

20 August 2022



Creative Australia, National Cultural Policy Submission

The Push welcomes the opportunity to elevate young people's voices and provide input into the Australian Government's Creative Australia - National Cultural Policy.

About The Push

The Push is an Australian youth music organisation and registered charity based in Melbourne. Over three decades we have supported more than 4 million young people with access to contemporary music programs and events. Our work is guided by our purpose of giving every young person the opportunity to participate and thrive in Australian music.

Contemporary music plays a vital role in the daily lives of young Australians

Young people are integral to the vibrancy and depth of our nation's creativity. They are amongst the most exciting musicians on our stages, and they are the audiences at our festivals and gigs. They are the most innovative recording artists and producers in our studios, and the songwriters of the most streamed songs across the globe. They are the leaders in developing new business models and shaping industry practices in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Music plays a vital role in the daily lives of Australians aged 15-24¹. Contemporary live music is the most popular art form attended by two in three young Australians aged 15-24 years. Participation in music at any level can be the defining moment in a young person's life. It helps young people to shape their identity, establish

¹ Australia Council for the Arts. *Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey* [Internet]. Canberra: Australia Council for the Arts, 2020 [cited 2022 August 20]. Available from <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Creating-Our-Future-Results-of-the-National-Arts-Participation-Survey-PDF.pdf>



lifelong relationships, build their connections to community and increase their sense of social connectedness.

COVID-19 has completely disrupted young people's career pathways into the creative industries

Young people in the creative industries have been disproportionately impacted by the ongoing disruptions caused by COVID-19. Training and employment pathways needed to enter the creative industries have been completely disrupted – meaning young people now need increased support and opportunities to develop the skills, confidence and networks that have been inaccessible over the past three years.

Young people are still experiencing high levels of uncertainty and stress relating to job losses, financial insecurity, social isolation, and poor mental health. Young people are also reporting major losses of social interaction and feeling disheartened about the future, which is linked to poor mental and physical health².

In a 2020 survey conducted by The Push, young people across Australia told us that:

- 100% of respondents were feeling less socially connected as a result of COVID-19
- 72% of respondents wanted opportunities to learn and practice new skills
- 46% of respondents wanted opportunities to network with peers

In addition to the challenges created by the pandemic, university fee structure reforms have led to a significant decline in applications across Creative Arts (5.1%) and Humanities courses (6.5%)³. These changes have also exacerbated the issue of representation – across a sector where pathways for young people who because of their cultural background, gender identity, location, income and ability were already impacted.

Pathways into the creative industries as either an artist or practitioner often rely on education and training, resources and social networks. We know that these pathways exclude, and often discourage, many young people from pursuing a

² Filia et al., *Clusters of COVID-19 impact: Identifying the impact of COVID-19 on young Australians in 2021* [Internet]. Orygen and Mission Australia, 2022 [cited 2022 August 20]. Available from <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey/2574-clusters-of-covid-19-impact-identifying-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-young-australians-in-2021/file>

³ Cassidy C, 'It's so hard': how the pandemic upended young people's career paths [Internet]. The Guardian, 2021 [cited 2022 August 20]. Available from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/sep/12/its-so-hard-how-the-pandemic-upended-young-peoples-career-paths>



career in the creative industries, especially those from low-income backgrounds or living in regional or rural areas.

As our creative industries re-build and work towards addressing the increasing skills-shortages across the country, we need to address the disconnect that exists between young people and the creative industries and ensure young people are appropriately supported to build sustainable and successful career pathways.

Recommendation: Young people need increased opportunities to develop the skills, confidence and networks for career pathways into the creative industries

Suggested Actions:

- Support for youth organisations to deliver structured industry-based programs that provide young people with opportunities to create new works, build confidence and networks and develop 21st century skills for sustainable career pathways
- Support for youth organisations to deliver professional development opportunities for secondary school teachers and students focussed on the creative industries and career pathways
- Embed dedicated funding streams across Australia Council for the Arts and Office for the Arts for young people and youth organisations

Young people have limited opportunities to participate in Australian live music

Access to contemporary music events and programs is more than a recreational experience - it creates opportunities to build social cohesion and a sense of belonging within communities⁴. It enables positive personal identity formation during a period of transformation and self-discovery, as well as developing the networks and confidence for creative employment pathways.

However, access to live music events is not a reality for all young people in Australia. There are fewer events in regional and outer-suburban areas, many events come with unaffordable ticket prices, and rarely are live music events staged for underage audiences or designed to be accessible and culturally safe.

