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COMMITTEE

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ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Monday, 3 July 2023

Members in attendance: Senators Bilyk, Cadell, Grogan, Hanson-Young, Hughes and White

Terms of Reference for the Inquiry:

If not available in Incorps, copy from U:\Administration\Committees\New HPS References or Committee Website (*Small*)

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Committee met at 10:02

CHAIR (Senator Hanson-Young): I declare open this hearing of the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee inquiry into the national cultural policy. I begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, the Kaurna people, and pay my respects to their elders past and present. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today. The committee will be conducting today's hearing in person and via teleconference. These are public proceedings being broadcast live via the parliament's website, and a *Hansard* transcript is being made. I remind all witnesses that in giving evidence to the committee they are protected by parliamentary privilege. It is unlawful for anyone to threaten or disadvantage a witness on account of evidence given to a committee, and any such action may be treated by the Senate as a contempt. It is also a contempt to give false or misleading evidence. Witnesses have the right to request to be heard in-camera. If a witness objects to answering a question, they should state the ground upon which the objection is made and the committee will determine whether it will insist on an answer having regard to the ground on which it is claimed. If the committee determines to insist on an answer, a witness may request the answer be given in-camera. I remind committee members and witnesses who are appearing via teleconference to ask those who are not speaking to mute their microphones. I now welcome representatives from Reset Arts and Culture, the Arts Industry Council of South Australia and Country Arts SA. I'd also note that Professor O'Connor is here via teleconference, and coming from France, where it's 2.30 in the morning. That's commitment. That's the type of South Australian commitment I love to see.

I understand that information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses giving evidence to Senate committees has been provided to you. I'd like to invite you to give a short opening statement. Do any of you have an opening statement you'd like to give us? Then we'll go to questions.

Ms Webb: I especially want to thank the committee for choosing to hold this hearing at Waterside Workers Hall at Yertabulti on unceded land and waters of the Kaurna nation, and the home of Vitalstatistix, my organisation. It's very fitting, I think, to have this hearing at an arts organisation outside of Canberra, outside of the eastern states and in a working-class cultural centre. I think as many of you know the Waterside Workers Hall was built by the Waterside Workers Federation and it was home to them and the Maritime Union of Australia for many years before Vitals took over custodianship around 40 years ago. Of course, it was a union organising hall, but the Waterside Workers Federation built the hall as a cultural place right from the beginning. As you can see from the proscenium stage, the whole hall was built for cultural work by the community here—music, dances, theatre, media production, like the famous Waterside Workers Federation Unit, and many other activities. Paul Robison sang here in 1960. I give you a little bit of this brief background because the Waterside Workers Federation and the Port Adelaide community have always understood the value of art and culture for an expression of humanity and quality of life and for progression of community and society.

Now when my organisation presents things such as experimental performance, new music concerts, contemporary live art and social practice projects, we can naturally situate our programs in the tradition of this hall as a place of cultural democracy. These places offer something quite qualitatively different on a kind of spectrum, I guess, from the provision of Big C public culture, such as large theatres, galleries, institutions, museums on the one hand, and commercialised, transactional, extractive, often individual consumption like Netflix and Spotify on the other. That's something that's very important to take into account in National cultural policy. There's lots to be positive about in terms of the National cultural policy. We certainly acknowledge Minister Burke's urgency to produce this policy early in the government's first term, while also stating that it won't always be perfect and that it's the beginning of a process. We believe there are excellent goals and actions and it's a big step forward in terms of the recognition of the public and purpose and intrinsic value of art and culture as I alluded to at the beginning of my statement.

In an alternative universe, it was very possible that not only would we not have had a National cultural policy but that our very important national statutory authority, the Australia Council, would have been devolved or disappeared. Reset has very strongly argued for an increase in resources and status to the Australia Council. We've done so in the context of arguing that the long-term goal should actually be the establishment of a ministry

for culture in Australia, which we're happy to speak more to in questions. We do note that the government's own National Cultural Policy Independent Advisory Group itself also made this recommendation in its longer term five-year-plus recommendations in its report on the national cultural policy.

With significant investment in the renamed Creative Australia from Saturday, via the national cultural policy, as you know, this included the establishment of four new centres within the structure of Creative Australia. Around this issue we raised three points for consideration. One is a really great need for attention to the governance and real clarity around the roles of these new centres and, most importantly, that they are public sector focused and not captured by commercial remits in the case of literature and music. Also, that in the case of the new Centre for Creative Workplaces that this centre is really able to drive major change and policy change, not simply act as a clearinghouse for complaints.

Secondly, we draw attention to the need to consider other art forms and the development of art form and multidisciplinary art forms, in particular experimental and emerging art, community and cultural development and art forms such as dance, all of which need greater attention and are not necessarily commercially focused in the way that music or literature may be able to be.

Then thirdly—and this is a very important point—that new investment into Creative Australia does not only go to the establishment of new bureaucracy. Acknowledging that one of the things that needs to happen across Australia really is the rebuilding of policy capacity of public sectors in Australia so we're less reliant on gifters like the PWC. It is also really important that the funding that goes into the arts goes to artists themselves and arts organisations.

Finally, some of you may be aware that currently Australia's small to medium sector is halfway through what's called the four-year funding process within the Australia Council, Creative Australia. This is the main way that the federal government funds the small to medium sector, and as it's named—four years—it will be funding the sector for the majority of the national cultural policy.

What is a little bit disappointing is it does seem to be that a lot of the money that has gone to the Australian Council and the setting up of Creative Australia is not necessarily flowing into these types of programs. The expression of interest process was completed in June. Of 370 applications, only 40 per cent have got through to the second stage, and 80 per cent of those were asked to reduce their indicative funding ask in the next second stage of the application process.

CHAIR: Ms Webb, what was that figure for?

Ms Webb: That's for the four-year funding program of the Australia Council. If we are to see arts and culture revived in Australia, we need to be funding the small and medium sector and it's not too late for the government to reconsider the allocation of funding to this particular program. Thank you again for your time and for being here. I do hope that you have the spirit of 100 years of cultural work in this place with you in your considerations today.

CHAIR: Ms Alice, have you got anything to add?

Ms Alice: Yes, and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and for holding this committee hearing here on beautiful unceded Kaurna country. I'm here as the Chair of the Arts Industry Council of South Australia, the independent representative body for the state's arts and cultural sector. The Arts Industry Council acknowledges that Revive is the first national cultural policy in a decade, and we congratulate Minister Burke on his dedication and swift action in bringing it into being. We appreciate many of the areas of focus within Revive, including a genuine commitment to first nations arts and culture, the long overdue funding for literature, an artform that has been neglected for decades, and a focus on artists as workers and the measures to address the low wages and precarity of the workforce. This reflects a government that has heard the voice of the sector.

The Arts Industry Council emphasises that the demand among the sector is very great. Artists and arts and cultural organisations have been starved and undermined for so long that there is now so much work to be done to fix it. We believe such a task requires a dedicated ministry of culture in order to best serve this complex arts ecology, which spans many art forms that have specific needs of their own. This would allow the government to deliver the national cultural policy in a way that intersects with other parts of public policy, just as the arts are intertwined with civil society.

Art is for everyone and it is an essential aspect of the human experience. However, we know that artists are among those on the lowest incomes, as acknowledged by Revive. We would like to see additional lines of thought between arts policy that improves the material conditions of artists as workers alongside other measures to reduce inequality. These include more public housing and rent freezes to address the housing crisis, greater rights for renters, many of whom are artists, including access to energy efficiency schemes like solar and electric vehicles,

more investment into public transport infrastructure and action on climate change, which we know will disproportionately affect those on low incomes who may not be able to endure extreme weather events. In closing, we welcome the ambition and the vision of Revive, and we stress that we need to continue to think about arts policy holistically, particularly how it intersects with other parts of public policy, or else we risk a world where only the wealthy can afford a life in art.

CHAIR: Mr Peluso.

Mr Peluso: I too acknowledge that we're here on Kaurna country and pay my respects to elders past and present and to all first nations people in attendance. I'm the Chief Executive at Country Arts SA and have worked for the organisation for almost 15 years. 2023 marks 30 years for our organisation. I start this morning by applauding the government on the release of Revive, a cultural policy that our country has needed for some time.

I'd like to make note of the points that align with our focus at Country Arts, particularly the establishment of a first nations-led body, and another to ensure creative workers are paid fairly and have safe workplaces. Additionally, the restoration of the Australia Council's funding and particularly for us at Country Arts SA the increase to the Regional Arts Fund by \$8.5 million.

I'd like to share one example of our work which shows what it takes to support new arts workers in the regions, and for which there is increasing demand across regional communities in South Australia. Last year we entered a new partnership with the Art Gallery of South Australia and the Tarnanthi Festival. This enables the employment of Marika Davies as a regional curator. Marika lives and works as a regional curator in Port Augusta. She started as a curatorial mentee on Country Arts SA's First Nations exhibition Vietnam-One In, All In, curated by Jessica Clark. From there, she won a position as a first nations arts and cultural facilitator, supported both by Country Arts SA and the City of Port Augusta. These opportunities over the course of three years provided her with the experience of working with regional first nations artists and communities that she needed to secure this curatorial position.

Outcomes such as this are only possible by securing multiple sources of investment through partnerships. They result in projects with deeper impacts for the local community and they resonate nationally. There's arguably therefore a greater need for federal funding to leverage those partnerships.

As a statutory authority, Country Arts SA finds itself caught within existing funding programs. We're not considered a major organisation, and yet we're seen as too big when competing with independent arts companies. And that's understandable. Our remit is broad and that makes the situation even more complex. So, whilst Revive does much to support our industry to thrive, there exists an opportunity for government to consider how to provide organisations such as Country Arts SA with the investment required to build the regional arts sector sustainably, and partner with regional organisations to support a greater diversity of artists, the creation of new work and contribute to a country richer with stories from across the land.

CHAIR: Senator Grogan.

Senator GROGAN: I'm very excited to be in my own backyard. This is such an amazing venue. Port Adelaide has such a deep artistic history. It's excellent that we're here today. Mr Peluso, you were talking about the \$8.5 million for country arts. What's that going to achieve?

Mr Peluso: The \$8.5 million is an uplift in the Regional Arts Fund, which supports regional arts activity nationally. In South Australia that particularly will support independent artists, arts organisations and community groups across regional South Australia to meet their cultural ambitions. It will provide professional development opportunities for artists and the support needed for vital projects with community groups and arts organisations right across regional South Australia.

Senator GROGAN: One point I'd quite like everyone's opinion on is the whole idea of actually valuing artists and improving that kind of workplace art scenario. Do you have a perspective on that? Maybe we'll start with Mr Peluso.

Mr Peluso: On artists particularly?

Senator GROGAN: On the industry in terms of trying to make more secure employment for people. I'd be keen to understand from the policy how you see that unpacking on the ground?

Mr Peluso: There's myriad responses to that. It takes a whole sector to provide that sustainability. Investing in arts organisations to employ artists and arts workers in a more sustainable way would be probably the central point I'd make. As illustrated in my case study, it actually requires organisations to work collaboratively across the sector and to understand the value of working locally as much as working nationally, and with that network of

organisations and investment in arts organisations particularly we can build that sustainability and reduce the precarity that artists currently find themselves within.

Ms Alice: Some of the areas of focus for the Arts Industry Council are around the conditions for artists, some of the basic things that we probably don't realise that artists are often going without, which is things like portable long service leave entitlements. Often artists are employed on a contract basis and often without the same entitlements that those who are otherwise employed by a large organisation might receive. There are a few things around that can make them more secure. Also, that sort of gig contract work is often a piecemeal or sporadic engagement. Some of my colleagues at Reset Collective, I'm sure, can speak more on this. We've been looking into other forms of employment for artists. So, perhaps looking at things like fellowships, company models where artists are employed on a longer term basis to give them the stability and greater income protections they deserve in their work.

Ms Webb: It's such a massive issue. We've had 40 years of artists basically being told they're very small businesses rather than workers. The kind of sole trading business mentality that is amongst freelance artists and the way the organisations trade on that really does need to be looked at through this new centre and through various I guess procurement policies around how funding is given to organisations that makes them actually follow the law, which is an issue. Then I think the broader issue is around what does the future of work and income look like? Artists are actually a really great kind of cohort along with other precariat workers to think about the kinds of trialling of things like basic incomes or other ways to look at income and work and other antipoverty measures that might be available to government.

