

The Hon. Tony Burke MP  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

04 August 2022

To the Honourable Tony Burke MP,

We are excited to contact you in recognition of your passionate work, support and investment in Queensland arts and culture over your time holding our shadow portfolio, and are grateful to see the adoption a National Cultural Policy. We are writing to you as both artists and Master of Social Work (MSW) students at the Queensland University of Technology, who are currently completing our final year. This dual-perspective means we are uniquely placed to appreciate the benefits of the arts to individual and community wellbeing, whilst also grappling with the impacts of economic struggle.

Each of us has a different experience of the art industry in a different art form, and are grateful for the role that the arts has played for our sense of connection, identity and wellbeing. However, we also have in common an experience of precarity, on which we have gained new perspectives through our study to become social workers. For example, Marisa is an interdisciplinary visual artist whose research placement entailed critically reflecting on the role of the arts industry in their experience of burnout. Shannon is a stand-up comedian who performs daily at gigs over South East Queensland, often receiving drink vouchers as the only form of payment. Rejen is a dancer who regularly attends community-connected studio classes in Brisbane, and is a witness to numerous dance studio directors, choreographers and performers who have struggled to achieve financial stability and a balanced lifestyle while promoting their business and creative works.

Together, we recognise the challenges artists and creative workers are exposed to while attempting to survive within the gig economy, particularly following the impacts of COVID-19. We advocate for their right to live a life without the stress of achieving financial stability, and for the societal and economic value of art to be taken seriously, and reflected in State and Federal policy and planning.

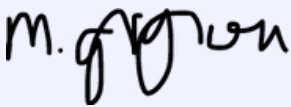
We present this submission of an artist-first funding model in the form of an Artist Basic Income as a brave policy response that invests in the industry at the roots. We promote the rights of artists to engage in their meaningful and

valuable work without the impacts of precarity. Implementing an Artist Basic Income provides the primary producers of the arts and cultural industry with the opportunity to be innovative, productive and well through the provision of a consistent financial safety net.

We also want to note that we have included Queensland state considerations and policy linkages, as part of this submission recommends better collaboration between all levels of government. We will be submitting a version of this document to Leeanne Enoch as part of the consultation for the next iteration of their Arts and Cultural Roadmap.

We thank you for your time and consideration and encourage you to get in touch with any questions or clarifications that might arise. We look forward to continuing this conversation.

Kind Regards,



Marisa Georgiou

P: 0408 459 219

E: georgioumarisa@gmail.com



Shannon Maugham

P: 0466 404 147

E: shannonmaugham@hotmail.com



Rejen Cabili-Hayes

P: 0402 525 654

E: rejenrose@gmail.com

2022

# Policy Submission for an Artist Basic Income

An artist-first model for creative  
recovery in Queensland and  
Australia

Marisa Georgiou  
Shannon Maugham  
Rejen Cabili-Hayes

# Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Art and Equality .....	3
<b>An Artist Basic Income.....</b>	<b>5</b>
What is an ABI and who is eligible? .....	5
Precedence.....	5
Benefits of an ABI.....	7
<b>Social, Economic and Creative Context.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Artist labour and economic value .....	8
Social Impact .....	9
<b>Moving Forward in Policy .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Our Recommendations .....	11
Policy Alignment .....	12
<b>References.....</b>	<b>14</b>

