

Submission to the National Cultural Policy (Revive)

Subject: Actionable Policies to Protect the Legacy and Future of Australian Circus

I submit this proposal to secure the future of all Australian circus. We define "classical circus" as the traditional, travelling tented circus, characterised by historical lineage and multi-generational dedication. As an Intangible Cultural Heritage, it serves demographics often unable to access traditional theatre. Astonishingly, it remains historically excluded from government arts grants. To protect this legacy, we propose these actionable policies:

1. First Nations First

- **The Problem:** Regional First Nations youth lack culturally safe arts programs.
- **Policy Action:** Establish federal funding for community-led circus programs. Circus builds resilience and diverts at-risk youth by keeping them engaged and connected to cultural storytelling.

2. A Place for Every Story

- **The Problem:** The scale of a circus tour is unique. We aren't just moving performers; we transport Big Tops, generators, heavy rigging, and custom equipment. Severe logistics and fuel costs make regional touring increasingly unviable.
- **Policy Action:** Introduce a "Regional Touring Logistics Rebate." This structural offset ensures mobile arts organisations remain afloat and regional communities do not lose access to live entertainment.

3. Centrality of the Artist

- **The Problem:** Irregular gig work forces talent out, and expensive visas restrict global collaboration.
- **Policy Action:** Implement a federal income support model bridging gaps between gigs, inspired by France's *intermittents du spectacle* and the Irish Basic Income pilot (which yields a €1.39 ROI per €1 invested). We also urgently need streamlined visas.

4. Strong Cultural Infrastructure

- **The Problem:** Urbanisation erases Big Top spaces, DA hurdles are immense, and public liability insurance has skyrocketed.
- **Policy Action:** The Federal Government must lead with national guidelines to fast-track temporary structure permits. Critically, establish a government-backed arts insurance pool for high-risk touring to cap premiums.

5. A Seat at the Table: Sector Equity & Engaging the Audience

- **The Problem:** Funding bodies consistently bury circus as a mere subset of "Physical Theatre." While categories like podcasting, ballet, and opera get standalone recognition (as seen in state systems like Create NSW), circus is left out in the cold. This systemic barrier dilutes funding pools. When classical circus competes against intimate physical storytelling, our massive

touring scale, safety testing costs, and distinct audiences are completely lost in the noise. Furthermore, circus uniquely reaches low-to-medium income and remote households, yet we are judged on copy-pasted traditional theatre metrics.

- **Policy Action:** Formally protect Classical Circus as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage within Revive's frameworks. It is time for a shake-up: cultural funding bodies must mandate "Circus" as its own standalone genre. Stop conflating us with physical theatre. Establishing sector-specific operational subsidies ensures equitable grant access. This guarantees classical circus finally gets a seat at the table to fund new season works, survive the grueling costs of touring, and maintain affordable tickets for every household.

Respectfully submitted,

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Director, World Circus Federation

Under the Honorary Presidency and patronage of H.S.H. Princess Stephanie of Monaco

Oceania Circus Guild

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