Dr Barnett: I think the idea of having a pillar of Revive being one of centrality of the artist is a fundamental shift in cultural policy and a really important one. We can't quite tell how that's going to eventuate. I think having a centre for workplaces, for arts and entertainment is an important initiative, but a lot of the language seems to focus towards the safety of the workplace, which is an important thing, especially these years after the MeToo movement. But I'm worried that the artists as workers will get lost in that division of work in that centre. In my interviews with artists, we see a lot of people on fellowships having an opportunity to pursue their practice in a completely different way that has longitudinal benefit, ongoing benefit for not only those artists but for the broader sector as well. We would like to see more fellowships. The policy mentions residencies more than fellowships, and we would like to see more fellowships and see that as a stepping stone towards a basic income trial for artists, because we think that would be revolutionary here in the arts. You also mentioned the word 'value' in your question. I think there's a lot to be thought about in terms of how we value different parts of the sector in this policy. While the policy itself uses a lot of different forms of the word 'value', it uses economic value quite a bit but it also uses the word 'intrinsic value' at one point and, in talking about the whole-of-government measuring what matters process, the policy talks about the broader cultural, social and economic value of the arts. I really want to point out the importance of that ordering of those three items, cultural, social, economic value. That's a great thing. Where I get concerned here as well is, when we look at the actions in Revive, they don't talk about any mechanism by which cultural or social value will be incorporated, only economic value, only quantitative value. Fixing the ABS and the cultural and leisure statistics is a really important thing to do. That's great, but in those actions we're not seeing that broader sense of value being recognised. That's because it's a really hard thing to do. It's very hard to measure forms of value beyond economic and participation, crude bums on seats numbers. Because it's hard, it gets missed out. I want to see Revive being used as an opportunity to do the difficult work, to find out how to better measure other forms of value beyond the economic, because that is how we can lead us out of this problem of culture as only industry rather than culture as a public value. I would then go to my colleague Professor Justin O'Connor. If you are happy, we might ask him to provide that on notice, that statement, since he can't connect, if that's okay?

Senator GROGAN: Yes.

CHAIR: We're very happy to do that.

Senator BILYK: That was one of my questions to the group. What other metrics could we use to assess the public value of art, specifically for the purpose of grant funding? Have you got any suggestions for us?

Dr Barnett: Yes. Luckily the field of heterodox economics is starting to provide us some answers that might be useful for this exercise. Economist Kate Raworth is famous for her book *Doughnut Economics*. I don't know if you know anything about this, but there's an outer ring which is beyond which the planet cannot accept anymore growth without devastation, and there's an inner ring of the doughnut beyond which society cannot be allowed to fall because of the safety and protectiveness of vulnerable citizens. We have to keep our activity within these two rings. I'll note that climate change was something that was missing in the Revive document. It's mentioned once in a case study only. Heterodox economists are providing us the capacity to bring these things together in an

important way. Kate Raworth talks about those foundational components of arts and culture. In her early thinking on this, she misses out a little bit about arts and culture. She talks about violinists, kids having access to violin lessons, for example. But we'd think that when this exercise is deployed in different cities—and we saw it deployed in Melbourne when they created their own Melbourne doughnut—the Melbourne citizens would not allow arts and culture to be missing from the doughnut. We think of a public value approach that uses heterodox economics methodologies to understand arts and culture as a foundational component for all of society alongside education, health and other forms of the SDGs, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which do this work as well. We just need to make sure that arts and culture is there, because then we can trust that the assessment methodologies will be relevant, inclusive and forward thinking and create a planet that we can all survive on. Heterodox economics, is my answer.

CHAIR: Senator Cadell.

Senator CADELL: I'm the token philistine on the board and I'm immersing myself in culture a bit. I have a very strong regional background and tie in with some of the stuff. When I was going through your website. Mr Peluso, access is different on the ground for arts. There aren't the same support structures. Digital should go some way towards fixing that, but a lot of people I've spoken to have questions about that. One of the things on your website interested me, the GAL program, Guarantee Against Loss. What's the scope of that in terms of overall value and is it working or is it something that needs more work?

Mr Peluso: The GAL program, the Guarantee Against Loss program, speaks directly to a program that we've been running successfully for many years at Country Arts called Shows on the Road. That program is a mixture of Country Arts working with mostly independent artists in South Australia and supporting them to tour through regional South Australia to present their performances. They work in small halls. We work very directly with local volunteer groups in about 25 different towns across the state. Not only does the Shows on the Road program provide extra employment for independent artists; it provides very necessary cultural opportunities that community groups are looking for. The Guarantee Against Loss program is an element of that, where in fact those individual community groups can reach out to Country Arts for a guarantee against loss for their own performances they wish to put on. We've seen that program grow as a result of the support that Country Arts is giving to those community groups to be part of the larger conversation that happens both statewide and nationally around touring.

One element of that that we're particularly keen to focus on is in fact the touring of work that comes from the regions. This is something that I think is a great area of growth and something that the cultural policy could see as an opportunity to provide greater diversity in terms of what's being offered across the state and nationally.

Senator CADELL: We had some conversations as a group before—and Senator Grogan has been helpful on this—that artists across regional Australia or New South Wales, where I'm from, don't feel connected and feel they're missing out on opportunities. Some of the low-hanging fruit we're able to start progressing is a single source of plays, scripts, licensed material for production in a library that are currently in development, and also a script or an audition base or opportunity based website for art where these people can get involved and feel connected. What can we do more and spend more on in the bush to connect these people, these creative minds, that are alone? They're in their homes. They're knocking themselves out. They're writing, they're creating, they're working, but they don't have the network to support them. Are we seeing anything in this document or anything with what you're doing that has worked for this and can lower these barriers?

Ms Alice: I might just pick up on the point of the small to medium organisations, which Emma Webb mentioned in her opening statement. In regional locations and in any part of the country as well—in cities also—it's often the small organisations that are the ones that are deeply connected with communities. Those small organisations might be small independent theatre companies, they might be writers centres or they might be craft organisations. These are the ones that are on the ground. They're often membership organisations. They are deeply entwined with their membership. They might present events and they might provide other skills and services.

These small to medium organisations receive the least funding out of the bulk of what we put into arts spending, and yet they are on the ground and they're also the place where we see that really vital funnel of artists coming through. Often, when they get their start, they might be learning their trade at small organisations. They're also places that are producing the most experimental and exciting work that may end up on some of the big stages. So ensuring that we can get more investment to those small to medium organisations, including those small to medium orgs in the regions, is that crucial first step to increasing participation, engaging people who might be isolated, young people, and ensuring they can have access to culture so it's not only the big shows with a big ticket price that they can get to.

Ms Webb: I think from memory the national cultural policy refers to small and medium organisations as the vertebrae of the sector. We like to talk about ecology, and there are all these different ways to talk about that kind of connection, but I think we all know in our own lives it is those small businesses, small groups of people on the ground, that actually do that work of connecting people into opportunities. I heard there is a slight suspicion about some of the digital stuff. I have the same thing. AI can be quite isolating. Secondly, it's also an issue around digital access. We know that's not as high in regional communities or in places like Port Adelaide. There's evidence that digital access is lower in suburbs like Port Adelaide. I think the thing about those types of organisations that are on the ground is that they really do the kind of work of community building and solidarity building through art and culture and are much more connected to our notions of leisure and recreation as well. When you think about community sport and art in communities, there's so much more in common there than we might actually think.

Senator CADELL: The sport analogy you're talking about is a great one. That's how I've gone about my indoctrination. If you look at culture and arts policy as in globo, and sports—there are many sports I dislike tremendously. But in sport there is something I love. In arts I think it's diversity of product and brand. Ballet is not my bag, not by a long way. I'm not built for it! But there are things that you love, and diversity of product is what we want. I think that comes from, as you say, the independent small thinkers. You've raised bringing up the cutting edge and so on. My joke earlier today was that, with 600,000 people buying Fringe tickets, maybe it should be called 'Mainstream' from now on. What is going on at those edges of diversity, on those differentiated approaches, so we're not getting same-speak—we're not getting everyone marching in the same direction? What's going to help diversity of arts?

Dr Barnett: We know with sport that there is a direct connection between the kids football clubs and the sport that we see on TV. It's the same with arts and culture. Revive can be commended for including arts education and so arts in the curriculum. But what's missing here a bit is other forms of access to arts that are outside formal schooling—which doesn't work for a lot of children. I'm sure that will come up later today. That ecosystem is really important. That's where we drive full understanding, full literacy, full access and participation. I would also recommend focusing on the arts for the health and wellbeing elements that are in the policy as well. Arts for Health had a framework that never got implemented 10 years ago. We need to draw arts and health towards arts for wellbeing, because that is when these benefits flow out to the whole sector, the small to mediums, and end up on our main stages.

Mr Peluso: To pick up on a couple of those points, many of the regional arts organisations around the country actually have cultural facilitators, arts officers on the ground, and it's that personable one-on-one approach right across the sector, whether we're talking about within schools, in school groups, or we're talking about independent artists, those who are trying workshops for the first time, right through to when the ballet tours to a town. I can speak from our point of view here in South Australia. It's our team of cultural facilitators who work in partnership with local government that really make the difference because they're able to bring the national conversation and they're able to bring the knowledge of working with other arts organisations across the state to that local conversation and really understand where that community is at right now. How would it like to grow? Where are the areas for skills development et cetera, but also how does the community want to celebrate? How does the community want to mark important moments for them across any given year? It's those facilitators who are at the centre of that conversation who are best placed to help to bring that to fruition.

Ms Webb: Going back to a previous question, what we need to make sure of is that, with this kind of work that happens in communities and in regional locations and through local government and so on, artists are getting paid. Artists are driven by their practice, wanting to work with communities, and a sense of social good and purpose. Unfortunately that does result in a sense sometimes of self-exploitation and just very low pay or a sense of having to take that opportunity, but also wanting to take an opportunity in your own community. While we want to talk about the social and public purpose of art, we also need to make sure that's not exploitative of artists themselves who are subsidising the sector through their unpaid or underpaid labour.

Senator CADELL: You raised early school sport and these sorts of things. Is there a focus where we should be looking at a cultural policy of using artists away from their creative time to educate these people at a younger level and get them involved in earlier stages of their life? In a previous relationship we had a ballet studio with 2,000 kids in it. It was just an introductory thing—preschool ballet. But we were able to use artists to come down and teach, and they were deriving an income at that level. Does the cultural policy need to look at educating earlier and engaging artists in other ways in the form?

Ms Webb: Yes. We've talked about the idea of basic income, and Dr Barnett has introduced the idea around different forms of heterodox economics. One of the other things that has been in the conversation is this idea of

public job guarantees, and those kinds of programs where we can rebuild the public sector, rebuild education, rebuild regional communities by having public employment programs of artists in schools, in health services and in local communities. That would be an excellent initiative to come out of the national cultural policy, creating employment across different sectors for artists.

CHAIR: Dr Barnett, you mentioned the difference between a residency versus a fellowship. I guess that's going to this point. I think it would be an incredible step forward if there was money put aside to establish an artist-in-residence in every school in the country, an artist-in-residence in libraries, and an artist-in-residence in aged-care homes. There are so many ways you could link the public good through some type of public funding system as well. Is that the type of distinction, Dr Barnett, that you're describing between a fellowship and a residency?

Dr Barnett: I think residencies are really important. They tend to be shorter term and instrumental in the outcomes sought from them. Fellowships enable artists to be in control of their work for a longer period, to use it in the best way they see fit to create brilliant artistic outcomes, and then basic incomes would be the next step for that. I think residencies are really important. I guess the point here is that it is an ecosystem, that we need all of these things in play in order to be able to create a really strong foundation for arts and culture in Australia.

CHAIR: It's that step, isn't it, between providing avenues for employment, but also a fundamental understanding that art and creativity is a public good. So where do we need to be building that from, the foundation? Where's that old school community hub by which creativity is supported as well?

Dr Barnett: Luckily, you're sitting in one right now. This is a model example of a community hub that works in exactly the way you are describing, and we need to make that accessible to more locations.

CHAIR: Ms Webb, did you want to jump in there?

Ms Webb: I think for a long time arts policy has focused on increasing money into the granting pool, and that is completely important and legitimate, and you can understand why. It's such a small part of the pie, and we've had 10 years of cuts. I think what we do need to make sure is that we also are looking at other policy levers, such as basic income, other types of employment programs and a whole range of other kinds of levers and policy levers. That's one of the reasons we think, in the longer term, a ministry for culture can actually have more power across government at a cabinet level to be able to connect cultural policy into a whole range of other areas of government.

The national cultural policy has that ambition, but on its own, without more resources and funnelled purely through one statutory authority, we're concerned it doesn't have enough power to do that. Creative Australia is going to be the main lever for all of this policy. We think there need to be a broader set of levers.

CHAIR: Yes, and I understand the point around, in particular, independent artists and the small and medium companies and businesses really falling through the cracks. Creative Australia is obviously an expanded remit from the Australia Council, but you can clearly see where the small creative businesses are going to fall through the cracks.

Ms Alice: Yes, absolutely. There's so much to do because, as we say, this policy is coming after a decade since the previous one. So there's a lot of work to do—a lot that we're catching up on. But as we've sort of indicated and with some of these discussions around artists in schools, artists in other public institutions, there are very clear ways that the arts intersects with other policy areas. This policy is ambitious and it aims to do a lot. It's incredible to see. We do think having a ministry will be the best way to achieve that and also allow arts policies to intersect with, say, education, health and these other parts of public life that it needs to, and to be able to have the resources and the ability to do some of that really big thinking.