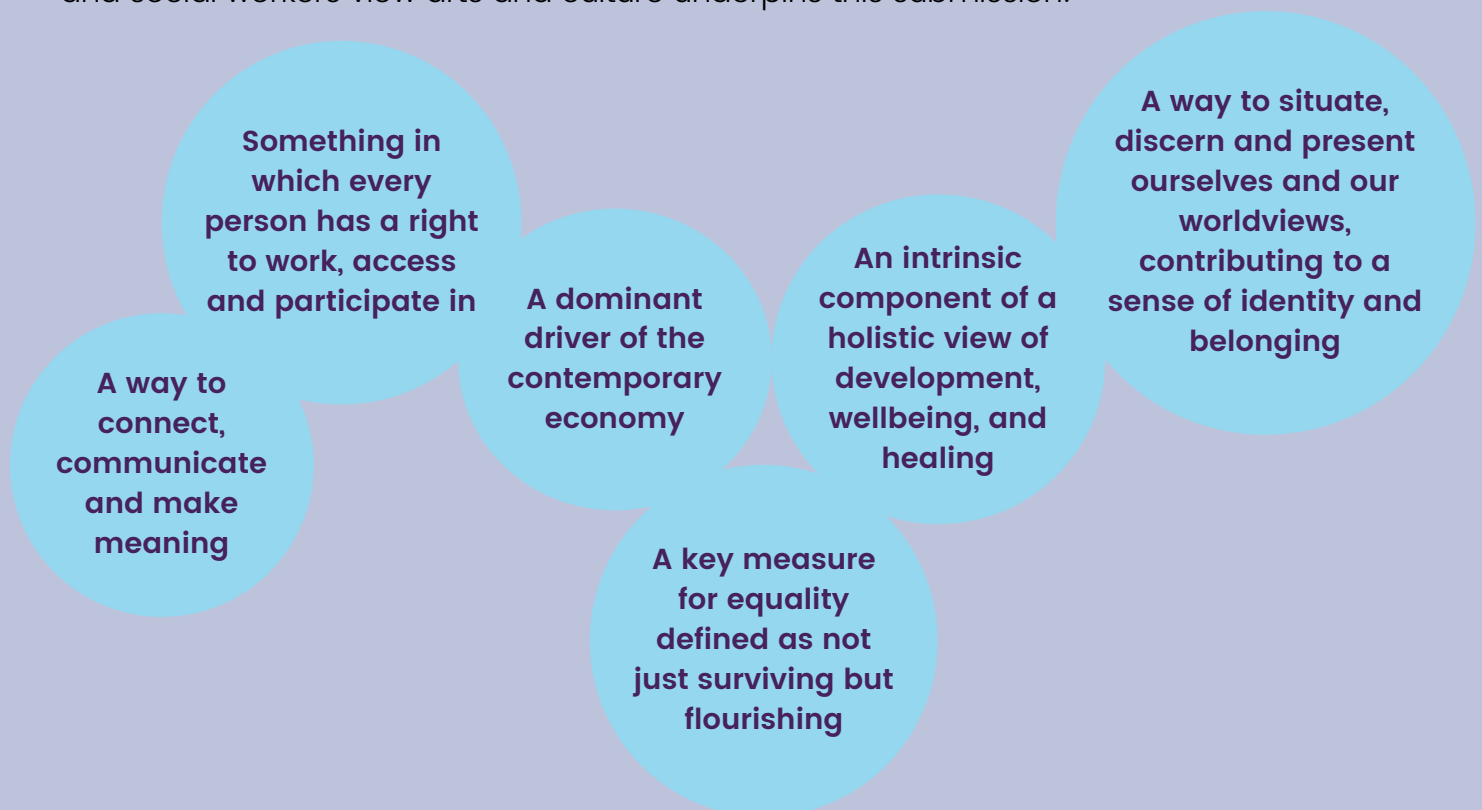
## Executive Summary

This submission proposes an artist-first model of an Artist Basic Income as a way to achieve social and industry equality for arts and culture in Queensland and Australia. Our dual perspective as artists and social workers argues that this will respond to the need to reform the current labour, funding and investment structure of the arts industry at the roots, and transition to a brave model which values, celebrates and invests in artists as the primary producers of arts and culture in the community context.

# Introduction

## Art and Equality

The definitions for arts and culture continue to change and evolve, as does the way we envision their role in society and the economy. The lens with which we as artists and social workers view arts and culture underpins this submission:

