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The Arts Industry Council of SA (AICSA) is an independent peak body representing and connecting South Australia's arts and cultural sector. Representing a broad cross-section of artists, arts workers, organisations, and communities, AICSA advocates for policies and investment that support a strong, inclusive and transformative cultural ecosystem for current and future generations of artists, audiences, and communities.

Building a strong cultural future for Australia

Australia's arts and cultural sector is under pressure from decreasing government funding, critically low income levels for artists, crumbling arts and cultural infrastructure, technological disruption, shifting patterns of participation, and growing pressure on the institutions and labour that sustain public cultural life. Artists and arts organisations are navigating ongoing economic precarity, rising costs of living and making, the impacts of generative AI, as well as significant shifts in audience behaviour. Yet arts and culture remain essential to place, to community wellbeing, democratic participation, social cohesion, education and civic imagination.

Achieving a strong cultural future also requires that the National Cultural Policy actively prioritise, recognise, and nurture independent practitioners, curators, producers, initiatives and the grassroots ecosystem. The value of these initiatives extends far beyond basic funding metrics; independent creators regularly initiate highly inclusive, supportive, and impactful opportunities for the wider sector.

AICSA supports:

- Increasing support for First Nations' cultural authority and creative practice through self-determination and self-governance
- Ensuring livable incomes for artists through mandated payment for their work, untied grants, fellowships, increased opportunities and other basic income streams
- Prioritising support and accessibility for d/Deaf and disabled artists and audiences
- Expanding investment in regional arts and culture
- Recognising, supporting and nurturing independent and artist-run initiatives as essential cultural infrastructure
- Strengthening the network of small-to-medium organisations across all artforms, including studios, venues, festivals, initiatives and community arts

- Developing a national regulatory framework for addressing generative AI that ensures fair remuneration for artists and strengthens copyright, transparency, consent, attribution, and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property protections
- Increasing support for artist- and community-led, socially-engaged and participatory arts practices
- Providing equitable opportunities for participation in arts and culture across metropolitan, regional, and remote Australia to ensure artistic participation and experiences are accessible to all Australians
- Embedding arts and artists in national wellbeing, and preventative health strategies
- Working with all levels of government to pay artists, develop new models for evaluating, assessing and communicating the value of arts and culture that recognise social, civic, environmental, and community impact alongside economic contribution
- Protecting and strengthening freedom of artistic expression through long-term support for independent cultural practice, equitable and transparent funding mechanisms, and opportunities for creative experimentation and critical engagement
- Protecting and strengthening the independence of arts and cultural organisations through arms-length peer review, independent governance and freedom from political or government interference
- Supporting Creative Australia to develop a funded youth arts strategy to ensure all young people have access and opportunities to participate in arts experiences as artists and audiences
- Working with partners across the youth arts and education sector, from early years providers to tertiary institutions, to develop and deliver a comprehensive and robust arts in education strategy to be funded through Creative Australia
- Extending the work of Creative Workplaces to represent all forms of labour in the arts, culture and creative industries sectors to better be able to address insecure labour, income precarity, fair remuneration, career sustainability and workforce retention through a national creative workforce strategy

Pillar 1: First Nations First

AICSA supports a national cultural policy that embeds First Nations' cultural sovereignty, self-determination and long-term investment.

Key recommendations

1. Expand funding and support for Creative Australia's First Nations Board
2. All government funded organisations to be required and funded to provide annual cultural competency and safety training for all staff, board, artists, and key contractors
3. Require all government funded arts and cultural organisations to have provisions for cultural leave
4. Ensure all government funded organisations are supported to increase employment of First Nations staff, board, artists and contractors, not just in targeted programs but across all aspects of organisational functioning and programming
5. Develop a mechanism for compulsory protocols for First Nations arts and cultural production, including Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP), to be reported against by all grant and funding recipients
6. Increase training and development opportunities for First Nations artists and artworkers

Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story and a Story for Every Place

AICSA supports the work of Revive in supporting diversity, inclusion and access into arts and cultural policy and funding. Policies to increase opportunities for d/Deaf and disabled artists and audiences, regional, youth, culturally diverse and other marginalised groups are crucial to the long-term health, wellbeing and happiness of our communities.

Accessibility must be embedded as a core principle of arts and cultural funding through disability-led practice, universally accessible venues, inclusive digital environments, hybrid participation models, and long-term support for artists and audiences with disability.

Funding requirements should also be in place to ensure often marginalised artists and their works are supported by cultural institutions and arts organisations.