CHAIR: So that it's not seen purely through this prism of arts but in fact the prism of creativity for public good, whether it's education, health or ageing?

Ms Alice: That's right.

CHAIR: Finally, Mr Peluso, on that point one of the things that strike me from answers to Senator Cadell is that not only are those small arts based organisations in rural and regional areas the best litmus tests of what's going on in a community; they are often left carrying the can when there's been a local trauma or some type of emergency. It seems that in a small town—I say this as someone who grew up in the bush—everything that happens in that town affects everyone. It doesn't get diluted as it does in the big metro cities or even a city the size of Adelaide. What happens in the town affects everyone. The arts community in those situations end up carrying a lot of the brunt of how a community deals with it.

Mr Peluso: You're entirely correct. The thing we all need to pay attention to around that is actually what that community wants to do about that, because too often what we see is that organisations that mean well come into regional centres to provide a diversion or a way of dealing with situations that that community is actually wrestling with. But the fact is that, unless you live and work in that place, you don't really understand what is the best response there.

I think that's definitely where Country Arts plays a role. By having staff in those regions and broadly across the state, as do many organisations across other states, they have that deep understanding: 'What is the right response here? We don't just need the circus to come into town'—or that could be part of the response. Actually what we might need is just an opportunity to stop, talk, ask questions and listen. We do a lot of that in our work. Out of that, a lot of great art manifests and becomes an artwork, which we then share back with that community, and then with their permission actually share with other communities. What we find is that those important moments in one community's life resonate very deeply with many other communities, not just in regional areas but also in metro areas. It really is that opportunity for organisations like Country Arts. Vitalstatistix is another great example—how it lives and breathes in this community and understands that listening to members of this community is actually the starting point. Artists in those circumstances are the best beacons for that work because they both understand the community and understand how that can be transformed into something that gives us all an opportunity to work through those situations and find our own responses in relation to that.

CHAIR: Our next witness is the Adelaide Fringe. I know this year in particular there were quite a few events that happened outside of the metro setting. What type of relationship has Regional Arts SA got with organisations like the Adelaide Fringe?

Mr Peluso: I feel very fortunate that in Country Arts SA we work with quite a lot of agencies across South Australia, and the Fringe has definitely been one of them. We've had a very productive relationship establishing Fringes in many regional settings—Mount Gambier, on Kangaroo Island, for example. I know the Fringe has also taken the lead in other places such as Whyalla. There's a relationship there about understanding who has the expertise and the connections and the right ways to move forward with different communities, and we continue to work with the Fringe in that way.

CHAIR: Thank you so much. I'm sorry we didn't get to hear from Professor O'Connor, but we will get him to forward his opening statement and, if we've got any follow-up questions, we'll ask him. Thank you very much.

ANTHONEY, Ms Christie, Head of Public Affairs, Adelaide Festival Centre

CROALL, Ms Heather, Director and Chief Executive Officer, Adelaide Fringe

GAUTIER, Mr Douglas, Chief Executive Officer and Artistic Director, Adelaide Festival Centre

JOCHYM, Ms Justyna, Chief Executive, Festival City Adelaide

O'CALLAGHAN, Ms Jo, Executive Director, Programs and Development, Adelaide Fringe [via audio link]

[10:51]

CHAIR: I now welcome representatives from the Adelaide Fringe, the Festival City of Adelaide, and the Adelaide Festival Centre. I understand that information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses giving evidence to Senate committees has been provided to you. I now invite you to make a short opening statement, if each of the organisations has one, and then we'll go to some questions.

Ms Croall: I'd just like to start by acknowledging that we're meeting on the land of the Kaurna people today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to any First Nations people here or listening/tuning in. I'm the Director at the Adelaide Fringe. Adelaide Fringe is over 60 years old, and every year we attract 6,000 to 7,000 artists. We're an open-access festival. Anybody can put on a show. We have small shows and large shows across 500 venues in hundreds of areas. It's all across the state. We have shows in rural, regional and suburban areas and in the CBD. This year we achieved a big milestone: selling a million tickets. Hundreds of thousands of audience members came along.

The Adelaide Fringe aims to be as inclusive and accessible as possible, and also as affordable as possible. It is a big challenge because the artists and venues make their money predominantly from the ticket price. When we have an average ticket price of around \$35, it's a very challenging scenario where box office is the majority source of the way to pay for the artists, the venues and the shows. We have great success in one way, but then in another way it's a very delicate ecosystem of thousands of artists trying to make funds break even from their box office.

We have over 4,500 Australian artists in the Adelaide Fringe every year, around 800 premieres—these shows are launching—and we have an industry marketplace that thrives behind the scenes. Hundreds of programmers come to Adelaide Fringe from all over the world to select shows for touring. We're very much a launchpad, a springboard, for Australian artists and artists from all over the world—but predominantly Australian artists.

We get absolutely no federal funding whatsoever. We've applied every year for major project funding. We don't get it. We do get support from the South Australian government. But, as I say, box office is the majority of how the Adelaide Fringe works. We would love to see festival representation in the cultural Australia structure, and I'm sure that Ms Jochym from Festival City Adelaide will talk more about that.

We would love to see assessments that focus on community impact and engagement and not just excellence, because the community engagement and impact we have at Fringe is so significant for hundreds of small to medium artists, and often they launch their touring deals for the next few years at Fringe as well. The only time we've ever had significant federal funding was through the RISE program, and we gave out every single dollar of what we raised. We gave it to the artists and venues. We gave it to the ecosystem to put on their shows. I would like to just highlight in the mix how important venues are in the arts ecosystem as well. It is really critical that venues are supported as well as all the artists. Every year we try to give the best platform possible to artists not only to make their income from box office but also to launch touring deals and create partnerships at the Adelaide Fringe.

Ms Jochym: Thank you so much for the opportunity to present here today. I too would like to acknowledge the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. Arts and cultural festivals, particularly not-for-profit ones, have a profound impact on many dimensions of our society and intersect with numerous policy areas. While these festivals yield significant positive outcomes, they also face multiple challenges that hinder their long-term sustainability in Australia. It is critical to address prevailing business and policy conditions that limit the ability of our arts festival sector to thrive, lead and achieve its goals.

From the Festival City Adelaide submission to the national cultural policy consultation, I've selected a few points to focus on today. Artists and audiences are the cornerstones of a successful festival sector. That is why we fully support advocacy around a basic universal income for artists and the calls made by our colleagues on the panel prior. We also strongly appeal to government to establish a national program to help schools increase children's participation in the arts and connect them with community, borrowing from the good practice and example of the federal initiative called Supporting Schools.

Skills shortages in festivals and live performance require fast and smart intervention. States need to be both empowered and resourced to deliver programs that bolster the visibility and long-term viability of skills and career pathways in the sector. The situation requires a federally coordinated approach that stimulates cooperation between states because the issues are systemic. Again, I refer to the previous panel, which so eloquently discussed those issues.

We applaud the recent consultation led by the Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research around the Cultural and Creative Activity Satellite Accounts methodology. This is but a small step, and we urge deeper interrogations into challenges related to workforce data development, assessment and precarity. We need federal schemes that stimulate participation in traineeships, internships, fellowships and mentorships to consider our industry so that we can incentivise new entrants into the arts and festival sector and look after those seeking to upskill and retrain.

As my colleague Heather Croall has alluded to, there are very few dedicated funding pathways for festivals at the national level, the Festivals Australia grant scheme being one of them. Investment opportunities tend to be artform specific with limited options available to optimise the role festivals play in our arts ecosystem, especially those that offer development and export pathways for local and national artists. Developing specific investment pathways for research, development and innovation across urban, suburban and regional festivals would support amplifying the national value and impact of our festivals. That is why we also repeat the call to have festivals included in the Creative Australia framework. We applaud the commitment in Revive to a music festivals research project due in early 2024. But to understand the breadth and impact of festivals in Australia we need to go beyond the commercial music industry. We need to understand the accessibility, sustainability, volunteering and employment issues that are so prevalent.

Despite substantial evidence collated by the Australia Council into the impacts of international and domestic arts and cultural tourism in 2018 and 2020 respectively, as well as research conducted at state level, arts and culture remains at the periphery of significant tourism and investment, development schemes and growth incentives. Arts tourists are high-value tourists. They're more likely to stay longer, travel farther and spend more than any other leisure tourist overall. If we want to leverage the potential, we need recognition across government of the economic imperative in arts and cultural tourism. It is a two birds, one stone scenario which could support sustainable growth of both tourism and arts sectors, including festivals and events.

Lastly, we need to demonstrate leading environmental responsibility by weaving ambitions pertaining to climate action and the reduction of arts' ecological footprint into any national cultural policy. The arts won't solve the climate crisis, but they can encourage climate action. Without environmental responsibility at the core of what we do Australia risks not being a contemporary of leading arts centres globally. We only need to look to our colleagues in Europe, Canada and the UK to realise we have a lot of catching up to do and our competitive advantage is at stake.

Festival City Adelaide is the only state based peak body for festivals in Australia. We are artform agnostic. We work with film and visual arts, cabaret, music, multimedia and multicategory festivals, including the ones on the panel here today. With a focus on advocacy, research and sector development we provide a valuable service on behalf of a sector that already has a lot on its plate. Peak bodies and service organisations address local challenges, leverage economies of scale and galvanise collaboration around systemic issues. In short, we need them, and we urge government to also actively strengthen pathways to cooperation with industry bodies, both state and national.

CHAIR: Mr Gautier.

Mr Gautier: Let me also acknowledge that we meet today on the traditional land of the Kurna people. I wanted to raise three policy points, one to do with the involvement of the state based cultural institutions or organisations, meaning the galleries, the art centres and the museums. Secondly, I wanted to talk briefly about Asia Pacific connections and, thirdly, about integrations and connections with the tertiary training and research sector in Creative Arts. As to the first issue, in terms of the institutions themselves, previously it was pretty much siloed. These organisations—and I'm referring to the state performing arts centres, galleries and museums, which have a lot of heft—have continuity, and they have resources. But previously from a policy point of view they weren't very strongly involved with the Australia Council. I think that's a pity and it's a missed opportunity, because the combined forces there really can, I think, work to more effect. I would hope that going forward those cultural institutions and all they do will be sewn more solidly into a strategic overview with the federal initiatives.

Secondly, talking about Asia Pacific, I think cultural engagement in our region is really so important. There is a lot of good work being done, particularly from DFAT and the Australia nation councils like NFACR, the Korea council, et cetera. There is work being done, or that has been done in the past by the Australia Council. My own

organisation, Asia Pacific Art Centres Association, chaired here in Australia, with about 70 members across Asia Pacific, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. This city worked towards convening the first Asia Pacific Creative Cities meeting. All of that's important, and it's good work, but it's not very well coordinated, in my view. It's a very important initiative and timing for us to be culturally engaged with soft power in our region, particularly given the current political circumstances.

This is really just a plea, maybe through this policy setting, to effect a more coordinated approach in terms of cultural engagement with Asia. My final point would be in terms of the sector's formal engagement with tertiary training and research. I think when we look elsewhere across the globe we see places like Lincoln Centre and Juilliard or Barbican and the Guildhall, and most recently in our region great work being done in this area in Korea and in Singapore with the newly created Singapore Arts University working very closely with the creative arts sector in Singapore. We see some initiatives in this area, say, with Griffith University and Queensland Performing Arts Centre, and I think some initiatives here with the Festival Centre and the sector with our three universities. Overall I think it's an area which, from a policy setting point of view, bears more investigation.

CHAIR: Firstly, just on the Adelaide Fringe success, I know last week you launched the Impact report. The economic figures in here are extraordinary. Could you just for the sake of this committee give us a sense of where the Adelaide Fringe sits with comparable festivals around the world?

Ms Croall: The Adelaide Fringe is the second biggest arts festival in the world and by far the biggest arts festival in Australia. As I mentioned, we sold a million tickets this year and we have had our economic assessment done by independent economists. Our impact on the South Australian economy was \$105.5 million injected into the economy as a result of Adelaide Fringe. We have very strong tourist numbers. Ms Jochym talked about how cultural tourists stay longer and spend well. We see our cultural tourists coming to Adelaide Fringe spending \$3,420 per tourist. There's a huge injection into the economy that happens as a result of the Fringe. The number of shows that we have on across the whole state means we're activating suburban communities and regional communities. Yes, there's significant activity in the CBD, but of the 500 venues 300 of them are in the suburbs and the regions. We're really seeing artists getting involved across the whole state. The range of shows goes from very small first-timers making their first-ever appearance to very well established artists as well. The range is extremely broad. Our demographic attending the Fringe is unusual. It's very unique to see a festival that attracts three, four or five generations in the audience equally. We have very young audiences. We've got a very successful schools program. We have a lot of younger audiences, people in their 20s, 30s and 40s. We don't have one particular age demographic. A lot of people in our surveys say that the Fringe is the first time they've engaged in the arts. We're really training a lot of audiences to engage in the arts, and we're also giving opportunities for artists to get on a platform, make the most of being able to be seen not only by the audiences who are buying the tickets and coming, but the in excess of 350 programmers from all over the world and all over Australia who come here to book those artists and scout for talent. The figures and the impact are broad from tourism to arts opportunities and audience discovery.

