just semantic. It creates a serious blind spot in national skills, workforce, and productivity policy.

Most people working in the Event Industry develop deep expertise in particular areas and particular types of events.

#### **SPECIALIST SKILLSETS, NOT GENERIC ROLES**

At a high level, some of the core specialist areas include:

- Event strategy and design
- Creative direction and experience design
- Technical direction and production management
- Travel, transport and logistics
- Registration and guest management
- Safety, risk and compliance
- Site and venue operations

Within each of these areas, there are further layers of specialisation.

For example, technical production is often loosely referred to as 'AV', as if it were a single skillset. In reality it includes distinct professional disciplines such as:

- Lighting design and lighting systems engineering
- Audio engineering
- Staging and structural systems
- Rigging and aerial systems
- Vision, projection and media systems

Even within one discipline, such as lighting, there are very different roles. A lighting designer focuses on creative design and visual outcomes. A lighting systems technician focuses on technical planning,

system integration, installation, testing and reliability. Both are essential, and both take many years to master.

This pattern is repeated across the industry.

People do not become genuinely expert in these areas quickly. Most spend a large part of their careers building experience in one domain. The people who are truly good at what they do are exceptional because they understand their field in detail and can still perform when conditions are difficult, complex or high risk.

### DIFFERENT EVENT TYPES REQUIRE DIFFERENT EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE

There is also major variation by event type.

A brand experience, an association conference, a B2B exhibition, a community festival and a major sporting event may all be called 'events', but they require very different combinations of skills, processes and experience.

While there is some overlap, the differences are often significant. Someone who is excellent at delivering large corporate brand events may not have the right background to manage a complex public festival. A producer who specialises in association conferences may have little exposure to large-scale site builds or crowd management.

This is one of the reasons the idea of a single, generic 'event manager' is misleading.

### SCALE DRIVES SPECIALISATION

On small events, a limited number of people often cover multiple roles. On medium and large events, delivery depends on large teams of specialists and specialist suppliers, each bringing their own expertise to the project.

Major events operate much more like large creative productions than like administrative projects. They involve temporary production systems made up of dozens or hundreds of professionals from different disciplines, assembled for a specific purpose and then disbanded when the event finishes.

### HOW SKILLS ARE DEVELOPED

There are some formal courses in event management and production, but the reality is that most expertise in the Event Industry is developed through practical experience.

People learn by working on real events, alongside more experienced practitioners, over many years.

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*“This is why having a strong local Event Industry matters so much.  
It creates the conditions for skills to be transferred from  
experienced professionals to the next generation.”*

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This is why having a strong local Event Industry matters so much. It creates the conditions for skills to be transferred from experienced professionals to the next generation.

Since the pandemic, this pipeline has been badly disrupted. Many highly experienced people left the industry and have not returned. This has left a significant gap in mentoring, training and accumulated knowledge.

This represents a direct loss of national productive capability, not just within the Event Industry, but across the many sectors that rely on events for knowledge exchange, training, and innovation.

### SYSTEMATIC UNDERVALUING OF EVENT EXPERTISE

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*“A persistent problem is that governments often fail to recognise the specialist nature of event work.”*

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A persistent problem is that governments often fail to recognise the specialist nature of event work.

This shows up in many ways.

At the most basic level, experienced event professionals are regularly approached by government agencies and offered contract rates equivalent to generic administrative roles, sometimes as low as \$50 an hour (all inclusive as a contractor) for highly specialised work that requires considerable experience.

More seriously, governments frequently attempt to design and deliver major events without employing people with deep Event Industry experience. The Commonwealth Games is a recent example of what happens when complex event projects are developed and managed without sufficient specialist expertise.

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*“The result is poor planning, unrealistic assumptions, weak delivery structures, and ultimately poor policy and poor outcomes.”*

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The result is poor planning, unrealistic assumptions, weak delivery structures, and ultimately poor policy and poor outcomes.

### WHY THIS MATTERS FOR POLICY

The specialist skills of the Event Industry are not a ‘nice to have’. They are the foundation of whether events succeed or fail.

If governments do not understand how the industry actually works, they will continue to:

- underinvest in capability
- undervalue professional expertise
- design poor event structures
- make unrealistic policy assumptions
- lose industry capacity over time

**In summary, the Event Industry is a specialist creative production sector, not a generic service industry. Its skills are built over decades, transmitted through practice, and sustained by a strong local ecosystem of experienced professionals and businesses.**

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*“If Australia wants a strong event economy, it must first understand, value and actively develop the specialist skills of its own Event Industry.”*

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If Australia wants a strong event economy, it must first understand, value and actively develop the specialist skills of its own Event Industry.

## 8.2 THE EVENT INDUSTRY SUPPLIERS AND WORKFORCE - CORE ROLES

Events are delivered through complex, temporary production systems that integrate creative development, technical production, site operations, logistics, content, and live performance. In this respect, events function more like large-scale creative productions than like conventional service industries.

Unlike most sectors, the Event Industry does not operate through stable, permanent teams. Instead, each event assembles a temporary production workforce, made up of a mix of small businesses, specialist suppliers and large numbers of freelance professionals.

Once the event finishes, that workforce disbands and is reassembled in a different configuration for the next project.

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*“Freelancers are therefore not peripheral to the Event Industry – they are its structural core.”*

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Freelancers are therefore not peripheral to the Event Industry – they are at its structural core. Most creative, technical and production roles in the industry are performed by independent contractors who move between projects, companies and event types.

Across the industry, roles can be grouped into the following core functional systems.

### EVENT ORGANISERS AND AGENCIES

Organisations responsible for overall concept, governance and delivery of events, including:

- Event companies and producers
- Professional conference organisers (PCOs)
- Creative event agencies
- Experiential and brand agencies
- Exhibition and trade show organisers

These organisations act as system integrators. Their core function is not to deliver all work in-house, but to design the event structure and then assemble the specialist freelance and supplier teams required for each project.

Most employ small permanent teams and scale up through contractors and external specialists.

### CREATIVE DIRECTION AND EXPERIENCE DESIGN

Roles responsible for the creative vision, narrative and experience of events, including:

- Executive producers
- Creative directors
- Event designers and experience designers
- Production designers
- Event stylists and theming designers
- Choreographers
- Content producers
- Show directors

These roles are predominantly freelance or project-based and operate much like creative roles in theatre, film and television. They are responsible for creating what the event is, not just how it runs.

### CONTENT, MEDIA AND DIGITAL PRODUCTION

Roles focused on pre-produced and live content, including:

- Video editors and animators
- Motion graphics designers
- Live stream and broadcast producers
- Digital experience designers
- Interactive and immersive media teams

These roles increasingly overlap with screen and multimedia production, game technology, interactive and immersive media, the creator economy, and the broader digital creative sectors — and are largely freelance or project-based.

### TECHNICAL PRODUCTION AND SHOW DELIVERY

Roles responsible for turning creative concepts into live reality, including:

- Technical directors
- Production managers
- Show callers and stage managers
- Lighting designers and operators
- Audio engineers
- Vision directors and video technicians
- Projection and multimedia specialists

This is the core ‘show machinery’ of the industry. The majority of these roles are freelance specialists who move between production companies and events, often working simultaneously across multiple clients.

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*“These roles require deep technical expertise and years of experience, particularly for complex, high-risk or high-profile events.”*

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These roles require deep technical expertise and years of experience, particularly for complex, high-risk or high-profile events.

### PRODUCTION SUPPLIERS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Specialist businesses providing the physical systems of events, including:

- Audio, lighting and rigging suppliers
- Staging and aerial rigging
- Video screens and broadcast infrastructure
- Temporary structures and marquees
- Event power systems and cabling
- Set construction and scenic build
- Furniture, equipment and expo hire

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*“These businesses invest heavily in capital equipment and employ a mix of permanent technical staff and large numbers of casual and freelance crew.”*

---

These businesses invest heavily in capital equipment and employ a mix of permanent technical staff and large numbers of casual and freelance crew.

Together they form a national mobile production workforce that travels between states and regions.

### SITE, LOGISTICS AND OPERATIONS

Roles responsible for making complex temporary environments function safely and efficiently, including:

- Site and venue managers
- Logistics and transport coordinators
- Workforce and volunteer managers
- Infrastructure and transport planners
- Crowd, spectator and access coordinators

Many of these roles sit at the intersection of event production, construction, transport and public safety. They are critical to risk management and operational success, yet are often invisible in policy and procurement frameworks.

### TALENT AND PERFORMANCE

Roles providing live human content, including:

- MCs, hosts and facilitators
- Musicians and performers
- Speakers and presenters
- Dancers and ceremonial participants

These roles are almost entirely freelance and are coordinated through production teams and talent agencies.

### EVENT SERVICES AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Operational services required for safe delivery, including:

- Catering and hospitality
- Security and crowd management
- Cleaning and waste management
- Risk management and safety
- First aid and medical services
- Venue operations and facilities

These services are delivered through a mix of specialist event contractors, venue staff and outsourced service providers, all operating within the event production system.

### THE FREELANCER REALITY

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*“Across all of these systems, the dominant workforce model is freelance and contract-based.”*

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Across all of these systems, a dominant workforce model is freelance and contract-based.

Many event professionals are:

- independent contractors
- engaged on short-term project contracts

- working across multiple companies and clients
- carrying their own insurance, equipment and professional risk

This is not a sign of instability or immaturity. It is the structural design of the industry and mirrors how creative production operates in film, television, theatre and live performance.

From a policy perspective, this means:

- industry capability does not sit inside a few large employers
- skills are distributed across thousands of individuals and small businesses
- workforce health depends on continuous project flow
- loss of activity leads directly to permanent loss of expertise

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*“Understanding this workforce model is essential if governments want to design realistic event policy, procurement systems and capability strategies.”*

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Understanding this workforce model is essential if governments want to design realistic event policy, procurement systems and capability strategies. Without it, governments will continue to design policies and procurement systems that overlook one of the country’s most mobile, skills-intensive, and cross-sector workforces — and a key practical mechanism for driving innovation and productivity across the economy.

## 9. EVENT ECONOMICS: COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

A critical part of understanding any industry is understanding how money actually flows through it.

In the case of the Event Industry, it is fair to say there is very little real understanding of the underlying economics of events or the Event Industry, either inside government or in public policy more broadly.

This is not because the industry is small or opaque. It is because events are almost always viewed through a tourism lens, and only the parts of the event economy that look like tourism are measured.

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*“As a result, most existing economic analysis of events captures only a narrow slice of total activity, and systematically excludes the parts of the industry where most professional labour, creative work and value-adding actually occur.”*

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As a result, most existing economic analysis of events captures only a narrow slice of total activity, and systematically excludes the parts of the industry where most professional labour, creative work and value-adding actually occur.

This is not just an accounting problem. When the production side of a large industry is missing from the data, productivity policy, workforce planning and industry programs are built on incomplete foundations.

### 9.1 EVENTS ARE NOT ‘EASY MONEY’

One of the most persistent misunderstandings about the Event Industry is the idea that events are an easy way to make money.

Events look profitable because they are visible: crowds, media coverage, sponsor logos, ticket sales headlines. But visibility is not the same thing as profitability.

Most event businesses operate on thin margins in good years and can lose money quickly in bad years.

Costs are high and largely fixed, risks are hard to control, and revenue is concentrated in short delivery windows, and costs are committed upfront. If forecasts are missed because of weather, timing, talent availability or demand shifts, there is little ability to recover the loss later.

This is why the sector has a long history of churn: events, festivals and promoters come and go, even when they are well-run and well-liked — as do event companies. It is not because people are incompetent. **It is because the economics are structurally unforgiving.**

The policy implication is straightforward. If government assumes events are an easy profit engine — or that running one major event automatically translates into running other events commercially — it will make poor decisions.

Events are not a “just do more and the numbers will work” business. More competition generally means thinner margins, not thicker ones.

The industry is best understood as a risk management business with occasional upside, not a guaranteed return.

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*“The belief that events are an easy source of profit is a fundamental policy error: events are structurally high-risk, low-margin businesses, and even experienced commercial operators often struggle to achieve sustained profitability.”*

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### 9.2 A 'WIN' IS NOT AN INVESTMENT

Another common problem in event policy is that the metrics look impressive while the underlying economics are weak.

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*“The dominant convention bureau KPI of ‘wins’ systematically overstates economic impact by treating one-off, rotating conferences as equivalent to long-term anchored events, despite the former delivering transient activity while the latter build permanent city assets, industry capability and repeat visitation.”*

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Convention bureau performance is usually measured through activity indicators such as 'wins', 'delegates' and 'room nights'. These are easy to count, but they say very little about whether public investment is building lasting economic value. The system is optimised to chase volume, not to build assets.

In most bureaux, a 'win' can include almost any level of involvement — responding to an RFP, providing venue suggestions, recommending hotels, attending site visits or supplying marketing material. Even if the event was coming anyway, the city had little influence, or the event will never return, it is still recorded as a full economic success. **This is attribution without causation.**

#### ROTATING CONFERENCES

A good example is the rotating association conference. These events deliberately move between Australian cities, extracting incentives and discounts each year. They generate a short burst of activity and then leave. There is no retention value, no accumulated brand association with the city, and no long-term capability building. Each year starts from scratch.

Because bureaux are measured on 'wins', they are structurally discouraged from prioritising events that stay, grow and deepen local industry capability. A single event that remains in a city for twenty years counts once. Twenty one-off events that appear once and never return count twenty times. The system therefore rewards churn over permanence.

From an economic perspective, there are two fundamentally different types of business events:

- **Visiting events** rotate between cities, extract incentives and leave with minimal long-term impact.
- **Anchored events** stay in one place, grow over time, build local expertise, generate repeat visitation and become part of the city's economic and cultural infrastructure.

Only the second category creates durable value.

### 9.3 INVESTING IN NEW EVENTS VS GROWING EXISTING ONES

One of the most persistent strategic errors in event policy is the preference for novelty and acquisition over retention and growth. Governments tend to focus on winning or creating new events, when the stronger economic logic is to develop and scale those that already exist.

This reflects a broader 'startup fallacy' applied to events: the assumption that acquiring more events automatically grows the sector. In reality, this is equivalent to a business strategy that prioritises constant customer acquisition while ignoring existing customers. In most industries, long-term growth comes from increasing the lifetime value of proven products. The same applies to events.

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*“Existing events have already achieved the hardest part of the business: they have found an audience, validated their concept, built a brand, tested operations and demonstrated real demand.”*

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Existing events have already achieved the hardest part of the business: they have found an audience, validated their concept, built a brand, tested operations and demonstrated real demand. Starting new events means starting from zero every time, with high risk and low probability of long-term success.

Commercial experience consistently shows that many new events lose money in their early years and many disappear before reaching maturity.

From an economic perspective, helping an established event to grow – by adding days, expanding venues, improving production quality, attracting higher-value sponsors or marketing interstate and internationally – is almost always cheaper, safer and more sustainable than funding a brand new event that may never reach viability.

Events that are retained and allowed to grow compound value over time. They deepen audience loyalty, strengthen sponsor relationships, build media reputation, develop operational capability and become part of a city’s cultural and economic identity. At that point they stop being projects and become infrastructure.

Yet politically, new events are easier to announce and claim credit for. Growing existing events looks incremental, and feels less like 'policy action'. As a result, public funding is often concentrated at the highest-risk stage of the lifecycle and withdrawn just as events begin to demonstrate real potential.

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*“The strongest economic returns in event policy come from supporting the growth of existing, proven events, where public investment compounds over time, rather than relying primarily on the creation or acquisition of new, untested events.”*

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The strongest economic returns in event policy come from supporting the growth of existing, proven events, where public investment compounds over time, rather than relying primarily on the creation or acquisition of new, untested events.

Because events operate on thin margins and high fixed costs, relatively modest, well-targeted support at the early growth stage can produce disproportionate and permanent improvements in quality, scale and resilience.

In many cases, the most effective intervention is not large capital funding, but small amounts of risk absorption and strategic capability – governance advice, business modelling, marketing or production expertise – delivered at the moment when an event is viable but fragile.

## 9.4 THE MEASUREMENT PROBLEM: EVENTS REDUCED TO ‘VISITOR SPEND’

The main dataset used to describe and measure the economic impact of tourism and the ‘visitor economy’ is the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ Tourism Satellite Accounts.

These accounts are well resourced, widely used by all levels of government, and form the basis of most official economic analysis relating to tourism and events.

However, they are built around a very specific definition of economic activity: **visitor expenditure**.

In practical terms, this means they capture spending such as:

- accommodation
- food and beverage
- transport
- attractions
- retail purchases by visitors

But they explicitly exclude most of the core economic activity of the Event Industry itself, including:

- event organiser costs and staff
- creative and production services
- audio-visual, lighting, staging and rigging
- theming, exhibition builds and set construction
- content creation and digital production
- event management systems and platforms

These exclusions are not accidental. They are a conscious methodological decision within the ABS for the tourism satellite accounts to focus only on visitor consumption, not on industry production.

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*“The result is that a large share of real event-related economic activity is invisible in official data, even though it represents the majority of professional labour, creative input and value creation within the industry.”*

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This is also why national visitor-economy policy settings, including THRIVE 2030, tend to see events primarily through visitor spend, while the Event Industry itself remains largely outside the core policy frame.

This is not just an accounting problem. When the production side of a large industry is missing from the data, productivity policy, workforce planning and industry programs are built on incomplete foundations.

The result is that a large share of real event-related economic activity is invisible in official data, even though it represents the majority of professional labour, creative input and value creation within the industry.

This measurement gap is not a minor technical issue. It creates structural invisibility. During the pandemic, the Event Industry received little targeted support because it was largely invisible within government data, classifications, and program design. Industries that could be clearly identified and measured were easier to support. The Event Industry, lacking clear statistical definition or recognition, was frequently overlooked.

This invisibility continues to affect productivity, workforce planning, innovation policy, and industry development. If an industry cannot be properly seen in data, it cannot be properly managed, invested in, or improved.

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*“If an industry cannot be properly seen in data, it cannot be properly managed, invested in, or improved.”*

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### **BUSINESS EVENTS ARE LARGELY MISSING FROM THE DATA**

Business events illustrate this problem particularly clearly.

A majority of business events involve:

- local participants

- no overnight travel
- no tourism activity at all

From a tourism perspective, they appear economically insignificant.

From an industry perspective, they represent one of the largest and most professionally intensive parts of the Event Industry.

Tourism Research Australia (TRA) publishes Business Events Visitor Spend data, which is useful and helpful as far as it goes. However, it currently only captures interstate and international delegate spend.

It does not include:

- organiser budgets
- sponsors
- exhibitor spending
- local delegate participation
- the extensive supplier economy that supports these events.

In other words, even the best available business event data currently measures only a modest subset of total economic activity.

Austrade and TRA are now aware of this gap and – to their credit – are exploring ways to expand their modelling. But at present, there is no comprehensive national framework for measuring the full economic footprint of the Event Industry.

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*“There is a very strong argument for the Federal government to fund the creation of a set of Event Industry Satellite Accounts to properly capture and measure of all the industry’s economic activity...”*

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There is a very strong argument for the Federal government to fund the creation of a set of **Event Industry Satellite Accounts** to properly capture and measure of all the industry’s economic activity – like those that currently exist for tourism and the some of the creative industries.

### THE POLICY CONSEQUENCE

Because most government analysis relies on tourism-based data, event policy is structurally biased towards:

- increasing visitor numbers
- increasing hotel nights
- increasing headline ‘impact’ figures

At the same time, it largely ignores:

- industry employment
- creative and technical capability
- business formation
- supplier ecosystems
- and long-term workforce development

To date, there has been no systematic attempt to measure the full economic structure of the Event Industry, including both its production side and its broader professional workforce.

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*"This makes it almost impossible to design policy that reflects how the Event Industry actually functions."*

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This makes it almost impossible to design policy that reflects how the Event Industry actually functions.

## 9.5 WHERE THE ECONOMIC BENEFIT ACTUALLY HAPPENS

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*"A second major flaw in current event economics is the assumption that most benefits occur where the event is physically held."*

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A second major flaw in current event economics is the assumption that most benefits occur where the event is physically held.

This assumption underpins most tourism-based event policy. **It is also wrong.**

In reality, the economic footprint of an event is often geographically distributed, with different components of value created in different locations.

### A SIMPLE EXAMPLE

Consider a two-day national corporate conference held in Sydney.

The standard policy assumption is the economic benefit of the event is in Sydney.

This is true for:

- accommodation
- food and beverage
- local transport
- venue hire

But it is often not true for the majority of professional and creative spending.

If the event is designed and managed by a Melbourne-based event company, and key suppliers are also based in Melbourne, then a substantial proportion of the event budget will be spent in Melbourne, not Sydney.

This includes:

- organiser salaries and overhead
- creative development
- technical planning
- content production
- design, systems and management

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*"In practice, a large share of the highest value, most skilled work occurs where the event is conceived and managed, not where it is staged."*

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In practice, a large share of the highest value, most skilled work occurs where the event is conceived and managed, not where it is staged.

### THE THREE-LAYER MODEL OF EVENT ECONOMICS

A more accurate way to think about event economics is to separate three distinct layers:

#### DESIGN AND ENGINEERING

Where the event is conceived, strategised and creatively developed. This is where event companies, producers and lead specialists operate.

#### MANUFACTURING

Where the physical systems of the event are built and maintained: production suppliers, technical infrastructure, equipment, crews.

