

ANONYMOUS

In this submission, I represent the perspective of an emerging performing artist and filmmaker who sits at the intersection of having studied, invested in their practice, and attained professional credits and exposure, and who now requires skills based and merit based opportunities to develop a sustained artistic career.

The points I expand upon are geared to the pillar point: “The Centrality of the Artist”.

The reality I face as a performer is challenging, and while difficulty is expected in a competitive field, the current conditions are increasingly unsustainable. For example, a recent *profit-share* musical production received between 500–700 applications to audition, despite offering successful cast members approximately \$500–\$1,000 for three months of work. What was once considered an entry point for early career artists has now become highly competitive due to the volume of experienced professionals seeking any opportunity to work.

This shift has effectively removed almost every accessible entry point into the industry. In response, and with the opportunity of the digital age, many artists are turning to self produced pathways - creating short films, fringe theatre, development readings, and digital content, including vertical social media work - as a means of building their practice and visibility.

However, the funding landscape has not kept pace with this shift. There is a critical gap in funding for small scale, independent projects that are an integral part of skills elevation, and form the foundation of the arts industries training grounds.

Small projects are often the most viable pathway for emerging and mid career artists to create work, test ideas, and build momentum, yet they remain under-supported.

Looking at the recent data, Creative Australia’s small projects grant had a 12% success rate. Excitingly, approximately 235 applications were supported. Devastatingly, it left a whopping 1728 applications un-funded.

From my perspective, as a multi-faceted practitioner, I also look to Screen Australia for project support. A mere four short narrative projects were selected for Screen Australia’s recent round. Looking at state-level funding, beyond the three annual recipients of the Short to Feature Fast Track, Screen NSW **does not** fund stand-alone short films.

I would strongly advocate for additional funding programs that explicitly prioritise skills development for sustainable practice, rather than being defined by artform or priority outcomes. This could include criteria that encourage artists to develop marketing strategies, monetisation pathways, and *explicitly* support or require complementary fundraising plans alongside their creative work. Concerningly, there is, and has always been, a notion that artists don’t make money. A grant similar to ArtStart (removed in 2013), could potentially help rectify this. By providing funds for expenses like equipment, software, and small project costs, emerging graduates would be encouraged to monetise their artforms early on in their career. The focus

should be on equipping artists not only to create new work, but to sustain it.

Initiatives such as Australian Arts Day demonstrate the value of building artists' capabilities beyond creation, particularly in areas such as crowdfunding. This is an essential skill for contemporary practice, and its continued support and expansion is strongly encouraged.

Building on this, there is an opportunity to further develop pathways in areas such as private sponsorship and philanthropy, which also remain underdeveloped, secretive, and gatekept, but are critical to long term sustainability.

Without structural support for these evolving pathways, emerging artists risk being locked out of both traditional and independent routes to building a sustained career - one that's not necessarily reliant on grant funding. A more responsive funding ecosystem would recognise and invest in the realities of how artists are creating, distributing, and sustaining their work. If emerging artists globally are now expected to become self producing, audience building practitioners, then funding frameworks in Australia must evolve to support this reality.

Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts pilot offers a promising example of this, showing how consistent, baseline support can enable artists to create more work, reduce financial instability, and build sustainable careers over time.

Beyond these points, I turn my attention to the removal of Creative Plus Business under the Business Connect Program. This move has significant consequences for artists.

I undertook Business Connect sessions upon graduating, and they were the most valuable opportunity, and a prized, accessible pathway for artists to explore and better their business practices. I urge the reinstatement of this service as a top priority. Even better, if Creative Plus Business mentorship was tied into the new Self-Employment Assistance program, creating its own creative industries stream.

All of the aforementioned points, if put in action, would greatly assist the foundations of a stable "middle class" of artists, which is the defining factor of any successful industry.