

30 January 2025

Parliament of Victoria

Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee

Re: Inquiry into Creative and Cultural Industries in Victoria

To whom it may concern

Ausdance Victoria, as the Creative Victoria funded service organisation for dance, welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on behalf of hundreds of thousands of practising dancers, students, choreographers, teachers, community members and small business owners.

As the peak body for dance in Victoria and Australia's leading dance-specialist Registered Training Organisation, we represent and serve professional performing arts organisations/companies, private education businesses, primary, middle and secondary school educators, tertiary dance/performing arts institutions, festivals, therapists/medical professionals, First Nations Cultural dance and community dance groups, in the arts, education, health, sports and business sectors.

Ausdance Victoria provides training opportunities, workforce and professional development, resource building, policy representation and innovative dance education projects for our members and the broader sector to produce world class artists and add to the economic and social fabric of Victoria.

Recommendations

RECOGNISE THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, HEALTH/WELL-BEING AND CULTURAL VALUE OF DANCE AND THE ARTS IN VICTORIA.

Diversify the funding to other educational organisations to support and grow other forms of dance

Recognise and invest in the social and cultural benefits of dance for all Victorians

Invest in well-supported and resourced arts education in primary, middle and secondary schools.

We will address two of the inquiries' questions – Question 1 and 5.

Question 1 *the economic and social impact of the Commonwealth Government's Australian cultural policy, Revive, on Victoria's arts and cultural industries including, in particular, Victoria's share of national arts and cultural spending;*

Diversify the funding to other educational organisations to support and grow other forms of dance

Ausdance Victoria commends the funding support for the Australian Ballet School as part of the Arts 8 however believes that as the only funded educational provider in Victoria,

a) the diversity of dance in Victoria is not represented by the ballet school alone. Other dance forms require support to continue to grow Victorian world class performers that add to the economic and cultural value of the State e.g. contemporary, street dance and cultural dance and,

b) this represents a career pathway to professional ballet dance but omits the majority of dancers who are benefitting from the social, health and wellbeing and creative thinking benefits that come from dance (see text box below on benefits of dance). These dancers and teachers require investment in their professional development and training to create a safe and inclusive space and support the benefits of dance.

Benefits of dance

*When you dance, you **burn calories, strengthen muscles, improve balance** and your cardiovascular fitness. To dance **strengthens communities**, encourages friendships and releases endorphins, enhancing social bonding. **Dance lessens loneliness**. To dance **creates joy** – it improves mood, increases confidence and compassion. Dancing **lowers anxiety** and reduces the impact of trauma. Dancing **improves cognitive development and memory**. It protects the brain from aging induced neurodegeneration and reduces the perception of pain¹*

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Recognise and invest in the social and cultural benefits of dance for all Victorians

In Australia, 573,726 adults and 387,617 children participate regularly in dance activities.² According to Fitness Australia, dance is the third most popular form of recreational activity. It is a part of everyday Australians' lives, and the diversity and impact of its sectors and industry practice needs recognition in all economic and funding policies.

Nearly 100% of respondents to an Ausdance Vic Survey rated 5 out of 5 as to how important it is to improve access and participation with dance for all

¹ <https://www.verywellmind.com/how-dancing-helps-your-mental-health-5206963>

² https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/research/ausplay/results#data_tables_br_july_2023_june_2024

Victorians, of every age, ability, identity, location and background. With increased investment in support for the dance community, more people will have access dance and the arts for their health and wellbeing.

With a loneliness epidemic, decreases in youth mental health and most children and adults not meeting the minimum requirement for physical activity across the ages, investing in an art form that: *“literally saved my life”* (key informant interview participant) can assist in reversing these trends.

Ausdance Victoria commends the First Nations First pillar in Revive and the funding of NAISDA as an educational organisation for First Nations artists and dancers. For Victoria more **investment in workforce capacity and capability for First Nations dance practitioners, leaders and Communities** is required to enable more sustainable careers, creative and Cultural leadership, products and services.

Victoria, with around 50% of the population being from a Culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) background³, requires **investment in awareness and engagement with culturally diverse dancers** and artists to:

- broaden the audience base for art in Victoria
- to reap the health and wellbeing benefits of from promoting dance for cultural expression and mental, physical and social health.

Ausdance Victoria regularly partners with and employs both First Nations artists and artists and community organisations from CaLD backgrounds.

Question 5 whether the Revive policy and relevant state government policies and spending provide sufficient support and impetus to rebuild and sustain Victoria’s cultural and creative industries following the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector.

Invest in well-supported and resourced arts education in primary, middle and secondary schools.

Arts education in state schools removes barriers to access and opportunities and will result in diverse and representative artistic, cultural and creative output, *uniquely Australian in context*.

However, educators in Victorian schools are not sufficiently well-supported to resourced to teach The Arts. Arts subject associations such as Ausdance Victoria are best placed to deliver educator professional development programs and ongoing support with subject-specific expertise, thus significantly improving the Victorian arts education landscape.

Ausdance Victoria commends the statement from *Revive* below. Dance artists and educators (often the same people) were heavily impacted by the Covid-19

³ abs.gov.au

pandemic and still require support to thrive and realise the statement from *Revive*. A report by the Australia Council (2017) indicated that dance was the most precarious of all arts employment and that dance artists were the lowest paid of all arts workers.

Centrality of the Artist (from Revive)

Continue to support creative practice in the classroom through the delivery of five arts subjects (dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts) under the Australian Curriculum: The Arts, as well as crosscutting general capabilities covering intercultural understanding and critical and creative thinking. • Support specialist in-school arts education programs that directly draw from cultural and creative sector expertise, focussing on areas of identified disadvantage.

Support would look like:

- **Recognition of the centrality of dance education and training to the Victorian dance ecology.** Studio, school, community organisation and tertiary dance education sectors are integral to its success and require support to access spaces, regulatory assistance, child safety support and other small business support. The skills learned through dance are transferable and sought after in careers outside the dance industry. Due to the high numbers of people identifying as females in the dance sector, supporting these organisations has the additional benefit of assisting Victoria in retaining its position as the nation leader in gender equality.

For more information on the above please reach out to myself or the Ausdance Victoria team on the contacts above.

Sincerely,

Deborah Prentice

Managing Director

Ausdance VIC