#### DELIVERY

Where the event is physically staged: venue, hospitality, onsite labour, logistics and services.

These layers often sit in different locations. Each generates economic value, employment and skills development in its own right.

### AN AUTOMOTIVE ANALOGY

The structure is similar to how the automotive industry once operated in Australia.

When a car was sold in a city, there was local economic benefit. But the highest value-adding activity occurred where the car was:

- designed
- engineered
- and manufactured

When Australia lost car manufacturing, the total sales stayed the same. But, that city lost:

- skilled engineering jobs
- design capability
- industrial ecosystems

Events operate in the same way.

You can host large numbers of events without building a strong Event Industry.

You can also build a strong Event Industry without hosting every major event locally.

The difference lies in where design, production and ownership sit.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

A genuinely strong event economy is not just one that attracts events.

It is one that:

- hosts leading event companies
- retains creative and technical capability
- develops suppliers and specialists
- and builds long-term workforce depth

From a policy perspective, this means a leading event state should seek to maximise:

- event design and management capacity
- production and supplier infrastructure

- delivery opportunities

Not just venue occupancy.

This is why workforce data is so important.

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*“The fact that there are now roughly twice as many event organisers employed in New South Wales as in Victoria is not just a labour market detail.”*

---

The fact that there are now roughly twice as many people working as event organisers in New South Wales as in Victoria (ABS Labour Force Survey data) is not just a labour market detail. It is a structural signal that:

- **more events are being conceived and controlled from Sydney**
- **more creative and strategic value is being generated there**
- **more long-term industry capability is being built there**

Event organisers also tend to favour suppliers and contractors in their own networks and regions, reinforcing this concentration over time.

From a career perspective, this is equally important.

The places where major event companies are based become the places where:

- skills accumulate
- experience is transferred
- professional pathways exist

From a policy perspective, it means that hosting events is not enough for states.

If a state wants to remain a leading event state, it must retain and grow the parts of the industry that sit upstream of delivery — not just the parts that sell hotel rooms.

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*“If a state wants to remain a leading event state, it must retain and grow the parts of the industry that sit upstream of delivery — not just the parts that sell hotel rooms.”*

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## 10. EVENT ECONOMICS: REAL OPERATING MODELS

Most people – including most policymakers – have never seen how money is actually spent on events, or how different types of events are funded in practice.

‘Events’ are often spoken about as if they operate under a single economic model. In reality, the Event Industry consists of multiple structurally different markets, each with distinct funding sources, revenue logic, risk profiles and measures of success.

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*“In reality, the Event Industry consists of multiple structurally different markets, each with distinct funding sources, revenue logic, risk profiles and measures of success.”*

---

Understanding these differences is essential. Without it, events are treated as a homogeneous category in policy and funding frameworks, despite operating under fundamentally different economic conditions.

Some of the examples that follow – and these are just a few of the economic models of events – are based on real events and real budgets, simplified and anonymised to protect confidentiality.

They are not intended to be statistically representative, but to illustrate just some of the actual financial structures that commonly exist across the Event Industry.

### 10.1 BUSINESS EVENTS: MULTIPLE MODELS, NOT ONE ECONOMY

Business events come in many different types and forms. They consist of several structurally different funding and revenue models, each with very different economics, risk profiles and policy implications.

Lumping these together under a single category obscures how they actually function and leads to poorly targeted policy and funding decisions.

#### 1. CORPORATE-OWNED EVENTS (FULLY INTERNALLY FUNDED)

These are events owned and funded by a single organisation.

Typical examples include:

- internal staff conferences
- leadership retreats
- franchise and dealer conventions
- partner summits

Funding structure:

- 100 per cent funded by the organisation
- no external ticket revenue
- no sponsorship
- no public funding

These are not event businesses in any commercial sense. They are internal investment decisions.

The organisation funds the event to achieve outcomes such as:

- strategic communication
- cultural alignment
- training and capability
- motivation and engagement
- behavioural change

Return on investment is measured in organisational performance.

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*“From an economic perspective, these events are deliberately designed as cost centres, not revenue-generating activities.”*

---

From an economic perspective, these events are deliberately designed as cost centres, not revenue-generating activities.

#### 2. ASSOCIATION CONFERENCES (DELEGATE + EXHIBITION MODEL)

This is the classic professional conference format.

Typical examples include:

- professional associations
- industry bodies
- medical, legal, engineering and education conferences

Funding structure:

- delegates pay registration fees
- suppliers pay to exhibit

- sponsors purchase branding and speaking opportunities
- sometimes small government grants

In many cases, exhibitor revenue exceeds delegate revenue.

This is because:

- delegates attend to learn
- exhibitors attend to sell

Structurally, these events operate both as education services and as B2B marketplaces.

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*“The conference program exists partly to create foot traffic for the exhibition floor, not the other way around.”*

---

The conference program exists partly to create foot traffic for the exhibition floor, not the other way around.

### 3. TRADE SHOWS AND INDUSTRY EXPOS (EXHIBITOR-LED)

These are events where the economic model is driven almost entirely by exhibitors.

Typical examples include:

- manufacturing and construction expos
- technology fairs
- health and industry trade shows

Funding structure:

- exhibitors pay for space
- visitors often attend free
- sponsors fund activations
- sometimes limited government support

In these events, visitors are the product.

They are the audience being sold to exhibitors.

This means:

- economic risk sits with the organiser
- exhibitor ROI is the primary success metric
- content is secondary to traffic and engagement

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*“These events live or die on the ability to deliver face-to-face commercial value, which is why online versions consistently failed.”*

---

These events live or die on the ability to deliver face-to-face commercial value, which is why online versions consistently failed.

### 4. MEMBER-SUBSIDISED EVENTS

These are events used primarily as member engagement tools.

Typical examples include:

- industry forums

- leadership breakfasts
- professional development series
- networking programs

Funding structure:

- partially funded by membership fees
- partially by ticket sales
- often by sponsors
- sometimes by government

These events are not designed to be profitable in isolation. They function as loss leaders that:

- justify membership
- maintain professional communities
- support organisational relevance

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*“Their value sits in long-term relationship building,  
not event-level financial performance.”*

---

Their value sits in long-term relationship building, not event-level financial performance.

### 5. SPONSOR-DRIVEN EVENTS

These are events that exist because a sponsor wants to shape a conversation.

Typical examples include:

- innovation summits
- thought leadership platforms
- corporate roadshows
- policy forums

Funding structure:

- low or zero ticket prices
- costs covered primarily by sponsors

These events exist not because there is organic ticket demand, but because sponsors want:

- brand positioning
- influence
- access to specific audiences

They are communications investments delivered through events, not market-driven products.

### 6. GOVERNMENT-FUNDED BUSINESS EVENTS

These are events used as policy instruments.

Typical examples include:

- trade missions
- export forums
- industry development summits
- sector consultations

Funding structure:

- funded from public budgets

- often free to attend
- sometimes co-funded by industry

Their return is measured in:

- engagement
- legitimacy
- behavioural change
- system coordination

And not in profit.

They are tools of governance, not commercial enterprises.

### 7. HYBRID COMMERCIAL EVENTS

These are complex mixed-model events.

Typical examples include:

- major national summits
- global thought leadership conferences
- cross-sector platforms

Funding structure:

- delegate fees
- exhibitor revenue
- sponsorship
- government support
- sometimes corporate underwriting

These are the hardest events to deliver successfully. They require multiple revenue streams to function simultaneously and are usually:

- high risk
- low margin
- operationally complex

### STRUCTURAL INSIGHT

There is no single 'business event economy'.

There are:

- internal investment events
- B2B marketplaces
- member engagement platforms
- sponsor-led communications events
- government policy instruments

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*“Each type of business event operates under different economic logic, with different risks, incentives and outcomes.”*

---

Each type of business event operates under different economic logic, with different risks, incentives and outcomes.

Treating them as one category in policy frameworks is therefore structurally flawed.

### BRAND EXPERIENCES AND CONSUMER EXPOS (BEYOND TRADITIONAL BUSINESS EVENTS)

Two major event economies are often excluded entirely from 'business event' thinking, despite being among the largest and most commercially significant parts of the sector.

#### BRAND EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVATIONS

These are events funded entirely by marketing budgets.

Typical examples include:

- pop-up brand experiences
- product launches
- immersive installations
- roadshows and fan activations

They are:

- 100 per cent brand funded
- not ticket driven
- not tourism driven

Their return is measured in brand impact, not event profit.

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*“From an industry perspective, brand experiences are some of the most lucrative and innovative commissions for creative event agencies.”*

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From an industry perspective, brand experiences are some of the most lucrative and innovative commissions for creative event agencies.

#### B2C TRADE SHOWS AND CONSUMER EXPOS

These are public-facing marketplaces.

Typical examples include:

- home and lifestyle shows
- car and travel expos
- bridal and parenting fairs

They operate on a mix of:

- exhibitor fees
- ticket sales
- sponsorship

Here again, exhibitors are the real customers and visitors are the audience being sold.

They are commercial marketplaces that work like festivals.

#### WHY THIS MATTERS FOR POLICY

Brand experiences and consumer expos:

- operate almost entirely commercially
- support large numbers of SMEs and freelancers
- drive innovation in experience design
- train a significant share of the workforce

Yet they are often:

- invisible in government data
- excluded from event strategies
- not recognised as part of the creative economy

despite being some of the largest and healthiest parts of the Event Industry.

### 10.2 A MID-SIZED CORPORATE CONFERENCE

The table below shows an indicative budget for a typical two-day national corporate conference, bringing approximately 500 staff from around Australia to a single location.

The figures are based on real event budgets (anonymised and simplified), and are not intended to be statistically representative. Budgets vary widely by organisation, production standard and strategic ambition. However, the overall structure is highly typical of professionally produced corporate events in this category.

ITEM	AMOUNT	LOCAL	CONTESTED
Venue	\$44,200	\$44,200	
Food & Beverages	\$242,000	\$242,000	
Talent / Artists	\$46,300		\$46,300
Production	\$163,000	\$32,600	\$130,400
Site Infrastructure	\$13,500	\$13,500	
Theming / Furniture	\$40,000	\$14,000	\$26,000
Design & Print	\$37,700		\$37,700
Content	\$56,700		\$56,700
Airfares	\$91,400	n/a	n/a
Accommodation	\$98,300	\$98,300	
Ground Transport	\$11,200	\$11,200	
Event Company / Management	\$203,100		\$203,100
Specialist Contractors	\$61,000		\$61,000
Local Event Staff	\$22,200	\$22,200	
Sundry	\$14,600	\$7,300	\$7,300
<b>Project Total (ex gst)</b>	<b>\$1,145,200</b>	<b>\$485,300</b>	<b>\$568,500</b>
		42%	50%

The purpose of the example is to make visible two things that are usually invisible in policy discussions:

- how event spending is actually distributed across cost categories
- where that spending occurs geographically

The budget distinguishes between:

- **Local spend** – costs that must occur in the host destination (for example venue hire, catering and onsite staff).
- **Contested spend** – costs that can occur in another location (for example where the event company, creative team or key suppliers are based).

Airfares are shown separately and excluded from both categories, as they do not meaningfully sit in any one location as airlines operate nationally and people will travel from all over the country.

#### STRUCTURAL INSIGHT FROM THE BUDGET

In this example:

- Total project budget (excluding GST): \$1.145 million
- Local spend in host city: \$485,300 (42%)
- Contested / non-local spend: \$568,500 (50%)
- Airfares: \$91,400 (excluded)

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*“In other words, less than half of total event expenditure is locked to the host destination, even for an event that involves national travel and significant hospitality spend.”*

---

In other words, less than half of total event expenditure is locked to the host destination, even for an event that involves national travel and significant hospitality spend.

The majority of high-value categories – including:

- event company and management
- production
- content
- design and print
- specialist contractors
- talent and creative services

are not inherently tied to the event location. They are tied to where the professional event ecosystem is based.

### WHY THIS MATTERS FOR POLICY

From a tourism perspective, this event would be described as a strong result for the host city, generating nearly \$500,000 in local economic activity across venue, catering, accommodation and local services.

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*“From an industry perspective, however, over half of the economic value sits upstream of delivery, in the design, management, creative and technical supply chain - including most of the higher margin value adding.”*

---

From an industry perspective, however, over half of the economic value sits upstream of delivery, in the design, management, creative and technical supply chain – including most of the higher margin value adding.

This is precisely the part of the event economy that is:

- almost completely absent from tourism statistics
- largely invisible in policy frameworks
- critical to long-term industry capability and employment

The implication is straightforward:

- **Hosting events captures only part of the economic value.**
- **Owning the Event Industry captures most of it.**

States that attract events but do not retain event companies, production suppliers and specialist talent will continue to see a large share of high-skilled value creation occur elsewhere, regardless of how many events they host.

### 10.3 A SINGLE-DAY CORPORATE EVENT

The table below shows an indicative budget for a medium-sized single-day corporate event.

This type of event is extremely common across government and industry: leadership forums, internal summits, stakeholder briefings and major staff meetings. Some participants may travel, but in this example there is no accommodation component, and air travel is minimal.

ITEM	AMOUNT	LOCAL	CONTESTED
Venue	\$18,000	\$18,000	
Food & Beverages	\$61,000	\$61,000	
Talent / Artists	\$16,000		\$16,000
Production	\$47,000	\$9,400	\$37,600
Site Infrastructure	\$6,600	\$6,600	
Theming / Furniture	\$22,800	\$7,980	\$14,820
Design & Print	\$16,000		\$16,000
Content	\$20,100		\$20,100
Airfares	\$11,000	n/a	n/a
Accommodation	\$3,400	\$3,400	
Ground Transport		\$0	
Event Company / Management	\$57,400		\$57,400
Specialist Contractors	\$16,000		\$16,000
Local Event Staff	\$7,600	\$7,600	
Sundry	\$6,200	\$3,100	\$3,100
<b>Project Total (ex gst)</b>	<b>\$309,100</b>	<b>\$117,080</b>	<b>\$181,020</b>
		38%	59%

As with the previous example, the figures are based on real event budgets (anonymised and simplified). They are not intended to be statistically representative, but they accurately reflect the cost structure of professionally produced one-day business events.

The budget again distinguishes between:

- **Local spend** – costs that must occur in the host city.
- **Contested spend** – costs that can occur elsewhere, depending on where the event company and key suppliers are based.

Airfares are excluded from both categories.

Structural insight from the budget

In this example:

- Total project budget (excluding GST): \$309,100
- Local spend in host city: \$117,080 (38%)
- Contested / non-local spend: \$181,020 (59%)
- Airfares: \$11,000 (excluded)

In other words, **less than 40 per cent of total event expenditure is locked to the host destination**, even for an event that physically takes place entirely in one city.

The largest cost categories sit outside the tourism economy altogether, including:

- event company and management
- production
- content
- design and print
- theming and furniture
- specialist contractors
- talent and creative services

---

*“Accommodation and hospitality, which dominate most tourism-based policy thinking, account for only a small fraction of total spend in this category of event.”*

---

Accommodation and hospitality, which dominate most tourism-based policy thinking, account for only a small fraction of total spend in this category of event.

### WHY THIS MATTERS FOR POLICY

This example highlights a core structural issue in current event policy.

Many government frameworks implicitly assume that the economic value of business events is driven primarily by:

- accommodation
- food and beverage
- visitor travel

In reality, for a very large share of business events, these items represent a minority of total economic activity.

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*“The dominant value sits in the professional, creative and technical supply chain...”*

---

The dominant value sits in the professional, creative and technical supply chain — precisely the part of the economy that is:

- not captured in tourism statistics
- not visible in headline impact metrics
- not considered in most funding or investment decisions

From an economic development perspective, this means that policies focused narrowly on ‘visitor spend’ systematically underestimate both:

- the true size of the Event Industry
- the parts of it that generate the most skilled employment and long-term industry capability

## 10.4 MODEST-SIZED ASSOCIATION CONFERENCES: A REAL EVENT ECONOMY

State and national association conferences are one of the core operating formats of the Event Industry.

They are professionally produced, run annually, and operate on real commercial budgets, rather than one-off funding rounds.

They are typically characterised by:

- 200–400 delegates
- two days
- plenary and concurrent sessions
- a small to mid-scale trade exhibition
- little or no government subsidy
- held in 3 to 4 star venues

In practice, many events in this category operate with a core organiser budget in the range of \$200,000 to \$300,000 – excluding delegate accommodation.

Delegate accommodation is usually booked directly by attendees and commonly adds a further \$100,000 or more in local hotel spend for a 300-person event.

### THE REAL REVENUE MODEL

The economics of this category are structurally simple:

- **Delegates create the audience.**
- **Exhibitors create the business model.**

Registration fees typically cover some of the core operating costs of the event, including:

- venue and catering
- AV and technical production
- staffing and basic operations

The financial viability of the event depends primarily on:

- exhibitor fees
- sponsorship linked to the exhibition
- face-to-face engagement on the expo floor

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*“Without the trade exhibition, most association conferences would either operate at a loss or become unaffordable for delegates.”*

---

Without the trade exhibition, most association conferences would either operate at a loss or become unaffordable for delegates.

This is why these events are deliberately designed around the expo:

- long catering breaks on the floor
- social functions in the exhibition space
- program schedules built to maximise foot traffic
- detailed exhibitor engagement metrics

**The exhibition is not an add-on. It is the financial engine of the event.**

### WHAT THE PANDEMIC MADE EXPLICIT

The pandemic demonstrated this structure more clearly than any economic model.

When conferences moved online:

- presentations transferred easily
- speakers transferred easily
- content transferred easily

But exhibitor value largely collapsed.

Virtual booths, sponsor logos and digital networking delivered little real return. As a result, exhibitor revenue disappeared and many association conferences became financially unviable.

The content could survive online.

The business model could not.

This is why this category of event has rebounded well. There is no effective digital substitute for live exhibitor engagement. Product demonstration, relationship building and deal-making remain fundamentally physical activities.

### WHY THIS CATEGORY MATTERS

Modest-sized association conferences:

- operate without public subsidy
- sustain large networks of specialist suppliers
- employ significant freelance labour
- underpin professional development and sector cohesion
- are highly sensitive to cost inflation and insurance

They are not headline events. But collectively they represent one of the most economically real, repeat and structurally important parts of the Event Industry.

They are:

- commercially disciplined
- professionally delivered
- repeatable year after year
- and deeply embedded in real industry ecosystems.

### INDICATIVE BUDGET STRUCTURE

Indicative example:

- 300 delegates · 2 days · plenary + concurrent sessions · trade exhibition

Core organiser budget (excluding accommodation):

- Venue and catering: \$80,000 – \$110,000
- AV and technical production: \$35,000 – \$55,000
- Exhibition infrastructure: \$15,000 – \$30,000
- Speakers and content: \$15,000 – \$30,000
- Staffing and operations: \$15,000 – \$25,000
- Marketing and digital: \$10,000 – \$20,000
- Insurance and administration: \$10,000 – \$20,000
- Total organiser budget: \$200,000 – \$300,000

Delegate accommodation (outside organiser budget):

- 300 rooms × 2 nights: \$100,000 – \$150,000

Typical revenue structure:

- Delegate registrations: \$180,000 – \$260,000
- Exhibitors (20–30 stands): \$50,000 – \$100,000
- Sponsorship: \$30,000 – \$70,000
- Total revenue: \$300,000 – \$400,000+

### STRUCTURAL INSIGHT

Across this category:

- registration fees roughly cover operating costs
- exhibitor and sponsor income determines viability
- without the expo, most events do not stack up financially

Which is exactly why modest-sized association conferences have proven resilient — not because content cannot move online, but because exhibitor value cannot be digitised.

### 10.5 FOR-PURPOSE ORGANISATION EVENTS: ROLE AND ECONOMICS

For-purpose organisations operate almost entirely in the human domain – **trust, belief, behaviour, identity and belonging**. Their work is not transactional. It is relational.

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*“Events are therefore not an add-on activity, but a core part of how the for-purpose sector functions.”*

---

Events are therefore not an add-on activity, but a core part of how the for-purpose sector functions.

Unlike commercial organisations, which can rely on pricing, advertising and distribution channels; for-purpose organisations need to build legitimacy, mobilise people, inspire belief, attract donors and sustain volunteer engagement.

These outcomes cannot be achieved through digital channels alone. They depend on people experiencing something together, in shared physical spaces. Events are the primary mechanism through which this happens.

From an organisational perspective, events perform four structural functions:

- they make mission and impact visible and tangible
- they generate legitimacy with funders, boards, communities and government
- they recruit and retain volunteers and advocates
- they create the emotional and social conditions for behavioural change and social action

In economic terms, for-purpose events operate under a distinct model.

They are not designed to maximise profit, and they are not funded as public programs. They function as financial engines for mission delivery.

Revenue typically comes from donations, fundraising, sponsorship, grants and community participation. This revenue is not driven by price sensitivity or product demand, but by emotional engagement, trust, identity and social norms.

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*“In other words, for-purpose event economics are behavioural, not transactional.”*

---

In other words, for-purpose event economics are behavioural, not transactional.

Most for-purpose events are structurally low-margin in any single year. Their economic return is cumulative and long-term, built through:

- expanding donor and supporter bases
- increasing lifetime donor value
- strengthening organisational trust and brand
- building volunteer and leadership pipelines

Surplus generated by events is almost always recycled directly into programs and services. There is little or no profit extraction and very low value leakage. From a system perspective, they are one of the most efficient conversion mechanisms in the event landscape: turning social capital into financial capital, and financial capital into social outcomes.

