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About Australian Dance Theatre

Australian Dance Theatre is the oldest contemporary dance company in Australia, founded on Kurna Country by Elizabeth Cameron Dalman OAM in 1965. Over our nearly 60-year history we have continued to 'expand the horizons of contemporary' dance in this country, becoming one of Australia's most acclaimed contemporary dance companies. We are the dance company *of* and *for* South Australia.

In January 2022 we welcomed Wiradjuri man, Daniel Riley, to the Company; our first First Nations Artistic Director and the first First Nations artist to be at the helm of a non-First Nations dance company. The commitment of the new Labor Government to 'First Nations First' in the development and implementation of this much-needed new National Cultural Policy is one that we emphatically endorse and will support across all of our work.

In addition to our submission, we wholeheartedly support the submissions made to this process by:

- National Dance Managers' Meeting (the following section of text in italics from their submission)
- BlakDance – First Nations Dance Sector Priorities

Without meaningful, well-funded, systemic change, the implementation of the proposed National Cultural Policy will be a difficult task. To assist with this process we would propose these broader ideas:

- Return Australia Council for the Arts annual funding to pre-2012 levels, indexed to 2022
- Establish a standalone federal Ministry for the Arts
- Provide dedicated arts learning and curriculum opportunities to all schools across the country, including visual arts, performing arts, music and literature, to create the foundation for lifelong learning and interest in the arts
- Continue this lifelong learning with funding for cultural literacy programs for arts organisation to implement

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

Dance is one of the oldest forms of storytelling and has been central to First Nations people and culture for more than 100,000 years. Dance (and the arts generally) is deeply embedded in First Nations identity, community and knowledge; the entire nation has much to learn from this millennia-old practice to meaningfully place dance in the centre of peoples' lives.

National Cultural Policy Opportunities

- Work with First Nations Elders and artists to transform the dance sector into an authentic, open space for First Nations and non-First Nations stories, audiences and ways of storytelling to come together to create cultural experiences that aspires to be truly 'Australian'
- Fund a self-determined, capacity-building plan (minimum 10-year lifespan) for First Nations performers, arts workers and companies; as there are no significant, ongoing, well-funded pathways/opportunities this work must happen now, riding on the public support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart
- Fund First Nations language and culture curriculum in all schools for students at all stages of learning

- Targeted funding for the export of First Nations culture, stories and artists, particularly across the Asia-Pacific

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

Dance, in all its forms, fosters an inclusive, equitable and diverse society. It has the capacity to tell story like no other medium. Its transcendent qualities – beyond the verbal intellectual - through the body – are inarguably its greatest power. Story is not always a narrative, it can be an exchange of understanding and knowledge, connected to and of the land, the ‘telling’ of peoples and making of place together. Through dance, story is embodied in diverse minds and bodies and finds a voice in different languages, outside of language.

National Cultural Policy Opportunities

- Fund pathways and employment opportunities in the arts for people from CALD communities, Australians identifying with disability and neurodiversity, and Australians facing disadvantage, in collaboration with the Departments of Health and Aged Care, Education, Employment and Workplaces Relations, Social Services, Veterans’ Affairs and Home Affairs
- Establish a fund to specifically commission, present and tour works from First Nations artists, creatives from CALD communities and Australians identifying with disability and neurodiversity

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

The cultural sector is of clearly demonstrable significance to the Australian economy. It 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) to build the case that a viable and sustainable career in the arts is achievable; That it is not a hobby or pastime, that performers and creatives are as central to the form and the ecology as administration, technical and production staff.

National Cultural Policy Opportunities

- Provide tax-incentives/payroll support/subsidies for arts organisations to employ artists and creatives as full-time employees – as an example, in the dance sector there are currently less than 250 full-time, paid jobs for performers currently in Australia
- Provide direct operational funding (in addition to existing funding agreements) to create new employment opportunities for artists and creatives in arts companies
- Create fast-tracked, fully subsidised vocational programs (e.g. micro-credentials) to address training needs and attract workers in areas of key post-COVID skill gaps, particularly for specialist production and technical staff
- After the significant impacts of COVID-19, and the impact that the collective role the arts played to support the general public, designate artists and arts workers as part of the care economy
- Introduce a Universal Basic Income to support the precarious and uneven nature of employment opportunities in the arts, along with protecting and advancing individual rights, conditions and entitlements

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

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. Each of these facets 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 with other artforms. This is at odds with the artform being one of the most popular, diverse and significant ways Australian's engage with the arts, including Australian research that shows that 430,000 children aged between 0 - 14 participate in dance.

National Cultural Policy Opportunities

- Fund arts organisations with multi-year agreements – longer than the current 4 years, most likely up to 8-10 years – to enable better long-term strategic planning and implementation and to confidently realise complex, multi-stage arts projects
- Support arts organisations with annual funding increases that are higher than CPI, to reflect the ongoing pressure of rising expenses
- Fund Board training and capacity building specific to arts organisations, which not only strengthens existing boards but also provides pathways for new board members that genuinely reflect Australian society broadly

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

Audiences are integral to the artwork itself. Artists and audiences are at the heart of dance organisations engaged in professional performances, expressed through a dense program of major works, commissions, collaborations, residencies, workshops and public and professional classes. These fundamental activities extend the art form and influence the public realm. It increases the visibility of dance as an everyday art form. Audience development is critical to meet the needs of arts organisations to develop future audiences and nurture ongoing relationships with audiences.

National Cultural Policy Opportunities

- Legislate quotas for all broadcast media to develop, commission and present dedicated arts programming, a mixture of live performance recordings, narrative-based works, arts documentaries and special interest news
- Provide Australia Council for the Arts with additional funding and resources to create a 'National Audience Development Strategy' and implementation plan, scalable to all types and sizes of organisations, cross genres, that efficiently reports back to funders across jurisdictions
- Create a sustainable National Touring Network (supported by a National Touring Policy) that sees works of all scales across Australia – particularly outside Melbourne and Sydney – for organisations and independent artists
- Directly fund digital, record and broadcast infrastructure for venues and companies
- Create a federal Arts Infrastructure Fund, which supports creating new, accessible, sustainable/green arts spaces, responding to the needs of individual communities and artforms
- Fund the export of arts – particularly dance – across the Asia-Pacific region, as a priority, building on the strategic imperatives of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with this unique form of cultural diplomacy