⁴ A New Approach, *Transformative: Impacts of Culture and Creativity* [Internet]. A New Approach, 2020 [cited 2022 August 20]. Available from <https://newapproach.org.au/insight-reports/transformative-impacts-of-culture-and-creativity/>



There has been a steady decline in the number of all-ages live music events held in Australia over the last 10 years. Anecdotally, The Push has also seen a decline in the number of underage young people attending live music events over the last 12-months.

Legislative requirements and the added costs of infrastructure, site modifications and event staffing to ensure the safety of minors are key factors contributing to the exclusion of young people from many of Australia's music festivals. Similarly, artists or promoters who stage events for underage audiences in existing live music venues are required to cover the costs of de-licencing, venue staff and other associated costs that would normally be covered through alcohol sales.

However, young people's consumption of alcohol is rapidly declining, at almost half the rate to which it was a decade ago⁵. If our Australian live music sector is significantly dependent on alcohol sales to exist, what does this look like in the future with audiences who will not be consuming alcohol at the rate they once were?

As we re-emerge from the last three years of the constant disruption to live music events it is essential that the structural factors contributing to declining audiences are properly understood, and that targeted investments are made to address this concerning trend.

Recommendation: Support the Australian live music sector to deliver viable all-ages events and create new approaches for growing our future live music audiences

Suggested actions:

- Undertake a comprehensive analysis of the challenges across the Australian live music sector, and work with all relevant stakeholders to find solutions that increase young people's attendance at live music events and festivals nationally
- Deliver a targeted all-ages funding program that provides subsidies to live music venues, booking agents, artists, promoters to stage all-ages live music events nationally

⁵ Toumbourou et al., 2018, *Student survey trends in reported alcohol use and influencing factors in Australia*, *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 37(1): 58-66



- Support the sector to deliver all-ages events that connect young regional and outer-suburban audiences with contemporary live music experiences, as well as support young people in regional and outer-suburban areas to access industry-based training opportunities through the staging of these events

Enhance the connections between young people, government, the youth sector and creative industries

Nationally there are limited formal supports for young people wanting to participate in contemporary music. A challenge that The Push frequently encounters across all levels of government is a reluctance from government departments responsible for youth services to fund creative industries initiatives, and a reluctance from departments responsible for creative industries to fund youth-led initiatives.

Local government and the youth sector play an integral role in supporting young people in the creative industries to maintain positive mental wellbeing, create new works, and develop transferable skills. Acting as intermediaries with other levels of government and cultural agencies, local governments ensure options for cultural participation and contribution are available to the local communities they serve. Local governments have a proven track record in working collaboratively at a community level to provide targeted delivery of strategic cultural and creative programs by expert personnel⁶.

Whilst local governments successfully deliver cross-departmental objectives, there are inconsistencies in the programs and services that are provided for young people by federal, state and territory governments, as youth services is not mandated, unlike many other community services.

To overcome the inertia of how to design and deliver youth programs across the creative industries, we must develop strategic frameworks that require collaboration across all levels of government, and drive initiatives to engage both the youth sector and creative industries equally.

Young people across our creative industries have been noticeably missing from any government response packages over the last three years, with the majority of support being given to older, established industry stakeholders. For any response

⁶ Australian Local Government Association, *Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts* [Internet]. Australian Local Government Association, 2020 [cited 2022 August 20]. Available from <https://alga.com.au/app/uploads/ALGA-House-of-Reps-Inquiry-into-Australias-creative-and-cultural-industries-and-institutions.pdf>



to be truly reflective of the unique needs and experiences of young people, they must be actively involved and consulted through the entirety of the policy development – from problem framing, research, design, implementation and evaluation.

Recommendation: Foster stronger strategic leadership and collaboration across all levels of government, the youth sector, creative industries and young people themselves

- Establish a national body to cohesively represent and synergise the work and impact of organisations working with young people in the creative industries
- Embed a whole of government strategic framework to enable collaboration across all levels of government, cross-government departments, the youth sector and the creative industries
- Embed dedicated funding streams across Australia Council for the Arts and Office for the Arts for young people and youth organisations
- Support the youth organisations working in the creative industries to be guided by youth participation frameworks that ensure all young people’s voices and perspectives are championed

We are excited for the Australian Government develop a new National Cultural Policy that truly reflects the unique needs of young Australians at this time – fostering a more vibrant and representative creative sector now and into the future.

If you would like any further information or to hear more about The Push’s work, please contact me on the details provided below.



Kate Duncan (she/her)
CEO
The Push

kate@thepush.com.au
03 9380 1277

