

# **National Cultural Policy Submission**

## **Force Majeure**

**Submitted: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation**

### **Our organisation:**

**One of Australia's most celebrated arts companies, Force Majeure produces critically acclaimed dance theatre. Using its unique blend of storytelling and movement, the company creates award-winning works by exploring and questioning contemporary culture.**

**A resident company at Carriageworks in Sydney, Force Majeure's original works are created through collaboration and partnerships with leading Australian artists and companies. Through a rigorous devising process, Force Majeure works with multidisciplinary artists to produce unforgettable theatrical experiences that ignite curiosity in audiences, and inspiration in artists.**

**As an industry leader, Force Majeure invests deeply in artform and artist development through the company's INCITE program. INCITE offers invaluable training in the company's devising process and sets the standard in our artform for young, emerging and mid-career artists.**

**The company offers support to Australia's independent dance sector through its Associate Artists program, with two inaugural positions currently held by Ghenoa Gela and Liesel Zink.**

**The company is led by Artistic Director Danielle Micich and was established in 2002 by Founding Artistic Director Kate Champion.**

For the purposes of the consultation we have distilled these into 5 pillars: First Nations, A Place for Every Story, the Centrality of the Artist, Strong Institutions and Reaching the Audience.

2. What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

<p><b>1. First Nations</b></p>	<p>We acknowledge that 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.</p> <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of representation and visibility, artistically and administratively</li> <li>- Lack of cultural understanding across the sector</li> <li>- Arts Institutions created by and for white people</li> </ul> <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating pathways for First Nations artists and administrators that are informed and led by First Nations people</li> <li>- Cultural policies and learning opportunities that are created and led by First Nations people</li> <li>- A commitment by funded arts institutions to representation of First Nations artists and administrators</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. A Place for Every Story</b></p>	<p>We believe that 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.</p> <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decision making around opportunities is held tightly by institutional leadership</li> <li>- Leadership is not willing to program work that doesn't fit neatly into existing forms</li> <li>- There are limited performance venues and spaces for work that doesn't fit neatly into traditional forms</li> </ul> <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decentralise who is driving the opportunities within the industry</li> <li>- Those who are in programming and presenting opening up opportunities and taking more risks on new voices and new ways of storytelling</li> <li>- Diversifying the types of spaces within which we are presenting work and meeting audiences where they are</li> </ul>

<p><b>3. The Centrality of the Artist</b></p>	<p>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 &amp; 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.</p> <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Artists are fatigued after two years of uncertainty</li> <li>- Less funding is currently available to artists and arts organisations across the board</li> <li>- Institutional structures supporting artists constrict artistic working boundaries and output</li> </ul> <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Funding for the creation of work over infrastructure</li> <li>- Consistent funding to support artistic careers rather than projects</li> <li>- A commitment by funded institutions to representation of artists in senior leadership or at board level</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Strong Institutions</b></p>	<p>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, which is at odds with the artform being one of the most popular, diverse and significant ways Australian's engage with the arts.</p> <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Industry has been drained of senior talent over the last two years, in administrative, production and creative roles</li> <li>- There is reduced funding for the small to medium sector</li> <li>- There is a lack of available rehearsal and performance spaces for small to medium companies and individual artists</li> </ul> <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Making the industry a more viable career option through improved wage conditions</li> <li>- Larger institutions working with small to medium companies and individual artists by offering more rehearsal and performance spaces, as well as opportunities for collaboration</li> <li>- Creating pathways into leadership roles, both in artistic and administration</li> </ul>

<p><b>5. Reaching the Audience</b></p>	<p><b>Audiences are integral to the artwork itself. Artists and audiences are at the heart of all dance organisations, 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.</b></p> <p>Australian research shows 430,000 children aged between 0 -14 participate in dance – creating a significant potential audience and professional pool of artists. Audience development is critical to meet the needs of arts organisations to develop future audiences and nurture ongoing relationships with audiences.</p> <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cost of seeing work is out of reach for many</li> <li>- Lack of arts education or access to arts for young people means there is not an appetite to consume arts as adults</li> <li>- Limited marketing budgets to reach potential audiences, particularly for small to medium companies</li> </ul> <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sharing of audience bases between companies, including cross promoting and supporting each other's work</li> <li>- Subsidised ticket programs focused on access</li> <li>- Ensuring that young people have opportunities to participate in and consume art and culture</li> </ul>
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**3. Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:**

<p><b>1. First Nations</b></p>	<p>All dance in Australia sits within the context of 100,000 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance continuum. Force Majeure has a focus on learning from First Nations artists and collaborating to create opportunities and work together.</p>
<p><b>2. A Place for Every Story</b></p>	<p>In order to reflect society, we want to open out and make accessible who we engage as a company and the stories that we tell through the work we present.</p>
<p><b>3. The Centrality of the Artist</b></p>	<p>At the core of our company is artist development through our INCITE Program, Associate Artist opportunities and mentoring. We are focused on contributing to the industry ecology alongside creating work and supporting artists at various stages in their career.</p>
<p><b>4. Strong Institutions</b></p>	<p>Having a stable infrastructure as a small to medium makes it possible to develop and create work, and the larger infrastructure of the industry continues to support our presentation opportunities.</p>

**5. Reaching the Audience**

Partnerships are key to our company, both to make work but also to reach audiences for that work.

**4. Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?**

- Policies that are applied across all layers of the ecosystem: artists, small to medium, large institutions
- Thoughtful investment and community consultation around arts infrastructure
- Value placed on the long term career commitment of artists and arts administrators to ensure the industry doesn't lose talent