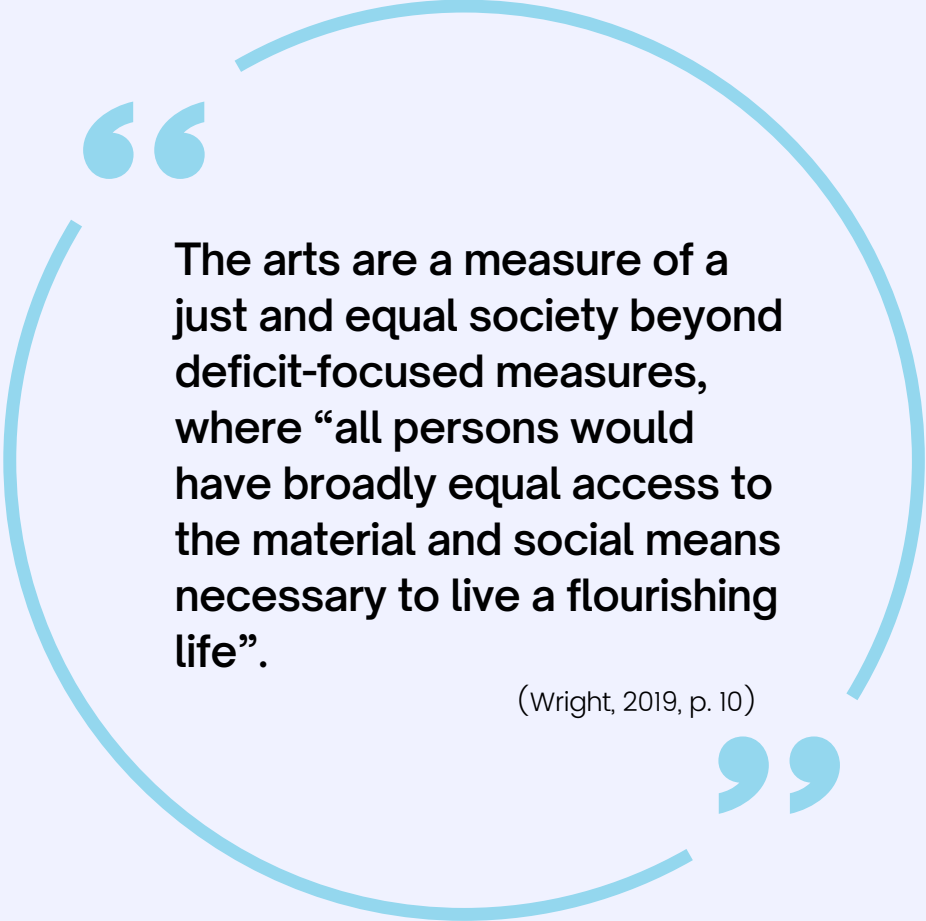


The evidence is that arts and culture are valued by the public beyond what current policy represents.

A New Approach identified their reasons as being because:

- Arts and cultural activities give us opportunities to be together and build community.
- Our children need exposure to arts and culture to develop.
- Arts and culture stimulate creativity and broadens perspectives.
- Australian arts and culture are essential for giving us a sense of identity and helping us represent Australia to the world.

(Fielding & Trembath, 2020)



The arts are a measure of a just and equal society beyond deficit-focused measures, where “all persons would have broadly equal access to the material and social means necessary to live a flourishing life”.

(Wright, 2019, p. 10)

The UN Declaration of Human Rights, Article 27.1 states that “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community [and] to enjoy the arts ... ” (United Nations, n.d.). Yet, the economic instability of artist work has “locked out the working class” (Kyriakakis, 2022).

**This gap disproportionately affects marginalised populations, including our First Nations artists, for who should be at the centre of our cultural life.**

We argue for reforming the labour, funding and investment structure in the arts industry with an **artist-first** model as a way to achieve social and industry equality.

# An Artist Basic Income

## What is an ABI and who is eligible?

**We propose an artist-first funding model of an Artist Basic Income (ABI), which ensures that the primary producers of the industry are given equal opportunity to flourish by freeing them from the pressures of economic precarity.**

The ABI is based on the tenets of a Universal Basic Income in that it will be non-discriminatory and apply to the individual regardless of how much they earn from gigs they obtain (Birnbaum, 2012). It is envisaged that the ABI will be a universal payment that all primary producers of arts and cultural activities would receive regardless of the form of art and creative work they engage in (Birnbaum, 2012). The payment would cover the average cost of living in the hopes that it would alleviate financial stress to allow primary producers more time and opportunity to produce arts and cultural activities for the community to engage in (Birnbaum, 2012; Klein et al., 2019; Standing, 2005).

We acknowledge arts and cultural activities are diverse and can take on various forms of live performance, community and visual media work. Therefore, we define an artist as an individual who works as an independent/unwaged 'primary producer' of arts and culture. For the purpose of piloting an ABI, we propose to define 'artists' as creative workers who are primary producers of activities which bring people together and are associated with arts and culture by Middle Australians (e.g. live performances, community projects, films and art exhibitions) (A New Approach, 2020a). This criterion is similar to the Basic Income implemented in Ireland (Citizens Information, 2022).

## Precedence

**This submission echoes a range of reports, articles and recommendations conducted by Australian journalists, peak bodies, and research industries.**

Reoccurring policy critiques are centred around gatekeeping of arts funding, unsustainable funding models, the lack of a national cultural plan, regulatory bodies, cross government collaboration, and effective data capturing (Caust, 2021; Hopkinson et al., 2021; Lanchester, 2019; Meyrick & O'Connor, 2021; Eltham & Pennington, 2021).

Similar programs to an ABI have been successfully piloted internationally. For example, San Francisco piloted the Guaranteed Income Program in 2020, providing \$1,000 to 130 selected artists a month, for six months (Borecka, 2022). The pilot was considered successful and was increased to a monthly \$1,000 for 2,400 local artists for 18 months (Borecka, 2022). This program has since been replicated in Minnesota and New York City (Bishara, 2022).

Ireland has taken a similar route, by introducing the Basic Income for Arts pilot in early 2022. This pilot was the number one recommendation from the Ireland Government's Art and Culture Taskforce, which was formed as a response to COVID-19 (Citizens Information, 2022). The pilot consists of a €325 weekly payment to 2,000 artists over three years (Velie, 2022).