CHAIR: It's the second largest in the world and the largest in the country, and yet you don't get any ongoing federal funding at all?

Ms Croall: No.

CHAIR: I find that extraordinary. It's a feather in your cap but it also seems to me to be something that needs to be addressed. Why would federal funding be important?

Ms Croall: The federal funding would be critical for us because we can then disburse the funds out to the Australian artists and venues in the festival ecosystem. The ecosystem of the Fringe, as I've said, is very delicately balanced. There's a sense that because it's so successful, because so many people turn up, it's commercial; it's really not. A lot of people in the Fringe break even. A lot of people do not break even. Some people are there for other reasons, hopefully to get tours and things. But whenever we unlock funds, we always disburse it to the artists to lower the risk. We sold about \$25 million worth of tickets. The risk the artists and the venues are taking is around \$25 or more million every year. The cost of living crisis is a challenge for us coming up. The cost of presenting shows is only going up as well—the cost of building the sites and putting on the power and so on. Federal funding for us would be critical to make sure that artists and venues can continue to put shows on in the Fringe. As we did with the RISE money, we would disburse it to Australian artists and venues to help them lower that risk. They will still be taking a risk. The Fringe model will require that. But they won't be taking 100 per cent. They might take 90 per cent of the risk. Our disbursing of the RISE money was absolutely why we could continue during those tough COVID years. We disbursed that money out to hundreds of artists and dozens of venues, and that made all the difference. The lack of festivals representation in the Australia Council structure and even now going forward in Creative Australia's structure is a real concern, because festivals play such a big part. I think

focusing on festivals that create opportunities for Australian artists is something that could be worth looking at. The platform we're providing is unique. The audiences we bring to them and the industry opportunities. You never know who you're sitting next to in Adelaide Fringe. You might be sitting next to someone who programs the Lincoln Centre or the Soho Theatre in London or a big festival in Germany or a television program. Lots of TV talent shows come to Adelaide Fringe. You see Adelaide Fringe artists winning *America's Got Talent*, *Britain's Got Talent* and *Australia's Got Talent*. You see them everywhere and it's because we brought them here in the industry program. The very small one-off bit of funding we got this year from Australia Council was \$30,000 to bring South American festival directors and programmers into our industry marketplace. We were very grateful for it, but we would love to see that as an ongoing support piece. The more industry programmers we can bring here the more opportunities there are. We see Adelaide Fringe artists touring the world as a result of the meetings that we know we set up. So, it's meetings by day and shows by night, business and partying all at once.

CHAIR: You made the point that festivals often are the first time audience members engage with creativity. From a Festival City of Adelaide perspective, how important is it that policy makers such as ourselves understand it is a gateway? You mentioned children's participation being essential. Without a kind of festival culture it's a lot more risk and a lot more bureaucracy for a government, whether local, state, federal or agency, to commit to an ongoing program. Whereas actually supporting audience participation through a festival to kind of see how it goes seems a much more efficient use of funds.

Ms Jochym: Festivals play an important role and function and they're really responsive and responsible for a lot of disruptions that are happening in the ecosystem. I'll give you the example of a decline in galleries or bookstores. There's a rise in literary festivals and a rise in visual arts festivals. They're playing a really important form and function to meeting those audiences, developing those programs, offering professional development, where possible, and being that gateway, as you say. They are one part of the ecosystem and a really important one and they need to be complementary to all the other parts of the ecosystem. So, that is that function. In terms of that gateway, in terms of children's participation, engagement and development, our festivals are doing a lot of legwork in that space and absolutely there are state based programs that incentivise engagement and participation. In New South Wales we have Creative New South Wales, which offers an arts voucher so families can participate and to lower the costs involved in that engagement. In South Australia—

Senator HUGHES: The New South Wales Labor government ended those programs this week and so that doesn't exist anymore.

Ms Jochym: Apologies; that doesn't exist anymore, which is a shame. In South Australia we have the sports voucher, which is again offering \$100 to families for participation and engagement. We saw that to be incredibly successful, with 48 per cent of the population engaging in those programs here in the state. Such initiatives are pathways. We also have sporting schools, which is a federally run initiative that ensures children get one hour of sports engagement per day. To my understanding, \$240 million has been disbursed to nearly 8,000 schools. We need those programs. We need those programs to be really comprehensive, because that then helps with that audience development for our festivals and arts sector more broadly.

CHAIR: Mr Gautier, you mentioned the soft diplomacy element of arts and cultural programs and initiatives. This is our second hearing and I think you're probably the first person to call for a coordinated response to that. I want to thank you because I think it's a really important element. Where do you think that coordination role fits best? Have you thought about that? Obviously DFAT does some things but is it really a DFAT role? Is it someone else?

Mr Gautier: Some people I think have thought for nearly 40 years or more that Australia ought to have the equivalent of the Goethe-Institut, British council or whatever. Indeed, many of our Asian neighbours have similar organisations like the Japan foundation, Korea foundation, and on it goes. China is active in this area as well. Currently our focus overseas is through our diplomatic missions. I think DFAT does great work and of course then it has all those separate councils, as I mentioned before, and then two new bodies, one which is Maitri, which is focused on India, and the other one, which is the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations, which is dealing not only with China but with Taiwan and Hong Kong. I sit on that body. I think with the Australia Council, yes, there has been an international department and, yes, they have made some attempts at Asia, but it's been less clear, I think, to a lot of us in the sector, and particularly those of us who spend a lot of time dealing with Asia, just quite what the focus was and is and what it will be in the future. Then there are a number of other organisations, peak bodies such as the one I currently chair, but also the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, which again I think was an initiative driven from this city as a UNESCO creative city. I guess what I'm getting at is there are a lot of good activities, but where is the coordination? Other than having our own version of the

Goethe-Institut, which is probably a very long bow, second best perhaps is really some strong coordination between the new body, Creative Australia, DFAT and those organisations which are very strongly involved in international outreach. Most of them of course are the larger organisations like the centres and the galleries, which do have international engagement programs ongoing.

CHAIR: Senator Bilyk.

Senator BILYK: Ms Jochym and Mr Gautier, you mentioned the importance of training and upskilling people. Can you just expand on that for the committee, about how important that is and how you see that maybe progressing?

Mr Gautier: I should declare my position here. I'm also the Deputy Chancellor of Flinders University. I do have a little bit of a conflict here. Overall, creative industries and creative arts is a very big industry and sector. It employs a lot of people not only in our country but in the region. When we look overseas, I think there's a connection between the industry, if you like, or the arts sector and those training organisations and research organisations, primarily universities, but sometimes conservatory based like NIDA WAPA, and also some technical training organisations. When we look overseas, I think what we see often is a much better integration between those tertiary organisations and the sector so that there are joint programs where students can have direct industry experience. We're seeing the beginnings of that, but I don't think it's at the level that we see particularly in Europe and America, but certainly growing very strongly in Asia. I think from a policy point of view it's good to have that on the scoreboard saying, 'The integration between the two sectors is going to be in everybody's interest.' A lot of that obviously has to be driven by the cultural sector and the tertiary sector themselves. Having some policy settings in that regard would certainly help.

Ms Jochym: I would absolutely echo those sentiments and only add the concerns around the systemic issues we face with the skills shortages. In any kind of ANZSCO code or the skills shortage lists, anything pertaining really to live production or festivals/events, there's no clear demonstration of the skills need. As to the reason the issue is systemic—I'll give you an example. Under the code for theatre technicians, which we would understand as the people who work in a theatre, we have listed also surgeons and nurses, who also work in theatre. That corrupts the data to the point where there's no skill shortage actually indicated around theatre technicians. Our lived experience is that we—

Senator BILYK: So, medical theatre technicians are lumped in with arts theatre technicians?

Ms Jochym: Correct, and as such there is on paper no skill shortage. Again, our experience is quite the opposite and it's quite a dire and dramatic issue, because we have those who are well established in the sector experiencing a lot of fatigue and also the mental health impacts of COVID and also the impacts of a skills shortage. We have people coming up through the sector who might need mentoring, that additional experience from a body of people in the sector who are already stretched too thin. It has a lot of consequences, these issues around that data in particular.

CHAIR: Could I just ask for clarification on theatre technicians example? What list is that? Who administers that list?

Ms Jochym: That is a federal list. I can take on notice the exact name. The issue has come up in the cultural and creative activity satellites accounts methodology review that was recently conducted at the federal level, and that would be the first point of reference.

CHAIR: If you have anything else, you can give us that on notice. That'd be great. Senator Bilyk.

Senator BILYK: Do you think there's an issue that a lot of especially young people don't understand what careers there might be available in the arts sector, the broader art sector, and so therefore aren't looking for things? I'm not sure; I don't come from the art sector. I'm interested in your views on that. It appears to me like there's the potential for people to get some really good training or higher education and to have some great careers, but at the minute we're missing the boat somewhere?

Ms Jochym: We would absolutely advocate for a nationally coordinated approach with states working together. The nature of our industry is that people are extremely mobile and so that cooperation does need to be there. We are missing a very serious opportunity. Parents, students and counsellors at schools don't understand the career pathways, and that is partly on the sector itself. We need to be clearer as to the types of jobs and skills required to meet its needs in a contemporary fashion. There's so much great work happening at the state level in that space. We're leading quite a significant project with our universities and TAFE SA around driving that clarity. But those are just seeds. Those are just the beginnings, and we aim to work with our state colleagues around broadening that reach and getting really into the hearts and minds of young people and having them start to consider a career.

Ms Croall: The issue really has been amplified during COVID, when a lot of people left the industry and haven't returned. We have a serious shortage. The Adelaide Fringe generates 10,000 direct and indirect jobs, and we have hundreds of jobs that are there for technicians, theatre work, a whole range of jobs, and these are very hard to fill. We would request that some work is done around the migrant visas as well, because we are seeing that a lot of festival technicians and arts workers go around as, as Ms Jochym said, in a very mobile environment but they go internationally as well. We need to see some more movement there, because there's a real skill shortage immediately while we wait to get more trained and hopefully more people taking up the tertiary training opportunities.

Mr Gautier: I think there's an underappreciation of the potential of the sector. Ernst & Young did a study with UNESCO about three or four years ago that looked at the power of creative industries worldwide—dollars, investment, research, all of that. It's very significant and particularly in the Asia Pacific region. I think some universities are coming to the conclusion, particularly in their humanities, arts and social sciences areas, that actually creative industries is a big earner, that people are interested in it and the enrolment numbers are really quite strong. I don't think that's been articulated very well in the tertiary sector generally, and I don't think it's been articulated at a policy level. I think when you look at some other jurisdictions, countries and places which really value the ingredient of creative arts from an economic, social, intrinsic worth point of view, that connection from a policy point of view and sector and tertiary groupings has been much more progressive and foresighted and strategic. I think this should be something that is in the mix if we're thinking about a forward policy for this country creatively.

Senator BILYK: Do you think there's still a cultural clash, I suppose, or cringe in regard to employment in the broader arts area? In my day, if my brothers had said they wanted to be a theatre director or something, my parents would have said, 'There's no future in that. It's intermittent employment.' I'm just wondering if there is still that cringe there?

Mr Gautier: I know exactly what you say. Creative arts and industries are changing, like everything else. A lot of them are related to digital, online, screen, et cetera. With enrolments and interest in those areas, often kids will think there's work there, there's activity there and there's credence there. I would say it's the old notion of creative arts and industries as a conservatoire approach where you have singing, ballet, opera well. They're still important, but the whole creative arts spectrum is much wider. At Flinders University, the majority of our creative arts students now are for screen and digital. I think that's the case pretty much across the board, because there's a new sort of integration of creative industries.

Ms Croall: It's important to recognise that a lot of artists are their own small business. They have producing skills, they've got the creative skills, they've got the producing and business skills. They wear many hats.

As Douglas said, there's a huge economic injection from the entire creative industry. The social health and wellbeing impact is yet to be properly measured. We look forward to seeing more and more ways to measure that. We do see that participating in the arts—either by performing and delivering arts or coming along and attending—has a positive impact on your wellbeing. It's just how we can measure that in a better way so that we can understand and appreciate what that means for the country. The business side of an artist these days is a really big part of it as well.

CHAIR: Senator Hughes?

