

Media Statement

20 March 2020



The time is now to save the Arts Sector

Today we stand united with all of Australia's peak bodies and the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) in calling for a clear commitment from government to adopt immediate emergency support and ongoing recovery assistance measures including:

- Provide greater national clarity around the projected timeframe for the public health response to coronavirus, including when venues and companies can anticipate preparing to resume operations
- Expedite immediate access to income support for industry participants who have lost employment or income due to venue or event closures, including casual workers and sole traders
- Funding to assist in the continued support for casual and contract staff in the form of wages or financial assistance
- Extend all current government funding arrangements for the next 12 months to minimise disruption to existing companies
- Provide a cash injection to the performing arts sector to enable them to meet cash and reserve shortfalls that will confront them in the next three months
- Provide additional funding to the Australia Council to fund all organisations that were assessed as worthy of funding in the four-year funding review process
- Repurpose and bring forward the allocated \$22 million Live Music package to be spent over the next 12 months
- Direct budget support for the duration of this financial year for all live performance businesses impacted by event and venue closures to enable continuity of their operations and employment levels throughout the shutdown period and to ensure viability for recovery in future
- Provide additional funding to Support Act to provide crisis support to the sector
- New funding to enable performances to be delivered through innovative online or digital platforms

In addition to these economic measures Regional Arts Australia is calling for the Bush Fire and Drought Relief to be maintained and to be provided to effected areas. Specifically to repurpose the Regional Tourism Bushfire Recovery Grants designed to support 'bespoke events, concerts, festivals for domestic and international tourism to arts and community recovery and renewal.

As the national voice for arts in regional Australia we urge the government to follow the lead of other countries like the UK, New Zealand and Canada who have swiftly implemented financial support to protect the arts sector.

Government funding must come now to save the arts sector, this is an economic, social, cultural emergency. We seek to ensure the arts in regional Australia are recognised as essential and are embedded within the Morrison's Governments Plan for Covid 19 responses.

Regional Arts Australia acknowledges and congratulates the ACT, Queensland and Victorian governments who have already activated to support the arts industry.