**Although this would be the first Australian program of its kind for artists, universal income schemes are not specifically new to Australia.**

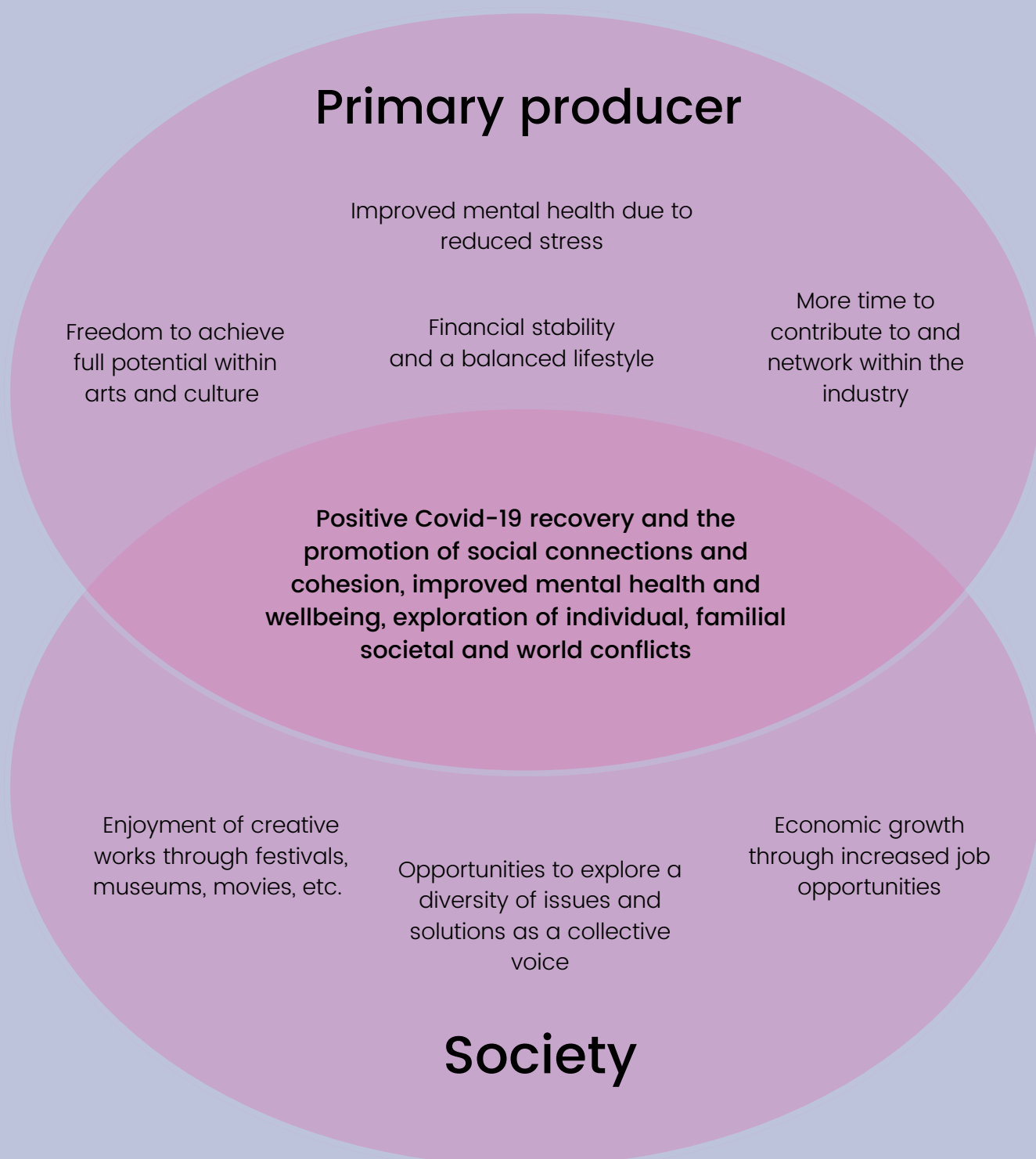
The Disability Support Pension, the Age Pension and the Family Tax Benefit scheme are all examples of universal income streams in Australia (Macular Disease Foundation, 2022; Services Australia, 2021a; Services Australia, 2021b). These examples have a narrow selection criterion but still provide an income to a universal group of Australians.

The success of income programs are dependent on the preconditions in which they are established, which must be weighted in egalitarianism and social justice. The measure of success must also be multifaceted, holistic and well documented.

For example, the San Francisco Guaranteed Income program conducted a verification process which required applicants to prove income, and statements of commitment to artistic practices (Bishara, 2022). However, once applications were verified, the final participants were selected randomly. This process contrasts the traditional grant model, as artists were not required to demonstrate their achievements, productivity or 'worth'. Despite this randomised model, successful applicants were diverse, and 95% of grant recipients identified as either a person of colour, LGBTQIAP+, a person with a disability and/or an immigrant (Bishara, 2022). The program was reported through selected artists undertaking ongoing journaling regarding their creative progress, as well as providing indicators of their general wellbeing (Bishara, 2022). This became detailed data for evaluation.