Senator HUGHES: Mr Gautier, regarding the Asia Pacific, I was in Indonesia last week. It's very interesting to hear you mention relations and soft diplomacy because it was something we heard when we met with different groups, and particularly when we met some Australians based in Indonesia who were looking to improve cultural relations between the two countries. We went to a ballet at one of the temples. As an aside, they lit a few things on fire, and the white monkey character was dressed in polyester from top to bottom, so they may have a more lax approach to OH&S when it comes to arts and culture.

While we were in Indonesia we met with some Australian students who were there on different exchange programs like the New Colombo and other exchange programs. These students were studying law and they were studying business, but one of the things they were saying to us was that there were a lot of people going to Korea through exchange programs because of the appeal of K-pop. I may have aged out of that as being part of the appeal, but it was the popular appeal of K-pop that was encouraging students from Australia to go to Korea not just for creative arts study but for all sorts of different reasons.

How and where do you think Australia has any capability to use an element of our popular culture that is of popular appeal to younger students coming to Australia to study law, to study business, to study all sorts of things—not just creative industries?

Mr Gautier: I spent some time living and working in Korea and there has been a very great strategic approach in terms of the power of creative industries for 'Brand Korea'. That has been a combination of work between the government and the chaebols—the private sector. For 40 years they have developed film and they have developed miniseries. A figure came out from Netflix last week saying that, worldwide, 60 per cent of Netflix members had looked at Korean miniseries at one time or another.

Senator HUGHES: I think *Squid Game* probably boosted their numbers.

Mr Gautier: Many other things, too. Who would have thought 40 years ago that Korea would be a creative industries power on this planet? But it is, with K-pop, films et cetera. There was a coordinated approach there that has worked for their creative industries, but it's also made Korea a very attractive destination for young people. That coordinated approach here in terms of what we offer from a creative industries point of view and how we project our country and our cultures into the region is a very important task and it's very important that we coordinate it well.

Senator HUGHES: I guess that leads to the next question. This inquiry has just got started. We obviously have estimates where we look at the arts. A whole lot of different things come before us in this committee. I admit that I have been on this committee only for this term of government, so I'm still getting up to speed with a lot of these things. You were right when you talked previously about the creative arts being incredibly broad. Do we almost have too many bodies? Is there too much duplication across too many areas so we don't have focussed funding on festivals, different types of art, different digital arts, different types of screens or different types of creativity? There seems to be quite a number of organisations focused on the same sort of area. Do we need to distil it a little bit so that there's more ability to project, whether internationally or within the nation itself, a bit of cohesiveness? I appreciate that you need to keep in mind that you are probably killing a few people's jobs off doing this.

Mr Gautier: I have one sentence before I flick it: it just needs to be better coordinated. That's my view.

Ms Jochym: I would echo that. There is a nuance to some of these subsectors and a subsector may require an approach that is slightly different from the approach that another subsector takes, but there is a lack of coordination, a lack of communication and a lack of future thinking, not only within the sector but across government departments and other industries. That is what's missing.

Ms Croall: Like in every sector, the world is changing so fast. When the things that might have been fit for purpose years ago aren't fit for purpose now we have to accept that it's time to review that. If there's too much duplication happening or there are ways for things to be coordinated better, great. I think everyone in every industry is accepting that the rate of change is so quick at this point that whatever got us here will not get us there. I think creative thinkers in the arts might adopt that flexible and agile way of thinking more than others. It is true. It is probably a moment in time to look at the purpose and the why—what was the purpose of this versus that? Maybe there's a way for the two to come together and have a new purpose emerge.

Senator HUGHES: So bureaucrats are not as flexible thinkers as artists—wow; quite the revelation. I want to finish with one point. Again I don't mean any disrespect or contentiousness here. Is there an element of snobbery within the sector—is there highbrow and lowbrow? Look at what has happened in parts of Korea—what happened in K-pop and the commercialisation of *Squid Game* when it was dubbed in English. Is there still a little bit of pull within the sector by artists or those within the sector—popular culture and people who are not as educated in the realm of the arts versus those who spend a great deal of time studying it—prioritising high over low?

Ms Croall: I think the amounts of money in arts funding focussed on particular high-art sectors would say that there is, because per ticket sold to those—

Senator HUGHES: You were talking about a million people going to the Adelaide Fringe, but probably not a million people have attended some of the very well funded galleries.

Ms Croall: Some areas might get hundreds of dollars per ticket sold and we probably get \$1 per ticket.

Senator HUGHES: Thank you.

CHAIR: Senator Grogan?

Senator GROGAN: Just very quickly, what do you attribute the excellent success of the fringe this year to? Hitting one million tickets is spectacular. How did we get there?

Ms Croall: The Adelaide Fringe is a massive collaboration between thousands and thousands of artists and hundreds of venues. Because we're open access we let everybody jump on. We focus very much on trying to serve those artists and venues as best as we possibly can. We're not a top-down organisation; we're a disruptive bottom-

up organisation. A few years ago we did enormous digital transformation at the Adelaide Fringe. We brought in an entirely new ticketing system. We brought in a much more user-centred design experience for buying tickets, which has definitely driven participation in the Adelaide Fringe when it comes to audience. We also make sure that it's accessible and affordable. We make sure that young people feel like they belong. A lot of people, in our survey, say they feel like they belong at the Fringe. They don't feel like it's for someone else; it's for them. We want to make sure everyone feels they belong, so we're all about embracing everybody, as much as we possibly can. We don't want to leave anyone out.

But the digital transformation of our systems, our tickets and our artist registration, I would say, is one of the biggest drivers of our growth being so exponential. There has been double-digit percentage ticket sales growth every year for nine years. There was a little bit of a dip during COVID, but we're back up on that trajectory. We've had about a thousand shows in the Fringe for years and years—a long time—so it's not about more shows. It's about being smarter. It's about how we make sure the audiences feel they belong. We try to sell as much of the ticket inventory as we possibly can. When you've got thousands and thousands of artists, social media is very powerful. Artists are really great, and they're all advertising their own shows, and the venues are doing it and we're doing it. So it's about making sure that audiences feel that this is for them. That's what we've worked on, and we've focused on our customer-centric and user-centred design systems that we've put in place at the Adelaide Fringe. It's a little bit like a disruptive online model for many other organisations in other industries.

Senator GROGAN: I did notice how easy it was to purchase tickets this year. It was very good.

Ms Croall: Yes. Someone said, 'It's like playing the pokies, but you win every time.' We tried to make it as easy as possible: push a few buttons and then you've got a ticket. So I'll take that compliment.

Senator GROGAN: Do you see some of the aims and objectives of Revive, the national cultural policy, as being things that could assist or could change the landscape in terms of how the festival runs?

Ms Croall: Yes. There are some things that we're hopeful about. Where we've been lost at the moment in the multidisciplinary funding streams of the previous structure, we're hopeful, in the new structure, to see how it plays out. But I still feel that what's really missing is an opportunity for festivals to apply and have a focus on cultural impact, have a focus on community engagement and opportunities. Of course, put criteria in there and make sure that this is about not just buying in lots of shows that wouldn't give opportunities to Australian artists. There's hope in the new structure, but I think that a festival representation stream is really lacking there.

CHAIR: Senator Cadell?

Senator CADELL: I have a couple of quick questions in regard to the Fringe. With regard to open access for 5,000 artists, I am incredibly proud of freedom of speech, outside of hate speech and incitement of violence. Has that caused you any concern in this era of cancellations? Have there been incidents where that has caused a problem?

Ms Croall: At Adelaide Fringe, we always say that anything goes as long as it's not illegal. So we are the same: we don't allow hate speech—

Senator CADELL: It's a pretty colourful board!

CHAIR: I think that's Ross's life model!

Ms Croall: You should come to the Fringe! Hate speech is obviously not tolerated at all. We haven't experienced a lot of shows suffering from cancel culture or anything. I think people, at this point, up until now, have loved the fact that the Fringe is such an open-access platform and that there's something for everyone. We try to make sure that you can find what you're looking for by focusing on our digital systems.

Senator CADELL: Still on that, but slightly wider, this is to the panel. The Fringe is like a business showcase for some people. That is my perception, having not been. There's a chance to go and take your sample platter. Is where we're going, when we're talking, in other respects, about music and some of the platforms, about prominence? You've got 5,000 artists. You talked about social media. What are the things in South Australia, what are the things in the Hong Kong festival even—you're managing that—that artists or creators can do to get prominence outside of industry? What are the things to break through in the industry? Technologies change, principles change, but people are still there trying to do their best. How do you break through a very busy crowd?

Ms Croall: As I mentioned before, a lot of artists are approaching work as a small business, and they have all the same challenges that any small business has in trying to break through the noise of a lot of things going on. I'm sure others will have some examples, but in the Adelaide Fringe we actually run development workshops and pathway opportunity sessions during the year to help artists understand how they can make the most of various opportunities to break through using social media or various other things, collaborations with other artists et

cetera. We've found that the professional development strand that we offer behind the scenes for the artists, those who take it up really do thrive in the Fringe. We can only continue to highlight pathways.

Also, the industry marketplace that we run is matchmaking thousands of meetings every Fringe, and people walk away having met with directors of festivals from all over the world, curators from venues all over Australia and the world. It's a lot to do with very similar patterns of any industry. It's about networking, connections, understanding what pathways you can take to connect with audiences and customers.

Ms O'Callaghan: Can I jump in here for one sec?

CHAIR: Yes, go ahead.

Ms O'Callaghan: Just in response to that, we also need to make a space for artists to make art and then promote it. That was the point in earlier conversations around fellowships and a basic living wage and a few of those conversations. It's really important that there are things they can do to promote themselves. But at its core, we need artists to be artists.

Senator CADELL: We talked about access, and we were talking about a million tickets, \$25 per head; we were talking about snobbery of one thing versus the other. I talk about regional access, which we were talking about earlier, but is Australia fundamentally challenged by its diverse range of culture and outlets and its small market? My wife and Leo and Anwen went to the UK to visit family. This week they've gone to the West End. They've seen two shows. They've seen *Mamma Mia* for 25 pounds a ticket. They saw *We Will Rock You* for 30 pounds a ticket. You can't get that sort of access in Australia. Are we at a disadvantage? Should we be better subsidised or better funded because of that diversity in a small market?

Ms Croall: There are a number of subsidy schemes going on in the West End where tickets are subsidised with funds that have come from either philanthropic donations or federal government schemes over there. London council is doing some as well. That's the sort of thing I think would work really well in Australia as well. We're always looking to try to keep our ticket price affordable. To help the artist put the show on—if we have philanthropists and sponsors, and we're always looking for government schemes as well, then we could actually help the artist earn their full ticket price, but the audience could pay a lesser price, particularly if they're people in need. If there was some scheme to subsidise it—whether it was an arts voucher scheme as Justyna outlined, or some sort of scheme that allowed more people to access shows at a more affordable price, but the artists didn't have to give up their income—that would be a great way to lower the bar and make arts more accessible.

Senator CADELL: The last one I saw I think was Tina for A\$350. It's a massive difference. Thank you.

Mr Gautier: Could I just add one point?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Gautier: You made a point about us being too small or whatever. The fact is we should be confident of our multicultural make-up and the cultures that brings and blends. There's nothing like it in the region. That's a real plus and we should be very confident of that.

Ms Jochym: Just going to Senator Cadell's question, there have also been calls to incentivise participation in the arts by making tickets to live performances, exhibitions and such tax deductible for below-median and median-wage earners, and that being one pathway to also incentivise that participation while not taking away from the impacts on artists essentially.

CHAIR: Thank you for appearing today and giving us your time. There were some questions taken on notice. Those answers are due back on 25 July.

CROSER, Ms Kate, Chief Executive Officer, South Australian Film Corporation

ROBERTS, Mr Dale, Managing Director, KOJO

SUMMERTON, Ms Rebecca, Principal and Producer, Closer Productions

[11:51]

CHAIR: Good morning. Thank you for joining us today. I understand that information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses giving evidence to Senate committees has been provided to you. I'm hoping that each of you has a prepared opening statement. If not, we can go straight to questions. We'll start with Mr Roberts and then move down the table.

Mr Roberts: I don't have a prepared statement—I've been away five of the last eight weeks—but just a little bit of information. KOJO is a 30-year-old creative sector company established in South Australia in 1991 and has now grown to be a leading sports and entertainment business across Australia and New Zealand. We employ about 110 full-time staff working across sports, stadium, audio visual, film and television production and visual effects and live events, conferences and activations.

Ms Croser: Good morning. The South Australian Film Corporation is South Australia's leading screen authority and investment body supporting the development, growth and promotion of South Australia's screen production sector. The SAFC welcomes the National Cultural Policy and its overarching aim to restore the importance of arts in Australia's society and economy.

