

# SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

Sydney Theatre Company appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the development of Australia's next National Cultural Policy.

Sydney Theatre Company (STC) is one of Australia's flagship theatre companies and a major national cultural institution. Based in Sydney and connected to audiences across the country and internationally, STC develops and stages new Australian work, reinterprets classic repertoire, sustains a large and varied creative workforce, and contributes significantly to the broader performing arts landscape. Each production relies on a wide network of artists and specialist workers, including writers, directors, producers, designers, set and costume makers, performers, technicians, electricians, riggers, front-of-house teams and hospitality staff, supported by professionals across marketing, administration, philanthropy, finance and human resources.

Sydney Theatre Company delivers around 600 performances per year and reaches audiences more than a quarter of a million people per annum. We are the largest not for profit theatre company in the country and regularly co-produce or collaborate with other theatre companies, independent artists, small to medium arts companies and commercial producers. We have a workforce of around 300 pax which swells up to 700 in any given year depending on production requirements, made up of a mix of full-time employees, seasonal and casual arts workers and fixed term employee performers and contract artists. We deliver an annual education program and invest annually in new Australian work via a commissioning program.

Sydney Theatre company, like much of the performing arts sector, continues to be negatively impacted by a combination of forces— including significantly higher costs, particularly in travel and production; critical skill shortages; changes to audience and consumer behaviour including reduced frequency and/or predictability of attendance; the impacts of high costs of living; climate change; and the sustainability of careers in the sector. Sydney Theatre Company is funded through the NPAPF, but Government funding makes up only about 8% of our annual revenue. We rely heavily on box office (ticket sales make up around 65% of our revenue) and philanthropy.

Against the backdrop of this operating environment and when Government funding has stalled or gone backwards in real terms, Sydney Theatre Company is increasingly needing to be more risk averse, often focusing on smaller-scale productions; reducing our range of offerings; and employing fewer artists and arts workers. Technical skill shortages risk best-practice show delivery and safety, and high-quality audience experience. Fewer new works can be commissioned, and there is less ability to invest in vital sector development and training.

Sydney Theatre Company supports the Government's work to build on the landmark [\*National Cultural Policy – Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place\*](#) (*Revive*), and to translate its ambitions into durable settings that strengthen the sector over the long term.

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To realise the ambitions of the existing policy, additional targeted initiatives are required in the next policy.

## **Pillar 1: First Nations First**

First Nations performing arts are essential cultural and social infrastructure, contributing to wellbeing, cultural identity, employment, knowledge transmission and community connection across Australia.

Sydney Theatre Company is committed to working in partnership with First Nations artists, arts workers and cultural leaders, and recognises the responsibility of major institutions to support stronger First Nations leadership, commissioning pathways and representation across all levels of theatre-making and decision-making.

We support the specific opportunities outlined in the statements and submissions of the Blak Futures Collective and First Nations Performing Arts Companies Network – acknowledging their cultural authority and expertise in articulating the First Nations performing arts priorities in Australia.

To fully realise *Revive* and *Closing the Gap* commitments, the new National Cultural policy should:

1. Sustainably support, develop and recognise the entire First Nations performing arts workforce system.

Including workforce development across producing, technical, touring and leadership roles; the recognition of cultural labour within workforce frameworks and long-term workforce sustainability pathways. We call for funding for a national First Nations performing arts workforce feasibility study and data framework.

2. Provide investment and support for a dedicated First Nations performing arts commissioning system.

Enable dedicated commissioning pathways for works of audience scale and cultural scale; investment in long term creation and development processes. Provide support for independent artists and emerging companies, as well as support for writers, dramaturgs, directors, designers and producers.

3. Ensure appropriate resourcing and recognition of requirements to fully support cultural governance and ICIP Infrastructure.

First Nations performing arts sustain wellbeing, language, identity, intergenerational knowledge transmission, community cohesion and cultural continuity. To properly support organisations, we

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require stronger coordination between arts, education, foreign affairs, tourism and employment systems.