## Benefits of an ABI

The benefits of an ABI are discussed throughout this submission and are summarised below, synthesised from research from Birnbaum (2012), Klein et al. (2019), Standing (2005), and A New Approach.



# Social, Economic and Creative Context

## Artist Labour and Economic Value

Current artist labour conditions reflect 'market first' economic model which has moved to dominance in recent decades, and has eroded the historical consensus regarding the primary role of public investment (Eltham & Pennington, 2021). Throughout the COVID-19 lockdowns, the arts and cultural industry experienced the largest loss of employment across all industries, with 94% of business being affected (A New Approach, 2020b).

The primary producers of arts and culture are commonly sole traders who rely on their own networks and self-management to maintain employment, and face particular instability and precarity in the industry (Rusak et al., 2021). These workers typically seek alternative employment outside of the industry to achieve financial stability (Rusak et al., 2021). This hinders their capacity to foster new skills and opportunities.

A key benefit to an artist-first model is the ability to increase innovative, experimental and entrepreneurial opportunities by providing financial stability to primary producers of arts and cultural activities (Birnbaum, 2012; Standing, 2005).

Even after Covid-19, the current gig-economy model prioritises salaried jobs in the sector for directors, administrators, grant writers, curators, designers, marketers, communication managers, philanthropic engagement officers, and digital developers rather than artists (Riddle, 2020). Simultaneously, the short-term, project-based funding model is creating "an era of throwaway art" by investing in new but disposable programs and initiatives (Woodhead, 2019). This industry format is implicated in the dire statistics around artists' mental health, who are increasingly abandoning the industry due to economic precarity and burnout (Rusak et al., 2021).

The current funding model is typically viewed as encouraging economic and adaptable use of resources. However, we perceive the failure to directly invest in and care for the primary producers of an industry as unsustainable and preventing adaptability, whilst interrupting more ongoing, consistent and place-based practice that resilient communities can be built around.

Artist precarity reflects fundamental misunderstandings and undervaluing of their labour. In a contemporary economy which sees the mind, language and creativity as the primary apparatus for its production of value, the 'immaterial labour' of a service, knowledge or communication that artists undertake in a particularly potent and distilled form has gained prevalence (Berardi, 2009; Lazzarato in Hardt, 1999).

Artists are also engaging in human work. Bessel van der Kolk's research into trauma describes how "conflict is central to theatre – inner conflicts, interpersonal conflicts, family conflicts, social conflicts, and their consequences" (p. 391). Central to the production of arts and culture is how individual creative workers perceive conflicts within their lives, and their choices of how they express this. Not only does this activity have social and therapeutic value, but it is an example that would resist automation due to its fluid socio-economic and political nature (Rusak et al., 2021).

While economic impact is difficult to measure, artists consistently produce the new experiences, narratives, desires, identities, trends, discourses and knowledges that are primary drivers of the contemporary economy.

## Social Impact

**The capacity for arts and culture to have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing is consistently proven.**

56% of the Australian population acknowledge arts and cultural participation as integral to their sense of wellbeing and happiness (Rusak et al., 2021). Primary producers of arts and cultural activities state that their involvement assists to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation in a variety of ways (A New Approach, 2019b; Rusak et al., 2021). Notably, as the data collection regarding these impacts on health and wellbeing are limited and inconsistent, there is potential that the statistics may be higher than what is currently reported.

Arts and culture provide individuals and communities with the ability to express themselves, by externalising their internal thoughts, emotions and struggles. These forms of externalisation encourage individuals to explore challenges in a safe and supportive environment (van der Kolk, 2014). As a result, people feel more capable of voicing their opinions, exploring different perspectives and solutions, coping with challenges, and connecting with others. Externalisation sparks connections between people about what is being expressed, curiosity to understand, and can lead to innovative solutions (A New Approach, 2019a; Aiken et al., n.d).

**Thus, the impact of arts and culture on the individual being is not only beneficial for the person who participates but also the community as a whole.**

Social change, community cohesion and collective wellbeing are significant outcomes of investing in art and culture. Throughout COVID-19 lockdowns, opportunities for connection were forfeited, causing disconnection and poor mental health for people worldwide (Rusak et al., 2021). Thus, the opportunities for engaging in arts and cultural activities were scarce at a time when the world turned to creative works to cope with feelings of loneliness while in isolation. Although lockdowns are no longer an imminent threat to Australian society, our artists are still feeling the effects of the last few years.