In particular, we welcome the following measures: establishing as its first pillar First Nations First, which recognises the significance of First Nations storytelling; the commitment to funding stability for the ABC and SBS, which will enable more quality content for all Australians; new investments in Australia's digital games industry; the commitment to supporting large-scale screen production through screen tax offsets; and the commitment to introducing Australian content obligations for streaming platforms, which I might say is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for us to design and build our industry for the future. I am able to elaborate further on considerations for content quota obligations, if that's of interest to the committee.

The SAFC notes that missing from the National Cultural Policy is a commitment to providing security of funding for Screen Australia.

In conclusion, I'd like to emphasise one additional point: to truly reflect the diversity and vibrancy of Australia, the SAFC supports a higher volume of Australian screen production made outside of the eastern states. With Sydney, Melbourne and south-eastern Queensland largely at capacity, other regions stand ready to contribute to growing Australia's capacity for screen production. A more equitable share of resources, activity and investment will help to grow and retain screen talent right across Australia.

CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Summerton?

Ms Summerton: I'm a producer and co-owner of the award-winning screen production company Closer Productions, which was formed in 2010. I'm also a member of Screen Producers Australia and support their submission to this inquiry. To give you a little background about myself and our company, my feature film credits include *52 Tuesdays*, which won the directing award for world cinema at Sundance and the Crystal Bear at Berlinale, and the feature documentary *Sam Klemke's Time Machine*, which premiered at Sundance, was in official selection at Hot Docs Rotterdam and won Docaviv's artistic spirit award for television. I've made numerous documentaries, and my television drama credits include the six-part series *Fucking Adelaide*—excuse my language—which premiered at Series Mania and was the most watched iview original in 2018. I also produced *The Hunting*, a four-by-one-hour drama series, which premiered on SBS television in August 2019, becoming SBS's most successful commissioned drama ever. Most recently, I produced *Afertaste*, a returnable six-by-30 comedy drama for the ABC. The first season premiered at Berlinale series selects and was nominated for the most popular comedy Logie in 2022. Season 2 screened on ABC in July 2022.

Screen Producers, of which I am a member, was formed by screen industry businesses representing large and small enterprises across diverse production, all forms and formats, of screen content. The screen industry, as you may know, employs thousands of people and drives billions of dollars worth of annual production activity from the independent sector, of which I'm a part.

I particularly wanted to take the opportunity today to say a few words about SPA's policy positions, noting that they've already appeared before this inquiry. The screen industry and SPA are optimistic that the national cultural policy and its commitment to securing certain investment from streaming platforms will be a hugely positive move for the Australian screen industry, as Kate mentioned.

We know that so much now depends on getting the detail of the streaming regulation right. These issues have been deeply considered and articulated by SPA on behalf of its members in the course of developing submissions to many parliamentary inquiries and government policy papers for many years. They centre on the following key issues: a 20 per cent investment obligation for new Australian content based on streaming services' Australian revenue; a recognised role for Australian small businesses, the independent screen sector, of which Kojo and I are a part of; a definition of and expenditure on 'Australian content' that meets the aspirations of the national cultural policy and the challenges associated with certain genres and market failure; opportunities for a broad range of content to be made, including children's content, which is now only really being commissioned by the ABC, following the removal of obligations on other broadcast services in 2022; and, lastly, a mechanism to retain Australian intellectual property in Australian stories.

From my own experience, I can assure you that one of the biggest benefits to Australian screen businesses like mine from the regulation of streaming platforms and their investment in Australian stories is the certainty that this will bring to our business. The screen industry is high risk and currently full of uncertainty.

At Closer Productions, as well as investing in the development of new ideas and concepts, we invest in developing new Australian talent, including but not limited to writers, directors and actors. This is often a resource-heavy but extremely rewarding exercise. We're keen to do more of this, but currently the main beneficiaries of this work are international businesses that we struggle to compete with. It would be great to see a more stable domestic industry that would give confidence to producers and build a stronger local screen industry that would benefit everyone and help retain talent here.

I'd also like to point out to the committee my own experience with *Aftertaste*, which was filmed here in South Australia with an almost entirely South Australian crew—99 per cent, I believe. A show like *Aftertaste* shows the benefit of a producer having intellectual property rights revert back to the producer after a fixed period of time, because the licensing to the commissioner, the ABC, was for a five-year period. This meant that I was able to onsell the production to Netflix and Stan at a good rate after that period ended and earn ongoing income from a production that I'd first created.

This scenario is not possible under the terms of trade demanded by streaming platforms, where they often retain all rights in perpetuity, denying producers like me an ongoing revenue stream that enables me to employ people and develop new programs and new talent. I also have the opportunity to use the existing IP of *Aftertaste* to generate further work, be it spin-offs, further seasons or merchandise and so on. I can sell these new ideas wherever there may be market interest. Current streamer terms of trade mean that these rights are held by the streamer in perpetuity worldwide, whether they choose to use them or not. I'm happy to answer more questions on these points. Thank you.

CHAIR: Great. Thank you so much. And I loved *Aftertaste*, by the way.

Ms Summerton: Thank you!

CHAIR: It's one of my favourites—and also a nice showcase of the Adelaide Hills, of course. Senator Grogan.

Senator GROGAN: Mr Roberts, can you just step out for us what benefits you think the cultural policy, Revive, may have for KOJO and the industry more broadly?

Mr Roberts: Touching across all of the topics brought up in these statements, we will benefit in a range of areas. For us, it's the consistency and certainty of work, whether that's the commitment from the streamers or the location incentive, which hopefully will have a smooth pathway through parliament coming up. Consistency and certainty for us equals confidence—confidence to invest. We put a lot of equity into our projects. We, too, have a new show, launching on Wednesday night on the ABC, *Gold Diggers*, which, whilst shot in Victoria, was created, and all the post-production done, with the support of the SAFC. There's hundreds of thousands of dollars of our own cash going into these projects. We are growing into employment. Then we're looking at some new areas, like AI and things like that. So I guess the range and mix of these, from a private enterprise business—it goes, for me, back to consistency and certainty of work, and, I think, our rightful place of ownership of IP. I agree with Bec. That's a tough negotiation, dealing with Hollywood studios all the time, and to get that recurring revenue is really important for them, for future growth of jobs and investment in infrastructure as well.

Senator GROGAN: How do you see the employment side of the policy assisting? We hear a lot about skill shortages. We hear a lot about challenges with training. As to the intent of the policy—to put that kind of workplace and artist at the centre, not just in terms of the value they bring with their art but also in terms of recognising them as the creator, as central to it, and therefore trying to create a better employment scenario for them—is that going to have much of an impact, given the way you guys work?

Mr Roberts: We're probably a bit different from, say, some of the big visual-effects houses. There's some fantastic training. Rising Sun Pictures have an incredible record in that space. We're a little bit more individual. So, for us, it gives us, again, that confidence to bring on people, whether that's as employees or as joint venturers. We do a lot of partnerships. We have partnerships working with people like Epic Films on the series *First Day* that won an Emmy. Our international partnership's with the company Stampede Ventures with *Gold Diggers*. So we will be looking at a lot more on-the-job training. We have some specialist roles that we need, where we recently had to employ someone from South Africa because the talent was just not in South Australia. These are like post-production producers. Also—and Kate and I have spoken a lot about this—there's the future: who are the future executives? There's very much, I believe, in the artist side of things. But also: who is going to run the next Rising Sun or the next KOJO? For us, it's about identifying talent. The business of creativity as well is a real passion of mine, beyond the traditional training that we've focused on in areas like visual effects. So these policy elements will all combine for us to proactively employ and bring people in for that on-the-job training, many of whom have left KOJO and started their own companies. Resin visual effects in South Australia was a former employee of ours, along with Astbury Audio and Mae King, Nicola Tate's company. Many staff come in, get trained, leave and start their own enterprise.

Senator GROGAN: In terms of the information register for artists, which is part of that, a lot of people talk about coordination, and, as you say, people come and go and do one project and then move on to something else. Do you think that registration piece will help coordinate that and understand where you can pool from?

Mr Roberts: To be honest, I don't have a lot of information on that particular area. I don't know if other members of the panel want to add to that.

Ms Croser: The SAFC has a crew and services database that exists already. That's where we would refer any productions that are looking to hire crew or artists for their productions. It lists people's credits. In this industry, your credits are like your qualifications, in a way, and you get more repeat jobs from your past credits. The database that we have set up works really well. I don't think there's one on a national level, but I know there is some private enterprises that are looking at creating national databases. Because the screen industry has had the support of state based and federal agencies for so long, we're very self-sufficient in that way, and the industry certainly looks to Screen Australia and the state agencies for that leadership more so than a wider, overarching body, I'd say.

Senator GROGAN: As you said, you deal a lot with state and federal agencies. How do you see that working together? Is it an issue in terms of the various aspects that people cover at the various levels of government? Is that problematic?

Ms Croser: I don't think so. We're actually incredibly collegiate. In particular, during COVID, the industry showed that it could organise itself really well. We came out very, very quickly with safety protocols for resuming work during COVID, and that's how we were able to bounce back so quickly as an industry and start resuming production in Australia and in South Australia. That's evidence of how well we work together. We have monthly calls between the states and Screen Australia. We look to coordinate where we can. For example, we're all coordinating a national workforce development strategy at the moment. South Australia has its own, which is more localised, but there's also a national one to address those skills shortages that you were talking about. So I think we're very organised and very proactive as a sector and we all work together. Having said that, there is competition between the states, but I would say it's friendly competition.

Senator GROGAN: Yes, more things away from the eastern seaboard.

Ms Croser: Yes, exactly.

Senator GROGAN: I agree. Thank you.

CHAIR: Senator Cadell.

Senator CADELL: I have a couple of questions. The chair was able to organise a meeting with the screen producers. I just couldn't attend all of it, so some of this may have been covered there. I've seen cognitive dissonance around the arguments of the level of the thing. We've just heard today that eastern states are full, and there's capacity here. But unless we increase the limits, the industry will die. That's a concern for me, to balance out skills shortages and all that. Ms Summerton, you were talking about the rights in perpetuity of works. I understand that is a big thing. But in a sheet given to us by producers, it showed that the perpetuity of rights is only when there's a single source of funding for productions in the majority of cases, not across the board. You said there's a huge risk when a producer goes into something. If there is a single source of funding, doesn't that eliminate risk?

Ms Summerton: Unfortunately, not. This is what producers do in their businesses. Before I can even present something to, for example, Netflix, I'm required to do a substantial amount of work that requires my own investment. So we have a good relationship with them. I can get a call in. They're very busy. And I can pitch an idea at an early stage. They'll say, 'Yes, that sounds interesting,' or 'No, it doesn't.' If they say: 'Yes, it sounds interesting,' then I'm required to employ talent such as writers. The Writers Guild that set rates that surround that. It's an expensive exercise to develop intellectual property to a certain point. Sometimes it requires optioning an original piece of work, like a book, which costs. There are also legal fees involved. I have the overheads of running my business. All of those things are required to get it to a point where I can pitch it to Netflix, who may say: 'Yes, we'll give you X amount of dollars to do a next stage,' and they'll see if they then want to take the risk to continue to develop it further.

The risk sits entirely with producers up until the point when you can get a single source of income like Netflix on board to develop it with you. Quite often, even with a streamer like Netflix, producers continue to invest. It's very common that, in the development phase, producers don't get paid. They are given the money to pay the talent that they're employing to develop the IP, but they're holding back their own fees and their own overheads until it is greenlit for production, which can be years and years. So there's a significant investment from producers and production companies before they get that green light for production. Traditionally, streamers will then pay a premium—a higher rate—because you aren't able to retain your own rights. However, because of the way the marketplace is at the moment, those budgets have come down. They're not as high as they used to be. So we are giving them everything now, in return for less money upfront.

Senator CADELL: I understand. And it's not hostility. We're in this—

Ms Summerton: No. I'm just passionate.

Senator CADELL: It's trying to get that understanding. I'll talk about a totally different industry. If I'm a property developer, I have to lodge plans, I have to go for DAs, I have to pay architects. I have to do all that, and there's no guarantee at the end of that either. It would be horrible if I've come up with an idea, made it and it's all been taken off me. That's the difference with multiple-source funding.

I accept that profit is a reward for risk, and more power to you. That's what we've got to do. Finding that balance—three years, five years, forever and a day—between risk and reward is a difficult thing for us to do from outside when we've not done it.

What is the state of the industry, when we're talking about the current levels—whatever they claim to be, what they actually are versus the ability to increase that? Last week the government moved, through TLAB4, the digital games tax offset. We have large digital gaming places setting up now. That means we'll have sound engineers and all these sorts of things moving into the digital games space as well. Isn't this a very busy industry, in that we share a lot of skills at the moment?

Ms Summerton: If I've understood the question correctly, yes. You did put the question to Kate earlier, so I think this is your question. It is a very busy industry, but there's a disparity between the amount of production that is locally owned compared to footloose. I hope I'm answering your question.