Greater coherence can be achieved by embedding First Nations leadership across international cultural policy and export structures and aligning cultural policy implementation with Closing the Gap and UNDRIP commitments.

As identified in the Blak Futures Collective and First Nations Performing Arts Companies Network submission, First Nations cultural governance, workforce development international exchange and cultural continuity must operate as cross-cutting principles across all pillars of the next National Cultural policy, rather than as isolated initiatives.

This includes across all recommendations highlighted below.

## **Pillar 2 – A place for every story**

The generation of new Australian Stories, reflecting the diversity of our community is a priority for Sydney Theatre Company. However new work requires significant investment of time and resource and is inherently riskier than producing works with known titles and proven audience appeal. Additionally, Australia is already at a global disadvantage in terms of producing works, due to the more favourable tax treatment available to producers in the UK and various other jurisdictions. To meet and overcome these challenges The new National Cultural policy should:

4. Endorse and commit to the introduction of a 40% Live Performance Production Incentive (LPPI) for commercial and not-for-profit producers to attract investment in a globally competitive market, supporting the development of new works in Australia across theatre, dance, ballet, opera, music and other live performance, and including First Nations works.

This critical investment in Australian live performance across the commercial and not-for-profit sectors offers a 40 per cent offset on qualifying production costs. It would be applied as a tax offset for taxpaying entities, or as a rebate for non-taxpayers. Rebates or offsets would only be realised on eligible production-related spend, ensuring the benefits flow directly to the industry and are tied to tangible creative output.

International case studies, including from the UK, and financial modelling conducted by Live Performance Australia, highlight the significant benefit of this proposal for the nation's performing arts sector, its artists and its arts workers. Following the NSW Government hosted Creative Industries Tax Summit in September 2025, this high impact initiative is understood to be supported by all State Governments.

Embedding the Live Performance Production Incentive (LPPI) within the next National Cultural Policy would represent a major structural reform for the performing arts. By building on existing

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public investment and attracting new private capital, the LPPI has the capacity to reshape the economics of production in a meaningful way, rather than offering only marginal relief. Sydney Theatre Company supports Live Performance Australia's advocacy for the LPPI and joins the broader sector in urging its adoption, recognising its potential to expand the creation of Australian work and increase opportunities for Australian artists to reach Australian audiences.

## **Pillar 3- centrality of the Artist**

The new National Cultural policy should:

5. Support sustainable careers for artists and arts workers, including in not-for-profit organisations.

Australia's theatre workforce is a vital, expansive ecology defined by a high reliance on freelance work, interconnected subsectors, and systemic precarity. The sector faces critical skills shortages, long-standing wage issues, and an ongoing need for sustainable operations.

The theatre workforce functions as a connected ecology rather than a stand-alone industry. It encompasses independent practitioners, small-to-medium companies, larger not-for-profit employers such as Sydney Theatre Company, festivals, venues, state cultural institutions and commercial producers. Touring extends this activity across regions, states and international markets, while artists, technicians, producers, front-of-house teams and many other arts workers move fluidly across these interconnected parts of the sector.

Only about 9% of artists work full-time solely on their creative practice. Much of the workforce balances multiple jobs, relying on a mix of freelance work, arts-related employment, and non-arts jobs to make ends meet. While creative output is highly valued culturally, economic conditions remain tough. Average incomes for artists fall well below the national workforce average, with professional artists averaging just \$23,200 annually from creative work, and the sector routinely suffers from higher-than-average job mobility and underemployment.

Without arts and arts workers, the goals of *Revive* will not be able to be met, and the benefits to the community will be severely impacted. Conditions to retain a healthy and sustainable creative workforce must be addressed, including addressing sector-wide recruitment and retention.

Approaches to address this challenge could include:

- Extending Public Benevolent Institutions (PBI) status to include arts and cultural institutions. This critically enables the attraction and retention of skilled staff, with an ability to compete for talent against other industries and address current skills shortages.
- Piloting dedicated Artists as Workers Schemes to embed salaried artists as hybrid artistic/administrative workers inside companies across multiple NPAP organisations. As one model, this could be a multi-year training and employment initiative that combines artistic practice with arts administration and organisational operations. It tests a new model of hybrid artistic and administrative employment, supporting artists to build sustainable careers while

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strengthening the creative and operational resilience of participating organisations and the wider sector.