A further, largely unrecognised economic role is risk absorption. For-purpose events fund services, pilot new models and respond to social needs well before government programs exist or adjust.

The policy implication is straightforward. For-purpose events are not ‘communications activities’ or discretionary engagement. They are core economic infrastructure for how the sector generates revenue, mobilises labour, sustains legitimacy and delivers social outcomes at scale.

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*For-purpose events are not ‘communications activities’ or discretionary engagement.  
They are core economic infrastructure for how the sector generates revenue,  
mobilises labour, sustains legitimacy and delivers social outcomes at scale.*

---

### 10.6 TRADE SHOWS AND EXHIBITIONS: WHERE THE MONEY ACTUALLY GOES

Trade shows are often described as if most of their economic benefit happens in the host destination. In reality, only part of the trade show economy is destination-based. A large share of the spending can, and often does, occur elsewhere.

The economics fall into three broad layers: what is locked to the destination, what is tied to the organiser, and what sits with exhibitors.

#### 1. WHAT STAYS IN THE DESTINATION

This is spending that cannot travel. It only exists because the event is physically in that place.

It includes:

- convention centre or venue hire
- mandatory venue services (cleaning, security, utilities)
- onsite bump-in / bump-out labour
- local logistics and materials handling
- local freight and last-mile delivery
- some local AV and production services
- local accommodation and hospitality for exhibitors and crew

For most trade shows, this represents roughly 35–50% of the organiser's direct costs, plus a portion of exhibitor labour and accommodation spend. This is the genuine host-destination economy.

#### 2. WHAT IS OFTEN SPENT ELSEWHERE

This is spending that occurs regardless of where the show is held.

It includes:

- organiser staff salaries and overhead
- sales and business development teams
- marketing and national advertising
- CRM and registration platforms
- design, content and digital
- corporate admin and finance
- almost all organiser profit margin

These costs sit where the organiser is based, which is often interstate or offshore. As a rule of thumb, this represents 45–65% of organiser direct costs, plus nearly all margin. This part of the economy is routinely misattributed to the host destination.

#### 3. THE EXHIBITOR ECONOMY (LARGEST AND MOST DISPERSED)

The largest pool of spending in a trade show is usually not the organiser at all, but the exhibitors.

Typical exhibitor costs include:

- stand design and fabrication
- graphics and displays
- freight and storage
- onsite labour and services
- staff travel and accommodation
- marketing and collateral

In a mid-scale exhibition with 150–250 exhibitors, average exhibitor spend of \$5,000–\$20,000 each produces \$1m–\$4m of exhibitor-side economic activity. This often exceeds both the organiser budget and venue revenue.

Where this money goes is highly distributed:

- design and build usually occurs where exhibitors are based
- storage and fabrication are often interstate
- global modular systems and displays are frequently offshore
- only labour, services and accommodation are reliably local

So even though exhibitor spend is the largest component of the trade show economy, it is also the least place-bound.

### STRUCTURAL REALITY

Once the full value chain is visible, the pattern is clear.

What is local:

- venues and mandatory services
- onsite labour and logistics
- local accommodation and hospitality

What is often elsewhere:

- organiser wages and overhead
- marketing and platforms
- design and content
- profit and retained earnings
- exhibitor design, fabrication and storage

Which means a trade show may be held in one city, but a large share of its economic value is created and captured somewhere else.

And, that if a state wants to maximise the real economic benefit of events, it cannot focus only on hosting events. It must also attract and retain the event organisers and the core supply chain that design, produce and service those events.

---

*“... if a state wants to maximise the real economic benefit of events, it cannot focus only on hosting events. It must also attract and retain the event organisers and the core supply chain that design, produce and service those events.”*

---

## 10.7 REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITY FESTIVALS: THE ECONOMICS THAT ACTUALLY WORK

Regional and rural community festivals are one of the strongest economic case studies in the entire Event Industry, because they show what good event economics looks like when value is retained locally, benefits are widely shared, and costs are aligned with real community outcomes.

A typical community festival is small in budget terms – often between \$30,000 and \$300,000 – and funded through a mix of council support, small grants, local sponsorship, stall-holder fees, bar and food revenue, and sometimes modest ticket sales. Costs are equally modest: staging, performers, marketing, traffic management, insurance, toilets, power and a small amount of coordination.

What makes these events economically powerful is not their scale, but their structure.

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*“In a genuinely locally organised festival, almost all spending goes to local people and businesses.”*

---

In a genuinely locally organised festival, almost all spending goes to local people and businesses. The event manager is local. The staging and PA company is local. Performers are mostly local. Catering, printing, accommodation, trades and suppliers are all local. In practice, around 85–95% of total cash spend stays within the region.

That is an extraordinarily high economic retention rate. There is very little leakage, usually limited to things like insurance, ticketing platforms and the occasional specialist input or headline artist from outside the region.

The result is multiple layers of economic benefit. There is the direct spend of the event itself. There is visitor spending in local cafes, pubs, shops and accommodation. And there are longer-term effects: local jobs, repeat visitation, new small businesses, increased confidence and local entrepreneurship.

Because these are small communities with relatively thin economies, even modest injections of money have outsized effects. In practice, a \$100,000 festival in a small town can feel like a million-dollar project. Unlike in capital cities, the multiplier is real – money circulates repeatedly through the same local businesses rather than leaking out through national or global supply chains.

Over time, these events also build local economic capacity. They develop local suppliers, build skills, strengthen governance, train volunteers into professionals and improve infrastructure. They literally build the local economy from the inside.

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*“Community festivals reduce isolation, improve mental health, build trust, strengthen networks, increase civic pride and create a sense of belonging.”*

---

There is also a layer of value that never shows up in economic models. Community festivals reduce isolation, improve mental health, build trust, strengthen networks, increase civic pride and create a sense of belonging. These translate directly into higher participation, stronger volunteerism and greater resilience after shocks like fires, floods or drought.

In economic terms, they are social infrastructure that generates cashflow.

The paradox is that despite being some of the highest-return events in the entire sector, they are also some of the most fragile. They are underfunded, heavily volunteer-dependent, exposed to rising compliance costs, and often one bad year away from collapse.

Governments, meanwhile, tend to prefer funding big regional spectacles and one-off headline events because they look impressive and generate large numbers. From a pure economic development perspective, that is not the best approach.

The strongest returns generally come from strengthening small, embedded, locally owned events.

Put simply, community festivals quietly do what governments wish big events would do.

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*“Put simply, community festivals quietly do what governments wish big events would do.”*

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### 10.8 AGRICULTURAL SHOWS: REGIONAL ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE IN EVENT FORM

Agricultural shows are one of the most misunderstood and undervalued event types, largely because they are still viewed through a nostalgia lens rather than an infrastructure lens.

They are treated as heritage entertainment for country towns, when in reality they function as multi-sector regional institutions that sit at the intersection of economy, education, industry development and community governance.

At their core, agricultural shows are not entertainment products. They are industry platforms.

They operate as:

- market access points for producers
- product demonstration and sales environments
- skills competitions and training systems
- technology transfer mechanisms
- workforce development pathways

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*“In practical terms, they perform many of the same functions as trade fairs, industry expos and professional conferences – but in a public, community-facing format.”*

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In practical terms, they perform many of the same functions as trade fairs, industry expos and professional conferences – but in a public, community-facing format.

They support entire regional economic ecosystems. Shows connect farmers and suppliers, breeders and buyers, educators and students, researchers and producers, and regional businesses and markets. They directly drive livestock sales, machinery and equipment sales, service contracts, training uptake and workforce pipelines.

None of this appears in tourism statistics or standard event metrics, yet it represents real and ongoing economic activity.

Their most important value is not transactional, but structural and intergenerational. Agricultural shows shape who enters agriculture, who stays in it, how skills are transferred, and how regional leadership develops. In policy terms, they sit squarely within workforce development, industry capability and regional economic development – not just ‘events’.

They are also major volunteer institutions disguised as events – governed by community boards, operating year-round and managing significant physical assets. In effect, they function as rural civil society institutions, not weekend attractions.

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*“They operate as emergency evacuation centres, disaster response hubs, training facilities, markets, sporting venues and community gathering spaces.”*

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Showgrounds themselves are critical public infrastructure. They operate as emergency evacuation centres, disaster response hubs, training facilities, markets, sporting venues and community gathering spaces. This infrastructure is maintained largely by show societies and volunteers on budgets that would not sustain even modest urban facilities.

Financially, they are challenging despite being economically essential. They face rising insurance, compliance and biosecurity costs, ageing infrastructure and declining volunteer bases, yet rely on revenue streams such as gate takings, small sponsorships and canteen sales. This is not a sustainable funding model for institutions that function as regional economic and social infrastructure.

Governments tend to treat agricultural shows as cultural nostalgia, when their real role is as economic and social infrastructure for regional Australia. In economic terms, agricultural shows are not peripheral to regional development. They are one of its foundational institutions.

### 10.9 MAJOR STADIUM CONCERTS: HIGH VISIBILITY, LOW CAPABILITY RETURN

Major stadium concerts are probably the most mythologised category of events in economic impact studies. They are often used as political proof that “events = massive local benefit”, when in reality they are one of the most globally extractive formats in the event economy.

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*“They are often used as political proof that “events = massive local benefit”, when in reality they are one of the most globally extractive formats in the event economy.”*

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A large stadium concert involves four main economic actors:

- the artist and their global touring entity
- the promoter
- the venue
- the local economy (crew, suppliers, hospitality, etc.)

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*“It is structurally designed so that the majority of value flows to the artist and their international touring operation, not to the host city or state.”*

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Financially, this is not a balanced system. It is structurally designed so that the majority of value flows to the artist and their international touring operation, not to the host city or state.

#### ARTIST AND TOURING ECONOMICS

For the top-tier of acts, the artist operates as a mobile multinational business. They typically control ticket pricing, production design, brand and IP, merchandise, and touring strategy.

On major stadium tours, artists commonly receive 70–90% of net ticket revenue, either through guaranteed fees or revenue share.

Merchandise is also controlled by the artist’s global touring entity. It is designed, manufactured, distributed and accounted for offshore. Typically 80–95% of merchandise profit flows to the artist, with only small floor-space fees retained locally. Most of this revenue leaves the country and is not reinvested in the local industry.

#### PROMOTERS AND VENUES

Promoters carry significant financial risk but generally operate on relatively thin margins for mega tours, often in the range of 5–10% of gross revenue, after artist fees and operating costs.

Venues are frequently assumed to be major beneficiaries, but in practice their net margins are often modest, once staffing, compliance, remediation and operational costs are included.

#### PRODUCTION AND LOCAL SUPPLY

Modern mega tours import most high-value production. Lighting, audio, staging, video systems and creative content are typically owned by international touring companies and operated by touring crews. Local suppliers mainly provide casual labour, logistics and basic services.

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*“As a result, very little of the high-skilled design, creative or technical production spend happens in Australia.”*

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As a result, very little – if any – of the high-skilled design, creative or technical production spend happens in Australia.

### AUDIENCE SPENDING

Audience travel and hospitality spend is often overstated in economic impact claims. Two effects are usually ignored:

- **Substitution** – people replace one form of leisure spend with another.
- **Displacement** – hotels and restaurants shift existing demand rather than create new demand.

This means gross visitor spend figures significantly overstate net economic uplift.

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*“A very significant amount of audience spend tends to be on the artist’s merchandise – which has no real local economic benefit.”*

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A very significant amount of audience spend tends to be on the artist’s merchandise – which has no real local economic benefit.

### ACCOMMODATION

Most of the mega stadium tours involve the artist performing in at least five capital cities – meaning there are only modest tourism benefits from most of them, as most people can attend the concert in their home city.

Very occasionally there is one like Taylor Swift’s Eras Tour where they only perform in two capital cities. In this case there can be a considerable amount of travel to the cities where the concerts are happening.

This was certainly the case for Melbourne and Sydney for the Eras Tour.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Major stadium concerts are culturally valuable and politically visible. They are effective for destination branding and public profile.

However, from an industry development perspective they are one of the weaker event formats. They often do not build local creative capability, develop domestic IP, strengthen local production companies, or generate exportable skills.

An event strategy overly focused on benefiting from mega stadium concerts will produce strong headlines but weak long-term economic outcomes compared with investment in:

- business events
- trade shows
- creative exhibitions
- industry-led festivals
- locally owned touring platforms

These formats retain more value locally, build capability, and generate durable employment.

**A mega stadium concert is a world-class cultural experience. But economically, it behaves far more like imported retail than like a local creative industry.**

## 10.10 SINGLE-LOCATION MUSIC FESTIVALS: LOCALLY OWNED CREATIVE BUSINESSES

Single-location music festivals operate under the opposite economic model to mega stadium tours.

A locally created and owned festival — such as Beyond the Valley — is not just an event that happens in Australia. It is an Australian creative business that uses live events as its delivery mechanism. That single structural difference changes almost everything economically.

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*“It is an Australian creative business that uses live events as its delivery mechanism. That single structural difference changes almost everything economically.”*

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### OWNERSHIP AND RETENTION

In locally owned festivals:

- the brand is local
- the IP is local
- the business entity is local
- strategic decisions are made locally

This means that profit is either reinvested locally or taxed locally. By contrast, in global touring concerts the brand, IP and profits are booked offshore. Even if gross audience spend looks similar, the economic retention rate is fundamentally different.

### WHERE VALUE IS CREATED

Local festivals spend heavily on:

- creative direction and experience design
- staging, lighting and audio
- production management and logistics
- marketing, ticketing and digital
- legal, insurance and professional services
- local artists, crew and suppliers

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*“As a result, the highest-value parts of the event economy — design, strategy, IP, technical expertise and creative leadership — sit inside Australia, not just low-margin labour.”*

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As a result, the highest-value parts of the event economy — design, strategy, IP, technical expertise and creative leadership — sit inside the local area, not just low-margin labour.

### REAL MULTIPLIERS

For locally owned festivals, economic multipliers are real rather than theoretical. Expenditure circulates through local businesses, staff and supply chains, generating secondary activity in housing, hospitality, services and taxation.

In global tours, most of that value leaves the country. The creative systems, technology and profits are imported and exported again with the tour.

### CAPABILITY AND INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

Local festivals build industry capability. They:

- develop new formats and IP
- train producers and technical specialists
- experiment with new technology
- grow export-ready teams

Global tours largely bypass local capability, importing creative concepts and production systems and using local industry mainly for labour and compliance.

### LONG-TERM VALUE

Over time, locally owned festivals produce stronger companies, more skilled workforces, deeper industry experience and international reputation. Risk and reward stay local, and knowledge accumulates within the state.

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*“People travel for the festival itself – not simply because a global act happened to be there – which builds destination identity and repeat visitation.”*

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They also generate tourism that persists. People travel for the festival itself – not simply because a global act happened to be there – which builds destination identity and repeat visitation.

### THE CORE ECONOMIC DISTINCTION

- A mega international concert is a foreign-owned product temporarily consumed in Australia.
- A locally created festival is a Australian creative business building the local economy.

That distinction explains why locally owned festivals deliver far stronger long-term economic outcomes than imported touring events.

## 10.11 ONE-OFF INTERNATIONAL CONCERTS IN REGIONAL CENTRES

One-off international concerts in regional centres are often attractive because they are highly visible, easy to communicate, and generate clear short-term metrics such as attendance and media coverage. And are currently quite popular.

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*“...from an economic development perspective, they are generally weak instruments for building long-term regional event capacity.”*

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However, from an economic development perspective, they are generally weak instruments for building long-term regional event capacity.

They produce short-term activity, but very little enduring structure.

### BUYING A MOMENT, NOT BUILDING AN ASSET

A one-off international concert primarily delivers:

- a single short spike in visitation
- a single burst of media attention
- a single night of economic activity

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*“Once the event is over, there is no ongoing asset, no retained intellectual property, no accumulated capability, and no repeatable platform.”*

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Once the event is over, there is no ongoing asset, no retained intellectual property, no accumulated capability, and no repeatable platform. Each event must be negotiated and subsidised again from scratch.

Structurally, this is closer to a one-off activation than to an industry investment.

### WHERE THE MONEY FLOWS

In most regional international concerts, a large share of public funding flows to:

- artist guarantees
- international touring companies
- global promoters
- imported production systems
- capital city based suppliers and contractors

Relatively little flows to:

- local creative businesses
- local production companies
- local IP development
- long-term regional capability

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*“As a result, much of the economic value is captured outside the region and often outside Australia.”*

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As a result, much of the economic value is captured outside the region and often outside Australia.

### INHERENTLY EXPENSIVE

The regional concerts are generally expensive to hold and require a high level of government funding. The reasons for this are quite simple.

If the event is a part of an Australia tour, the both the promoter and the artists will generally want to be making the same amount of money from the regional show that they would have made if it was being held in a capital city.

Being in a more remote location — and not in a standard capital city stadium — will generally mean lower ticket sales and significantly higher production and site infrastructure costs. Government funding will be used to at least make up this significant difference.

### TOURISM EFFECTS ARE LIMITED

While these events attract visitors, the tourism effects are usually modest and short-lived. Many attendees are local or near-local, interstate visitors typically stay only one night, and there is limited pre- or post-event activity.

This was demonstrated by the recent Foo Fighters concert in Launceston. While 26,000 people attended the sold out concert, the streets of Launceston were pretty empty the next morning. Many arrived in time for the concert and then departed straight after.

They were given no reason to stay longer and to actually experience Launceston — as is often the case with these concerts.

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*“... these events rarely build lasting destination identity or repeat visitation patterns.”*

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The destination is rarely the primary travel motivator; the artist is. As a result, these events rarely build lasting destination identity or repeat visitation patterns.

### OPPORTUNITY COST

The key question that is not asked often enough with these events is whether the funding will produce the best longer term return on the very significant investment. One of these events can easily cost the best part of \$1 million — so it is serious money that could be used for a lot of things.

The same level of public funding could often support:

- a recurring local festival over multiple years
- a regional touring circuit of Australian acts
- permanent infrastructure and event capability
- locally owned event IP

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*“Recurring events build audience habits, operational expertise, local business relationships and long-term brand equity.”*

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Recurring events build audience habits, operational expertise, local business relationships and long-term brand equity. Over time they become structural assets. One-off concerts do not.

### THE STRUCTURAL DISTINCTION

One-off international concerts in regional towns are effective at generating attention and short-term activity. They are much less effective at building:

- regional industry capability
- locally owned event platforms
- long-term tourism positioning
- sustainable creative businesses

From a policy perspective, they function primarily as consumption subsidies, not as industry development tools.

### POLICY IMPLICATION

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*“The central economic issue is not whether one-off concerts are enjoyable or culturally valuable. It is whether they create durable regional assets.”*

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The central economic issue is not whether one-off concerts are enjoyable or culturally valuable. It is whether they create durable regional assets.

The key distinction is between:

- funding isolated spectacles
- and building repeatable cultural and economic platforms

Long-term regional benefit comes primarily from the latter.

## 10.12 REGULAR CONCERTS IN REGIONAL LOCATIONS: A DAY ON THE GREEN

Regular touring platforms such as A Day On The Green provide a useful contrast to one-off international concerts because they demonstrate what sustainable regional event economics actually look like in practice.

A Day On The Green is a Australian-owned event business, operating as a permanent Australian touring and destination platform. That distinction is critical.

### A PLATFORM, NOT A BOOKING

A Day On The Green is:

- Australian owned and headquartered
- Australian operationally controlled
- Long-running and repeatable

### NATIONAL IN SCALE

It is not based on securing a single act for a single night. It is a standing event system that can host multiple artists, multiple weekends and multiple seasons.

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*“Economically, this means value accumulates over time rather than resetting to zero after each event.”*

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Economically, this means value accumulates over time rather than resetting to zero after each event.

### EMBEDDED IN PLACE

Unlike one-off concerts, A Day On The Green is structurally tied to specific regional destinations such as the Yarra Valley and the Hunter Valley. Over time this creates:

- infrastructure investment by venues
- alignment with local councils and services
- integration with hospitality and tourism
- a strong association between the event and the region

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*“People are not just attending a concert. They are participating in a repeatable regional experience.”*

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People are not just attending a concert. They are participating in a repeatable regional experience.

**This is place-making, not just event delivery.**

### SUSTAINED TOURISM, NOT A SPIKE

Because the platform runs multiple events across a season, it generates:

- overnight stays
- dining and wine tourism
- repeat visitation
- predictable hospitality demand

The economic effect is a sustained regional season rather than a single short-lived spike.

### HIGH DOMESTIC VALUE RETENTION

Most of the core event economy for A Day On The Green sits within the local area:

- production companies
- catering and bars
- transport and logistics
- marketing and ticketing

While some headline artists may be international, the event system itself is domestic and locally controlled. This means a far higher proportion of economic value is retained in-state compared to global touring shows.

### CAPABILITY BUILDING

Over two decades, A Day On The Green has:

- developed touring expertise
- strengthened supplier networks
- refined large-scale outdoor logistics
- trained a national workforce
- built exportable operational IP

In structural terms, it has contributed to building the industry, not just hosting performances.

