

newtheatricals

Newtheatricals Pty Ltd welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to inform Australia's next cultural policy. Newtheatricals is a theatre producer of musicals and plays in Australia and internationally, established in 2000.

Revive 2023's 5 Pillars:

1. First Nations First: Recognising and respecting the crucial place of First Nations stories at the centre of Australia's arts and culture.
2. A Place for Every Story: Reflecting the breadth of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture.
3. Centrality of the Artist: Supporting the artist as worker and celebrating artists as creators.
4. Strong Cultural Infrastructure: Providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts, culture and heritage.
5. Engaging the Audience: Making sure our stories connect with people at home and abroad.

Revive 2023's 10 Principles:

1. First Nations arts and culture are First Nations led.
2. All Australians, regardless of language, literacy, geography, age or education, have the opportunity to access and participate in arts and culture.
3. Artists and arts workers have career structures that are long-term and sustainable, supported by vocational pathways.
4. Australian students have the opportunity to receive an education that includes culture, creativity, humanities and the arts.
5. Creative talent is nurtured through fair remuneration, industry standards and safe and inclusive work cultures.
6. Arts and cultural organisations have representation and leadership that is reflective of contemporary Australia.
7. Cultural infrastructure, including galleries, libraries, museums, archives and digital collections, is restored, built and maintained.
8. Australian stories are seen and heard, regardless of platform.
9. Creative industries and practice are future focused, technology enabled, networked and globally recognised, including through reciprocal exchange, export and cultural diplomacy.
10. Arts and culture are generative (creating new works and supporting emerging artists) and preservative (protecting heritage and conserving cultural memory).

Revive 2023's pillars and principles remain fit for purpose in an industry that has suffered significantly due to uneven or poor investment over decades, that has been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 as is still yet to recover, and that continues to be negatively impacted by broader social and economic conditions that are out of its control such as the current cost of living crisis.

As a national and international theatre producer with over 35 years' experience in the live performance sector, it is my view that there are a number of additional steps the federal Government can take in the next version of its cultural policy to advance the pillars and principles stated above. These are outlined below.

1. Tax credits for investors in commercial theatre.

Unlike comparable countries, there has been a persistent under-appreciation and lack of recognition that the commercial theatre sector contributes to live performance in Australia. The commercial theatre sector is uniquely placed to support many of the initiatives that the Revive policy is seeking to deliver on. Indeed, we would argue that this is a role we have been playing for decades.

In the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands all offer tax credits or tax relief as incentives to encourage private investment in live performance. In the United Kingdom the Theatre Tax Relief (TTR) system is credited with having significantly increased investment, and thereby the viability and diversity of the sector since its introduction.

The need to attract investors and their capital to fund ventures in Australia is critical, however, Australia has very little domestic investment in theatre. Major musical theatre is largely reliant on international investment which is increasingly more difficult to obtain as we cannot compete with the more tax attractive territories outside of Australia as noted above. The lack of investment directly impacts our ability to develop new work and therefore the breadth and diversity of work that Australians are exposed to. Without such an incentive in Australia, there remains a significant challenge in raising the ever-increasing costs of producing theatre for Australian audiences, including investment in developing Australian stories and Australian creatives, a key focus of Revive. This effectively stunts the growth of live performance and puts it at significant risk in difficult economic times such as those experienced since COVID-19 in 2020 to today where consumer confidence is being negatively impacted in real time due to the conflict in the Middle East and resulting cost of living pressures.

The introduction of tax incentives for investment would have multiple benefits including a reduction in the reliance on government funding, an increase in the development of Australian content and work by Australian creatives and a much-needed injection of support to an industry facing multiple barriers to success.

Recommended action: Introduction of tax incentives for investment.

Outcome: Increase in the development of Australian content and work by Australian creatives; reduced reliance on government-funding; creation of jobs in the live performance sector.

Revive alignment: Pillars 1,2,3,5; Principles 1,2,3,5,6,8,10

2. Australian content versus Australian initiatives

We note that incentives to tell Australian stories should not come at the expense of supporting Australian creatives to develop new work – whatever that story may be. Indeed, Australians creating content that has international appeal (such as the work of Suzie Miller for example) should receive equal incentive to those who create Australian-only content. It does not serve our sector to favour only Australian stories/content over general content produced by Australian creatives. Supporting both will ultimately benefit our sector here at home, and importantly, abroad.

Recommended action: Equalise incentives for developing Australian content AND content made by Australian creatives; creation of jobs in the live performance sector.

Outcome: Increased content by Australian and increased Australian content, increasing the incentives for people to enter into creative careers.

Revive alignment: Pillars 1,2,3,5; Principles 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9,10

3. Not-for-profit (NFP) theatre investment and accountability

The NFP theatre sector is a critical element of our live performance industry, however, there are imbalances and perverse incentives that could be addressed to benefit both NFP and commercial producers on a more equal footing.

For example, NFP's who receive significant federal (and state funding), including their GST-free status, creates an imbalance between the NFP and commercial sectors.

There is a missed opportunity for commercial theatre producers to work together with NFP theatre producers to develop Australian content to a high-standard that can result in lucrative productions and careers for writers and directors. This would also provide exposure and capacity building for NFP personnel to the commercial sector that operates differently but that can positively influence NFP practice. At present, there is a perverse disincentive for the NFP sector to make profits each year for fear of losing ongoing funding. The multi-year losses that many NFP companies post is a negative

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consequence of the current structure and diminishes accountability of the scarce public funding available.

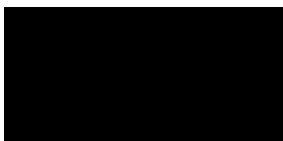
Recommend action: Consider levelling the playing field between NFP and commercial producers to encourage collaboration.

Outcome: Increased collaboration between NFP and commercial sectors in live performance; increased diversity of skills within the NFP sector; creation of jobs and career pathways within the live performance sector; increased fiscal performance of NFP production companies.

Revive alignment: Pillars 1,2,3,5; Principles 1,2,3,4,5, 7,9,10

We would be pleased to provide any additional information in support of this submission.

Kind regards,



Rodney Rigby

Producer, Olivier Award winning and four time Tony nominee

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