

where we are

pvi collective live, work, and play on Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar, in western australia. we acknowledge our work takes place on unceded First Nations lands and pay our deepest respect to the enduring resistance, creativity and cultural authority of First Nations peoples here and across the globe. always was always will be.

who we are

pvi are an artist-led experimental art group based in Boorloo. over the past 28 years, we have sustained a practice within australia's experimental arts ecology, creating participatory works that engage audiences through contemporary art, performance, technology and public space.

our collective has evolved through project funding, capacity development and multi year investment. we know how sustained support can strengthen artistic practice, as well as how precarious and unsustainable the broader funding landscape is for many independent artists.

dear taskforce,

thank you for the care and labour involved in undertaking this process.

we know there is a huge amount of reading, listening and discussion required to engage with so many sector voices. behind every submission is a lived reality of trying to sustain artistic practice within australia. there are opportunities here to rethink what kind of arts ecology we actually want to build. this is a chance to test new ideas, prototype fairer systems and build conditions where artists can genuinely sustain long-term careers.

as climate instability and economic pressure continue to intensify, the role of artists will become more urgent. artists help people process change, stay connected, challenge dominant thinking and imagine different ways forward. art improves people's wellbeing, contributes to the economy, and connects us with each other. if artists are genuinely central to australia's cultural future, we need systems that allow them not just to survive project-to-project, but to sustain long-term practices and lives.

with kindness and in solidarity with australian artists,

pvi collective

kelli mccluskey,
rachel arianne ogle,
steve bull,
tom campbell



focus for this submission - pillar 3 - centrality of the artist

"[artists] play a major role in shaping and enriching public life, but it's time we make sure they can afford to live."

- penelope benton, exec director, nava.

without the artists, there is no arts sector.

we need a sustainable system that supports the working lives of artists. project funding does not sustain careers, build capacity or enable artists to earn a regular income beyond the duration of the project. this financial model keeps artists in a perpetual state of financial insecurity and psychological distress. we have an opportunity to reimagine the way we support artists beyond this insecurity, and do so in ways that generate significant cultural, social and economic returns.

we need a living wage for artists.

a living wage structurally embedded into cultural policy would ensure creative work is understood and valued as a career and would set the foundation for a thriving and confident workforce. supporting artists to do their jobs is necessary cultural infrastructure. it will future proof the arts by foregrounding its most important mycelium, the artists.

this situation as it stands

according to creative australia's 2024 *economic study of professional artists in australia*, there are 47,100 practicing professional artists working across australia. the average annual income from artistic practice is \$12,330 for women and \$23,130 for men.

women now make up approximately 65% of australia's artistic workforce, yet continue to earn substantially less than male artists. these figures sit in stark contrast to salaried art sector roles, where leadership and admin positions often attract wages between \$75,000 and \$125,000 per year:

art worker role

artistic director / ceo

senior arts worker [curator, manager]

mid level arts administrator

artists

average annual income

\$115,000 - 125,000 p.a

\$95,000 - 105,000 p.a

\$62,000 - 75,000 p.a

\$13, 937 p.a

the disparity couldn't be more sobering.





artists who sit at the heart of artistic production are the most financially disadvantaged by it. the above waged jobs exist because of the artists. the arts institutions exist because of the artists. what doesn't exist is an equitable system that acknowledges and empowers its core workers - the artists. this has to be put right. instead of perpetuating the same cycle of disadvantage, there is an opportunity to place artists at the heart. a living wage would rectify this.

case study

ireland recently adopted a transformative policy measure to protect and support creative practice, one that recognises the intrinsic value of arts and culture, but also retains the social and economic impact. the basic income for artists pilot [bia] scheme was introduced in 2022 and has since been made permanent. the scheme alleviated the constant struggle to make ends meet with a 20% reduction in the likelihood of experiencing enforced deprivation and significantly reduced levels of anxiety or depression.

other benefits to the bia include:

- > countering earnings instability and precarious nature of working as an independent artist.
- > fostering artists' agency and safeguarding freedom of expression.
- > reducing the need for artists to work outside of the arts for economic reasons.

opportunities in an australian context

basic income guarantee program

pilot a program where a cohort of artists are provided with a living wage, which could be based on the ireland model. artists are given the security to contribute to society. beyond cultural and social returns on investment. the ireland model demonstrated a strong roi on economic investment (with every €1 invested in the scheme generating €1.39 in return).

an expanded artist-in-residence program

the benefits of the arts are felt across society, with access to creativity and culture a key metric that improves wellbeing. artists could exist beyond their homes or studios, beyond connecting with the public through galleries, theatres and festivals. artists in residence and embedded artist programs could be expanded across health, aged care, education, libraries and urban planning. centring artists across public life could create stronger communities while opening up new long term pathways for artistic practise and collaboration.





if we embraced these opportunities, where could we be?

lets imagine this....

we live in a country where artistic production and creative labour is valued. not only that, it's believed to be fundamental for a just society and a healthy democracy. artists are no longer on the poverty line or juggling multiple part time jobs to stay afloat. instead, they do their day jobs as artists.

they have autonomy and agency to make, create, research, develop, collaborate, learn, share and experiment with rigour and confidence. they engage deeper with their communities due to having more time. they collaborate extensively across all industries and occupations because they are valued and respected. they produce more work, which engages more people, and contributes more to the economies around them...

when artists are supported and valued, entire communities benefit. the cultural ecology becomes stronger. audiences experience richer and more ambitious work. the sector shifts from survival mode into a space of confidence.

at pvi, we have experienced first hand how sustained investment beyond short term project funding strengthens artistic capacity. we believe this kind of support should form part of the national infrastructure that supports every artist across australia.

"establishing basic income schemes for artists would have a transformative effect on the field and international cultural collaborations would then stem from artistic relevance and values, rather than being distorted by an unbalanced distribution of available funding."

- elina polivsteva, culture policy room, ietm