**Arts and cultural activities are imperative to social and community recovery after COVID-19.**

# Moving Forward

## Policy Recommendations

We propose the following five recommendations for establishing an ABI:

### **ONE | Create a working group/taskforce comprised of industry professionals, artists, and political leaders to establish a viable Artist Basic Income pilot**

This taskforce should comprise 50% artists, with adequate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation.

### **THREE | Implement appropriate, relevant and useful data collection techniques to contribute to future ABI programs and extensions**

As on par with ANA's recommendations, current data collection should be reviewed to ensure arts data is holistic, and captures the economic, and social and emotional wellbeing implication of art and culture, from the perspective of artists and consumers (A New Approach, 2021).

### **FIVE | Work and communicate effectively with local, state and federal governments**

Multiple reports have expressed the need for more effective collaboration between state, local and federal governments when it comes to arts policy (A New Approach, 2021; Croggon, 2020; NAVA, 2022).

### **TWO | Establish a pilot program that includes metropolitan and regional artists with a minimum commitment of 110 million per year, with an increase every two years**

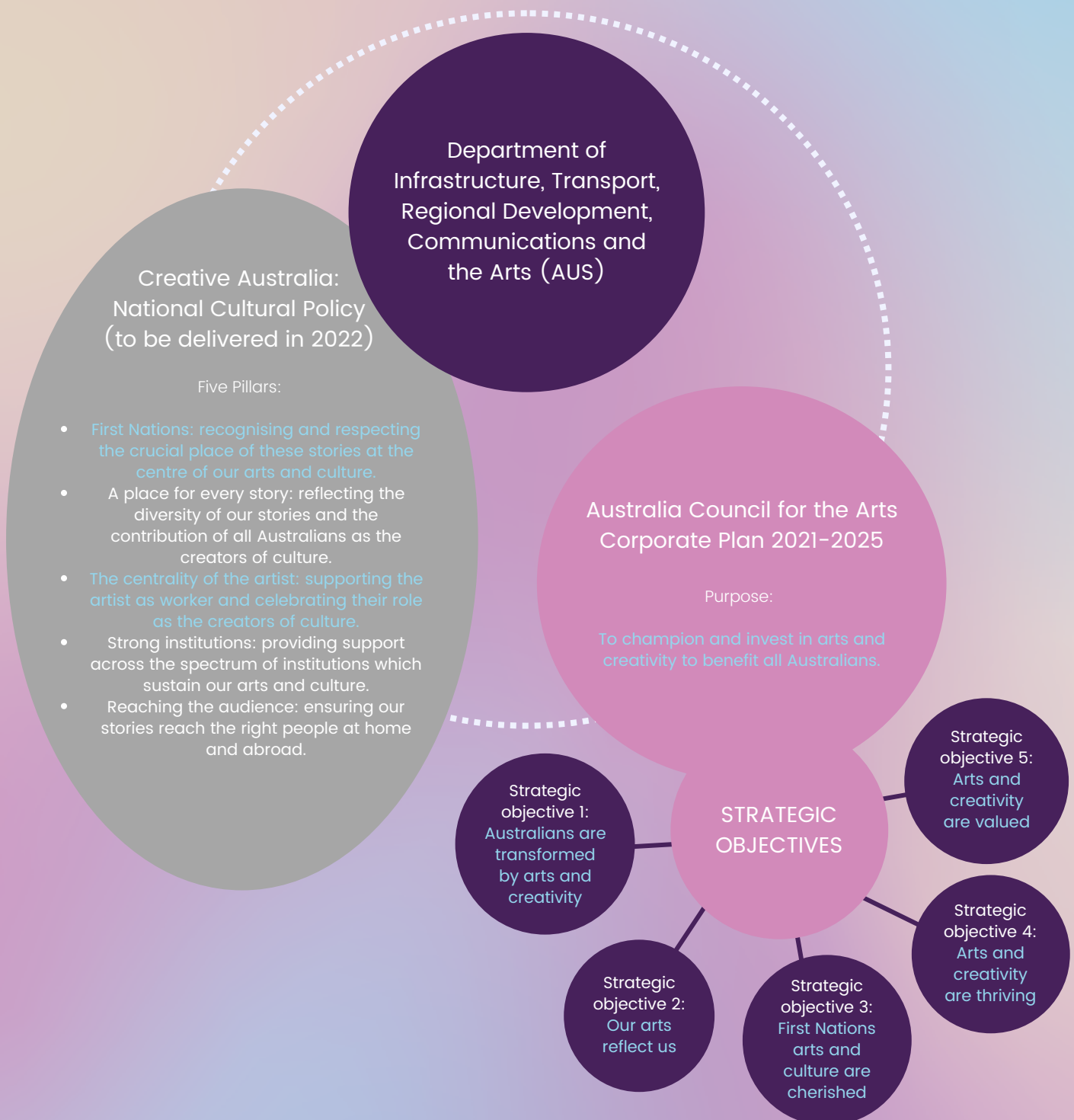
The pilot should be established on inclusive and non-merit-based parameters. We propose a minimum commitment of \$220 million over two years. This figure has been calculated by an income prediction on par with previous artist pilot examples, \$700 a week for 3,000 artists for two years. \$110 million per year is an achievable commitment, and a 50% match of arts infrastructure spend at a state and federal level (Arts Queensland, 2018).