### RISK IS COMMERCIAL, NOT PUBLIC

Importantly, the platform does not depend on recurring public subsidy. It is commercially viable because:

- the brand is established
- the audience is loyal
- the operating model is mature

### STRUCTURAL COMPARISON

The economic difference is simple:

- One-off international concerts in regional centres generate attention.
- Regular touring platforms build industries.

The former produce isolated moments. The latter produce durable economic and cultural assets.

### POLICY IMPLICATION

Australian-owned touring platforms such as A Day On The Green demonstrate how live music events can function as a sustainable creative industry retaining IP, circulating expenditure locally, embedding events into regional identity, and generating repeat tourism and employment.

From an economic development perspective, they are fundamentally different instruments to one-off international regional concerts — and far more aligned with long-term regional outcomes.

## 10.13 PROFESSIONAL WEDDINGS

Professional weddings are often excluded from event policy frameworks because they are classified as private or personal activity rather than as part of the Event Industry. In practice, they represent one of the largest and most economically real segments of the sector.

Weddings operate entirely in the open market. They receive no public funding, no tourism grants, no sponsorship and no institutional support. Every dollar is paid directly by clients and negotiated commercially with suppliers. This makes weddings an event category where pricing, demand and value are fully market-tested.

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*“In aggregate, professional weddings represented an estimated \$4 billion per year industry in Australia...”*

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In aggregate, professional weddings represented an estimated \$4 billion per year industry in Australia prior to the pandemic (based on figures provide by the industry to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Event and Tourism Sectors), operating year-round across metropolitan and regional areas.

Expenditure is direct and tangible: venues, catering, planners and coordinators, florists and stylists, photographers and videographers, AV and lighting, entertainment, transport, accommodation, hire companies, designers and printers.

From an economic perspective, weddings are characterised by exceptionally high local retention. Unlike international concerts, touring exhibitions or visiting conferences, almost all wedding expenditure flows to domestic small businesses and sole traders. The economic leakage is minimal, usually limited to digital platforms, insurance and imported consumer goods.

There is also a significant regional tourism component. Regional and destination weddings generate sustained accommodation demand, multi-day visitation, and high-value hospitality spend for local communities. In many regional areas, weddings represent one of the most consistent and reliable sources of event-driven tourism outside peak holiday periods.

The key policy point is simple: professional weddings constitute a large, decentralised, small business driven segment of the Event Industry that delivers substantial economic activity, retains value locally, and operates entirely without public subsidy — yet remains largely invisible in government data and industry strategy.

## SUMMARY

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*“These examples illustrate only a small selection of the very different economic models that operate across the Event Industry.”*

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These examples illustrate only a small selection of the very different economic models that operate across the Event Industry. From fully corporate-funded internal conferences, to exhibitor-led trade shows, locally owned festivals, regional community events, professional weddings and major international tours, each category is driven by fundamentally different funding structures, risk profiles, revenue logic and patterns of economic retention.

The core point for policy is that there is no single ‘event economy’. Events do not operate under a common business model, and their economic impacts cannot be meaningfully assessed through a single framework or through a tourism lens. Effective event policy therefore requires an explicit understanding of these diverse economic structures, rather than treating all events as interchangeable units of visitor activity.

From a productivity perspective, the strongest policy focus should be on where capability, ownership, and higher-value work accumulate over time — not simply where people sleep or spend on the day.

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*"From a productivity perspective, the strongest policy focus should be on where capability, ownership, and higher-value work accumulate over time — not simply where people sleep or spend on the day."*

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## 11. HOW AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS ARE FRAMING EVENTS IN POLICY

Across Australia, event policy has historically sat inside tourism or 'visitor economy' frameworks, and has largely been measured through hotel nights, visitor spend and destination marketing outcomes.

In recent years, however, there has started to be a noticeable shift in how some jurisdictions are framing the role of events. The most significant change is not about individual programs or funding levels, but about how events are positioned within the overall economic and social policy architecture.

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*“In both Queensland and New South Wales, relatively recent strategies now place events as a core pillar of the visitor economy, while also recognising their broader role across the economy and community.”*

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In both Queensland and New South Wales, relatively recent strategies now place events as a core pillar of the visitor economy, while also recognising their broader role across the economy and community.

This represents a structural shift in thinking.

Instead of viewing events simply as tools to drive tourism demand, these policies increasingly acknowledge that events:

- support industry development and workforce capability
- drive innovation and knowledge exchange
- strengthen regional economies and local identity
- build social cohesion and civic participation
- shape international profile and trade relationships

In other words, events are being framed not just as marketing activities, but as multi-purpose economic and social infrastructure.

In practice, this means events are increasingly being treated as tools for lifting productivity — by supporting industry capability, workforce development, knowledge exchange and regional economic activity.

### 11.1 QUEENSLAND: EVENTS AS A CORE STATE GROWTH MECHANISM

Queensland’s recent policy settings — as outlined in their Destination 2045 policy — position events as one of the central levers for the state’s long-term growth and place-making agenda.

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*“Events are treated as tools for regional development, industry capability building and global positioning, as well as a structured pathway toward the opportunities created by Brisbane 2032.”*

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Events are treated as tools for regional development, industry capability building and global positioning, as well as a structured pathway toward the opportunities created by Brisbane 2032.

The emphasis is not only on attracting events, but on building a coordinated pipeline across the state, integrating major events, business events, cultural events and regional destination events.

The policy language consistently frames events as economic enablers — capable of driving visitation, skills, investment, regional activity and global recognition at the same time.

### 11.2 NEW SOUTH WALES: EVENTS AS A STRATEGIC VISITOR ECONOMY PILLAR

New South Wales has also moved toward positioning events as a central pillar of its NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2035.

While the state has long had a strong events focus, more recent policy settings explicitly recognise the wider role events play across the economy.

In this framing, events are seen as drivers of year-round visitation, catalysts for regional economic activity, platforms for cultural expression and creative industries, and tools for international engagement and trade.

This places events alongside accommodation, aviation, attractions and hospitality as one of the structural components of the visitor economy, rather than as an optional add-on.

### 11.3 A CLEAR POLICY SHIFT IS EMERGING

While Queensland and New South Wales have different histories and event portfolios, their recent strategies point in the same direction.

Both states now:

- position events as a core pillar of their visitor economy strategies
- recognise the wider economic, social and regional roles of events
- treat events as long-term system investments, not just marketing tools
- integrate events across multiple areas of government policy

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*“... events are being treated as structural components of economic and regional development, with roles in workforce capability, industry growth, place-making and global positioning.”*

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Instead, events are being treated as structural components of economic and regional development, with roles in workforce capability, industry growth, place-making and global positioning.

### 11.4 WHAT THIS MEANS FOR NATIONAL POLICY

At the federal level, events are still largely framed through tourism. There is no single national framework that recognises the Event Industry as a standalone economic and creative sector. As a result, a major cross-sector capability sits largely outside national productivity, skills and innovation policy.

The recent approaches in Queensland and New South Wales demonstrate a different model.

They show that events can be treated as:

- a core pillar of economic and visitor economy strategy
- a tool for regional development
- a platform for industry growth and international engagement

This provides a practical direction for national policy.

Rather than treating events primarily as tourism marketing tools, Australia could recognise the Event Industry as a strategic sector in its own right, with roles across economic development, skills, trade, innovation and community outcomes.

The state-level shifts in Queensland and New South Wales provide working examples of how this broader policy framing can start to operate in practice.

Victoria has historically been one of Australia's strongest event states, with a long record of major events, business events, festivals and industry capability.

However, unlike Queensland and New South Wales, it has not yet made a clear policy shift to recognise the Event Industry as a strategic economic sector in its own right.

Event policy in Victoria still sits largely within tourism and major events attraction frameworks, rather than within an integrated industry development model.

The consequences of this are now visible in the data.

Victoria, once the clear national leader in business events, has fallen behind Queensland on several key measures (based on TRA Business Event Visitor Data), and there are now nearly twice as many people working as event organisers in New South Wales as in Victoria (based on ABS Labour Force Survey data). These are not just tourism statistics; they are signals about where industry capability, companies and long-term economic value are concentrating.

### State of Business Events in Victoria - Update

Business Events Direct Spend - 2013/14				
	VIC	NSW	QLD	Australia
Direct Expenditure	\$10.0b	\$7.5b	\$4.3b	\$28.0b
% of Australia	36%	27%	15%	

Source: The Value of Business Events to Australia, Business Events Council of Australia, February 2015 - prepared by Errol A. Young and based on 2013/14 financial year

Business Event Visitor Contribution to the Visitor Economy - 2024				
	VIC	NSW	QLD	Australia
Business Event Visitor Expenditure	\$4.33b	\$5.86b	\$4.36b	\$19.58b
% of Australia	22.1%	29.9%	22.2%	
Business Event Visitor Numbers	4.84m	6.48m	4.43m	19.77m
% of Australia	24.5%	32.8%	22.4%	
Business Event Visitor Nights	10.30m	16.91m	10.33m	52.83m
% of Australia	19.5%	32.0%	19.6%	

Source: Business Events Contribution to the Visitor Economy January 2024 to December 2024 - Tourism Research Australia - www TRA.gov.au

### The Real Impact on Event Organisers in Victoria

The Number of People Working As Event Organisers				
	VIC	NSW	QLD	Australia
2018/19 Financial Year	11,544	13,421	2,566	34,375
2024/25 Financial Year	7,062	13,327	4,361	29,148
Change	-4,482	-94	+1,795	-5,227
% Change	-38.8%	-0.7%	+70.0%	-15.2%

Source: Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 6291.0.55.001 - E098 - Employed Persons by Occupation Group of Main Job, Released June 28 2025. Using ANZSCO Code 1463 Conference and Event Organisers.

% Share of People Working As Event Organisers by State				
	VIC	NSW	QLD	
2018/19 Financial Year	33.6%	39.0%	7.5%	
2024/25 Financial Year	24.2%	45.7%	15.0%	
Change	-9.4%	+6.7%	+7.5%	

Source: Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 6291.0.55.001 - E098 - Employed Persons by Occupation Group of Main Job, Released June 28 2025. Using ANZSCO Code 1463 Conference and Event Organisers.

This creates both a risk and an opportunity.

The risk is that industry capability, talent and companies gradually relocate to jurisdictions with more coherent policy settings.

From a national productivity perspective, this is not just a state competition issue. It is a signal that industry capability, skills and higher-value work are concentrating in the jurisdictions with clearer and more integrated event policy settings.

## 12. THE ROLE OF THE EVENT INDUSTRY WITH A MAJOR EVENT

Unsurprisingly, the Event Industry plays an integral role in almost every part of the delivery of major events like the Australia F1 Grand Prix, AusOpen, or an Olympic or Commonwealth Games. Yet this is not well understood.

Just as there is a significant construction component and an obvious sporting component, there is an equally significant event component that underpins how major events are actually staged, operated, and experienced.

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*“... when you go to a large concert and see five people performing on stage, there are another thousand people who have made it happen.”*

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As Australian concert touring legend Howard Freeman said to a parliamentary inquiry, when you go to a large concert and see five people performing on stage, there are another thousand people who have made it happen. That gives a clue to the vast number of event people involved in major events.

With major events involving a long planning and delivery window, different people and businesses are engaged for different timeframes — from creative development and operational planning to on-site delivery and post-event wind-down. Some will be involved for the whole process while others might be just there on event days.

### 12.1 EVENT PEOPLE DIRECTLY ENGAGED

Many event specialists will be directly employed by the event organising body and associated agencies. These include roles in:

- Event management
- Logistics and operations
- Venue planning and management
- Infrastructure and transport coordination
- Security, crowd and spectator management
- Workforce and volunteer coordination

Specialist event management consultancies are also likely to be engaged to deliver major operational areas or provide advisory support.

### 12.2 OPENING AND CLOSING CEREMONIES

The opening ceremonies are among the largest and most complex creative productions undertaken in Australia. They often involve a consortium or lead event-production company engaging:

- Executive producers
- Creative directors
- Production designers
- Technical directors
- Stage and site managers
- Animators, content producers, editors, and show callers
- A very broad range of talent

These companies will also contract extensive supplier networks providing lighting, audio, staging, rigging, projection, and infrastructure services.

### 12.3 FESTIVALS AND LIVE SITES

Many major events include a public festival program. Each live site or cultural program is produced by specialist event production companies, employing creative and technical specialists and supported by full production and site-infrastructure teams.

These programs are essential in connecting communities to the event and ensuring the whole community feels part of the experience.

### 12.4 SPORTS PRESENTATION

Sports presentation is a specialised discipline within the Event Industry covering in-venue entertainment, medal ceremonies, athlete introductions, and audience engagement. Dedicated event production teams work across all sports and venues, integrating creative, technical, and broadcast elements.

### 12.5 CORPORATE HOSPITALITY AND BUSINESS EVENTS

Major events include extensive corporate hospitality and business event programs for sponsors, partners, and delegations. These encompass dinners, receptions, product launches, exhibitions, and conferences — many linked directly to the major event, and others independently timed to coincide with them. These activities involve a wide cross-section of event organisers, designers, producers, caterers, and suppliers.

### 12.6 BRAND ACTIVATIONS AND EXPERIENTIAL EVENTS

Brand activations are now central to nearly all major events. They are huge business.

They include sponsor experiences, pop-up installations, public exhibitions, and interactive marketing activations held in and around event precincts.

These are delivered by specialist experiential agencies and event production firms that employ:

- Creative producers and designers
- Production managers and builders
- Site managers and logistics coordinators
- Content and digital specialists
- Supported by a wide range of event suppliers and technical partners.

### 12.7 COMMUNITY EVENTS

There are often many community events connected to major events — ensuring that local communities are actively involved and can benefit from the event's profile. These events typically involve local organisers, community groups, councils, and regional event suppliers, with professional event people providing guidance and support.

### 12.8 LEAD-UP EVENTS

In the period leading up to major events there will often be a number of lead-up events — such as launches, fan celebrations, test events, and preview activations. Each will engage creative, logistical, and technical event teams, with many regional areas already planning to use these opportunities to promote local participation, attract visitors, and develop local event capability.

### 12.9 PRODUCTION

Virtually every part of major events depends on large-scale event production services, including:

- Audio
- Lighting
- Rigging
- Aerial rigging
- Staging
- Backline
- Video screens
- Video production
- Talkback and communications
- Projection
- Set design and theming
- Costuming

These suppliers are drawn from the Event Industry's national network, with many expected to invest in new equipment and training to meet the scale of the major events.

### 12.10 SITE INFRASTRUCTURE

Similarly, major events require vast amounts of temporary event site infrastructure, including:

- Event power systems – generators, distribution boards, cabling, cable covers
- Marquees and temporary structures
- Crowd-control barriers
- Two-way radio networks
- Furniture and equipment
- Portable buildings and compounds
- Toilet and sanitation facilities

### 12.11 BROADCAST AND MEDIA SUPPORT

Broadcast operations rely heavily on Event Industry expertise. Although technically part of the media sector, outside broadcasts and international media facilities depend on event-production and site-infrastructure professionals to deliver power, staging, rigging, and logistics for each broadcast compound and live-cross location.

### 12.12 TALENT

Major events often feature many performers and presenters — from MCs, musicians, and dancers to ceremonial participants and entertainment. The coordination, contracting, and management of talent involve numerous event producers, stage managers, and production teams across multiple disciplines.

### 12.13 EVENT SERVICES

Finally, major events depend on a wide range of event services, including:

- Production and site crew
- Catering and hospitality
- Security and crowd management

- Venue management and operations
- Cleaning and waste management
- Risk management and safety
- First aid and medical services

Each service area forms part of the wider Event Industry supply chain and contributes to the safe, efficient, and memorable delivery of the major event.

### 12.14 SUMMARY - WHY RECOGNITION MATTERS

Major sporting events, for example, are not simply sporting competitions — they are a complex network of many events, each requiring the specialist expertise of Australia's Event Industry.

The scale and complexity of major events is huge. They rely on hundreds or thousands of event professionals, suppliers, and contractors working across every creative, technical, logistical, and operational discipline. They draw on many dozens of specialist skillsets and service areas — from creative direction, design, and production through to engineering, logistics, and safety management.

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*“The breadth and sophistication of this capability are rarely well understood by those outside of the Event Industry.”*

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The breadth and sophistication of this capability are rarely well understood by those outside of the Event Industry. Yet it is this expertise that turns ideas and venues into real, live experiences — safely, creatively, and efficiently.

The size and complexity of major events illustrate the breadth of the Event Industry — from concept to delivery.

However, it is worth stressing that major events are still a relatively small part of the Event Industry and the work in the Event Industry. The hundreds of thousands of other more modest events that happen each year enables the Event Industry to have the capability to do major events. It is not the other way around — despite what some may think.

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*“The tens thousands of other more modest events that happen each year enables the Event Industry to have the capability to do major events.”*

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Ensuring proper recognition will allow Australia to understand its true event capability, identify where capacity needs to grow, and ensure that opportunities and benefits flow to local event professionals and suppliers.

Recognising this depth of expertise is the starting point for understanding the Event Industry's full economic, creative, and social value to Australia.

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*Recognising this depth of expertise is the starting point for understanding the Event Industry's full economic, creative, and social value to Australia.*

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## 13. WHY THE EVENT INDUSTRY MATTERS ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY

The Event Industry is one of Australia's most effective — and most under-recognised — engines for economic growth, innovation, and community connection.

While tourism captures part of the visitor spend generated by events, the broader benefits reach far deeper — and for most events, these broader benefits are the primary reason the event exists.

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*“Events influence business productivity, workforce skills, innovation and change, regional participation, creative output, and social cohesion.”*

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Events influence business productivity, workforce skills, innovation and change, regional participation, creative output, and social cohesion. They are used every day by government, industry, institutions, and communities to achieve outcomes that cannot be delivered in the same way through other means.

If Australia is serious about its objectives for economic growth, jobs, skills, innovation, and reaching every community, then strengthening the Event Industry that creates and delivers these events is essential.

### 13.1 ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

The Event Industry makes a substantial contribution to Australia's economy.

Importantly, direct expenditure figures capture only part of the Event Industry's economic contribution.

Many of the most economically significant events — particularly business, professional, and industry events — generate value through productivity gains, skills development, innovation uptake, and investment decisions that are not reflected in visitor-spend metrics alone.

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*“Many of the most economically significant events ... generate value through productivity gains, skills development, innovation uptake, and investment decisions that are not reflected in visitor-spend metrics alone.”*

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These forms of value creation are typical of creative and knowledge-based industries, where impact is realised through capability, learning, innovation, and behavioural change rather than transactional spend alone.

Nationally, events generate more than **\$40 billion** a year in direct expenditure.

Business events also play a stabilising role in the economy. They support high levels of mid-week and off-peak demand, providing year-round activity for venues, accommodation, and hospitality businesses, and sustaining jobs that would otherwise be seasonal or insecure.

In this way, the Event Industry aligns closely with the Government's economic growth objectives by supporting productivity, strengthening local industry ecosystems, and creating resilient employment across metropolitan and regional Australia.

### 13.2 INNOVATION AND PRODUCTIVITY

Innovation policy is ultimately about how ideas move from theory into practice — and events are one of the primary mechanisms through which that happens. In this sense, events function as part of Australia's innovation infrastructure — providing real-world environments where ideas are shared, tested, demonstrated, and adopted.

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*“...events function as part of Australia's innovation infrastructure — providing real-world environments where ideas are shared, tested, demonstrated, and adopted.”*

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Every event is, at its core, an exercise in applied innovation.

Events bring together experience design, creative technology, spatial design, multimedia production, logistics, communication, and human behaviour to achieve a specific purpose within tight constraints. They are live, public prototypes — testing ideas, formats, technologies, and ways of working in real time.

Business events, in particular, are critical platforms for innovation and productivity. Conferences, trade exhibitions, expos, and industry forums are where new ideas are shared, emerging technologies are demonstrated, partnerships are formed, and innovation is translated into practice. For many industries, business events are a primary mechanism for professional learning, knowledge exchange, and the adoption of new methods.

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*“... the Event Industry ... supports collaboration between industry, research, government, and the community...”*

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This makes the Event Industry a practical enabler of Australia's broader innovation agenda. It supports collaboration between industry, research, government, and the community, and accelerates the take up of innovation across the economy — turning creativity and research into commercial and social outcomes.

### 13.3 COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL IMPACT

Events play a central role in community life across Australia.

From local festivals and civic commemorations to large public celebrations and cultural events, they bring people together, strengthen belonging, and help communities navigate change. They create opportunities for participation, volunteering, creative expression, and shared experience that are fundamental to social connection and wellbeing.

These outcomes are not accidental by-products of events; they are often the explicit reason events are commissioned, funded, and designed. This is particularly true for community, cultural, and civic events, which frequently generate little or no tourism activity but deliver substantial social, cultural, and economic value locally.

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*“In regional and rural Australia, events are often among the most important drivers of local economic activity and social cohesion.”*

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In regional and rural Australia, events are often among the most important drivers of local economic activity and social cohesion. They reinforce identity and pride, support local businesses, and provide moments of connection that sustain communities over time.

These social benefits are not incidental. They align with broader government objectives around inclusion, participation, wellbeing, and resilient communities — outcomes that cannot be achieved through economic policy alone.

### 13.4 WHY IT DESERVES STRATEGIC ATTENTION

Despite its scale and impact, the Event Industry is rarely treated as a strategic sector in its own right. Instead, it is often viewed narrowly through the outcomes of individual events, rather than as an industry that builds capability, skills, innovation, and long-term economic value.

