

In reply please quote: D25/26354



Ms Georgie Purcell MP

Chair

Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee

Parliament of Victoria

Yarra City Council

ABN 98 394 086 520

PO Box 168

Richmond VIC 3121

T 03 9205 5555

info@yarracity.vic.gov.au

yarracity.vic.gov.au

Dear Chair,

Inquiry into the cultural and creative industries in Victoria

Yarra City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into the cultural and creative industries in Victoria (the Inquiry).

Councils are the grassroots level of government and closest to people and places that make up our creative ecosystem. Councils play a significant role in nurturing and growing our creative community through fellowship support, providing opportunities through festivals and events, and supporting venues and creative spaces to remain viable.

Introduction

Revive was a welcome intervention by the Federal Government to uplift the creative sector at a time when many factors have threatened its survival.

As the sector began to re-build following COVID-19, cost-of-living pressures and other external factors, challenges to social cohesion have been evident. These created further hurdles for artists and organisations to create and present work that aligns with the 5 pillars in *Revive*.

We ask the Victorian Government to consider the following actions to deliver on its promises and uplift a sector that is in crisis:

1. First Nations First - Invest in long-term programs that ensure governance within arts organisations that reflect best-practice and enable self-determination. This empowers "First Nations First" to be integrated into decision making structures and day-to-day operations. We see arts organisations making efforts, as a standalone pillar that inform programming and curatorial decisions but do not see how it informs more broadly governance within the sector.
2. A Place for Every Story - Re-commit to the promised whole-of-Government approach originally announced, with programs that demonstrate inter-departmental collaboration and co-investment.
3. A Place for Every Story - Invest in programs that support professional development for industry leaders from underrepresented groups. Including in board training, governance and executive functions.
4. Centrality of the Artist - Invest in the community through subsidised rents to ensure that artists are not priced out of arts hubs due to inner city rent and insurance premiums.
5. Engaging the Audience - Support programs that encourage and incentivise the community to attend grassroots arts events.
6. Engaging the Audience - Incentivise businesses and organisations to adopt products/programs that are purpose-driven and that directly support artists, creative industry professionals and emerging sector leaders.

First Nations First

Decision-making in arts and culture must reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and values by embedding their leadership into our decision-making processes.

Yarra City Council's [Arts and Culture Strategy 2022-2026](#) commits to celebrating and embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and culture by increasing the cultural competence of our creative producers, participants and audiences.

We advocate for *Revive* to consider how best to integrate the actions of the three tiers of government in delivering on the pillar of First Nations First as it intersects with all 5 pillars in the policy.

This requires a collaborative approach between the three tiers of government and more long-term investment into First Nations organisations to steer the sector around what is “self-determination” and how it can be embedded within the governance structures of organisations to then be embedded into programming, curation, and operations.

A Place For Every Story

The most effective way to ensure that there is a place for every story is to adopt a whole-of-government approach. It ensures that the arts respond to current challenges experienced within the community and government programs addressing those challenges are supported by specialists within those portfolios.

At Yarra, we adopt a whole-of-local-government approach to our programs. By creating the space for artists to share their lived experience, we enrich our creative economy.

Our internally produced programs, including the 12-year-old Leaps and Bounds festival, feature specific programming for our aged and disability services clients, supported directly by subject matter experts within Council. It also includes arts programs created, resourced and led by our youth services team, LGBTQIA + teams and multicultural partnerships team.

Council's direct support of the Victoria Street Lunar Festival and Johnston Street Fiesta demonstrates a community-led festival model supported by Council. The challenge for these majority volunteer-run events is the mounting costs that are threatening their existence. It is only through structured support from Government that we can save these examples of diverse art.

We advocate for *Revive* to:

- re-commit to the promised whole-of government approach with clear programs that demonstrate this inter-departmental collaboration, including vertical planning and inter-departmental support. For example, the arts play a crucial role in:
 - modelling best practice towards limiting carbon emissions (see [Green Music Australia](#)). We urge the Government to fund arts programs through the department of Climate Change, Energy and Water that are strategically aligned;
 - the social, cognitive and academic development of young people through education: [Alberts - The Tony Foundation](#). We urge the Government to fund arts programs that increase the presence of music education in our schools through the Department of Education;
 - bridging the widening division and reduced social cohesion in communities [Amidst declining social cohesion, help communities connect through culture - A New Approach \(ANA\)](#). We urge the Government to co-invest with state governments to fund national arts programs that actively promote inter-community, inter-faith and inter-generational collaboration. Bringing those communities together across state lines, through the Department of Social Services;
 - exporting cultural assets internationally (see [Born Global Australia Council](#) and [The Booming Australian Digital Games](#)). We urge the Government to act as an active broker in facilitating reciprocal international export relationships via the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade;

- maintaining the overall health of our communities both physical and mental. We urge the Government to take on the role of an educator in promoting the direct health benefits the creative industries provide the community and through the Department of Health;
- invest in programs that support professional development for industry leaders from under-represented groups in governance, executive functions and operational functions.