### **FOUR | Ensure Arts Queensland and the Australia Council for the Arts' expenditure is transparent and accessible**

Current Arts Queensland and Australia Council expenditure is not easy to access or interpret. A detailed breakdown of grant and funding spend should be accessible for anyone to view and understand.

# Policy Alignment

The following diagrams show policy alignment for the objectives, purposes and focus areas for the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (AUS), and the for the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy (QLD). Both levels have been included as our policy recommendations encourage collaboration between all levels of government. The key difference between existing strategies is our **artist-first model**, which stimulates growth from the roots by investing directly in our primary producers of arts and culture. Linkages with this policy submission are highlighted blue.



Department of Communities,  
Housing and Digital Economy  
(QLD)

Objectives:  
Improve social and economic outcomes for  
Queenslanders across the state. Ensure  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples  
and culture are central to all engagement,  
design and delivery. Integrate proactive  
frontline services, assistance and programs  
for communities, housing, digital and the arts

Arts Queensland

Purpose:  
Invest in opportunities that create  
greater access for Queenslanders  
to experience arts and culture,  
support the growth of the arts  
sector and showcase the state's  
stories and artistic talent.

Community Services

Purpose:  
Support communities to thrive  
through investing in quality  
community services that are  
connected and support the social  
and economic inclusion and  
wellbeing of people of all ages,  
abilities and backgrounds.

Creative Together  
2020-2030: A 10  
Year Roadmap for  
arts, culture and  
creativity in  
Queensland

STRATEGIC  
OBJECTIVES

Drive social  
change across  
Queensland

Elevate First  
Nations Arts

Activate  
Queensland's  
local places and  
global digital  
spaces

Strengthen  
Queensland  
Communities

Share our stories  
and celebrate our  
storytellers

FOCUS  
AREAS

Enhance access and  
understanding of  
data to support  
business model and  
programming  
decisions

Continue to invest  
in the adoption of  
best practice  
governance and  
business models in  
organisations

Build sector agility to  
adapt to and leverage  
changing community  
needs an support  
delivery of  
government priorities

Support the sector to  
grow its skills base and  
increase capacity for  
opportunities, diversify  
into new markets, and  
realise innovative  
creative practice

# References

- A New Approach. (2019a). *Insight Report One: The Big Picture: Public Expenditure on Artistic, Cultural, and Creative Activity in Australia*. Australia Academy of the Humanities.
- A New Approach. (2019b). *Insight Report Two: A View From Middle Australia: Perceptions of Arts, Culture and Creativity*. Australia Academy of the Humanities.
- A New Approach. (2020a). *Insight Report Three: Behind the Scenes: Drivers of Arts and Cultural Policy Settings in Australia and Beyond*. Australia Academy of the Humanities.
- A New Approach. (2020b). *Insight Report Four: Behind the Scenes: Drivers of Arts and Cultural Policy Settings in Australia and Beyond*. Australia Academy of the Humanities.
- Aiken, S., McBride, W., Frahn-Starkie, A., Friebe, H., Keebler, S., Lasica, S., Meaden, C., Ottone, M., Ryan, R., & Woodmand, T. (n.d). *Submission 66: Australia's creative and cultural industries and institutions: The impact to the arts of COVID-19, from members of Melbourne's contemporary dance community*.  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15438620600987064>
- Birnbaum, S. (2012). *Basic Income Reconsidered*. Palgrave Macmillan US. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137015426>
- Bishara, H. (2022, May 13). A universal basic income for artists? US cities are trying it. *Financial Times*.  
<https://www.ft.com/content/03574a31-27fa-4402-baac-8a512d8a98cd>
- Borecka, N. (2022, January 22). San Francisco tested a \$1,000 guaranteed income pilot program. Here's how it went for two artists. *SFGATE*. <https://www.sfgate.com/sf-culture/article/sf-tests-guaranteed-income-program-16791353.php>
- Caust, J. (2021, February 8). Latest arts windfalls show money isn't enough. We need transparency. *The Conversation*. <http://theconversation.com/latest-arts-windfalls-show-money-isnt-enough-we-need-transparency-154725>
- Caust, J. (2022, May 2). Australia should have a universal basic income for artists. Here's what that could look like. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/australia-should-have-a-universal-basic-income-for-artists-heres-what-that-could-look-like-182128>
- Citizens Information. (2022, May 13). *Basic Income for the Arts (BIA)*.  
[https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/unemployment\\_and\\_redundancy/employment\\_support\\_schemes/basic\\_income\\_arts.html](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/unemployment_and_redundancy/employment_support_schemes/basic_income_arts.html)
- Croggon, A. (2020, April 23). Arts funding: A survey of destruction. *Witness*. <https://witnessperformance.com/arts-funding-a-survey-of-destruction/fbclid=IwAR2zhCXGXXToMrWVzKI4KnFuYb2gfAy4VNyur8drCymceh5DoFZPI4GgNJo>
- Eltham, B., & Pennington, A. (2021). *Creativity in Crisis: Rebooting Australia's Arts and Entertainment Sector After COVID*. Centre for Future Work, The Australia Institute. <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/creativity-in-crisis-rebooting-australias-arts-and-entertainment-sector-after-covid/>
- Fielding, K., & Trembath, J. L. (2020). *A View from Middle Australia: Perceptions of Arts, Culture, and Creativity*. Australian Academy of the Humanities.
- Hopkinson, C., MAILLÉ, N., Phillips, C., Pon, P., & Shahani, S. (2021, March 20). Canada's largest municipal arts councils ask for a basic income guarantee for artists: OPINION. *The Globe and Mail*.
- Klein, E., Mays, J., & Dunlop, T. (Eds.). (2019). *Implementing a Basic Income in Australia: Pathways Forward*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-14378-7>
- Kyriakakis, V. (2022, May 15). Want to make art? You better be rich: how Australian culture locked out the working class. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/may/16/want-to-make-art-you-better-be-rich-how-australian-culture-locked-out-the-working-class>