In order to talk to the point I made in my opening statement, I spend a lot of time and resources developing talent. I then profile that talent through the projects I make, whether I own them or not, depending on who I'm doing business with. If that talent, which I've taken the risk on, is then poached—for want of a better word—by international businesses, I'm not able to share in the rewards, because in order for me to build a sustainable business I need to own IP. All businesses internationally understand the power of owning IP, and that's where the real revenue is for screen businesses. You receive fees from the work that you do, but in terms of long-tail investment and returns, that's what we're asking for here. It's very common. Other countries are insisting upon this and we'd be foolish to not do the same.

Ms Croser: The less back end that comes back, the less people will be able to invest in those jobs and on creating the IP. You asked how we know that that back end is diminishing? One of the issues is that there's very little transparency regarding the streamers' deals right now. In terms of the traditional model of territory-by-territory sales, there's a lot of information that's transparent and freely available, like box office returns et cetera. But, as to knowing how much the streamers are paying and what that margin is on the production budget, that's not available at the moment, so we actually don't know the impact that it's having right now.

Senator CADELL: I don't even know 'the taste' or whatever we're talking about—

CHAIR: *Aftertaste.* Get onto it, mate!

Senator CADELL: *A Sunburnt Christmas*, I think you worked on; it's not a bad movie—shot in South Australia—so I'll take that one.

It's a difficult thing when we want our industry to soar, but this is a cultural policy, not just an industry policy. Where do you draw distinction between Australian stories and industry? It is great to shoot every Marvel movie ever made on the Gold Coast or in Sydney, but, if it's not tied to Australian culture, if it's not improving our storytelling, if it's not doing this soft policy we're talking about, that is a different thing. That's jobs, not a heritage, not a culture.

CHAIR: When it's some jobs, right? It's not even all jobs.

Senator CADELL: Yes. Where do you see culture in film coming versus industry in film?

Ms Croser: It's a really great question, and one I think we do grapple with. I think that there needs to be consultation with the industry around this. There hasn't been, around what defines Australian content or Australian stories. I think that's really important to get a range of views on. In my personal view, I don't think you can cast aside international content that has, for example, an Australian writer or an Australian director attached, because culture is about perspective and it's about identity, and any time that you have Australian artists involved in a production, they're bringing their perspective to that story, and so we're gaining something, as Australian culture, from that. It's not an easy question to answer, but I do think that, as a sector, we need to come together and be united on it, and I don't think there's been an opportunity to do that yet.

Mr Roberts: As a private business, our view—and we did this as a business model—was: we went into production to create Australian stories. KOJO has done over a hundred films as a post-production and visual-effects company for American studios, fee for service, since Scott Hicks took us to Hollywood in 1998. Kate would know well that we've been in production and trying very hard for many years, but it's really only in the last three to five years that we've sunk hundreds of thousands of dollars in significant risk, but it was to create our own stories, whether it's our co-productions, with *First Day*, or another show, *A Beginner's Guide to Grief*, which we did for SBS last year, which won best digital original series at the AACTA awards, or *Gold Diggers*—it's quite a rude show, you'll see, if you watch it Wednesday night; it's a bit blue—

Senator CADELL: Probably not up my alley then!

Mr Roberts: It's a fantastic story—a significantly powerful story of the gold-rush era in Australia. So that is very much our strategy. But the reality is: it's the profits of our post-production and visual-effects business that funds our go, and also significant equity.

There's another thing I'll add to the other question around the deals. The other thing that's coming, particularly from US broadcasters, is that they see the producer offset as a tax rebate. So, effectively, they're putting zero value on the ownership to the producer. You then have to fight for years to get a seat at the table for that IP. They will also now ask you to put in your own equity running with it—in addition to the sweat equity of sinking in years of development. So the pressure for these deals has never been greater. I think that's where this goes back to all of the elements of this policy coming together, to give these businesses a fighting shot to actually defend territory and get that long tail. That's something that we're really focused on. As for us, we split our business in two to very much focus on those Australian-created stories.

Senator CADELL: Is there a risk as well? If I was a streamer now, and I was faced with 20 per cent of revenue going to Australian content, not between culture and stuff—don't we rush to the old Hollywood studios where we put actors, writers and people on wage, and they produce in-house? Don't we lose Australian creativity if that happens?

Ms Croser: I think Australian creativity is born when there are Australian creators involved. Whether that's independent or in-house, you're still going to have Australian creativity involved.

Senator CADELL: Good answer.

Ms Croser: But what I would say is that it's the independent sector where you get the breadth and diversity of perspectives of all Australians, from all regions, and that's why it's important to make sure we have a strong and vibrant independent sector.

Senator CADELL: I suspect the chair and I may have very different views on this. I suspect there's an overlap bigger than either of us would want to consider, really. But that independent view is what makes Australian culture what it is. There are some amazingly good and horribly bad shows out there in the world.

Mr Roberts: I think, going back to that point, if your question is around whether they would do that themselves, rather than spend 20 per cent in the local industry, it's the risk in massive capital investment, bringing on, in some cases, quite expensive people, running an overhead—

Senator CADELL: But they've got to spend it. It's money they have to spend.

Mr Roberts: They do. But I think that they would see that it's easier to outsource it, for want of a better word, to engage industry and put the risk—they can have 20 bets rather than one if they do it that way.

CHAIR: We're talking about companies that are engaged globally and are commissioning things around the world, where other countries are putting forward regulation to require a certain amount to be spent on creating local stories for them. That, then, is where we're competing. We are not the first country to do this; right?

Mr Roberts: Correct.

CHAIR: In fact, we're going to be one of the last, if we don't get on with it.

Ms Summerton: Correct.

CHAIR: Senator White?

Senator WHITE: I think you and Senator Caddell have partially covered a couple of my questions. What I was interested in is, in fact, the regulation that other countries put on IP and also on content. Are you able to give us a bit of an understanding of what that's like in the screen field? What other regulations exist elsewhere? Has there been any appreciable decrease in the streamers' operations in those countries?

Ms Summerton: The question was in regard to other countries. Has there been a decrease in—

Senator HANSON-YOUNG: Senator White, it's Senator Hanson-Young here. You're just echoing a little bit. So, just to be clear, your question is in relation to the IP implications where there is regulation or where other countries have engaged with companies like Netflix.

Senator WHITE: Yes. That's it generally.

Ms Summerton: Just one moment. I have some information on that to share. I hope this will answer your question, Senator White. France, for example, requires streamers to invest up to 25 per cent of their local revenues in French language content and reverts intellectual property rights to independent producers. In Italy, regulation for a staged streamer investment is an obligation that will reach 20 per cent in 2024 for European audiovisual works produced by independent producers, with 50 per cent of these to be for original Italian works. In the United Kingdom, the terms of trade is a code of practice established in their Communications Act 2003 that ensures independent television producers retain an interest in intellectual property in works commissioned by public service broadcasters. This has been very successful in retaining IP and supporting the independent screen sector. An independent report found that, since the introduction of the terms of trade framework in 2004, the UK independent production sector has grown to become a global leader in television production. TV related revenues increased from about 1.5 billion pounds in 2004 to more than 2.6 billion pounds in 2017. Canada is currently in the process of legislating a new law to empower their media regulator to regulate online streaming, tying investment regulation with collective terms of trade requirements, including providing safeguards for Canadian ownership and control of the content created and produced by Canadians.

CHAIR: Thank you. Senator White, do you have any other questions?

Senator WHITE: Yes. I have just one further question. It's to the South Australian Film Corporation. Why do we need multiple state film corporations?

Ms Croser: What I'd say to that is that the SAFC was established in 1972 and was the first of all of the screen agencies nationally, so we really led the way in that space. Each of the states have state government investment. The state government invests to get the cultural and social benefits of screen content being produced in that particular state. Increasingly, the state governments are recognising the value of the economic benefits to the state as well—the jobs that are created, the businesses that are created and the inward investment into the states. So I suppose the answer would be, at a federal level, that the policy intent of, say, Screen Australia seems to be very much around Australian cultural product. Within the states, the governments are investing for a range of reasons and there are different pots of funding. That's why there are the two different types of organisations. Does that answer the question?

Senator WHITE: Yes, it does answer the question. I have one follow-up question to ask, just quickly. Do you find that those state film corporations are competing against each other for the same sort of work? Or do you manage to work harmoniously together?

Ms Croser: I think the amount of screen content that is being produced globally and in Australia right now is at such high levels, and that's being driven by demand from audiences. The amount of demand for producing content in the states is probably higher than what the states can support with their incentive schemes, for example. In that sense, each state can afford to be quite selective about what it will take on and to leverage really great outcomes for the industry out of the productions that come to that state or are produced within that state. Yes, there is competition, but some of the other factors that go into why a production would film in a state include the

creative of the script and the kinds of locations that are needed. Certain states are going to automatically be the frontrunners in that space. For example, in South Australia, we're never going to pitch for movies that are set in the snow or tropical islands, because that's just not something that we can do here. So I think things will naturally fall out in that way.

Senator WHITE: Thanks very much. That's all I had.

Ms Summerton: If I can just add to that, I think this answers Senator White's question and also the question about Netflix producing things in-house. The National Cultural Policy Review recognises the importance of diversity and authenticity from artists. One of the functions of the South Australian Film Corporation and the various state agencies is to identify local talent and authentic voices that may otherwise get lost in a federal framework. The independent sector also does this work to ensure that we are able to really effectively represent our nation in all its diversity, culturally and otherwise. My company is owned by South Australians. We've managed to forge a very successful career and create a very successful business here, and that has a lot to do with the local support that we received through the South Australian Film Corporation. If those agencies didn't exist, we would have probably, if we wanted to continue to work in the industry, had to move to the eastern states, thereby changing our perspectives and what we can offer. I think it's really important that those agencies do what they do.

CHAIR: On the importance of local corporations and the arrangement that you can have with state governments in particular and even local governments—this is not a South Australian example—I was talking to the producers of *Bay of Fires* the other day. It is an extraordinary example in that \$1 million or whatever it was that was invested by the Tasmanian government was then directly spent in the township where it was filmed. It was a direct investment into the state government's own community, which you couldn't get if you were going through larger organisations, I can imagine.

Ms Croser: That's right. Within Australia, for example, we're getting returns of between eight-to-one and 10-to-one on the state's investment being spent in South Australia and in those regions. So it's actually bringing money that would otherwise be spent elsewhere to Australia and to South Australia.

CHAIR: Speaking of Tasmania—Senator Bilyk.

Senator BILYK: It's alright. Senator White asked my question. I was going to ask about the overseas impacts.

CHAIR: Great. Thank you. I've just got one final question, probably to the SA Film Corporation. You mentioned, Ms Croser, the concern that there wasn't ongoing or guaranteed funding through the national cultural policy for Screen Australia. Can you just unpack for me a little bit?

Ms Croser: Absolutely. I've noted that there's been a reversal of indexation for other national bodies like the ABC and SBS, but that was not included in the cultural policy for Screen Australia. Screen Australia is vitally important for production. What it does is, in terms of the production funding, it enables a top-up to the finance plan to enable the production to be made. Without Screen Australia's funding, many Australian films and TV shows would just not be able to be made because the finance would not be there. So it's addressing that market failure because of the fact that we have a small population compared to other jurisdictions—the US or the UK, for example. Screen Australia is actually facing a decline in funding over coming years because of the efficiency dividend or indexation—their funding not being indexed.

CHAIR: The freeze.

Ms Croser: Yes. That's correct. At the same time, you actually have production budgets increasing. Anecdotal evidence is that it's 30 per cent per year. The budgets are going up. Screen Australia's funding is static or going down. Therefore, there are going to be fewer productions that Screen Australia will be able to support, and that might impact the other industry development work they're doing, such as dealing with skills shortages or developing new writers and directors from diverse backgrounds. That's the breadth of support that Screen Australia provides to the industry, so they're a vitally important body to our sector.

Mr Roberts: Just to add to that: the fact of that funding essentially going down—because it's a cost of business—and then the pressure from the US studios for more equity from independent producers, to me, are real pressure points of risk around the industry moving forward.

Ms Croser: Another impact is that producers are relying more and more on the states to fill those gaps that Screen Australia can no longer fill because of how competitive it is. We're all noticing that the states are being required to put in more to enable productions to close finance because those production costs are increasing and it's not coming from anywhere else. That's an issue, I think, for state governments.

CHAIR: That's right. We might ask some questions on notice to Screen Australia to just unlock some of those funding questions.

Senator CADELL: Just on that cost of making productions: I think in estimates, the ABC mentioned their costs. They used to talk about \$1 million an hour for Australian production stuff, and now they're up to \$2 million. Are you seeing similar sorts of numbers on those sorts of things?

Ms Croser: Absolutely. Some of the productions are well in excess of \$2 million per hour—international-type productions.

Mr Roberts: Even crew rates—having recently shot in Victoria, I can say that, on average, crew rates are up 19 to 22 per cent per line item, so, on a budget, that stacks up very quickly.

