Template Email text to Candidates for Local Council Elections.

Update text highlighted in YELLOW for your situation.

Take note of GREEN highlight as key areas for you to add or adjust content.

**DO NOT SEND THIS TEMPLATE WITHOUT CUSTOMISATION**

Dear CANDIDATE NAME,

I am a COUNCIL AREA resident and ratepayer. I have lived in the WARD NAME Ward for YEARS/MONTHS and have voted in many local elections. Thank you for your candidate statement, which I read with interest.

Something about you. Keep this brief but relevant. You might wish to showcase your specialty as an artist i.e. I am a professional dancer, choreographer, dance teacher, producer etc

This is the first time I have not seen the arts mentioned once in any candidate statement. OR The arts was barely mentioned in candidate statements. I find this alarming and extremely disturbing. COUNCIL AREA is the home to many artists and creatives, myself included.

* The arts, (creative and cultural industries) provide enormous direct and indirect economic benefits to our local area and to Victoria generally.
* COVID-19 has decimated the arts industry. One of the first industries to shut down, it will be one of the last to start up again, and even then, in a vastly different way. The Arts includes cultural practices of storytelling, dance, theatre, music and song, visual arts, literature and media arts. It spans diverse cultures and identities, modes of expression and forms of presentation. Artists are often also teachers and leaders in community development.
  + Many are sole traders who run micro businesses. Along with other smaller businesses, they have been left without the necessary means to successfully carry out their business activities during COVID-19. JobKeeper may support individual jobs, but resources are also needed to support the multifarious projects those workers undertake.
  + Many artists are freelance professionals. Most work without any safety net and are struggling at this time. A large majority of these workers have been omitted from JobKeeper because they have not worked for one employer for the length of time deemed necessary to meet eligibility criteria, yet as workers who have been consistently engaged by multiple employers in the 12-month period prior to COVID-19 they may have earned too much to meet JobSeeker eligibility.

NAVA reports: 'Australia’s leading economists, including the Government’s own, have identified our industry as the first hit and the worst hit:

* + On 7 April, ABS data showed that only 47% of arts and recreation services businesses were still trading, identifying it as the worst-hit industry while 90% continued to trade in the majority of other sectors[8];
  + On 19 April, the Grattan Institute projected a 75% employment downturn in the arts and recreation sector, with over 70% of businesses impacted, identifying it as the equal worst-impacted industry[9] \*\*

Ausdance Victoria reports that privately operated dance studios and dance schools generate in excess of $300M in annual revenue and create an estimated 10,000 paid positions in Victoria alone. 92% of respondents expressed concern about their business surviving until the end of March 2021. COUNCIL AREA is home to many of these, and similar music, visual art and performance-teaching businesses. **Councillors must recognise the importance of the Arts and Culture to our economy and identity.**

* The arts provide tangible non-economic benefits that enhance community, social wellbeing and promote Australia’s national identity, and COUNCIL AREA’s local profile. **Council must acknowledge this and help artists continue to provide these benefits through their practice.**
* The best mechanism for ensuring cooperation and delivery of policy and funding is between layers of government: federal, state and local. **Local government is an essential part of this ecology, providing infrastructure, funding, cross pollination of ideas, the facilitation of opportunities between arts and health, arts and amenity (Creative Ageing programs, Arts and Health programs, Community Cultural Development programs, Percent for the Arts Policies, for instance; Arts in Parks, cultural and creative festivals etc.)**

Unless COUNCIL AREA Council recognises the value of arts and culture in our lives, as an expression of individuals, groups and communities and supports the individuals and microbusinesses that enable this, **we will find ourselves lacking identity and understanding of ourselves as a wider community**. Unless Council finds ways to financially support the arts and culture, **many interacting non-arts business economies will be negatively affected**. These include but are not limited to work with stakeholders in:

* Disability
* Mental health
* Physical health
* Creative capacity building
* The hospitality sector

**Prospective Councillors must give consideration to:**

Add and adjust points here as relevant to your situation and council area.

* Enhanced investment in local artworks, performing arts and industry development.
* (IF RELEVANT) Consider Arts grant criteria that does not requires NFP status. Council must recognise that not all worthwhile enterprises are not-for-profit. Many Councils recognise that artists are often sole traders and enable artists to apply for local government grants under their own ABN. When this option is not available, this hinders cultural advancement and equitable access to opportunities in the area.
* Specific support for artists through innovative programs, such as opening up disused spaces for visual artists and performing artists (dance, music, theatre).
* Reducing Council space hire costs for artists. Currently these are far too high, and artists are often forced into other municipalities to access spaces with lower costs or to use spaces that are not safe or fit for purpose.
* (IF RELEVANT) Eliminate half-day/full-day 'take it or leave it' hire policies that are attached to many Council spaces. This forces artists into other municipalities or to use spaces that are not safe or fit for purpose.
* (IF RELEVANT) Continue to explore the use of the COUNCIL RUN PERFORMING ARTS SPACES as a creative hub, not just a venue for hire. Consider the use of the space for the performing arts, in addition to the visual arts.
* When programming arts at cultural venues, think outside the square. Offer arts and cultural events that appeal to a range of audiences, that reflect diversity of person, culture, age and situation. Consult with the arts community and the many arts and cultural experts in our area. Advertise these consultations across a range of media and languages.
* Communicate and regularly update the COUNCIL AREA Arts and Culture Policy. Policy at this level needs to provide a clear vision to achieve recognised goals of local importance. Continue to engage with art and culture sector representatives to inform equitable and relevant policies of support and assistance for the local arts ecology.
* Endorse and meaningfully support First Nations arts and cultural activity. This must be central to arts policy to preserve First Nations cultural knowledge and storytelling, and ensure the safety of First Nations Peoples. Without them we have no future.
* Make it easier for local artists to talk to COUNCIL AREA Arts officers and staff.

The Arts and Cultural sector contributes to the health, wellbeing and vibrancy of local communities and stimulates the COUNCIL AREA economy and the broader Victorian and national economy.

**Please tell me how you intend to support COUNCIL AREA’s vibrant, highly-skilled and diverse arts sector in your term as Councillor, should you be elected to serve our community.**

I look forward to your response. If I do not hear back from you, I will interpret your lack of response as disinterest and will cast my vote accordingly.

\* [**DANCE STUDIO OWNER: COVID -19 BUSINESS IMPACT SURVEY (VICTORIA)**](https://www.ausdancevic.org.au/covid-19-impact-survey)

**\*\***[**NAVA submission to the COVID-19 Senate Enquiry**](https://visualarts.net.au/advocacy/industry-advisory-note-covid-19-response/navas-submission-covid-19-senate-inquiry/)

Kind regards,

NAME