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*“Recognising the Event Industry as a core economic and creative sector ... ensures that government policy captures its full value...”*

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Recognising the Event Industry as a core economic and creative sector — rather than as a series of isolated activities — ensures that government policy captures its full value and not just its tourism contribution. It allows events to be integrated more deliberately into economic growth, industry development, innovation, skills, regional development, and community policy.

Doing so supports the Government’s economic growth and industry objectives, strengthens innovation and workforce outcomes, and helps ensure that the benefits of events are felt across the whole state — not just in headline moments or major destinations.

In short, treating the Event Industry strategically allows Australia to use a tool it already relies on every day — events — more effectively, more consistently, and with far greater long-term impact.

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## 14. THE EVENT INDUSTRY AS A CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE INDUSTRY

The Event Industry is one of Australia's largest and most dynamic creative industries.

Within Australia's creative economy, the scale of the Event Industry is substantial. Creative and cultural industries together contribute more than \$67 billion to national GDP (BCARR). Of this, the traditional arts account for roughly \$8 billion, while the broader creative industries account for more than \$50 billion.

The Event Industry alone represents close to \$50 billion in direct expenditure each year. Prior to the pandemic business events alone had a direct spend of \$35.7 billion dollars a year (EY/BECA). Yet most of this activity is not captured within existing creative-industry totals.

Large parts of the Event Industry sit outside the current ANZSIC industry classifications and ANZSCO occupation codes, and therefore fall largely outside the datasets that governments rely on for policy and investment decisions. This includes the ABS Labour Force Survey, the Creative and Cultural Industries Satellite Accounts, and large parts of the Tourism Satellite Accounts.

In Appendix B - ANZSIC Codes - Being Visible in the Statistics the issue of ANZSIC codes is outlined in a lot of detail. Noting that this appendix is an excerpt from 'A Truly Creative And Innovative Australia: And The Role Of The Event Industry'. My submission to the current Senate Environment and Communications Reference Committee Inquiry into the Federal Government's National Cultural Policy.

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*"As a result, one of the largest applied creative production systems in the economy remains structurally invisible in national statistics, creative-industry policy, workforce planning, and productivity analysis."*

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As a result, one of the largest applied creative production systems in the economy remains structurally invisible in national statistics, creative-industry policy, workforce planning, and productivity analysis.

This measurement gap is not a minor technical issue. It has direct consequences for productivity, skills policy, and industry development.

If a sector cannot be clearly identified in official classifications and datasets, it cannot be accurately measured, benchmarked, or strategically improved.

The result is an industry that plays a central role in innovation, organisational change, and economic coordination, yet remains largely absent from the policy frameworks designed to support those outcomes.

The Event Industry applies creativity, design, storytelling, and technology to create shared experiences that inform, inspire, and connect people — and in doing so generate both cultural and commercial value. Events are where creative ideas are translated into live, public outcomes, often at significant scale and under complex constraints.

### 14.1 THE ARTS, CULTURAL ACTIVITY AND THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

A central issue in national cultural policy is the way the terms 'the Arts', 'culture' and 'creative industries' are often used interchangeably.

This is the case in Australia's current National Cultural Policy, where the language moves between these terms without clearly distinguishing their different roles, structures, and economic models.

In practice, however, these are not the same thing.

**The Arts** generally refer to traditional creative forms such as theatre, music, dance, literature, and visual arts. These are often supported for their intrinsic cultural value, their contribution to national identity, and their role in the cultural life of the community.

**Cultural activity** is broader again. It includes heritage, festivals, community traditions, and identity-based expression. These activities are frequently supported because of their social, historical, and community significance.

The **creative industries** are structurally different. They are sectors where creativity is applied to generate economic, commercial, and organisational value across the economy. This includes industries such as: experience design, industrial design, advertising, architecture, interactive and immersive media, game technology, screen and multimedia production, creative technology, fashion, the creator economy, and the Event Industry.

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*"In these sectors, creativity is not only about artistic expression. It is a core economic input, used to shape products, experiences, communications, environments, and organisational change."*

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In these sectors, creativity is not only about artistic expression. It is a core economic input, used to shape products, experiences, communications, environments, and organisational change.

The funding and business models are also different.

Much of the Arts sector relies on public funding, philanthropy, or mixed funding models. By contrast, large parts of the creative industries are primarily commercially funded and operate as professional service or production sectors embedded across the wider economy.

Using the terms 'the Arts', 'cultural' and 'creative industries' interchangeably obscures these structural differences. It leads to policy that is heavily focused on the Arts and cultural institutions, while much larger applied creative sectors remain outside formal recognition, measurement, and development frameworks.

**This has particular consequences for the Event Industry.**

The Event Industry uses the same core creative disciplines as the Arts — direction, design, performance, storytelling, staging, and production — but applies them to a much broader range of economic, civic, and organisational purposes.

Events are where creative ideas are translated into live, shared experiences for businesses, governments, industries, and communities.

In this sense, the Event Industry sits squarely within the creative industries. It is one of the largest applied creative production sectors in the country, yet it remains only partially recognised within current cultural and creative-industry policy frameworks.

This is not simply an issue of the Event Industry being overlooked.

Because the current National Cultural Policy largely uses the terms 'the Arts', 'cultural' and 'creative industries' interchangeably, much of the applied creative economy sits outside the policy frame. Large, commercially oriented creative sectors — including events, experience design, experiential marketing, interactive media, creative technology, game technology, the creator economy, and other applied creative services — are either only partially recognised or not recognised at all.

Yet these are the parts of the creative industries most closely linked to innovation, organisational change, technology adoption, and productivity growth across the wider economy. They are the sectors where creativity is applied directly to business, government, and industry outcomes.

As a result, a substantial portion of Australia's modern creative economy — including many of the sectors most relevant to productivity and economic transformation — currently sits outside the Government's primary creative-industries policy framework.

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*“A large share of the creative industries most directly linked to innovation, change and productivity currently sit outside Australia's core creative-industries policy framework.”*

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## 14.2 THE CREATIVE CORE OF EVENTS

Every event begins as an act of creation — an idea brought to life through design, collaboration, and technical ingenuity.

Whether it's a business conference, a festival, a product launch, or a civic celebration, each event blends creative direction, experience design, environment design, multimedia production, creative technology, and performance to create a shared experience that informs, inspires, and connects people.

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*“Events are one of the most practical expressions of creativity in action — creativity used not only for artistic expression but to engage audiences, communicate ideas, and drive change.”*

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Events are not just logistical operations or service deliveries. They are creative productions that combine imagination, craft, and technology to achieve a clear purpose. Events are one of the most practical expressions of creativity in action — creativity used not only for artistic expression but to engage audiences, communicate ideas, and drive change.

This creative depth is often overlooked in policy discussions, yet it is central to Australia's ambition, articulated through Creative State, to position the state as a global leader in creativity, innovation, and cultural exchange.

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*“... events are not simply users of creative inputs — they are environments in which multiple creative disciplines converge and are produced simultaneously.”*

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In this sense, events are not simply users of creative inputs — they are environments in which multiple creative disciplines converge and are produced simultaneously.

## 14.3 THE ARTS AND THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES – DIFFERENT PURPOSES, SHARED SKILLS

It is important to distinguish between the Arts and the broader Creative Industries.

The two overlap but have different purposes and economic structures.

	THE ARTS	THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
<b>Core Purpose</b>	Cultural expression, interpretation, identity	Applied creativity – using ideas and design to create cultural, social, or commercial outcomes
<b>Economic Model</b>	Often subsidised, patronage-based	Predominantly commercial or fee-for-service
<b>Creative Focus</b>	Artistic exploration, aesthetic experience	Applied problem-solving, communication, and design
<b>Outputs</b>	Artistic works (plays, exhibitions, compositions)	Creative products, services, and experiences – events, brand experiences, interactive media, screen content, design services, advertising, digital platforms
<b>Examples</b>	Theatre, visual arts, literature, classical music	Events, experience design, industrial design, advertising, interactive media, game technology, creative technology, the creator economy, fashion, screen and multimedia production

The Event Industry clearly sits within the creative industries column.

It uses the same creative disciplines – direction, design, performance, storytelling, and production – but applies them to practical outcomes such as community engagement, organisational transformation, product innovation, and brand experience.

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*“Saying that the Arts are creative but events are not is like saying a film made for cinema is creative, but a film made for a company, institution, or brand is not. Both rely on the same creative skills and processes; only the context and purpose differ.”*

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Saying that the Arts are creative but events are not is like saying a film made for cinema is creative, but a film made for a company, institution, or brand is not. Both rely on the same creative skills and processes; only the context and purpose differ.

This distinction matters for policy, because it allows creative practice to be supported across its full spectrum – from artistic creation to applied, commercial, and industry-facing work.

### 14.4 THEN VS NOW: CREATIVE INDUSTRIES (1980s vs 2020s)

Over the past four decades, however, the definition and role of the creative industries has changed profoundly – both economically and socially. What was once a small, culturally focused sector is now a central driver of innovation, employment, exports, and organisational change across the economy.

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*“What was once a small, culturally focused sector is now a central driver of innovation, employment, exports, and organisational change across the economy.”*

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Let’s look at these changes over time with the creative industries a broader way:

### 1. DEFINITION AND STRUCTURE

1980s	TODAY
Referred to as the Arts	Encompasses creative industries: includes experience design, interactive and immersive media, game technology, creative technology, screen and multimedia production, advertising, fashion, the creator economy, and more
Focused on publicly funded high art and cultural institutions	Includes commercial creativity (advertising, experiential marketing, game technology, events, creative technology, the creator economy, fashion, etc.)
Creative work seen as non-essential or as cultural enrichment	Creativity now viewed as a key economic driver and strategic industry
Siloed sectors (e.g. galleries, theatre, publishing)	Convergent, cross-disciplinary industries blending media, tech, and art

### 2. EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

1980s	TODAY
Mostly full-time employment in institutions	Rise of freelancing, gig work, and project-based teams
Limited commercial creative roles	Creativity now central in marketing, experience design, product design, brand experience, interactive media, data visualisation, service design, and content creation
Viewed as an economic cost (subsidised arts)	Recognised as a contributor to GDP and innovation
Smaller scale impact	\$63.7 billion economic contribution and over 280,000 employed (2022–23)

### 3. TECHNOLOGY AND DISTRIBUTION

1980s	TODAY
Analog production (film, print, typewriters)	Digital-first creation (video, animation, game engines, immersive media, AI-assisted production, real-time content, creative coding)
Distribution limited to physical venues	Global digital distribution via social media, streaming, online platforms
Gatekeepers: publishers, broadcasters, arts bodies, record companies	Democratised access — anyone can publish, perform, promote
Audience feedback delayed or minimal	Real-time interaction, feedback loops, user-generated content

## 4. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT

1980s	TODAY
Creativity seen as niche, elite, or extracurricular	Central to national identity, social discourse, and cultural diplomacy
Minority representation limited	Diversity and inclusion are central themes
Community arts and festivals just emerging	Events, installations, and digital platforms drive community cohesion and participation
Arts seen as reflective	Now often activist, participatory, and collaborative

## 5. GLOBALISATION AND CREATIVE EXPORTS

1980s	TODAY
Australia’s creative exports were minimal	Australia exports screen and multimedia production, game technology, experience design, event expertise, music, advertising, digital media, and fashion globally
Cultural exchange through official channels only	Widespread through collaboration, global platforms, and diaspora networks
Local cultural production rarely globalised	Global reach now integral to business models in many creative fields

## SUMMARY: THEN VS NOW

ASPECT	1980s	TODAY
Scope	Arts and culture	Broad creative industries
Role in Economy	Subsidised	Exportable, investment-worthy
Perception	Nice-to-have	Strategic and essential
Access	Gatekept	Widely accessible
Global Reach	Limited	Central
Social Function	Reflection	Innovation and identity formation

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*“... the creative industries have fundamentally changed over the last four decades. Similarly, their role in society has also changed massively.”*

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In summary, the creative industries have fundamentally changed over the last four decades. Similarly, their role in society has also changed massively.

Whereas once they were something practiced by a few, they are now integral to the lives of a large proportion of the population — both as participants and consumers. As well as being integral to organisations right across the economy.

**The Event Industry is central to the creative industries.**

### 14.5 THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES: SCOPE AND INNOVATION IMPACT

The previous section showed how the creative industries have fundamentally changed over the past four decades. But what does the modern creative economy now look like? And why does it matter for innovation and productivity?

This section describes the major creative industry sectors that sit largely or entirely outside the current National Cultural Policy framework — yet are among the parts of the creative economy most directly linked to innovation, technology adoption, and productivity growth across the wider economy.

These are not niche sectors. They employ hundreds of thousands of Australians, generate billions in economic activity, and are embedded across virtually every industry. They represent the commercial, applied end of the creative spectrum — where creativity is used to solve problems, build products, transform services, and create new markets.

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*“These are the creative industries most directly linked to innovation and productivity — yet most sit outside Australia’s current creative-industries policy framework.”*

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These are the creative industries most directly linked to innovation and productivity — yet most sit outside Australia’s current creative-industries policy framework.

This is not an exhaustive list — it is intended to illustrate the breadth, depth, and innovation-intensity of the applied creative economy, and to make clear why a separate Creative Industries policy, closely linked to innovation, is essential.

It should be noted that there is a large amount of overlap between all of these different areas.

#### DESIGN — FAR MORE THAN MOST REALISE

##### EXPERIENCE DESIGN (UX/CX)

Designing how people interact with products, services, and environments. Experience design is now embedded in every technology company, every digital transformation program, and increasingly in government service delivery. It is one of the most in-demand professional disciplines in the modern economy.

**Innovation in practice:** Australia’s Service NSW — one of the most awarded government service platforms in the world — was built on experience design principles. Every major bank, airline, and retailer now employs dedicated UX teams. This is design as innovation infrastructure.

##### INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

Designing physical products for manufacture — from consumer electronics and medical devices to furniture, transport, packaging, and mining equipment. Industrial design is one of the clearest examples of creativity directly driving innovation, manufacturing capability, productivity, and export revenue. It turns ideas into products that can be made, sold, and scaled.

**Innovation in practice:** Industrial design is inseparable from Australia’s manufacturing and technology ambitions. Every product that is designed for production — whether a medical ventilator, a mining sensor housing, or a piece of flat-pack furniture — begins with industrial design.

### SERVICE DESIGN

Redesigning how organisations deliver services end-to-end — from hospitals and government agencies to banks and insurers. Service design uses creative methods to solve systemic problems, improve citizen and customer outcomes, and reduce costs. It is now used across Australian federal and state governments, yet it does not even have its own ANZSCO classification.

**Innovation in practice:** The Design Institute of Australia (DIA) — which represents 380,000 designers across Australia — has been campaigning for Strategic Design and Service Design to be formally recognised in national occupation classifications.

### PRODUCT & INTERACTION DESIGN

Designing digital products — apps, platforms, interfaces, connected devices — where the user experience is the product. This discipline drives the software, fintech, health-tech, and consumer technology sectors.

### DATA VISUALISATION & INFORMATION DESIGN

Making complex information usable, understandable, and actionable across every sector — from health and finance to government and defence. A creative discipline with direct productivity impact.

### GRAPHIC DESIGN & VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Graphic design has undergone a dramatic transformation. What was once understood as ‘design for print’ — logos, brochures, packaging, typesetting — has expanded into a multi-platform discipline that encompasses motion graphics, real-time generative visuals, interactive interfaces, brand identity systems that span physical and digital environments, social media content systems, way-finding and signage design, and data-driven design at scale.

**Innovation in practice:** The shift from static print design to dynamic, multi-platform visual communication mirrors the broader transformation of the applied creative industries. Modern graphic designers routinely work with motion, interactivity, data, code, and real-time content — skills that overlap significantly with creative technology, multimedia production, and experience design. The discipline is now central to how organisations communicate, how brands present themselves, and how information is made accessible. Australian graphic designers are internationally recognised for quality and innovation, yet the profession remains poorly understood in policy terms.

### SPATIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Designing immersive physical environments for exhibitions, retail, workplaces, events, and public spaces. This extends well beyond interior decoration into behavioural design, way-finding, and placemaking.

### SCREEN AND DIGITAL CONTENT

#### SCREEN, BROADCAST AND MULTI-PLATFORM PRODUCTION

In government, ‘screen’ typically means Australian drama — locally produced film and television series — as well as documentaries. This bears almost no resemblance to the modern screen and content production landscape. The vast majority of screen-related creative and technical activity in Australia is commercial, multi-platform, and technology-intensive: corporate video, motion graphics, real-time broadcast graphics, virtual production, interactive content, live streaming, app-based media, social media content, and data-driven audience experiences.

**Innovation in practice:** Consider the Australian Open. One of Australia's largest global media operations, reaching hundreds of millions of people worldwide. It involves live broadcast to free-to-air television, but that is only one channel among many. The AusOpen simultaneously produces and distributes long-form video, short-form highlights, text and image content, real-time data feeds, interactive statistics that fans can explore and manipulate, app-based experiences, on-demand content, web-based coverage, and content tailored for every major social media platform. It is a massive, multi-platform creative and technical production — yet under current government definitions of 'screen', almost none of it would be recognised. It is not drama. It is not a feature film. But it is undeniably screen, it is undeniably creative, and it is undeniably innovative. And it is, of course, also an event.

### MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTION AND INTEGRATION

Multimedia production has evolved far beyond the term's original meaning of 'combining media types on a CD-ROM.' It is now a specialist discipline concerned with the integration and simultaneous delivery of video, motion graphics, animation, interactive content, live data feeds, sound design, and spatial audio into cohesive multi-platform outputs. In screen and broadcast contexts, this means producing and distributing content across television, streaming, apps, social media, and web simultaneously. In event contexts, multimedia production is even more demanding: producers must create and manage real-time content across LED screens, projection, interactive displays, live broadcast feeds, social media channels, and on-demand platforms — often simultaneously and live. This is not simply 'video production.' It is the orchestration of multiple creative and technical streams into a unified audience experience.

**Innovation in practice:** Virtual production — using real-time game-engine technology with LED volume stages — is one of the most visible examples of multimedia integration, transforming both screen production and live events. But the broader discipline of multimedia production underpins almost every modern communication environment: corporate presentations, museum and gallery installations, retail experiences, conference stages, broadcast studios, and public installations. The Event Industry, in particular, has become one of the most intensive and sophisticated users of integrated multimedia production.

### ANIMATION AND VISUAL EFFECTS (VFX)

A deeply technical, deeply creative industry in which Australia is a significant global player. But VFX and animation are not just about movies and television. The same skills and technology now underpin architectural visualisation, medical imaging, engineering simulation, forensic reconstruction, scientific visualisation, and defence training. This is creative technology with applications across the entire economy.

**Innovation in practice:** The skills and technology developed in VFX studios transfer directly into other sectors — including events, architecture, health, education, and defence simulation. The distinction between 'screen VFX' and 'applied visual computing' is increasingly meaningless.

### GAME DESIGN, GAME ENGINES AND GAMIFICATION

A global industry larger than film and music combined, and one that drives advances in real-time graphics, AI, user interaction, and simulation. But the significance of game technology extends far beyond entertainment. Game engines — particularly Unity and Unreal Engine — have become the foundational technology platform for architectural visualisation, urban planning, defence simulation, virtual production, medical training, industrial design prototyping, and interactive event experiences. Gamification principles are applied across education, health, corporate training, and citizen engagement.

**Innovation in practice:** Australia’s game development sector generated over \$284 million in revenue in 2023–24 and employs thousands of highly skilled creative technologists. But the full economic impact of game technology is far larger than the game industry itself — because game engines are now infrastructure for innovation across dozens of other sectors.

### THE CREATOR ECONOMY

#### CONTENT CREATION, INFLUENCERS AND THE CREATOR ECONOMY

Perhaps no area of the creative industries better illustrates how far government thinking has fallen behind reality than the creator economy. Content creators, influencers, YouTubers, podcasters, streamers, and TikTok creators are professional creatives who write, film, edit, produce, design, and distribute content — often running substantial businesses with production teams, brand partnerships, merchandise lines, and multi-platform distribution strategies. The global creator economy was valued at over US\$200 billion in 2024.

**Innovation in practice:** This is not a fringe activity. It is one of the largest and fastest-growing creative industries in the world. Creators operate sophisticated production workflows, use AI-assisted tools for editing and analytics, and monetise across advertising, subscriptions, merchandise, live events, and brand collaborations. Many run businesses that would be recognisable to any creative agency or production company.

#### CREATOR-LED EVENTS AND LIVE CONTENT

The creator economy also has significant and growing crossover with the Event Industry. Influencer events, brand activations built around creators, creator-led festivals, live streaming from events, and creator meet-and-greets are now a substantial segment of the events market. Live content creation at events — where creators produce and distribute content in real time to global audiences — has become a core part of event strategy for brands, sports, and entertainment properties.

For example, The AusOpen this year had one hundred influencers involved with their event.

### CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY

#### CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY AND CREATIVE CODING

The people and firms building the tools, platforms, and systems that bridge creativity and technology. This includes projection mapping, generative design, interactive installations, AI-assisted creative production, and bespoke software for creative applications.