- Explore portable benefits and entitlements as well as insurance for freelance workers which can be carried from one job or project to another, regardless of the employer or contract type. For example, access to paid leave or income support for freelancers between contracts or gigs, as implemented in the Republic of Ireland's Basis Income for the Arts (BIA) initiative nor the implementation of an insurance scheme which would cover workers compensation, public liability and professional indemnity insurance for freelance workers.
6. Support nation-wide industry-led training initiatives to address identified critical workforce and skills shortages across the arts and cultural sector.

The recent [Creative Workforce Scoping Study](#) conducted by Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA). articulates that Australia's creative industries are facing critical workforce and skills shortages, exasperated by precarious work conditions, a disconnect between formal education and industry needs, low wages and overwork. Workforce shortages are most acute in production/technical roles, off-stage creative roles (lighting designers in particular) and marketing and communications.

The study points to the need for new or renewed initiatives that strengthen industry-led mentoring, traineeships and practical on-the-job development in the performing arts. Pilot programs can provide a useful testing ground for longer-term approaches, as demonstrated by recent Creative Australia workforce development initiatives in producing and production roles, in which Sydney Theatre Company and other major organisations have participated.

The ANZCO classifications also should be reviewed to sufficiently capture performing arts producing roles (such as Executive Producers, Producers and Assistant Producers), bringing this into alignment with screen producers and ensuring that the Occupation Shortage List (OSL) accurately captures all workforce supply gaps.

The SaCSA study also identified slow progress on delivering diversity and inclusion due to structural barriers, and a consistent need across performing arts for business skills for creatives, alongside management and leadership skills. Structurally, this could be enhanced by initiatives to actively encourage specialists with expertise in law, finance, human resources, psychology, coaching and/or mediation to make pro bono support available to arts companies (rather than frequently relying on these skills to be covered by volunteer board directors, particularly in smaller organisations).

These findings closely reflect Sydney Theatre Company's own experience and underscore the need for practical policy action. Sydney Theatre Company would welcome the opportunity to

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contribute to future workforce pipeline and skills development initiatives in partnership with Government.

## **Pillar 4 – Strong Cultural Infrastructure**

The new National Cultural policy should:

7. Enhance the overall level of investment in the arts sector and recognise the role that producing companies play in supporting independent artists and contributing to Australia’s creative sector. This would allow for rebuilding of capability within the sector, organisational stability and vitality, and the enhance the crucial scaffolding to support the ongoing development of artists and artform.

With federal per capita expenditure in 2023 being the lowest on record at \$114, there is a clear and urgent need for increased investment to achieve the ambitions of the National Cultural Policy.

This increase should include a step change in the level of overall investment that:

- reflects the current increased cost base impacting all arts organisations and individual artists;
- acknowledges the recent broadening of criteria applied to many funding schemes to a wider range of entities and increases funding pools to ensure ongoing equity to all types of organisations.
- enables individuals and organisations, including multi-year funded organisations, to seek specific strategic project funding which specifically supports the new Cultural Policy.

In addition, to be sustainable, structurally

- Government funding must keep pace ongoing with rising expenses, rather than being indexed at less than CPI. The sector cannot meet the objectives of *Revive* or a new Cultural Policy with partially indexed funding from government, which is a decline in real terms. This damages the ability to maintain standards, employ artists and arts workers, maintain infrastructure, invest in new work, and keep ticket prices affordable and audiences representative of the whole community.
- Funding arrangements must enable long-term strategic and operational planning, with multi-year horizons and adequate timelines for decision making.

