

National Cultural Policy Submission | Chunky Move

Organisation: Chunky Move

Submission: Made on behalf of Chunky Move Board, Staff and associated Artists / Creatives. Can be made public

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About Us: Chunky Move is Victoria's flagship contemporary dance company. We create bold, visually striking and genre defying dance works. These works are experiments that merge the body with other forms, explore new ideas and respond to different spaces and contexts. Under the leadership of Artistic Director, Antony Hamilton and Executive Director, Suzanne Daley Chunky Move play a crucial role in driving the artform of dance forward in Australia and beyond. On average, Chunky Move annually employs around 100 independent dance artists, choreographers, dance teachers and creatives from other artistic disciplines.

Dance Sector: All dance in Australia sits within the context of a 100,000-year continuum of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. It encompasses practices which include contemporary, improvisation, conceptual, narrative-based, street dance, dance theatre, classical ballet, physical theatre, youth dance, folk dance, dance sports, screen-based work, and technology based performance.

Underpinned by a robust and thriving dance studio, cultural dance and competitive dance-sport culture in Australia, the contemporary dance sector produces work that is seen across stages in metropolitan, regional and remote settings. It tours widely across the country and internationally to festivals and theatres, halls, schools, and firesides. It encompasses work of large, medium and small scale.

Dance plays a key role in the promotion and maintenance of physical and mental health for all ages and is an integral expression of culture and inclusion for many communities including First Nations, CALD, Disability and LGBTQI+.

Dance is a primary artform with our bodies as the expressive instrument.

Submission

PILLAR ONE: First Nations: Recognising and respecting the crucial place of these stories at the centre of our arts and culture.

First Peoples inclusion is fundamental to Chunky Move's values. Roles for First Peoples are embedded across our organisation (Board, core staff, contracted artists) and we consult regularly with Elders and First Peoples community members regarding our activities. We support First Peoples self-determination for all projects led by First Peoples and engage First Peoples in curatorial roles. We are guided by our First Peoples Engagement Framework, which was created in consultation with the Koorie Heritage Trust and adopted by the Chunky Move Board in 2021.

Challenges and Opportunities

1.1 Develop and secure funding for a 10+ year plan that builds capacity of First Nations dancers, arts workers (including producers, designers, technicians, production managers, creatives,

administrators), and companies; currently there are no significant, ongoing, well-funded pathways/opportunities to support this critical work.

- 1.2 Ensure all activities within creative organisations are culturally safe, self-determined and adhere to best-practice ICIP protocols, particularly when organisations are not First-Nations led. This will require investment to ensure a sustainable practice of learning, engagement, training and leadership across the sector.
- 1.3 Transform the dance sector as an authentic, open space for First Nations and non-First Nations artists, stories, audiences and ways of storytelling to come together – in studio, in theatres, on Country or online; to create cultural experiences that aspire to be truly Australian. Ensure that barriers to meaningful engagement, participation, creation and learning can be supported and addressed through all processes and practices.

PILLAR TWO: A place for every story: reflecting the diversity of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture.

All forms of dance contribute to fostering an inclusive, equitable and diverse society. Dance has the capacity to tell story like no other medium. This story is told through the expressive language of movement, and many diverse cultural groups have dances that reflect their unique place in the wider cultural sphere. Chunky Move is committed to ensuring our works and program reflect the diverse community we are a part of. We have short, mid and long-term strategies to contribute to a more equitable creative sector guided by our 2021-24 Equity Action Plan.

Challenges and Opportunities

- 2.1 Dance organisations and dance artists to be provided with resources to establish, maintain, and deliver, comprehensive inclusion strategies and access services.
- 2.2 Access must include the development of effective opportunities to participate in the arts for First Nations people, culturally diverse communities, Australians identifying with disability and neurodiversity, and people in disadvantaged circumstances.
- 2.3 Generate career pathways and employment opportunities in the arts for First Nations people, culturally diverse communities, Australians identifying with disability and neurodiversity, and Australians in disadvantaged circumstances.
- 2.4 New works or reaching a new audience can be risky and expensive. Ensure there is support and investment available for companies of all scales to take risks and support the development and growth of new voices, opportunities and artistic outcomes.

PILLAR THREE: The centrality of the artist: supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture.

Chunky Move's works and public program activity create opportunities for a multiplicity of artistic voices, challenging expectations and diversifying the art form.