**Innovation in practice:** Creative technologists are now embedded across events, advertising, architecture, retail, and public art. They sit at the exact intersection of creativity and innovation.

#### DIGITAL FABRICATION AND PROTOTYPING

Using digital design tools and advanced manufacturing (3D printing, laser cutting, CNC, robotics) to move from concept to physical prototype rapidly. A direct bridge between creative design and industrial innovation.

### ARCHITECTURE, PLACEMAKING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

#### ARCHITECTURE, DIGITAL TWINS AND COMPUTATIONAL DESIGN

Modern architecture has moved well beyond the design of individual buildings. It now encompasses digital twins, parametric design, smart building systems, Building Information Modelling (BIM), computational design, building performance simulation, and data-driven urban planning. Architecture firms are increasingly technology companies that happen to design buildings.

**Innovation in practice:** Digital twin technology — creating real-time virtual replicas of buildings, precincts, and entire cities — is transforming how infrastructure is designed, built, managed, and optimised over its lifetime. This is architecture as applied innovation, directly linked to productivity in construction, infrastructure management, urban governance and event design.

#### PLACEMAKING AND URBAN DESIGN

Placemaking is where architecture, urban design, community development, and events converge. It is the discipline of designing public spaces, streetscapes, precincts, and neighbourhoods that function as social and economic ecosystems — not just collections of buildings. Placemaking is fundamentally about how communities live, connect, and thrive.

**Innovation in practice:** Events are one of the primary tools of placemaking. A laneway activation, a night market, a street festival, a cultural precinct program — these are all placemaking delivered through events. The growth of placemaking as a discipline has reinforced the connection between architecture, urban design, community development, and the Event Industry. Yet placemaking, like so many of these applied creative disciplines, sits outside conventional Arts and cultural policy.

#### STAGE, SET AND RETAIL DESIGN

Designing the physical and digital environments for events, performances, exhibitions, screen productions and retail environments. Increasingly technology-driven, incorporating projection, LED, spatial audio, and real-time interactive elements.

### ADVERTISING, MARKETING AND BRAND EXPERIENCE

#### ADVERTISING AND DIGITAL MARKETING

Modern advertising bears little resemblance to its traditional form. It is now a high-technology industry built on programmatic delivery, AI-driven personalisation, real-time bidding, dynamic creative optimisation, and behavioural data analytics. Advertising platforms craft and deliver tailored messages to individuals and micro-audiences at massive scale, blending creative production with machine learning and behavioural science. Australia's digital advertising market alone is valued at in excess of 15 billion.

**Innovation in practice:** The global digital advertising ecosystem is one of the most technologically sophisticated commercial environments. Australian agencies and ad-tech firms operate at the leading edge of this convergence of creativity and technology..

#### EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING AND BRAND EXPERIENCES

Using live events, immersive installations, pop-up environments, and interactive experiences to engage audiences with brands, products, and ideas. Experiential marketing is one of the fastest-growing segments of the marketing industry and sits squarely at the intersection of events, creative technology, spatial design, and commercial strategy.

**Innovation in practice:** This sector has significant and direct crossover with the Event Industry. Much of what is now called experiential marketing is delivered by event professionals using event production methodologies, event-specific creative skills, and event supply chains.

### **THE EVENT INDUSTRY: A CREATIVE INDUSTRY IN ITS OWN RIGHT**

The Event Industry integrates more applied creative disciplines than almost any other single sector. A major conference, festival, product launch, or brand experience routinely draws on experience design, environment design, creative technology, multimedia production, lighting and AV system design, data visualisation, brand strategy, content creation, placemaking, and production design — all delivered simultaneously, in real time, to live audiences.

But it is important to understand what this means in practice.

The Event Industry is not an assembler of borrowed skills from other industries. Over decades, it has developed its own specialist disciplines, career paths, and professional expertise. The people who design event environments are not architects doing events on the side — they are environment designers whose careers and skillsets are built specifically around events and experiences. Many originally trained in fields like architecture, industrial design, or fine art, but their professional practice, creative methodology, and technical knowledge are shaped by the unique demands of live, temporary, audience-facing environments.

### 14.6 ALIGNMENT WITH AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL CREATIVE INDUSTRIES POLICY

Recognising the Event Industry as part of Australia's creative industries aligns directly with the intent of the Federal Government's National Cultural Policy, *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place* — while also addressing one of the key structural gaps identified in that policy.

As outlined in submissions to the Senate inquiry into the National Cultural Policy, there is ongoing confusion in federal policy between three distinct but overlapping domains:

- **The Arts:** Heritage-rich and traditional art forms such as theatre, dance, orchestras, literature, and visual arts.
- **Cultural Industries:** The lived expression of identity, heritage and tradition, including First Nations and multicultural cultural practice.
- **Creative Industries:** The broader set of industries where creativity and knowledge are applied to generate economic and social value — including experience design, industrial design, advertising, interactive and immersive media, game technology, creative technology, screen and multimedia production, the creator economy, fashion, architecture, and the Event Industry.

These sectors overlap, but they operate under different economic models, workforce structures and policy needs. Treating them as interchangeable leads to incomplete and ineffective policy.

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*“The Event Industry sits squarely within the creative industries: it applies creative skills, design, storytelling and technology to produce economic, social and cultural outcomes at scale.”*

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The Event Industry sits squarely within the creative industries: it applies creative skills, design, storytelling and technology to produce economic, social and cultural outcomes at scale.

The National Cultural Policy rightly recognises the importance of creativity to Australia's future economy and society. However, many of the largest applied creative sectors — including the Event Industry — remain largely invisible within current federal frameworks.

Recognising the Event Industry explicitly as part of the creative industries would:

- reflect the real structure of Australia's creative economy
- support clearer career pathways for creative practitioners working in applied contexts
- strengthen links between creative industries, innovation, and export policy
- improve workforce, skills and economic data across the sector
- ensure policy supports the full spectrum of creative practice, not just traditional art forms

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*“This does not require the creation of new frameworks.  
It requires recognising what already exists.”*

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This does not require the creation of new frameworks. It requires recognising what already exists.

The Event Industry already functions as one of the most practical and economically significant expressions of creativity in action — where creative skills are applied to business, government, community, and cultural outcomes every day.

## 14.7 WHY THE EVENT INDUSTRY IS A CREATIVE INDUSTRY

The Event Industry meets every international definition of a creative industry — including those used by UNESCO, UNCTAD, and the European Union.

It satisfies the key criteria:

- Creativity and design are the primary inputs.
- Its outputs have cultural, social, and economic value.
- It drives innovation and employment across other creative sectors.

Events are designed, scripted, staged, and produced using imagination and creative collaboration.

They generate original intellectual property — creative concepts, show formats, scripts, and designs — that can be adapted, evolved, or exported.

The Event Industry employs and commissions thousands of creative professionals — creative directors, designers, writers, animators, filmmakers, choreographers, stage managers, musicians, editors, lighting designers, and sound engineers.

You can go further and look at the similarities of some of the creative industries and the Event Industry in more detail. As an example, here is a simple table mapping Event Industry roles to their equivalents in theatre and live performance:

### EVENT INDUSTRY ROLES VS THEATRE / LIVE PERFORMANCE ROLES

EVENT INDUSTRY ROLE	PARALLEL IN THEATRE / LIVE PERFORMANCE	NOTES
Event Producer / Event Director	Theatre Producer / Artistic Director	Oversees the whole production, budget, and creative vision.
Creative Director / Event Designer	Stage Director / Set Designer	Shapes the creative concept, look, and feel of the event.
Show Caller / Stage Manager	Stage Manager	Runs the show “on comms” – cueing lighting, sound, vision, performers.
Technical Director / Production Manager	Production Manager / Technical Director	Manages technical delivery (lighting, sound, staging, rigging).
Site / Venue Manager	Venue Manager / House Manager	Coordinates venue or site logistics, safety, and audience flow.
Lighting Designer / Operator	Lighting Designer / Lighting Operator	Designs and operates lighting states and cues.
Audio Engineer	Sound Designer / Sound Engineer	Designs and mixes live sound.
Vision Director / Video Technician	AV Designer / Projectionist	Operates and cues video, projection, or multimedia content.
Content Producer (video, graphics)	Multimedia Designer / Video Content Creator	Creates pre-produced visuals, animations, and screen content.
Event Stylist / Theming Designer	Costume Designer / Set Dresser	Shapes the aesthetic environment and visual branding.
MC / Host / Facilitator	Lead Actor / Narrator	Guides the audience through the narrative or program.
Performers, Speakers, Presenters	Cast / Performers	Provide the live content – speeches, performances, entertainment.
Choreographer	Choreographer	Creates movement for performers, dancers, or audience interaction.

Show Caller Assistants / Crew Chiefs	Deputy Stage Manager / Assistant Stage Managers	Support with cueing, coordination, and backstage communication.
Event Coordinator / Logistics Manager	Company Manager	Handles schedules, transport, accommodation, and admin.
Risk Manager / Safety Officer	Production Safety Manager	Ensures compliance, safety, and contingency planning.
Volunteers / Event Crew	Stage Crew / Ushers	Provide essential support to deliver the production smoothly.

This shows that events, like theatre and other live performances, are complex creative productions.

It highlights the scale. A larger event often involves hundreds of people across production, logistics, and creative disciplines.

It shows events as creative works in their own right, not logistics or ‘tourism products’.

**The Event Industry is, in practice, one of Australia’s largest employers of creative talent.**

Few — if any — other creative industries integrate as many creative disciplines within a single project lifecycle as the Event Industry.

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*“Events are therefore not peripheral to the Creative Industries — they are one of the main commercial and applied outlets for creative work in Australia.”*

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Events are therefore not peripheral to the Creative Industries — they are one of the main commercial and applied outlets for creative work in Australia.

## 14.8 INTEGRATION WITH OTHER CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The Event Industry sits at the centre of Australia’s creative economy, drawing on and contributing to nearly every other creative sector:

- **Advertising, Marketing and Brand Experience** – Events are the live and experiential dimension of brand communication. Experiential marketing — one of the fastest-growing marketing segments — is largely delivered by event professionals using event-specific creative skills and production methodologies.
- **Experience Design and Spatial Design** – Events are designed experiences: temporary environments that require experience design, environment design, way-finding, and audience-flow expertise. Event environment designers are specialist practitioners, not architects or interior designers working outside their field.
- **Screen, Multimedia and Content Production** – Modern events are multi-platform content operations. They produce and distribute live broadcast, motion graphics, real-time data visualisation, interactive content, social media content, and on-demand video — often simultaneously.
- **Creative Technology** – Events are among the earliest and most intensive adopters of creative technology — from projection mapping and LED virtual sets to AR, VR, interactive installations, and AI-assisted content production. Event creative technologists are specialists in deploying these technologies in live, audience-facing environments.
- **Game Technology and Interactive Media** – Game engines (Unity, Unreal) are now used extensively in events for real-time visualisation, interactive experiences, and virtual production. Gamification principles are applied across conference design, audience engagement, and brand activations.

- **The Creator Economy** – Content creators, influencers, and live streamers are increasingly integrated into event strategy. Creator-led events, brand activations built around creators, and real-time content distribution from events to global audiences are now a substantial segment of the events market.
- **Architecture, Placemaking and Urban Design** – Events are one of the primary tools of placemaking — activating public spaces, precincts, and destinations. This connects the Event Industry directly to urban design, community development, and the visitor economy.
- **Performing Arts and Music** – Events employ performers, stage managers, and technicians from the same talent pool that supports Australia’s theatres, festivals, and music venues.
- **Fashion and Applied Craft** – Fashion shows and design exhibitions are themselves events; creative and production teams often move fluidly between these sectors.

This creative interdependence means the Event Industry is both a creative industry in its own right — with its own specialist disciplines and career paths — and a creative integrator that connects, commissions, and commercialises creativity from across the broader creative ecosystem.

A good example is provided by comparing event companies and advertising agencies:

### EVENT COMPANIES VS ADVERTISING AGENCIES

CREATIVE EVENT AGENCY ROLE	ADVERTISING AGENCY ROLE	SHARED / PARALLEL CAPABILITIES
Event Producer / Event Director	Account Director / Client Services	Oversees project delivery, client relationship, budgets, and objectives.
Creative Director (Events)	Creative Director (Advertising)	Sets the creative vision, messaging, and overall brand narrative.
Experience Designer / Event Designer	Art Director / Brand Designer	Creates look, feel, and flow of the brand experience.
Strategy Director (Events)	Strategic Planner / Brand Strategist	Aligns creative execution with brand positioning and audience needs.
Show Caller / Technical Director	Production Director	Oversees technical delivery (lighting, AV, staging vs. media channels, print, broadcast).
Content Producer (live & digital)	Copywriter / Content Producer	Storytelling, scripting, multimedia content for live/digital channels.
Multimedia Designer / Motion Graphics	Multimedia / Digital Designer	Video, animation, graphics, interactive displays.
Video Producer / Editor	TVC Producer / Film Editor	Produces and edits moving image content for campaigns or event screens.
Print Designer / Graphic Designer	Print Designer / Graphic Designer	Collateral, signage, programs, exhibition displays, campaign print.
Event Technologist / AV Specialist	Digital Producer / Tech Specialist	Emerging tech, platforms, interactivity, hybrid/digital event integration.
Event Stylist / Theming Designer	Production Designer / Set Designer	Shapes physical brand environments — staging, décor, campaign set builds.

Choreographer / Performance Director	TVC / Campaign Director	Manages talent, performance, and movement for live or filmed execution.
MC / Host / Facilitator	Campaign Talent / Brand Ambassador	Brings creative concept to life, guides the audience/ consumer.
Account Manager (Events)	Account Manager (Advertising)	Manages day-to-day client delivery and coordination.
Freelancers / Specialist Creatives	Freelance Creatives	Copywriters, designers, videographers, editors, animators — fluid workforce shared.

### KEY INSIGHTS

**Overlap of Capabilities:** Both types of agencies cover multimedia design, print design, video production, digital content, branding, and storytelling. The tools and outputs may differ, but the skills, workflows, and creative processes are strikingly similar.

**Different Mediums:** Advertising agencies primarily create content for broadcast (TV, print, digital campaigns). Event agencies create for live, hybrid, and experiential platforms — but both rely on the same creative ecosystem.

**Undervalued in Policy:** Advertising agencies are recognised as part of the creative industries. Event agencies - despite doing equivalent work in different media — are left out, even though their teams and outputs look almost identical.

**Scale and Impact:** Events combine more creative disciplines simultaneously than almost any other medium (design, video, print, staging, digital, performance), often at far larger scale than a campaign rollout.

### ONE CAMPAIGN, MANY CHANNELS

For most major brands today, a marketing campaign is not a single-channel effort. It blends:

**Advertising Agency Outputs:** TV commercials, print ads, digital/social campaigns, out-of-home (billboards, posters), branded content.

**Creative Event Agency Outputs:** live product launches, roadshows, brand experiences, business conferences, experiential stunts, sponsorship activations at sporting or cultural events.

Both are parts of the same campaign — reaching audiences through different media, but with consistent brand storytelling, visual identity, and messaging.

### COMPLEMENTARY ROLES

Advertising agencies excel in broadcast reach: getting a message out to millions.

Creative event agencies excel in direct, participatory engagement: giving people an experience of the brand they can feel, share, and remember.

Together, they form the full brand experience: awareness (advertising) + immersion (events).

### SHARED CAPABILITIES

Both types of agencies often:

- **Produce multimedia content** (video, animation, print, digital).
- **Deliver design** (visual identity, collateral, installations).

- **Provide strategy and creative direction** (audience insights, narrative, brand alignment).
- **Manage talent, logistics, and production** (performers in ads, or hosts/performers at events).

This overlap is why many companies see their ad agency and event agency working side by side, often sharing campaign assets and coordinating calendars.

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*“This integration positions the Event Industry not at the edge of the creative economy, but at its intersection point — where creative disciplines converge, collaborate, and reach scale.”*

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This integration positions the Event Industry not at the edge of the creative economy, but at its intersection point — where creative disciplines converge, collaborate, and reach scale.

### 14.9 THE EVENT INDUSTRY AS AN ENGINE OF INNOVATION

Every event is, in effect, a prototype — a creative concept that is designed, built, tested live, and then dismantled.

This constant cycle of invention and iteration makes the Event Industry one of the most effective laboratories for applied innovation. Event professionals routinely solve complex, time-critical challenges involving technology integration, sustainability, audience engagement, risk management, and the blending of physical and digital experiences.

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*“Event professionals routinely solve complex, time-critical challenges involving technology integration, sustainability, audience engagement, risk management, and the blending of physical and digital experiences.”*

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In this way, the Event Industry aligns closely with Australia's broader innovation objectives, supporting collaboration, experimentation, and practical problem-solving across industries.

Australia's event professionals have long been early adopters and innovators. Deploying game-engine technology, AR, VR, and interactive installations in live environments. Producing and distributing multi-platform content — including real-time data, interactive media, and creator-led content — from events to global audiences. Applying experience design and service design principles to transform how audiences engage with information, brands, and each other.

Events are also where innovation is shared. Conferences, exhibitions, trade shows, and summits bring together industry, research, government, and investors to showcase new ideas, encourage adoption, and accelerate change.

Events are, in practice, among the most powerful platforms for innovation and change in the economy.

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*“Events are, in practice, among the most powerful platforms for innovation and change in the economy.”*

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### 14.10 RECOGNITION AND INCLUSION

Despite its scale and significance, the Event Industry is consistently not recognised within Australia's formal creative industries frameworks.

This limits understanding of its true economic and cultural contribution, constrains access to programs designed to support creative and innovative industries, and weakens workforce planning and data collection.

Recognising the Event Industry within Australia's creative industries policy would:

- connect event businesses to creative-industry development, innovation, and export initiatives
- enable more accurate workforce, skills, and industry data
- encourage collaboration between event producers, education providers, research institutions, and creative-technology clusters
- reflect the reality that the Event Industry is one of the largest employers of creative professionals in the country

Inclusion would not blur the boundary between Event Industry and the Arts. It would clarify it — showing how applied creativity complements artistic creation and delivers real-world outcomes.

A core structural issue is that large parts of the Event Industry are not clearly defined in national statistical and workforce classifications. Businesses responsible for tens of billions of dollars in annual event activity do not have a dedicated ANZSIC industry code, and many specialist occupations are poorly represented or misclassified within ANZSCO.

This classification gap is not unique to the Event Industry. The Design Institute of Australia (DIA), which represents 380,000 designers across Australia, has been campaigning for Strategic Design, Service Design, and other emerging design disciplines to be formally recognised in national occupation classifications. The fact that these rapidly growing, economically significant creative disciplines — like the Event Industry — are not yet counted in national frameworks illustrates how far behind the classification systems have fallen. Reform is needed not just for events, but across the applied creative industries.

Without clear industry and occupational definitions, the Event Industry remains partially invisible in national data. This limits effective workforce planning, productivity analysis, skills investment, and industry development. Addressing these classification gaps is a necessary first step in recognising the Event Industry as a core part of Australia's creative and innovation economy.

### 14.11 CREATIVITY IN ACTION — THE BROADER IMPACT

Events are among the most visible and practical expressions of Australia's creative capability — bringing together more of the innovation-linked creative disciplines than almost any other single sector.

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*“Events demonstrate how creative thinking, design, and technology can be applied to achieve tangible economic, social, and cultural outcomes.”*

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Events demonstrate how creative thinking, design, and technology can be applied to achieve tangible economic, social, and cultural outcomes. They show creativity at work — including in public spaces, workplaces, communities, and industries.

By recognising and supporting the Event Industry — and the broader creative industries — as part of Australia's creative and innovation economy, government can strengthen creative careers across the full spectrum of creativity, support industry growth, and enhance Australia's capacity to use events as practical tools for innovation, productivity, and social connection at every scale.

## 15. THE EVENT INDUSTRY AS AN EXPORT INDUSTRY

### 15.1 AN INTERNATIONALLY MOBILE CREATIVE SERVICES SECTOR

The Event Industry operates in a similar way to other recognised creative and professional services sectors such as architecture, advertising, interactive media, screen production, and industrial design.

It generates value through creativity, technical expertise, and complex project-delivery capability — services that can be applied anywhere.

Value is created where:

- the creative direction is developed
- the project is managed
- the workforce and companies are based
- not necessarily where the event physically takes place

### 15.2 EVIDENCE OF INTERNATIONAL CAPABILITY

Australian event professionals and companies have been working on major international events for decades.

Examples include:

- Ric Birch producing the opening ceremonies of the Los Angeles 1984 Olympic Games and many subsequent global ceremonies. Leading the way for many other Australia's to work on major events around the world.
- The extensive involvement of Australian event professionals, production companies, and technical suppliers in the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, which built world-class capability across the industry, and led to many working around the world.
- Ongoing international work by Australian companies and specialists on major events, exhibitions, and ceremonies around the world.
- Norwest Group contributing to audio systems for nearly every Olympic Games since Sydney 2000.
- The continued presence of Australian professionals and suppliers on recent events, including the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

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*“This work demonstrates that Australian event capability is internationally competitive and has been exported in practice for many years.”*

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This work demonstrates that Australian event capability is internationally competitive and has been exported in practice for many years.

However, most of this activity:

- is not captured in export statistics,
- is not recognised as a distinct export sector, and
- occurs without dedicated export policy or industry frameworks.