Stable multi-year public investment in Australia’s major producing companies remains vital and should be continued and strengthened in the new policy. Government should consider an increased investment quantum relative to the actual cost of researching, developing and producing theatre at a world-class standard, and reflective of the sector leadership role these companies play in commissioning Australian work, developing artists and connecting with audiences nationwide. Funding levels to theatre companies falls well below funding levels

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provided to other performing arts forms and this fact alone increases the precarity of work and income for the performers of this genre. Unlike ballet or orchestral companies that have large workforces of full-time artists, theatre companies rely heavily on freelance actors employed on short term contracts and declining funding and rising costs puts downward pressure on the volume of work available for these artists.

We applaud the investment made in the Creative Futures Fund through *Revive*, and the focus on telling Australian stories in impactful ways and we advocate for the continuation of this initiative. The specificity of the fund's requirements and the highly competitive nature of the fund means that it largely picks up works which have already received investment made by the producing companies in the commissioning phase of a new work life cycle.

Developing new work is resource-intensive, inherently uncertain and requires long lead times. Sydney Theatre Company continues to prioritise investment in new Australian writing and production, but sustained financial pressure has reduced ours and the sector's overall capacity to support this essential and high-risk part of the theatre ecology. We therefore call for the creation of a dedicated theatre commissioning fund focused on the earliest stages of generating new work. Such a fund would strengthen the pipeline into programs like the Creative Futures Fund and help ensure a steady supply of new Australian stories for the stage, and in many cases for later adaptation to screen. Such a fund would benefit Australian Playwrights and lead to the generation of new Australian IP

Alongside a new commissioning fund, STC advocates for stronger ongoing core investment that enables theatre companies to develop ambitious work, sustain employment for artists and arts workers, and serve Australian communities with breadth, quality and reach.

8. Empower a coordinated national approach to policy development and funding across federal, state and local jurisdictions, and across portfolios (e.g. Health, Education, Trade, Investment).

International and Australian research confirms that arts and culture have direct, positive impacts on cohesion, health, sustainability, security and prosperity. Providing access to arts and culture for all Australians, whoever they are and wherever they live, is not simply a matter for the arts portfolio. This is a critical whole-of-government responsibility.

Unlocking this power of the performing arts to support other policy areas will require creating real mechanisms designed to broker cross-portfolio connections – with structured opportunities to unleash additional investment.

This could include elevating the existing meeting of Cultural Ministers to a formalised Ministerial Council, reporting annually to National Cabinet, as suggested by A New Approach. This would provide a functional and transformative step to give higher priority to the nation's cultural needs

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and ambitions. Crucially, this new Ministerial Council should be tasked with developing an intergovernmental non-partisan plan for long-term collaboration.

## 9. Support affordable and efficient access to rehearsal venues and touring accommodation.

The development and rehearsal of work within the live performing arts is inherently linked to the physical co-location of the artists, creatives, technical staff and broader arts workers involved. However, rising property costs and limited access to affordable, safe and productive creative space continue to place significant pressure on the sustainability of Australia's arts sector, impeding the ability for artists and organisations to develop, create and rehearse new work.

This impacts all parts of the sector including those who rent or lease physical ongoing premises, as well as availability and affordability of rehearsal spaces for independent artists and organisations on a project basis.

Opportunities could include:

- providing tax incentives or a rental subsidy scheme to new and existing property developers and owners to provide sustainable access to unused space to artists and arts companies. A national scheme could incentivise property developers and owners to make vacant or underutilised spaces available for rehearsals, studios, creative development, and residency programs. This initiative would increase access to affordable creative infrastructure while also activating unused buildings, supporting urban renewal, and strengthening connections between artists and local communities. It would create practical pathways for developers and the arts sector to partner in ways that deliver both cultural and civic value.
- better leveraging Government-owned assets, solving, in part, the need for space far more efficiently than building more physical infrastructure. For example, this could include a program which coordinates between local and state government to identify unused government-owned spaces that could be donated to arts organisations and freelance artists. Additionally, the leasing model between existing arts organisations who are resident in Government-owned arts assets could be remodelled to shift the focus from commercial return to an investment in artists developing work and creating audience connection. This strategy also develops partnerships between the independent sector, cultural institutions and/or larger organisations.