- Lanchester, J. (2019, July 18). Good New Idea. London Review of Books, 41(14). <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v41/n14/john-lanchester/good-new-idea>
- Malcular Disease Foundation Australia. (2022). *Blind Pensions*. <https://www.mdfoundation.com.au/support-me/understanding-government-services/blind-pensions/>
- Meyrick, J., & O'Connor, J. (2021, November 3). Slippery definitions and alarming silences: A parliamentary inquiry into the creative industries gives us a plan for a plan. *The Conversation*. <http://theconversation.com/slippery-definitions-and-alarming-silences-a-parliamentary-inquiry-into-the-creative-industries-gives-us-a-plan-for-a-plan-170963>
- NAVA. (2022). *Policy*. [https://visualarts.net.au/advocacy/policy/fbclid=IwAR0sB8AUbbLxriIFzArAK\\_3asJkQyGPwMHFmJx325nNRbzzoSIhoDYceQe4](https://visualarts.net.au/advocacy/policy/fbclid=IwAR0sB8AUbbLxriIFzArAK_3asJkQyGPwMHFmJx325nNRbzzoSIhoDYceQe4)
- Riddle, N. (2020, May 29). *Letter from the Editor – May 2020*. Running Dog. <https://rundog.art/letter-from-the-editor-may-2020/>
- Rusak, H., Goh, T., Barbe, F., Newman, R., & Blevins, P. (2021). *Breathing through the Pandemic: Performing Arts Challenges and responses to the mental health implications of COVID-19*. Edith Cowan University. [https://www.waapa.ecu.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/960387/Breathing-through-the-pandemic.pdf](https://www.waapa.ecu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/960387/Breathing-through-the-pandemic.pdf)
- Services Australia. (2021a, December 10). *Age Pension*. <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/age-pension>
- Services Australia. (2021b, December 10). *Family Tax Benefit*. [servicesaustralia.gov.au/family-tax-benefit](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/family-tax-benefit)
- Standing, G. (2005). Why basic income is needed for a right to work. *Rutgers Journal of Law and Urban Policy*, 2, 13.
- The Australian Greens. (2022). *Creative Australia: Supporting our art, stories and music*. <https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2022-05/Greens-2022-Policy-Platform--Creative-Australia.pdf>
- United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. United Nations; United Nations. Retrieved June 12, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
- van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Penguin Group (USA) LLC.
- Velie, E. (2022, April 11). 2,000 Artists Will Receive \$355 a Week Under Ireland's New Basic Income Program. *Hyperallergic*. <http://hyperallergic.com/723457/ireland-basic-income-for-the-arts-program/>
- Woodhead, J. (2019). An era of throwaway arts. *Overland Literary Journal*. <https://overland.org.au/2019/08/an-era-of-throwaway-arts/>
- Wright, E. O. (2019). *How to be an anticapitalist in the twenty-first century*. Verso.