## 15.3 A MODEST BUT STRATEGIC EXPORT OPPORTUNITY

International work currently represents a modest share of total Event Industry activity. Most events are still delivered domestically.

However, the industry is structurally export-capable because it is:

- knowledge-based
- project-driven
- internationally mobile

Unlike other creative services industries, the Event Industry is not formally recognised within Australia's trade or creative-industry export frameworks. As a result, export activity is largely ad hoc and company-led.

Recognising the Event Industry within existing creative-services export settings would allow Australia to:

- measure event exports more accurately
- convert major project experience into sustained international capability

This would not require new programs, but better alignment with existing export frameworks for creative and professional services.

## 16. CURRENT POLICY GAPS

Despite its scale, economic contribution, and central role in innovation, skills, and regional development, the Event Industry is not currently supported by a coherent national policy framework.

At the federal level, events are still largely treated as:

- tourism marketing tools
- arts activities
- sporting spectacles
- one-off major projects

They are rarely treated as an industry in their own right.

This has created a series of structural gaps in recognition, measurement, workforce planning, regulation, and productivity policy.

### 16.1 THE EVENT INDUSTRY IS NOT RECOGNISED AS AN INDUSTRY

At a Commonwealth level, the Event Industry is not formally recognised as a distinct industry.

It does not sit clearly within:

- industry policy
- innovation policy
- skills and workforce strategies
- creative industries frameworks
- trade and export programs

Instead, it is spread across multiple portfolios — tourism, arts and culture, sport, trade, infrastructure, and local government. In each of these areas, events are treated as a tool to achieve other objectives, rather than as an industry with its own workforce, supply chains, businesses, and productivity potential.

This has very practical consequences. Industries that are not recognised are not properly measured, planned for, or supported strategically. The result is that one of Australia's largest applied creative and coordination industries operates largely outside the national industry policy framework.

The same is true of many other applied creative industries — from experience design and creative technology to the creator economy — which also lack formal recognition within national industry frameworks.

### 16.2 NO FEDERAL EVENT INDUSTRY STRATEGY

Unlike tourism, construction, manufacturing, agriculture, or the screen industry, there is currently no federal strategy for the Event Industry.

There is no national plan, no long-term capability framework, no coordinated approach across portfolios, and no clear statement of the industry's role in the national economy.

This stands in contrast to several states, where events are now starting to be positioned as core economic and regional development tools within broader strategies.

At a federal level, the absence of a strategy means policy is reactive rather than strategic. Programs are fragmented, responsibilities are unclear, and major opportunities for productivity, skills, and innovation are missed.

### 16.3 STRUCTURAL INVISIBILITY IN NATIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS AND DATA

A central structural problem is that large parts of the Event Industry are not properly defined within Australia's official statistical systems.

The industry sits only partially within:

- ANZSIC industry classifications
- ANZSCO occupation codes
- ABS Labour Force Survey data
- Creative and Cultural Industries Satellite Accounts
- Tourism Satellite Accounts

Large parts of the industry are either misclassified, split across unrelated categories, or not counted at all. This includes significant areas of event management and production, creative and technical event services, brand and experiential event work, exhibition and trade show activity, and much of the broader supply chain.

Because the industry is not clearly defined:

- workforce numbers are incomplete
- productivity cannot be measured accurately
- industry growth cannot be tracked
- policy decisions are based on partial data

This is not a minor technical issue. It is a structural barrier to effective industry policy.

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*“If an industry cannot be clearly identified in official classifications, it cannot be measured, benchmarked, or systematically improved.”*

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### 16.4 NO NATIONAL WORKFORCE OR CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK

Because the Event Industry is not formally recognised, there is no clear federal ownership of the sector.

There is:

- no lead department responsible for the industry
- no coordinating body
- no national workforce strategy
- no industry capability framework

Workforce issues are handled indirectly through tourism training, arts education, construction or technical trades, and general business programs. None of these are designed around the actual structure of the Event Industry.

As a result, skills shortages persist, career pathways are unclear, workforce data is incomplete, and there is no coordinated approach to capability building.

This is particularly problematic for an industry that operates across multiple sectors, relies heavily on project-based work, and plays a central role in productivity, innovation, and coordination across the economy.

## 16.5 INCONSISTENT RULES ACROSS STATES AND TERRITORIES

The Event Industry is a national and highly mobile industry. Event companies, suppliers, and professionals regularly work across multiple states and territories, often delivering projects in several jurisdictions within the same year.

However, they face different approval processes, safety frameworks, licensing systems, and administrative requirements in each state and territory.

These variations occur in areas such as temporary structures, engineering approvals, public event permits, liquor licensing, food safety, ticketing regulations, and workplace inductions.

In many cases, the same company or individual must complete separate venue inductions in each location, navigate different local government processes, and comply with different interpretations of similar rules.

This fragmentation increases costs, reduces productivity, discourages interstate work, and creates unnecessary administrative burden.

Other industries have addressed similar issues through national qualifications and standardised induction systems. Construction, for example, uses the White Card as an industry-wide induction. No equivalent national framework exists for the Event Industry.

## 16.6 EVENTS ARE NOT TREATED AS A PRODUCTIVITY TOOL

Events are one of the primary mechanisms through which skills are transferred, innovations are demonstrated, industries coordinate, and organisations implement change.

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*“Events are one of the primary mechanisms through which skills are transferred, innovations are demonstrated, industries coordinate, and organisations implement change.”*

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Business events, trade shows, conferences, and industry forums are where:

- new technologies are introduced
- new standards are adopted
- partnerships are formed
- investment decisions are made

In many sectors, events are a core part of the productivity system.

Yet at a federal level, events are rarely considered in productivity policy, innovation strategy, industry transformation programs, or workforce development initiatives. They are treated primarily as tourism drivers or cultural activities.

This overlooks their core economic function as coordination infrastructure, innovation platforms, and applied learning environments.

As a result, Australia is not fully leveraging one of the most effective tools it already uses every day to improve productivity, accelerate innovation, and strengthen industry capability.

This is not because events lack productivity relevance, but because the industry itself sits outside the main structures used to design productivity policy.

### 16.7 A STRUCTURAL GAP, NOT JUST A FUNDING ISSUE

The challenges facing the Event Industry at the federal level are not primarily about funding or individual programs. They are structural.

The industry is:

- not formally recognised
- not clearly measured
- not strategically coordinated
- not integrated into national productivity and industry frameworks

Until these structural issues are addressed, policy will continue to underestimate the size of the industry, overlook its workforce, misinterpret its economics, and miss major opportunities for productivity and growth.

Recognising the Event Industry as an industry in its own right is therefore not a symbolic step. It is the foundation for better data, better policy, stronger workforce planning, and more effective use of events as a national economic and productivity tool.

In effect, Australia is trying to improve productivity while leaving one of its core coordination and innovation industries largely outside the national policy framework.

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*“In effect, Australia is trying to improve productivity while leaving one of its core coordination and innovation industries largely outside the national policy framework.”*

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## 17. THE OPPORTUNITY FOR AUSTRALIA

Australia already relies on events every day to coordinate industries, share knowledge, build skills, launch products, attract investment, and connect communities.

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*“Australia already relies on events every day to coordinate industries, share knowledge, build skills, launch products, attract investment, and connect communities.”*

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However, the Event Industry that designs and delivers these outcomes is not clearly recognised, measured, or strategically supported within federal policy.

This creates a structural gap.

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*“One of the economy’s most practical mechanisms for driving innovation, skills transfer, organisational change, and regional participation sits largely outside the policy frameworks designed to improve productivity and economic performance.”*

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One of the economy’s most practical mechanisms for driving innovation, skills transfer, organisational change, and regional participation sits largely outside the policy frameworks designed to improve productivity and economic performance.

The opportunity for the Commonwealth is straightforward: to recognise the Event Industry as a national industry and to align it more deliberately with productivity, skills, innovation, creative-industry, and export policy.

### 17.1 EVENTS AS A PRODUCTIVITY MECHANISM

Across most sectors of the economy, events are one of the primary ways that new ideas, technologies, and practices move from theory into real-world use.

Conferences, trade shows, industry forums, summits, and professional gatherings are where:

- new technologies are demonstrated
- standards are introduced
- partnerships are formed
- investment decisions are made
- workforce skills are updated

These are core productivity functions.

Yet events are rarely considered within national productivity or industry-development policy. They are generally viewed only through a tourism or cultural lens, even when their primary purpose is economic, professional, or organisational.

**Recognising the Event Industry as part of Australia’s productivity infrastructure would allow government to use an existing national system more deliberately to support innovation, skills development, and economic coordination.**

### 17.2 A COORDINATED FEDERAL APPROACH

At the federal level, responsibility for events is spread across multiple portfolios, including tourism, arts and culture, trade, innovation, skills, and regional development.

Each of these areas interacts with events, but no single framework recognises the Event Industry as a cross-cutting national sector. As a result, the industry is:

- inconsistently measured
- partially visible in official data
- disconnected from key productivity and innovation programs
- largely absent from coordinated workforce planning

A federal approach does not require the creation of entirely new systems.

It primarily requires recognising the Event Industry within existing policy frameworks and coordinating activity across portfolios around a shared understanding of how the industry actually functions.

### 17.3 LEVERAGING THE FULL BENEFITS OF EVENTS

Current federal policy tends to focus on events primarily as drivers of visitor expenditure. While this is one benefit, it is only a small part of their overall impact.

Events also:

- support workforce skills and professional development
- accelerate the adoption of new technologies and practices
- strengthen industry coordination
- enable trade, investment, and export activity
- build social and regional resilience

Most of these benefits sit outside traditional tourism or cultural metrics, and therefore outside most existing policy settings.

A more complete national approach would recognise events as:

- economic infrastructure for industries
- platforms for innovation and skills development
- applied creative production systems
- mechanisms for national coordination

The opportunity for Australia is not simply to host more events. It is to recognise and leverage the full economic, creative, and social value generated by the Event Industry that designs and delivers them.

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*“The opportunity for Australia is not simply to host more events. It is to recognise and leverage the full economic, creative, and social value generated by the Event Industry that designs and delivers them.”*

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## 18. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL POLICY

The recommendations in this section are deliberately practical and structural.

They are not primarily about funding new programs, creating large new agencies, or launching major new event initiatives. Instead, they focus on a smaller number of foundational changes that would allow government to properly recognise, measure, and use the Event Industry as part of Australia's broader economic, creative, and productivity agenda.

At present, the Event Industry sits in an awkward position in national policy. It is widely used by government, industry, research institutions, and communities to achieve economic, social, and innovation outcomes. Yet it is not clearly recognised as an industry in its own right, and much of its activity is structurally invisible within national datasets, industry classifications, and creative-industry frameworks.

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*“If an industry is not clearly defined, measured, or recognised, it is very difficult to design effective policy around it.”*

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This creates a basic policy problem. If an industry is not clearly defined, measured, or recognised, it is very difficult to design effective policy around it. It also becomes difficult to understand how that industry contributes to productivity, innovation, workforce development, and regional economies.

The recommendations that follow focus on addressing these structural gaps.

At their core, these are productivity reforms.

Australia cannot effectively improve productivity in an industry that is not clearly recognised, measured, or integrated into national policy frameworks. By addressing these structural gaps, government would be able to use the Event Industry more deliberately as part of the national productivity system — particularly in areas such as innovation adoption, skills development, industry coordination, and regional economic participation.

They aim to:

- **recognise the Event Industry within the broader creative industries framework**
- **align creativity and innovation policy more closely**
- **correct gaps in national industry and occupation classifications**
- **establish proper national measurement of the Event Industry**
- **recognise the role of events across a wide range of government policy areas**

Taken together, these changes would allow Australia to better understand and leverage an industry that already plays a central role in how ideas are shared, industries coordinate, skills are developed, and communities connect.

This is not about inventing a new sector. It is about recognising, measuring, and supporting one that already exists — and using it more effectively as part of Australia's productivity, innovation, economic-development, and community agendas.

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*“Events are one of the few mechanisms that operate simultaneously across economic, creative, and social domains. They help industries adopt new ideas, support workforce learning, strengthen community participation, and provide shared moments that help societies navigate change.”*

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Events are one of the few mechanisms that operate simultaneously across economic, creative, and social domains. They help industries adopt new ideas, support workforce learning, strengthen community participation, and provide shared moments that help societies navigate change.

A national policy approach that properly recognises the Event Industry would therefore deliver benefits not just in economic output, but in innovation uptake, workforce capability, regional resilience, cultural life, and social cohesion.

### 18.1 SEPARATE ARTS POLICY AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES POLICY

The current National Cultural Policy is intended to cover the full breadth of Australia's creative industries. In practice, however, it is largely focused on the traditional Arts and cultural sectors, with limited recognition of the broader creative industries that operate on commercial, professional, and innovation-driven models.

These are structurally different parts of the economy.

**The Arts** are primarily concerned with cultural expression, artistic practice, and public cultural value.

**The broader creative industries** — including sectors such as experience design, industrial design, interactive and immersive media, game technology, creative technology, advertising, screen and multimedia production, architecture, the creator economy, and the Event Industry — are largely market-based, and play major roles in innovation, organisational change, exports, and productivity across the wider economy.

Treating these different sectors as a single policy domain leads to gaps in measurement, workforce planning, industry development, and innovation policy. Many of the creative sectors most closely linked to economic transformation and productivity remain only partially recognised, or effectively invisible, within current frameworks.

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*“Many of the creative sectors most closely linked to economic transformation and productivity remain only partially recognised, or effectively invisible, within current frameworks.”*

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The consequences of this conflation can be seen in how government defines and supports individual creative sectors.

Screen Australia, the federal government's own agency for the screen sector, states that its purpose is to 'inspire, inform and engage screen audiences through compelling Australian storytelling.' Its funding programs are almost entirely focused on narrative drama, documentary, and children's content. That is a legitimate and important Arts function.

But it means the vast majority of commercial screen activity — corporate multimedia, broadcast production, real-time content, multi-platform distribution, virtual production, and the creator economy — has no institutional support and no policy home. When 'screen' is defined through an Arts lens, it means Australian drama.

The same pattern applies across design, where the Design Institute of Australia represents 380,000 designers across disciplines that include experience design, service design, and industrial design — yet many of these disciplines are not even recognised in national occupation classifications.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Australian Government should establish:

- A dedicated National Arts Policy, focused on cultural expression, participation, and artistic practice.
- A separate Creative Industries Policy, that includes a strong focus on jobs, innovation, exports, skills, and industry development across the broader economy.

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*“This structural separation would provide the foundation for properly recognising the full breadth of the creative economy...”*

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This structural separation would provide the foundation for properly recognising the full breadth of the creative economy — from experience design and creative technology to interactive media, the creator economy, and the Event Industry — and for integrating these innovation-driven creative industries into Australia’s productivity, economic-development, and social policy agendas.

### 18.2 RECOGNISE THE EVENT INDUSTRY AS AN INDUSTRY IN ITS OWN RIGHT

At the federal level, events are primarily understood through a tourism lens, and more specifically through metrics such as hotel room nights, visitor numbers, and visitor expenditure.

While these are valid measures for parts of the visitor economy, they capture only a small portion of what the Event Industry actually does. The vast majority of event activity — including most business, community, corporate, civic, and professional events — is not driven by tourism at all, and is instead focused on productivity, skills, innovation, organisational change, community connection, and social outcomes.

As a result, the Event Industry is largely invisible in federal policy settings. It is not clearly recognised as an industry in its own right, is poorly represented in national industry and occupation classifications, and sits only partially within existing tourism, cultural, and creative-industry frameworks.

This has practical consequences. Without clear recognition:

- the industry is difficult to measure
- its workforce is poorly understood
- its economic and social contributions are underestimated
- it is rarely considered in broader productivity, innovation, skills, or industry-development policy

This invisibility is compounded by the fact that the Event Industry has developed its own specialist creative disciplines and career paths — including event environment design, production design, creative direction, creative technology, and experiential design — that are not recognised in current workforce classifications.

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*“These are not borrowed skills from other industries; they are distinct professional practices built around the unique demands of live, temporary, audience-facing experiences.”*

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These are not borrowed skills from other industries; they are distinct professional practices built around the unique demands of live, temporary, audience-facing experiences.

### RECOMMENDATION

The Australian Government should formally recognise the Event Industry as a distinct national industry, rather than viewing events primarily through tourism and visitor-economy metrics.

This recognition should be reflected across:

- national industry and occupation classifications
- creative industries policy
- innovation and productivity frameworks
- relevant economic, skills, and regional-development policies
- visitor economy policy

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*“Doing so would allow government to properly measure, understand, and leverage one of Australia’s most important creative, professional, and social industries.”*

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Doing so would allow government to properly measure, understand, and leverage one of Australia’s most important creative, professional, and social industries.

### 18.3 BRING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION TOGETHER IN NATIONAL POLICY

Improving productivity ultimately depends on innovation — and innovation is, at its core, a creative process.

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*"Improving productivity ultimately depends on innovation — and innovation is, at its core, a creative process."*

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New products, new services, new systems, new technologies, and new ways of working all begin as creative ideas. Creativity and innovation are not separate activities. They are two parts of the same process.

However, at the federal level, creativity and innovation are largely treated as separate policy domains. Creativity is primarily addressed through cultural and Arts policy, while innovation sits within industry, science, and technology portfolios. This separation reflects an outdated understanding of how innovation actually occurs in the modern economy.

In practice, many of the industries that drive innovation across the economy — experience design, interactive and immersive media, game technology, creative technology, industrial design, advertising, architecture, the creator economy, and the Event Industry — sit within the broader creative industries.

As described in Section 14.5, these sectors apply creative thinking to real-world problems:

- experience designers reshape how citizens interact with government services
- game engines power defence simulation, architectural visualisation, and medical training
- creative technologists deploy AR, VR, and interactive installations across retail, events, and public art

And the Event Industry brings all of these disciplines together in live environments that drive innovation adoption, skills transfer, and industry coordination.

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*"If Australia is serious about improving productivity, it needs to better connect its creative capability with its innovation agenda."*

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If Australia is serious about improving productivity, it needs to better connect its creative capability with its innovation agenda.

This is particularly true for industries such as the Event Industry, which operate as practical platforms for innovation adoption, skills transfer, and industry coordination.

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*“Yet under current policy settings, creativity sits in cultural policy while innovation sits in industry and science portfolios.”*

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Yet under current policy settings, creativity sits in cultural policy while innovation sits in industry and science portfolios. The applied creative industries fall between the two — too commercial and innovation-driven for Arts policy, but not recognised within innovation and industry frameworks. The result is that the creative industries most directly linked to productivity and economic transformation are the least likely to be supported by either policy domain.

### RECOMMENDATION

**The Australian Government should establish a national body responsible for the broader creative industries, with a strong and explicit focus on innovation, industry development, and productivity — bringing creativity and innovation together within a single policy and institutional framework.**

This body would sit alongside — not replace — a dedicated Australia Council for the Arts, which would continue to be responsible for Arts and cultural policy and funding.

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*“The purpose is not to diminish the Arts, but to ensure that the applied creative industries ... have a policy home that recognises their role in innovation, productivity, and economic growth.”*

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The purpose is not to diminish the Arts, but to ensure that the applied creative industries — which represent the majority of Australia’s creative economy by employment and economic contribution — have a policy home that recognises their role in innovation, productivity, and economic growth.

## 18.4 REFORM NATIONAL INDUSTRY AND OCCUPATION CLASSIFICATIONS

A large proportion of the Event Industry is not clearly recognised within Australia’s current industry and occupation classification systems. (This is outlined in more detail in Appendix B.)

Many event businesses and event professionals are spread across multiple ANZSIC industry codes and ANZSCO occupation codes, often embedded within other sectors such as tourism, marketing, construction, performing arts, or general business services. As a result, the Event Industry is only partially visible — and often effectively invisible — within the datasets that inform national policy.

This affects:

- ABS Labour Force Survey data
- industry and productivity statistics
- creative and cultural industries satellite accounts
- tourism satellite accounts
- workforce planning and skills policy

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*“When an industry cannot be clearly identified in national classifications, it cannot be accurately measured, benchmarked, or strategically developed.”*

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When an industry cannot be clearly identified in national classifications, it cannot be accurately measured, benchmarked, or strategically developed. This creates a structural policy gap, where a large and economically significant industry remains outside the frameworks used to support productivity, skills, and innovation.

This classification gap extends beyond the Event Industry.

[REDACTED] disciplines that employ thousands of practitioners yet have no dedicated occupation codes. The creator economy, one of the largest and fastest-growing creative industries globally, is similarly absent from national classifications.

Reforming these systems is essential not only for the Event Industry but for the broader creative economy.

### RECOMMENDATION

The Australian Government should work with the ABS and relevant agencies to reform national industry and occupation classifications — including ANZSIC and ANZSCO — so that the Event Industry is clearly and consistently identified across national datasets and policy frameworks.

## 18.5 ESTABLISH EVENT INDUSTRY SATELLITE ACCOUNTS

Australia does not currently have a statistical system that captures the full scale, structure and benefits of the Event Industry.

Parts of the industry appear in existing datasets, particularly the Tourism Satellite Account and the Creative and Cultural Industries Satellite Accounts. However, very large sections of event activity sit outside both.