Key recommendations

1. Prioritise funding for youth arts and arts education, particularly in low socio-economic areas
2. Increase funding and support for d/Deaf and disabled artists
3. Develop, fund, and ensure compliance with policies for funded artists and organisations to increase accessibility of their arts experiences
4. Embed recognition of the barriers artists from marginalised communities face in all policies, programs and funding processes
5. Ensure fair national representation in federal arts funding so it is shared equitably across all states and territories
6. Ensure all arts funding, advisory, assessment and consultation processes include a balanced mix of: representatives from every state and territory; independent artists, producers, curators, representatives of artist-led initiatives, and grassroots contributors; a diverse range of marginalised voices; and urban, suburban, regional and remote artists

Pillar 3: The Centrality of the Artist

Artists are vital to the arts and are essential contributors to Australia's civic, cultural, social, and economic life. Cultural policy must state, unequivocally, that artists must be paid for their work. Payment should not be a competitive prize or a wellness strategy; it must be a mandatory requirement across the entire sector. AICSA supports mandated payments for artists, and basic award conditions across ALL artforms.

Along with sustained investment in artistic practice, including fellowships, fair remuneration strategies, career sustainability supports, workforce wellbeing support, fellowship opportunities, and long term support for creative labour including through basic income for the arts schemes, recognising that a sustainable cultural future depends on sustainable conditions for artists.

AICSA urges the Federal Government to note the full report and recommendations of the 2025 South Australian Artists at Work Taskforce.¹

Key recommendations

1. Pay the artists: all publicly funded organisations and projects must be required to pay artists directly and fairly for their art/work, and there must be reporting mechanisms for these practices embedded in funding agreements

¹ https://www.create.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1169982/Artists-at-Work-Taskforce-Report.pdf

2. Reform workplace award coverage to include all artists who are not currently covered by an award
3. Explore models for a basic income payment for artists
4. Increase income streams for artists through grants, fellowships, paid residencies, paid consultation, and increased opportunities
5. Make all arts awards tax free
6. Introduce a sick pay guarantee program for contract, casual, and fee-based artists
7. Require that boards of arts organisations, cultural statutory authorities, and non-government arts and cultural organisations in receipt of government operational funding include at least 25% practising artists and creatives
8. Fund board and governance training for independent, practising artists and creatives, with a priority for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTQIA+, culturally and linguistically diverse, d/Deaf and disabled, and regional and remote artists, leading to the development of a pool of board-ready arts leaders
9. Ensure that grants and the way they are paid do not unfairly compromise eligibility for concessions or government income support benefits, including:
 - a. project grant payments are not automatically recognised as personal income
 - b. income from lump sum grant payments can be amortised across the project period
 - c. processes for reporting income from grants are simple and accessible
10. Ensure that the National Disability Insurance Scheme recognises creative practice as employment
11. Enshrine artistic freedoms: artists must be able to speak freely, sign letters and participate in boycott actions without harming their reputation and livelihoods

Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Strong cultural infrastructure includes both robust major institutions and physical buildings and the human, social, digital, and community infrastructures that sustain cultural participation, creative practice and public cultural life.

Cultural participation depends on funding for artistic production as well as the sustainability of arts and cultural organisations, the availability of accessible venues, community cultural spaces, libraries, festivals, rehearsal and studio spaces, digital infrastructure, and pathways for participation that enable people to create, experience, and share culture.

A strong cultural ecosystem is one in which all people and communities are able to encounter their own stories, contribute new ones, and participate meaningfully in public cultural life. Foundational to places and venues, however, is the human infrastructure that sustains arts and culture. A strong cultural ecosystem depends upon artists, arts workers, educators, being able to build sustainable careers and remain within the sector over the long term.

1. Increase funding for the small to medium arts sector
2. Support a strong network of sector organisations for all artforms and across the country
3. Recognise and embed in legislation the work of the arts as essential cultural infrastructure necessary for flourishing communities
4. Develop a whole of government approach to update and improve cultural infrastructure, including with state, territory and local governments, particularly for First Nations and regional infrastructure
5. Fund independent initiatives and venues, festivals, studios, and community cultural organisations
6. Expand investment in regional arts and cultural infrastructure

Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience

Engaging audiences requires long term strategies and investment in cultural participation, arts education, accessibility, community, and the public cultural infrastructure that enables people to encounter, experience and contribute to cultural life. Effective cultural policy must strengthen the conditions that enable meaningful participation in arts and culture across communities, generations, and places.

Key recommendations

1. Development of new co-funding sources with federal and state money to fund national and international touring and audience development for independent artists and the small to medium arts sector
2. Given the current cost of living crisis, urgently explore new initiatives, in partnership with state and territory governments, for affordable ways for all people to participate in arts experiences, including subsidised tickets, free transport, and digital streaming
3. Launch new national campaigns to re-engage and build arts audiences, listeners and readers
4. Increase awareness, capability and resources across the sector of ways to engage diverse and marginalised audiences, and to provide more inclusive and accessible options for d/Deaf and disabled audiences, both in person and online
5. Support artists and organisations to leverage new digital opportunities for audience development
6. Fund the development of archival documentation and creation of comprehensive digital records of arts projects in order to extend the lifespan and audience reach of artists' work
7. Work with state and territory governments on innovative ways to measure the impact of arts projects and experiences on audiences to assist artists to communicate the value of their work to a wider audience locally, nationally and internationally
8. Expand Australian content quotas across artforms, platforms, and within funding agreements for government funded organisations