The benefits of improving access to rehearsal spaces could be amplified by creating a national Guest Artist Rebate initiative, such as tax incentives for accommodation providers that offer discounted lodging to visiting artists, touring productions, and creative practitioners. This would address the rising accommodation costs that are placing significant pressure on existing creation and touring models, limiting the scale, reach and diversity of work able to be developed and travel across Australia.

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10. Reform the operation of the GST-free concession under section 38-250 to better reflect contemporary operating models, including allowing eligible ticket sales by charity-endorsed and DGR live performance organisations to be treated as GST-free.

Not for Profit Live Theatre Companies (and other NFP producers) ticket pricing often mixes GST-free and GST-inclusive ticket classes, particularly for larger companies and producers. This creates compliance complexity, retrospective tax risk, and reduces revenue available to reinvest in Australian work.

Eligible charity-endorsed and DGR organisations should be able to treat all ticket sales as GST-free under clear conditions.

The New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999 (s38-250(2)) allows endorsed charities/DGR entities to sell tickets GST-free only where the ticket price is less than 75% of the cost of supply. Tickets above the threshold incur GST. The 75% threshold has not changed since July 2000, but the economics of these for purpose companies has changed in that time with many companies demonstrating an increasing reliance on ticket income and thus amplifying the impact of GST complexity. This

- Creates uncertainty and administrative burden when setting prices and substantiating the threshold.
- Introduces retrospective tax risk where ticketing systems or cost estimates do not align to GST treatment.
- Discourages small price increases because GST can reduce net revenue unless prices rise materially- either Audiences are asked to pay more, or non-profit companies take a hit to their bottom line- which in the long term reduces resources available to reinvest in the sector

A 100% GST-free setting would remove a structural barrier to incremental revenue growth, reduce retrospective tax risk, and support reinvestment in Australian performing arts, including tours and community access initiatives. In addition, this would provide greater pricing flexibility to keep tickets affordable and equitable; and enable simpler pricing and compliance through one GST treatment across tickets sold by for purpose arts organisations.

11. Commit to a more ambitious arts philanthropy framework, incentivising increased private support for arts and culture, specifically to
  - Increase tax deductible donations to 1.5x amount of gift
  - Expand matched funding programs to increase donations
  - Lead a nationwide campaign that inspires and encourages Australians to donate to the arts.

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*Revive* identified the need to promote philanthropic giving. However, more work is needed to meet the Australian Government's commitment to double giving by 2030. The Productivity Commission noted that, while the total value of donations has increased over recent decades, fewer people are claiming a tax deduction for giving. Australia's giving also compares unfavourably with our global counterparts - Australian giving equates to 0.81% of GDP, in comparison to New Zealand (1.84%) and the United States (2.1%).

Individuals are less likely to give if the financial incentive they receive is too weak. Currently, donors can claim back the exact amount that they gift to a DGR entity. Allowing them to claim a deduction of 1.5x the donation amount would incentivise donations. This model has been successfully implemented in Singapore, where individuals receive \$2.5 deductions from their taxable income for every \$1 donated (2.5x the donation amount).

Matched funding schemes amplify individual contributions to create a more substantial collective impact. It adds legitimacy to the fundraising campaign, and gives donors a compelling reason to give, knowing their contribution will be matched and maximised. Proven benefits of matched schemes include increasing donation amounts; building stronger relationships with major donors; expanding the donor base, particularly smaller donors; making the 'ask' easier; and boosting visibility and attracting media coverage. Existing programs like Plus1, MATCH Lab, and ACF Boost (all administered by Creative Australia) could be used as models on which to expand further and specific gifting towards endowments or company reserves would assist in building long term capacity for many arts companies, allowing them to plan more effectively, take greater risks and employ more Artists

12. Support arts and cultural organisations, many of which already hold DGR status, to more efficiently harness philanthropic opportunities.

Philanthropic and private sector giving is growing as a required proportion of overall income for performing arts companies, necessitated by stagnant Government funding, cost-of-living increases dampening box office returns and presenter fees, and the need to offset major inflationary cost increases. However, skilled staff are in high demand across multiple not-for-profit sectors, with the administrative and system burden high to acquire and steward required donors and partners.