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*“As a simple example, the event companies that create and organise most events are not currently counted in either the Creative and Cultural Industries Satellite Accounts or the Tourism/Visitor Economy Satellite Accounts.”*

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As a simple example, the event companies that create and organise most events are not currently counted in either the Creative and Cultural Industries Satellite Accounts or the Tourism/Visitor Economy Satellite Accounts. This is despite the fact that they are among the most creative organisations in the economy, and that the business events they create generated \$19.58 billion in interstate and international delegate spend in 2024 (Tourism Research Australia Business Event Visitor Survey 2024).

These event companies sit at the centre of both the creative economy and the visitor economy, yet much of their activity is structurally invisible in the national data used to shape policy.

This creates practical problems for government. It limits the ability to:

- measure the true size of the industry
- understand its workforce and productivity
- track performance over time
- design effective industry, skills, tourism, regional, and creative-industry policy

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*“It also means that many of the most creative and knowledge-intensive parts of the Event Industry ... are largely excluded from the Creative and Cultural Industries Satellite Accounts.”*

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It also means that many of the most creative and knowledge-intensive parts of the Event Industry — particularly event design, production, and business-event activity — are largely excluded from the Creative and Cultural Industries Satellite Accounts.

Similarly, many event types that drive visitation are only partially captured in the Tourism Satellite Account, because the event activity itself is not fully measured.

### RECOMMENDATION

**The Australian Government should establish Event Industry Satellite Accounts to capture the full economic footprint of the Event Industry.**

These accounts should:

- Measure the complete event ecosystem, not just tourism-related activity.
- Incorporate the relevant creative components of the Event Industry into the Creative and Cultural Industries Satellite Accounts.
- Incorporate the relevant visitor-related components into the Tourism Satellite Account, so the full economic contribution of events is properly understood.

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*“This would provide the baseline data needed for effective productivity, workforce, innovation, creative industry, tourism, and regional-development policy.”*

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This would provide the baseline data needed for effective productivity, workforce, innovation, creative industry, tourism, and regional-development policy.

## 18.6 RECOGNISE THE ROLE OF THE EVENT INDUSTRY ACROSS BROADER GOVERNMENT POLICY

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*“Events are not a single-purpose activity. They are used every day across government, industry, education, health, science, trade, and community sectors to achieve real outcomes.”*

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Events are not a single-purpose activity. They are used every day across government, industry, education, health, science, trade, and community sectors to achieve real outcomes.

Business events support trade, innovation, skills development, research collaboration, and investment.

Community and cultural events build participation, social connection, and regional confidence.

Major events drive national profile, infrastructure, and industry capability.

For-purpose events generate funding, volunteers, and social outcomes.

In practice, events are one of the main ways governments and institutions:

- communicate complex ideas
- coordinate stakeholders
- drive behaviour change
- showcase innovation
- and build social cohesion

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*“... the Event Industry is rarely considered as part of mainstream policy in areas such as productivity, innovation, skills, regional development, health, science, or community wellbeing.”*

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Despite this, the Event Industry is rarely considered as part of mainstream policy in areas such as productivity, innovation, skills, regional development, health, science, or community wellbeing. Events are often treated as a narrow tourism or marketing activity, rather than as a practical delivery mechanism used across the entire economy and society.

This means opportunities are missed to use events more deliberately as tools for:

- innovation adoption and industry transformation
- workforce development and skills transfer
- regional economic participation
- social inclusion and community resilience
- national capability building

### RECOMMENDATION

**The Australian Government should formally recognise the role of the Event Industry across broader areas of public policy, and integrate event-based approaches into relevant national strategies.**

Including:

- productivity and innovation policy
- skills and workforce development
- regional development
- industry transformation
- science and research translation
- social and community policy

This does not require large new programs. It requires recognising events as one of the government’s most practical tools for achieving economic, social, and innovation outcomes — and using them more deliberately across policy areas.

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*“It requires recognising events as one of the government’s most practical tools for achieving economic, social, and innovation outcomes — and using them more deliberately across policy areas.”*

---

In effect, this would allow government to use the Event Industry as a practical coordination and implementation layer across major national priorities, rather than treating events as isolated marketing or communications activities.

### 18.7 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section proposes a small number of practical, system-level changes that would allow the Australian Government to properly recognise, measure, and support creativity, innovation, productivity, and the Event Industry as part of the nation's economic and social development.

At its core, the recommendations focus on six things:

- **Clearly separating Arts policy from broader creative industries policy, so that the creative industries most linked to innovation and productivity have a dedicated policy home.**
- **Recognising the Event Industry as a major creative sector.**
- **Aligning creativity and innovation within federal policy structures as a core pathway to improved productivity.**
- **Reforming national industry and occupation classifications.**
- **Establishing Event Industry satellite accounts and properly including event activity in existing satellite accounts.**
- **Recognising the role events play across wider government objectives.**

Together, these are foundational reforms.

They would give government a clearer picture of where creative and event-related activity actually sits in the economy, properly recognise the applied creative industries that drive innovation across every sector, support better workforce planning and productivity policy, and allow events to be used more deliberately as tools for innovation, economic growth, and social connection across Australia.

## 19. VISION AND LEGACY

### 19.1 UNDERSTANDING EVENTS FOR WHAT THEY REALLY ARE

For many years, events in Australia have largely been understood through a single lens: the number of hotel room nights they generate and side trips to the penguins for the tourism industry.

That measure has been convenient and easy to quantify, and it is relevant for a small subset of visitor-driven events. But it captures only a fraction of the value created by the Event Industry.

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*“The reality is that most events in Australia generate little or no overnight visitation at all.”*

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The reality is that most events in Australia generate little or no overnight visitation at all.

Business meetings, industry conferences, exhibitions, community festivals, civic gatherings, training events, and cultural programs make up the vast majority of event activity across the country. Their primary value lies not in tourism, but in innovation, skills development, knowledge exchange, economic coordination, and social connection.

When events are understood primarily through tourism metrics, policy settings focus on visitation rather than capability, productivity, or long-term value. As a result, much of the Event Industry’s real economic and social contribution remains structurally invisible in government decision making.

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*“Correcting this is not about diminishing tourism. It is about broadening the lens to recognise the full role the Event Industry plays across Australia’s economy and communities.”*

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Correcting this is not about diminishing tourism. It is about broadening the lens to recognise the full role the Event Industry plays across Australia’s economy and communities.

### 19.2 THE NATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Events are one of the most practical tools available to government, industry, and communities to drive change.

They:

- accelerate innovation and knowledge transfer
- support workforce skills and professional development
- connect research, education, and industry
- enable trade, investment, and collaboration
- strengthen community participation and social cohesion
- support creative practice across the economy

The opportunity for the Australian Government is to better understand and use the Event Industry as part of the nation’s productivity, innovation, economic, and social agenda.

This requires recognising the Event Industry as a creative and economic sector in its own right, measuring it properly, and aligning policy so that events consistently generate long-term value.

### 19.3 REAL OUTCOMES FOR AUSTRALIA

If Australia adopts this broader understanding of events and the Event Industry, the outcomes are not abstract or administrative. They are practical, national outcomes that affect productivity, opportunity, and quality of life.

A stronger, better-recognised Event Industry will contribute to:

#### HIGHER NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY

Events accelerate the spread of ideas, technologies, and new ways of working. Business conferences, trade shows, industry forums, and training events are where innovation moves from theory into practice.

A stronger event ecosystem means faster adoption of new technologies and practices across the economy.

#### STRONGER INDUSTRIES AND MORE COMPETITIVE BUSINESSES

Events help industries coordinate, learn, and grow. They connect suppliers, buyers, researchers, investors, and customers. This leads to better products, more efficient markets, and stronger industry ecosystems.

#### BETTER SKILLS AND CAREER PATHWAYS

Events are one of the key ways people learn, train, and build professional networks. A healthy Event Industry supports workforce development across almost every sector — not just within events themselves.

#### STRONGER REGIONAL ECONOMIES

Regional events drive local business activity, support small enterprises, and create reasons for people to visit, stay, and invest. Over time, they help build more resilient and self-sustaining regional communities.

#### MORE INNOVATION AND FASTER COMMERCIALISATION OF RESEARCH

Events connect universities, startups, investors, and established industries. They are one of the primary environments where ideas become partnerships, investments, and real businesses.

#### STRONGER COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL COHESION

Community festivals, civic events, cultural gatherings, and regional shows build trust, belonging, and participation. These social outcomes are critical to national resilience, mental health, and civic life.

#### A LARGER AND MORE COMPETITIVE CREATIVE ECONOMY

The Event Industry is one of the larger employers of creative talent in Australia, and sits at the centre of the creative economy.

Recognising and supporting it — alongside the broader creative industries, from experience design and creative technology to interactive media and the creator economy — strengthens creative careers, businesses, innovation, and export opportunities.

In simple terms, the real legacy is:

- A more productive economy.
- Stronger industries.
- Better skills and jobs.
- More resilient regions.
- More connected communities.
- And a larger, more competitive creative economy.

That is how a stronger Event Industry contributes to a better future for Australia.

### 19.4 VISION

The vision is straightforward.

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*"To recognise the Event Industry as a core part of Australia's economic, creative, and social infrastructure — and to use events more deliberately as tools for productivity, innovation, skills development, regional growth, and community connection."*

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To recognise the Event Industry as a core part of Australia's economic, creative, and social infrastructure — and to use events more deliberately as tools for productivity, innovation, skills development, regional growth, and community connection.

This is not about more events for their own sake.

It is about getting far greater long-term economic, social, and creative value from events.

By properly recognising and supporting the Event Industry, Australia can strengthen productivity, build more competitive industries, create better career pathways, support stronger regions, and foster more connected and resilient communities.

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*"In this approach, events are recognised as part of the systems through which economies grow, skills are developed, ideas are shared, and communities are strengthened."*

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In this approach, events are recognised as part of the systems through which economies grow, skills are developed, ideas are shared, and communities are strengthened.

They are ongoing mechanisms of coordination, learning, exchange, and connection — practical instruments for building Australia's future.

## A FINAL THOUGHT

Australia does not lack events.

And it does not lack talent, creativity, or experience.

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*"What it has lacked is a framework that fully recognises what events actually do — and a national strategy that deliberately uses them for the benefit of all Australians."*

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What it has lacked is a framework that fully recognises what events actually do — and a national strategy that deliberately uses them for the benefit of all Australians.

This document is about providing that framework.

It is about shifting from a narrow measure of value to a fuller understanding of impact — and from treating events as a byproduct of other industries to recognising them as one of the most practical tools Australia has for driving productivity, innovation, and social connection.

It is about recognising that the applied creative industries — from experience design and creative technology to interactive media, the creator economy, and the Event Industry itself — are not the Arts, but they are among the most important drivers of innovation and economic growth in the modern economy.

They deserve a policy home that reflects what they actually are and what they actually do.

And it is about ensuring that Australia finally recognises one of its greatest practical strengths — and uses it deliberately, strategically, and for the long term.

**Ultimately, success will not be measured by how many events Australia hosts, but by what those events achieve — for productivity, for innovation, for communities, and for the nation.**

**Australia already has one of the most capable Event Industries in the world. What it needs now is a government that recognises it, a framework that supports it, and the ambition to use it for the benefit of all Australians.**

## APPENDIX A - ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simon Thewlis is an experienced event professional who has created, produced, and consulted on a very broad range of events and experiences across Australia — from major public commemorations and community celebrations to business events, conferences, product launches, and large-scale creative activations.

Over more than four decades, Simon has worked with and for many of Australia's leading brands, government bodies, promoters, and not-for-profits, including RSL Australia, 7-Eleven, Holden, Honda, Telstra, ING, Nissan, AMP, Federation Square, Australian Red Cross, Ronald McDonald House, and Live Nation.

He has also consulted extensively to major event companies, promoters, and government agencies on the design, planning, and delivery of complex event projects, as well as on major infrastructure initiatives such as Melbourne Docklands, Docklands Stadium, and Federation Square.

Simon's practical experience spans every part of the Event Industry — including event strategy, creative development, logistics, production, site operations, content, stakeholder management, audience experience, safety, risk, and emergency management. This gives him a systems-level understanding of how events are actually conceived, organised, delivered, regulated, and evaluated in practice.

He has played active roles in industry leadership and advocacy, including with the International Special Events Society and the Victorian Events Industry Council, and was one of the central figures behind the Save Australian Events campaign during the COVID-19 pandemic — a grassroots initiative that mobilised more than 2,000 event professionals and over 900 event businesses across Australia.

The campaign became the primary source of industry data and insight for government during the pandemic, and helped inform major policy responses — including additional direct financial support for event businesses, changes to public health restrictions affecting events, the establishment of the Victorian Government's \$230 million COVID-19 Event Insurance Fund, and a much deeper understanding of the Event Industry across all three levels of government and the media.

Simon has appeared as a key Event Industry witness in three parliamentary inquiries, providing evidence on event policy, regulation, and economic impact, and continues to contribute to national discussions on industry development and reform.

He remains deeply involved in the Event Industry as both a practitioner and advocate, focused on strengthening the recognition, capability, and sustainability of Australia's Event Industry — and helping governments and organisations better understand the creative, economic, and community power of events.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/aneventfullife/>

## APPENDIX B - ANZSIC CODES - BEING VISIBLE IN THE STATISTICS

This appendix is an excerpt from 'A Truly Creative And Innovative Australia: And The Role Of The Event Industry'. My submission to the current Senate Environment and Communications Reference Committee Inquiry into the Federal Government's National Cultural Policy.

The harsh lesson we learnt in the Event Industry very early on in the pandemic is that if you aren't in the statistics then it is very hard to be in government policy or get government funding - as no one is reasonable for you. Your situation isn't visible.

We put a huge amount of effort into trying to change this for a couple of years during the pandemic with the Save Victorian Events campaign. And I've kept pushing it along since (as time allows - as the Event Industry isn't an easy place nowadays).

### SCALE OF THE EVENT INDUSTRY

There is no disputing the scale of the Event Industry.

According to the Federal Government agency Tourism Research Australia, business event visitors spent \$19.6 billion in Australia in the 2024 calendar year.

<https://www.tra.gov.au/en/economic-analysis/business-events-data>

Studies by EY (for the then Business Events Council of Australia) show this is only about half of the direct expenditure on business events. The other half is that spent by the local delegates, event organisers, exhibitors, etc...

Hence the total direct spend of business events is about \$39 billion a year.

Obviously there are many other benefits from business events. We drive change and innovation across organisations, industries and the broader community.

Therefore the total spend of the whole Event Industry is well over \$40 billion a year.

And yet most of the businesses that organise most these events - the event companies, professional conference organisers, creative event agencies, etc.... - come under a most obscure ANZSIC (Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification) code, and one that is shared with other unrelated sectors.

- 72 Administrative Services
- 729 Other Administrative Services
- **7299 Other Administrative Services (not elsewhere classified)**
- 72990030 Event management or promotion (incl sport, art or similar); fund raising services (fee based) or administration services not elsewhere classified

Here is the detail of the ANZSIC 72 series from the ABS website:

<b>72</b>	<b>Administrative Services</b>
721	Employment Services
7211	Employment Placement and Recruitment Services
7212	Labour Supply Services
722	Travel Agency and Tour Arrangement Services
7220	Travel Agency and Tour Arrangement Services
729	Other Administrative Services
7291	Office Administrative Services
7292	Document Preparation Services
7293	Credit Reporting and Debt Collection Services
7294	Call Centre Operation
7299	Other Administrative Services n.e.c.

Noting that practically no data is available publicly for the eight digit code level. They are essentially internal use for the ABS. The vast majority of data that is publicly available is for the four digit codes - i.e. 7299.

The ABS description of code 7299 is:

This class consists of units mainly engaged in providing administrative services not elsewhere classified.

Primary activities

- Administrative service n.e.c.
- Event management service
- Sports ticketing service
- Sport, art and similar event promotion service (without facilities)
- Theatre and concert booking service
- Tourist information centre operation

Exclusions/References

Units mainly engaged in providing sports, arts and similar event promotion services (with facilities) are included in the appropriate classes of Division R Arts and Recreation Services.

A very odd mix of activities and businesses!

Noting that a part of 7299 that is guessed to be 'arts events' is included in the creative and cultural industries definition.

Thankfully they've removed reference to supermarket trolley collection services and meter reading services in the 7299 definition!

This is in very sharp contrast to the performing arts - which have the whole 9000 series:

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<b>90</b>	<b>Creative and Performing Arts Activities</b>
900	Creative and Performing Arts Activities
9001	Performing Arts Operation
9002	Creative Artists, Musicians, Writers and Performers
9003	Performing Arts Venue Operation
<b>91</b>	<b>Sports and Recreation Activities</b>
911	Sports and Physical Recreation Activities
9111	Health and Fitness Centres and Gymnasia Operation
9112	Sports and Physical Recreation Clubs and Sports Professionals
9113	Sports and Physical Recreation Venues, Grounds and Facilities Operation
9114	Sports and Physical Recreation Administrative Service
912	Horse and Dog Racing Activities
9121	Horse and Dog Racing Administration and Track Operation
9129	Other Horse and Dog Racing Activities
913	Amusement and Other Recreation Activities
9131	Amusement Parks and Centres Operation
9139	Amusement and Other Recreational Activities n.e.c.

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Or to publishing, film, broadcasting, etc..... All these sectors have proper classifications - even though they do not have the same economic impact as the Event Industry.

<b>54</b>	<b>Publishing (except Internet and Music Publishing)</b>
541	Newspaper, Periodical, Book and Directory Publishing
5411	Newspaper Publishing
5412	Magazine and Other Periodical Publishing
5413	Book Publishing
5414	Directory and Mailing List Publishing
5419	Other Publishing (except Software, Music and Internet)
542	Software Publishing
5420	Software Publishing
<b>55</b>	<b>Motion Picture and Sound Recording Activities</b>
551	Motion Picture and Video Activities
5511	Motion Picture and Video Production
5512	Motion Picture and Video Distribution
5513	Motion Picture Exhibition
5514	Post-production Services and Other Motion Picture and Video Activities
552	Sound Recording and Music Publishing
5521	Music Publishing
5522	Music and Other Sound Recording Activities
<b>56</b>	<b>Broadcasting (except Internet)</b>
561	Radio Broadcasting
5610	Radio Broadcasting
562	Television Broadcasting
5621	Free-to-Air Television Broadcasting
5622	Cable and Other Subscription Broadcasting
<b>57</b>	<b>Internet Publishing and Broadcasting</b>
570	Internet Publishing and Broadcasting
5700	Internet Publishing and Broadcasting

It is a very stark difference between how the Event Industry is treated in the ANZSIC codes and how other creative industries are treated.

As we are not visible in the ANZSIC codes, we aren't visible to government, and hence not in policy.

### PANDEMIC IMPACT

During the pandemic this turned out to be truly, truly devastating for our industry. The majority of our industry received little financial support. Our industry and its people and businesses were decimated.

The devastating impact was covered in detail in the Victorian Legislative Council's Inquiry into the Events and Tourism Sectors in 2021.

The pandemic showed just how little the Event Industry is understood in government. Despite being one of the largest creative industries, it received almost no targeted support, while arts, sport, and tourism sectors did. This was not deliberate neglect but a result of structural invisibility: events are absent from definitions, excluded from data, and overlooked in policy frameworks.

The same mistakes cannot be repeated. Australia cannot have a credible creative industries strategy without including one of its largest and most innovative creative industries.

### TRYING TO CHANGE THE ANZSIC CODE TO A VISIBLE ONE

I first contacted the head of the ABS on January 14 2021 about this. And, a vast number of other people since. But to no avail - apart from the references to supermarket trolley collection services and meter reading services being removed.

To be clear, the group of businesses that organise a large proportion of the events in Australia that have a direct spend of well excess of \$40 billion a year don't even have an ANZSIC code.

An extraordinary situation!

### A SIMPLE SOLUTION

A simple solution would be to create a create ANZSIC series for the Event Industry:

- **723 - Event Organisers and Event Services.**

And then under that, for example:

- **7231** - Event organisers and producers (the businesses that create, organise and manager special events: including business events, public events, community events, festivals, major events, etc...)
- **7232** - Event services (the businesses that provide event personnel and services to events)
- **7233** - Event equipment (the businesses that rent specialist event equipment - e.g. marquees, etc... - to events)
- **7239** - Other event related businesses n.e.c.

The rest of 7299 - i.e. relating to fund raising, other administrative service nec, etc... - could remain in 7299.

### EVENT INDUSTRY SUPPLIERS

It is also worth mentioning that many event industry supplier businesses currently come under similarly large grab bag codes - meaning we can't see data for our industry. These grab bag codes include:

- 7212 Labour Supply Services
- 6639 Other Goods and Equipment Rental and Hiring not elsewhere classified

In the above suggested approach Event Industry businesses in 7212 would move to 7232, and businesses in 6639 would move to 7233.

And this would give visibility to a very significant amount of the Event Industry.

It would also make it much easier to include event companies and suppliers in the creative and cultural industries definition and satellite accounts.

### CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] made no sense as Australia's approach to classifying the Event Industry is completely different to other major countries, such as:

- United Kingdom - which is far from perfect but at least has:
  - SIC Code 82301: Activities of exhibition and fair organizers
  - SIC Code 82302: Activities of conference organizers
- USA - again less than perfect but has:
  - CIP Code 52.0907: Meeting and Event Planning

It is worth noting that in their most recent publications BCARR do state that the definition of the creative industries is not uniform internationally, and hence Australia does have a different definition to other major countries.