The cultural sector employs more than 350,000 people and generates \$17 billion in economic activity per annum (2018-19) [Analysis & Policy Observatory]. At its core it celebrates, the place of artists and arts workers. This is the moment to work across many sectors (government, media, industry, philanthropy, education, health) to build the case that a viable and sustainable career in the arts is achievable; That it is not a hobby or pastime. Performers and creatives are central to the sophistication and vitality of the art form, with the support of administration, technical and production staff. High achieving funded not-for-profits like Chunky Move deliver on government priorities as and when required. Therefore, they need to be trusted to deliver programs that support policy objectives. In essence, the arts can be instrumentalised to support cross portfolio work such as education and health, with dedicated funding streams to build organisational capacity to deliver this important work.

Challenges and Opportunities

- 3.1 Undertake a thorough review of arts training across the tertiary education sector to determine what is really required in those areas and where. Create fast-tracked programs (e.g. micro-

- credentials) to address training needs and attract workers in areas of key skill gaps, particularly for production managers, producers and technical crew
- 3.2 Acknowledge the arts as playing a critical part of the care economy programs which can be developed across government and have immediate benefits for the arts sector, as well as other portfolios (e.g. Health and Aged Care, Education).
 - 3.3 Establish long-term policies that create pathways for recreational or professional engagement in the broad arts sector, making the arts more accessible and attractive, breaking down biases in the creative industries as a viable career choice, and enabling emerging artists to have the confidence to commit themselves to viable careers.
 - 3.4 Artists and arts workers earn a living through many activities, from casual work (in and outside the sector) to self-generated entrepreneurial activity and the gig economy. The development of mechanisms that ensures this portfolio employment structure is sustainable, such as a Universal Basic Income, would support the precarious and uneven nature of most employment along with protecting and advancing individual rights, conditions and entitlements.
 - 3.5 Implementing well-funded, ongoing programs that create employment opportunities, from embedding specialist dance teachers in schools (offering immediate employment but also signalling pathways for students) to a coordinated, year-round touring circuit for works of all scales that ensure the mobility of dance works across the country. Career retraining programs also will ensure physical artists are supported once no longer performing.

PILLAR FOUR: Strong institutions: providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture.

Chunky Move has been at the forefront of Australian contemporary dance for 30 years. We produce ambitious, interdisciplinary performance works of various scale that challenge the form, facilitate unique artistic collaborations, and offer audiences unparalleled live experiences in dance. The dance sector is a thriving ecology made up of independent artists, small, medium and large institutions, commercial arts businesses, arts education institutions, venues, presenting and touring partners. These parts of the sector interconnect, support one another and contribute to the overall health of the sector. We particularly note that the dance sector is significantly underfunded compared to other artforms, which is at odds with the artform being one of the most popular, diverse and significant ways Australian's engage with the arts.

Institutions like Chunky Move do much more than just create performances for audience entertainment. Chunky Move increasingly plays a role in artform advocacy, export market development, sector sustainability and support and consultation. We also build and deliver a range of programs that create activity and access points for creative opportunities to a wide cohort of independent artists, casual amateur dance enthusiasts and cross art-form and arts-worker professionals.

Challenges and Opportunities

- 4.1 A coordinated national approach to policy development and funding across Federal, State and local jurisdictions, and across portfolios (eg Health, Education, Trade, Investment), enhancing the overall level of investment. This would allow for sustainable rebuilding of capability within the sector, the scaffold to support and nurture ongoing development of artists and artform, and an ability to deliver on commitments to inclusion, equity, access and diversity. This approach should include:
 - longer term funding arrangements across the sector to enable long-term strategic planning.
 - pathways for smaller organisations to grow their level of support
 - an appreciation of the specific challenges in regional areas to attract, develop and retain workforces
 - the ability for multi-year funded organisations to seek project-based funding for strategic projects, developing and enhancing organisational capability with broad sector reach
 - funds for programs with long-term benefits for the sector (artists, participants, audiences) that extend past their premiere season or may not have any presentation outcome
 - supporting activities and contexts that allow for risk-taking to create space for innovation