Specific initiatives to strengthen the sector's capacity, capability and effectiveness could include:

- Enhancing and extending Creative Australia initiatives to grow the arts sector's philanthropic aptitude. This would build on the integration of Creative Partnerships Australia into Creative Australia and ensure the ongoing delivery of initiatives such as mentoring, workshops and training.
- Adopting an international model such as the UK's Gift Aid program for arts and cultural organisations with DGR status. Under this model, for every donation made to a registered

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DGR status arts and cultural organisation, the Australian Government would directly contribute an additional percentage to the organisation. Gift Aid has successfully increased giving in the UK, with half of donors utilising it and cultural charities gaining substantial benefit. In Australia, a similar rebate could assist arts organisations who struggle to attract large volumes of donations, encourage donors at all levels through immediately boosting the impact of every donation and create a compelling message to galvanise more giving. Required administration could leverage Australia's existing tax infrastructure, with donation details submitted to the ATO via an online portal.

## **Pillar 5- engaging the audience**

The new National Cultural policy should:

- 13.** Endorse and commit to providing a federal Government-funded Cultural Pass for 13–25-year-olds.

Attendance at live performances in Australia is heavily constrained by cost-of-living pressures - 59% of young people (16-25) and over half of the general population identifying expense as the primary barrier.

The pass would support significantly discounted or free access to arts and cultural live performances and participatory workshop experiences, without impacting financial sustainability for organisations.

Successful overseas examples of a Culture Pass have been rolled out in Italy, Germany and France, providing between €100 to €500 to young people to use across cultural events and products; in France, 41% of these funds have been to live performances.

- 14.** Develop a cross Government dedicated Arts Access Program for schools.

Sydney Theatre Company delivers a substantial range of learning and engagement opportunities for students and young people, including curriculum-linked productions, workshops and direct engagement with artists. But growing pressure on school budgets and on theatre company resources is narrowing access, with programs increasingly reduced, discontinued or limited to communities able to pay fee-for-service costs.

An Arts Access Program, could, for example, be used to support opportunities such as artist-in-residence programs; workshops with teaching artists; additional subsidies for incursions for remote, small and disadvantaged schools; and access requirements for schools to attend performances (including transport). The Cultural School Bag (Norway) could provide an international benchmark to emulate – with this program giving all students the opportunity to

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experience, become familiar with and develop an understanding of high quality professional artistic and cultural expressions.

The impact of this initiative would be amplified by direct support for organisations with existing high-quality programs - maintaining and expanding reach in areas of identified disadvantage and providing more access for students to curriculum-aligned performing arts education.

15. Expand investment that supports live performance touring across Australia, reflecting real growth in costs and ensuring funding models continue to be fit-for-purpose for evolving and unique community needs, sustainable touring models, and audience and artistic development requirements.

The current regional and national touring model is under intense pressure, substantially reducing the ability for companies, to connect with audiences across all parts of Australia. These challenges are mirrored for companies who proudly represent Australia and Australian creative talent internationally.

- Producing companies have faced, and continue to experience, significant increases in the costs of touring. These are no longer able to be covered by stagnant Government touring funding envelopes;
- Fees payable by regional, metropolitan, and international presenting venues have been reduced due to their own increased costs of operating and revenue pressures, adding to the gap between touring and broader operating costs for producing companies and available funding.

Specific initiatives include:

- Doubling investment in Playing Australia for touring focused in regional and remote Australia, including funding timelines that support effective planning and resourcing.
  - Amplifying this investment with complementary touring funds for companies and artists to showcase their work nationally in larger metropolitan centres;
  - Developing targeted support for new ways of engagement between producing companies, presenting venues, and local communities. These could include: green-touring initiatives; skills sharing initiatives; new audience development strategies; new programming models which combine workshops, engagement with local artists, and performances over longer periods; expanding funding program remits to support touring of performances into regional schools; a “go see” fund to enable presenters to see new work created regionally and nationally; collaborative engagements which support the development of new work outside of metropolitan centres; and/or use of non-traditional venues and spaces.
16. Significantly increase support for Australian live performance companies to tour internationally.