Centrality of the Artist

It is essential to support artists directly, not only through project costs but also to nurture our creative community via fellowship support. There is no creative economy if artist themselves are not directly supported.

We advocate for *Revive* to consider:

- sharing resources across government departments to fund projects and allocate more resources through Creative Australia to support fellowships, residencies and artist development, in order that more artists can work in their local, national and international markets.

Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Artist development and innovation is reliant on space to create and engage audiences.

For decades, creatives have needed spaces that are affordable, long-tenured and suitable for local cultural production. Additionally, they need to have local and export markets for their work.

The cost-of-living crisis has led to new challenges that are currently not addressed in *Revive*. Within inner metro areas there is a lack of affordable spaces for artists and arts organisations to work, driving them to more affordable outer suburbs. While this geographic spread is a positive for the creative sector, it creates siloed and disconnected artistic communities.

It is essential that strategic goals are in place to both:

- develop outer suburban and regional arts ecosystems; and
- maintain inner urban arts communities.

Investment in arts infrastructure should be fit for purpose to enable the continuity of creative and cultural production and development across the country.

City of Yarra's Room to Create Program

Yarra has many small to medium sized and independent arts organisations that make up much of our creative footprint. There are over 80 live music venues, more than 60 galleries and artist run spaces, and numerous creative hubs and studios.

The Room to Create Responsive Grant Program is a Council initiative that helps creative spaces and live music venues stay in Yarra. The program is incentivised and designed to be quick response. The program pool is \$25,000 per annum and funding is capped at \$2,000 for a standalone grant or at \$5,000 for a matching grant, when the applicant can make a matching contribution.

This program is able to meet certain needs of the community, but without a three-tiered approach, systemic problems will remain that prevent long-term solutions from being advanced.

We advocate for *Revive* to consider:

- strategies and investment that uplift culturally thriving (albeit economically at-risk) community arts hubs;

- how culturally rich environments add value to property within municipalities and how this can be leveraged through a whole-of-government approach.

Engaging The Audience

Financial hurdles are the biggest barrier to attending arts events. As reported by Audience Atlas, Victoria. 2.1m fewer people have attended fewer events in the last 5 years, with 47% citing the citing that ticket prices and 38% the cost-of-living crisis as the cause. Major events featuring international talent continue to draw audiences, however this comes at the expense of the local arts sector (Ben Eltham, *As Taylor Swift sells out the MCG, local festivals and music venues shut their doors*, Crikey, Feb 2024).

As ticket revenue for locally produced art deteriorates, so do the resources to support the creation of new work.

City of Yarra – supporting live music venues through Leaps and Bounds Festival

Leaps and Bounds is Yarra City Council's annual music festival with the goal of supporting local venues, musicians, and businesses through the quiet of winter. It is an industry leader which would benefit from co-investment across multiple tiers of government to support local Victorian businesses. Through co-investment, the sector stands to gain exponentially with more venues, artists and industry practitioners sharing in more resources and opportunities.

The City of Yarra has been a beacon for live music for decades. However, in the last 5 years, there has been a significant decline in revenue and an increased cost to keeping these venues in operation (see [Australian live music venues closing as cost of living hits businesses and patrons - ABC News](#)).

We advocate for *Revive* to invest in:


- festival models that have a diverse spread of local presenting venues;
- subsidy or voucher programs, similar to the \$60 million Victorian Dining and Entertainment Program (2022) to encourage more people to attend grass roots live music events in their community;
- an [Arena Ticket Levy](#), as adopted by the UK to directly support grassroots music venues;
- incentivise businesses and organisations to adopt products and initiatives that are purpose driven and directly support the arts. For example, as of January 2025, 51 small businesses have adopted [ArtsPay](#), Australia's first purpose driven payment platform that donates a portion of their profits to independent artists and small arts organisations as a means of providing a long-term sustainable funding source.

Conclusion

As one of Melbourne's major arts hubs, we are uniquely positioned to understand the needs of modern artists and barriers to their ongoing economic and creative success.

Please do not hesitate to contact our Manager, Libraries, Arts and Venues, Vicky Guglielmo (Vicky.Guglielmo@yarracity.vic.gov.au), if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,


Sue Wilkinson
CEO Yarra City Council
23 January 2025