- a wide range of measures aimed at harnessing substantial private investment in the arts
 - mechanisms designed to broker cross-portfolio connections, not just at a Ministerial level, but at a bureaucratic level across peak organisations from different areas and across sector organisations and individuals
 - Government broadening approach to a cross portfolio response to the arts, inclusive of Health and Education.
- 4.2 To be sustainable, Government funding must keep pace with rising expenses, rather being indexed at less than CPI. Our institutions cannot continue with partially indexed funding from our government funding partners. This damages our ability to maintain standards, to employ artists and arts workers, to maintain our infrastructure and to keep our ticket prices affordable and our audiences diverse.
- 4.3 Ensure supporting structures and processes are efficient and effective for companies and artists
- Harmonise reporting across jurisdictions
 - Consider that meaningful engagement and impact needs sophisticated metrics of measurement
 - Create a national Working With Children Check, avoiding multiple applications for touring organisations.
 - Ensure the tax and welfare systems are responsive to the needs of students and workers in arts and cultural sector. They should reflect the varied nature of artists' income generation within years and over different years.
 - Strengthen the legal framework of copyright and traditional protocol to ensure that the income generated by arts and heritage is fairly distributed between the creators, institutions and entrepreneurs who make it available.
- 4.4 Support the capacity and capability of Boards across the sector, providing dedicated training on the roles and responsibilities within the specialised industry context.
- 4.5 Commit investment to capital works, upgrades and restoration of buildings, precincts and infrastructure to ensure institutions have adequate capability to meet the growing demands of high-quality program delivery and visitation experiences for audiences, participants, artists and arts workers,

PILLAR FIVE: Reaching the audience: ensuring our stories reach the right people at home and abroad.

Artists and audiences are at the heart of Chunky Move, expressed in a dense program of major works, commissions, residencies, workshops and public classes. Our role is to extend art form influence in the public realm and increase the visibility of contemporary dance as an everyday art form.

Australian research shows 430,000 children aged between 0 -14 participate in dance – creating a significant potential audience and professional pool of artists. Audience development is critical to meet the needs of arts organisations to develop future audiences and nurture ongoing relationships with audiences.

Chunky Move is one of a handful of small to medium dance and performance companies that commands the attention of a strong export market. The export market for Australian dance and performance is the low hanging fruit of international diplomacy and goodwill between nations. It is the salve for ideological and political impasse in the form of a global community of creatives that engage in artistic exchange and dialogue that is generous, open, inquisitive and hopeful. The arts are a critically valuable soft entry point to international relations.

Challenges and Opportunities

- 5.1 Create a National Audience Development Strategy and implementation plan to
- provide organisations a framework to develop individual development plans

- develop an 'Audience Finder' online resource to access national insights and audience development tools.
 - create Audience Development measurement tools that are not based on numbers alone.
- 5.2 Through adequate ongoing support, empower a broad range of dance organisations and independent dance practitioners to continue their work providing a diverse offering of performance, education and participation within the broadest possible context of Australian communities (geographic, socio-economic, age-based, health related, underrepresented, developing etc).
- 5.3 Resource dance organisations to have current infrastructure and skills to leverage new technologies and maximise connectivity to audiences both existing and prospective, as well as managing risks such as cyber security with access to expert assistance.
- 5.4 Ensure investment into existing cultural spaces and the development of new, much needed performance venues which include specialist spaces to support the needs of individual communities and long-term investment into programming to ensure their ongoing success and relevance.
- 5.5 Provide ongoing, targeted support for a national, integrated and sustainable touring network that sees works of all scales performed across Australia, and particularly outside Melbourne and Sydney, including sustainable multiyear programming investment for venues managed through Councils and Local Government Areas. These venues are critical to sustainable touring networks for companies of all sizes and enable the breadth of work created in Australia to be seen on stages locally, regionally and remotely.
- 5.6 Invest and underwrite the export of Australian performance and artist exchange into international markets that have cultural and economic relevance. This expands the power of valuable soft diplomacy whilst recognising that there is demonstrated market demand and meaningful history within the Asia-Pacific, South Asia, Europe and North America.

Reflections on The National Cultural Policy for Australia

Chunky Move applauds the Federal Government's commitment to cultivate and nurture a robust arts and cultural life in Australia through the continued refinement and implementation of A National Cultural Policy. This policy aspires to position arts and culture as a cornerstone of the national identity. Minister Bourke's preamble in the public consultation paper – Towards a New National Cultural Policy – is a principled statement on the importance of investment in the cultural life of Australians, 'essential to our economy, our wellbeing and our sense of belonging'. It is also a call to action for all Australians to take pride in our unique creative voice, to celebrate our successes in artistic endeavour, and to imagine a world that we want for the future, with the centrality of the artist at its heart. Expressed through the five pillars, the policy is intentional and unambiguous in its agenda and purpose.

Chunky Move backs the ambition of The National Cultural Policy.

We advocate for arts and culture funding that is commensurate to the nation's economic privilege and global GDP ranking.

We advocate for the Federal Government and The Office of the Minister for the Arts to assess OECD arts and culture expenditure as a comparative measure to benchmark our aspiration to lead globally on arts and culture policy and investment.

We advocate for arts and culture to be enshrined as a universal basic service aligned to health and education, and to maximise opportunities for robust cross-portfolio programs.