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This investment in the export of Australian performance and artist exchange into international markets has both cultural and economic relevance. It expands the power of valuable soft diplomacy across multiple jurisdictions, as well as meeting demonstrable market demand, particularly in Europe and the Americas. Ongoing feedback from international posts also highlights the value of the performing arts in cultural diplomacy.

At the same time, rising travel costs from Australia and reduced international cost-competitiveness are making it harder for Sydney Theatre Company to take up invitations from some of the world's leading festivals and presenting venues.

Whilst there has been a welcome shift in Creative Australia programs which support international touring for live performance, greater investment is required to keep up with escalating international travel costs and evolving global touring opportunities and challenges.

Foundational DFAT programs such as the Australian Cultural Diplomacy Grants Program (ACDGP) are significantly over-subscribed and individual grants are still limited to pre-pandemic levels. This severely impacts performing arts international touring viability, particularly for works with a larger cast or requiring freight, such as those often delivered by many of the NPAP framework organisations.

Where available, funding parameters and timelines are often asynchronous with confirmation of presentation arrangements, leading to lost opportunities or significant risk being borne by touring artists and organisations. Unpredictable geopolitical, climate and other disruptions can also add significant costs at short notice, beyond secured investment envelopes. New initiatives could address these structural barriers, including

- A presenter-fee matched funding model to help convert confirmed demand into viable touring.
- A quick-response international disruption and resilience fund alongside realistic contingency requirements in publicly supported touring budgets.

This would bring enhanced economic benefits and job creation, together with the opportunity for greater Australian cultural exchange, the showcasing of Australian talent on the world-stage and the initiation of new international collaborations.

In addition to increased direct touring investment, the establishment of a single fit-for-purpose organisation would support cross-government International Cultural Relations. A New Approach identified that of the top 15 economies in the world, Australia is the only nation to not have a single institution to lead its international cultural relations. This compares to organisations such as the Japan Foundation, The Korea Foundation, Germany's Goethe Institute or the Alliance Française. Strengthened pathways to DFAT and the international diplomacy network would

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ensure cultural diplomacy is able to continue to play a key part in the National Foreign Policy agenda as relevant to the world today.

## 17. Embed and support climate policy across all five pillars of the National Cultural Policy.

Sydney Theatre Company sees climate change as one of the most significant long-term challenges facing Australian communities. For theatre, its effects are already being felt in audience behaviour, artistic production, venue operations and the sector's overall ability to create and share work. Mitigation and adaptation should therefore be embedded in arts policy, infrastructure planning, touring approaches and sector development.

Australia's arts sector has both a responsibility and a leadership opportunity to respond to climate change, particularly given the country's ecological vulnerability and the knowledge systems offered by First Nations communities. Traditional touring models are highly carbon intensive and increasingly challenging due to climate-related disruptions such as floods and fires, particularly in regional Australia.

Climate action is necessary not only for environmental responsibility, but also to ensure Australia remains aligned with the global arts community. The new Cultural Policy should engage in dedicated investment in "green" or low-carbon touring models. There should be a formal recognition of live performance as essential to community resilience and recovery in disaster-affected areas. In addition, there should be climate-related cancellation funding, sustainable arts infrastructure upgrades, and support for artists and organisations adopting climate-conscious practices, as formalised within the Theatre Green Book Australia (TGBA).

Sydney Theatre Company believes these recommendations would help shape a National Cultural Policy that reinforces Australian theatre, strengthens First Nations leadership and storytelling, supports artists and arts workers, builds more resilient cultural infrastructure, deepens audience engagement and expands access to theatre across the country.

Taken together, these proposals would help secure a stronger theatre ecology in Australia—one in which live storytelling, education, connection and civic participation are available to more people, and in which future generations can continue to encounter ambitious Australian work.

Sydney Theatre Company also acknowledges related submissions from Live Performance Australia, CAST, NPAPF Companies as well as other performing arts bodies where they address structural issues affecting theatre producers and presenting companies.

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