CHAIR: I wonder whether on notice, Mr Roberts and Ms Summerton, you could give us a rough breakdown of production costs in that sense of how much you're seeing things go up and where the gaps are. That would be really helpful for us to marry up this concern around Screen Australia and also where the quotas for streaming services come in. That would be really helpful. Finally, I know we've had a lot of conversation about the requirements for regulating funding of the streaming services. We've been told for 18 months, two years now, that this current government was going to move on it. It does seem to have, sadly, been pushed back. We're still waiting to see the results of the new round from the options paper—the five different options. Have you seen that paper?

Ms Croser: No.

CHAIR: Okay. I know we've had representations from you before, so, just to be clear, are you all still of the view that it should be a 20 per cent local content expenditure?

Mr Roberts: Yes.

Ms Croser: Yes.

Ms Summerton: Yes.

Ms Croser: And the SAFC supports the views of the South Australian screen sector, who support a 20 per cent quota for streaming platforms.

CHAIR: Thank you. That's it for your panel today. Thank you so much. You've taken some questions on notice. The date by which we would like some of those answers is 25 July. If you've got any problems with that, please let the secretariat know. We appreciate your time today. We will now suspend for our break.

Proceedings suspended from 12:35 to 14:02

CROWE, Ms Mimi, Chief Executive Officer, Carclew

HOFFMAN-AXTHELM, Ms Francisca, Senior Lawyer, Australian Children's Television Foundation

KHALEEL, Ms Melak, Artist in Residence, Carclew

McHENRY, Dr Ross, Executive Producer, Windmill Theatre

O'MAHONY, Ms Bernadette, Head of Content, Australian Children's Television Foundation

CHAIR: I now welcome representatives from the Australian Children's Television Foundation, Carclew and the Windmill Theatre. Thank you all for being here this afternoon. I understand that information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses giving evidence to Senate committees has been provided to you. Do any of you have a short opening statement? We'll start with the Australian Children's Television Foundation.

Ms O'Mahony: Thank you for the opportunity to appear today. The ACTF are a not-for-profit company funded by the Commonwealth government and all the governments from the states and territories of Australia. We occupy a singular position at the intersection of Australian culture, education, social impact and the international screen business, advocating for quality Australian children's media. We invest in the development and production of children's content, nurture and scaffold producers, distribute Australian children's screen content all over the world and develop ancillary education resources to support the use of our programs in the classroom for years to come.

Australia's children's television is an exemplar of everything the national cultural policy is striving to achieve. Quality children's television intersects and engages with all five pillars. When Australian children see their lives reflected on screen, they experience recognition and affirmation with characters and stories that help them imagine all the possibilities for someone like themselves. Children's screen content is both a mirror and a window in a child's life, with the capacity to influence in profound and positive ways to bolster a child's own sense of identity as well as to encourage them to walk in someone else's shoes. In this way, Australian children's screen content is truly nation building.

Of course, a nation's children are not a homogenous group. We need an array of stories from around our country to ensure the visibility of all our children on screen and on all the platforms that they go to for entertainment. The production of children's content also plays a vital role in the screen sector ecosystem, employing people from all over Australia, including the regions, and offering career pathways and training that are not available on other types of production.

Children's content is the most vulnerable of any type of screen content. It is as expensive to produce as adult content. It's more difficult to finance as broadcasters don't want to pay for it. Children are not a prime-time audience; it doesn't attract Chris Hemsworth and major stars. Many broadcasters would prefer not to commission it. Children's content is therefore the clearest case of market failure of any sector of the screen industry. However, it is also the clearest example of public benefit, and it needs to be specifically supported through local content quotas and through direct and indirect funding, including support of the ACTF. We also propose that the visibility and discoverability of Australian children's content on all platforms, public and commercial, be enhanced with the development and positioning of an Australian children's content app that is required to be carried on all smart TVs and related devices.

CHAIR: Ms Crowe.

Ms Crowe: I acknowledge that we're meeting on the lands of the Kaurna people and pay my respects to elders past and present and to leaders emerging today. Carclew is Australia's largest multi-art-form cultural institution dedicated to children and young people. We celebrated our 50th anniversary in 2022 and have in that time been delivering advocacy and programs dedicated to all aspects of art and creativity for children and young people. We've seen the impact of the investment in youth arts in the seventies and the devastating effect of funding cuts and policy gaps in the past few decades. I've sent through some subsequent reports on the value of youth arts as well as a desktop review of the funding environment, which might be helpful for this committee.

Through a half century of delivering programs, grants and organisational support of art and creativity by, for and with children and young people, this is what we know. Children are small, but the impact of access to art is mighty. Children are critical thinkers, and, when we teach creative process and give opportunities to experience art in all forms and practice art making, we provide vital skills to tackle the complex problems of our nation. Put simply: we create better citizens with a range of skills and awareness and capacity not just to react but to create success in the future. To change the world tomorrow, we need to start today.

First Nations Art and Culture, a core component of Carclew programming for over 20 years, teaches us that past, present and future are connected and happening simultaneously. The time to make changes to drive a better future for Australia is right now. Using the inspiration from the 'Yes, and ...' improv technique of theatre, I'm here today on behalf of Carclew and the youth arts sector to say that Revive is a welcome policy and investment and there is further work to do to ensure not just a surviving but a thriving youth arts sector.

Funding and policy actions are notable in their omission from Revive. I ask this committee to amplify the national cultural policy with a renewed commitment in policy and funding dedicated to the youth arts sector. But the greatest advocacy I can do in this space is to make space for you to hear directly from the power of young voices who are exposed to art and creativity. I'm joined by one of our resident artists, and I'd like to ask Melak to give her opening statement on behalf of Carclew.

CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you, Mimi.

Ms Khaleel: Honourable members of the committee, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today. I stand before you to advocate for the vital importance of funding art programs for young children, particularly those provided by organisations like Carclew and other art institutions. Those programs not only nurture creativity but also foster children's and young people's critical thinking skills while promoting inclusivity and accessibility. Art plays a crucial role in a child's development, allowing them to express themselves and explore their unique perspectives.

Through engaging in our activities, children learn to think creatively, problem-solve and make connections between different ideas. For example, I had an art workshop this Saturday at the Parks Library, and I had a five-year-old boy named Ahmed asked me whether or not I had used artificial intelligence, AI, in my art practice without me even mentioning the topic. His curiosity led to a whole new discussion on art and technology within the workshop encourages children like Ahmed to ask questions, challenge existing notions and develop their own unique skills and voices. By nurturing young minds as unique as Ahmed's, we encourage their critical thinking and we equip them with the essential skills that challenge the future.

I would like to draw your attention to a remarkable initiative by Carclew called Pom Pom, which stands as a shining example of the impact that art programs have on the life of disadvantaged communities. I was honoured with an artist assistant position at Pom Pom earlier this year, and I've witnessed firsthand the impact our work has on young people and their families. Pom Pom is a free and accessible workshop specifically designed for low-socioeconomic families in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. These families, who may not have access to the necessary resources, are provided with an opportunity to engage in creativity development activities, encouraging their creativity and enabling their children to flourish in an environment full of artists. As an assistant, which I am forever grateful for, I had a mother say to me that Pom Pom was the first time that she ever had connected with her children through the arts, because she never had the opportunity or was comfortable enough until that day. If you ever attend these events, you'll hear these stories more often than you think.

Through Pom Pom and similar programs, children from all backgrounds are given the chance to unleash their creativity and develop their artistic talents. As a refugee and an immigrant myself, my family did not have the disposable income to let me explore art beyond the basic school curriculum—hence why many of us enter art much later in life. By removing these financial barriers, these initiatives created a level playing field, ensuring that children have access to the arts that is not determined by their socioeconomic status.

Investing in art programs for young children is an investment in the future of our society. By nurturing their creative potential, we are sowing the seeds of initiative, empathy and cultural understanding of one another. Art can inspire young minds in many fields, most of which are being created as we speak. We are leading with innovation into the future, and we need to engage young people with the rapid change that we are creating for them.

Therefore, I implore this esteemed committee today to consider the significance of funding art programs for young children, particularly those provided by organisations like Carclew and other art institutions. Let us ensure that every child, regardless of their socioeconomic background, has an opportunity to explore their creativity and grow into well-rounded individuals who can contribute meaningfully to our society.

Thank you for your attention and consideration. Together, let us be on the right side of history and create a future where art is accessible for all.

CHAIR: Thank you. Beautifully said.

Dr McHenry: Firstly, I also acknowledge that I'm speaking on Kaurna country here in Port Adelaide. I want to echo the sentiments of Melak and Mimi. I could not agree more with everything that you just put forward. For the benefit of the committee, I will give a brief overview of Windmill Theatre. Windmill is a leading producer of

theatre and bespoke screen works for children, teenagers and families. We are proudly led by our artists, and our work has always embraced their centrality. Windmill operates across two distinct company arms. We make original theatre for the stage through Windmill Theatre Company, and more recently we have expanded into film and television through Windmill Pictures, extending our reach and impact across Australia and around the world. We welcome the new national cultural policy and the long-overdue commitment to our national arts sector, including our broadcasters. We are very supportive of the five pillars, and I would like to quickly address five key areas.

We have long advocated for, and welcome, the return of \$44 million to the Australia Council. The removal of this funding had an outsized impact on the ecology that supports the performing arts practice for and by young children and young people. Its return is a welcome step towards righting this historic wrong. Nationally youth arts are in a profound state of crisis and will remain so unless they are further prioritised. Acknowledgement of the lack of support for youth arts features heavily throughout Revive, and we strongly encourage the addition of more specific actions and strategic funding initiatives to address chronic underfunding of arts practice for and by young people.

We welcome the establishment of Creative Australia. We've always advocated for the Australia Council and the people who have fought hard to support our sector from within it. Creative Australia is a step forward, incorporating long overdue new bodies within its structure alongside the new First Nations led board. There is much work to be done, and we look forward to working with our peers at Creative Australia to deliver on the goals of Revive.

We welcome the new major works fund. This is long overdue. Major works of scale for children and families are under-represented in our major festivals across Australia. We hope that this new fund will contribute to the capacity of companies to create and premier more significant new works of scale for young people, providing a platform of inclusivity and inspiration that supports the next generation of Australian artists and citizens. We believe in strong cultural infrastructure and support the commitments in the policy. More must be done to support and, in some cases, save our companies and institutions that serve children and young people, and we hope that Revive can be the platform to these ends.

We welcome the focus on cross-government cooperation and call for outcomes, particularly in the areas of education and health, to prioritise investment for children and young people, where they are so desperately needed to address the current mental health and wellbeing crisis in our children. There is much to be grateful for, and Revive is truly a national moment. We're committed and look forward with great enthusiasm to working with our peers over the long term to strengthen, refine and ultimately deliver on the pillars contained within it. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

CHAIR: Thank you. I might go to Senator Caddell first.

Senator CADELL: I'll go to the Australian Children's Television Foundation first. There's been lots of discussion about content on Australian TV and quotas and values and stuff like that. Some of the chatter is around having a higher weighted value for Australian produced and Australian cultural content for children than for general content. Do you believe in giving children's content a higher weighting or a higher value than general content for Australian TV?

Ms O'Mahony: Yes, we do. On the question of the quotas on the SVODs, we believe that the quota should be 20 per cent, and that 20 per cent of that 20 per cent should be for Australian children. They are a large portion of the population. It is the greatest area where content has the most impact on a demographic that rarely get to see themselves on screen. They see a lot of American content and a bit of British content. They are learning and evolving, and it makes a great impact on how they see themselves, how they see Australia and how they see themselves as part of our culture and part of the community. There are a lot of lessons in children's content that children take away.

A great example of that is that at the end of last year we got a letter from some parents about *Little Lunch*, which is a series for primary school children, who said that their child had started school during COVID. Post COVID she had tears and tantrums every single day about going to school. She was doing school refusal. She didn't want to go. They said that over the holidays they found *Little Lunch* on Netflix and they were watching that as a family. They said that it was the only thing that had changed in their life. When she went back to school in February she didn't love school, but she was happy to go because she had worked out where her place was. She'd learnt about all different sorts of personalities and how to deal with different children. The parents wrote this letter to the producers that made us all cry. It was so heartfelt about the impact of really good quality children's television and seeing themselves on screen and what the takeaways are. Even in a comedy drama there are life

skills and life lessons. So we believe it's really important that there is definitely a weighted value and a firm commitment that they have to do it—not just, 'We encourage you to do it,' but that they have to do some.

Senator CADELL: What are some of the successes of Australian children's productions? There's *Dirtgirl* from Whiporie in New South Wales. I think that was fun.

Senator HUGHES: *Bluey*.

Senator CADELL: There's *Bluey* on the ABC. Are there any other things that are going quite well worldwide?

Ms O'Mahony: Yes, there are a lot. It depends on what you deem to be a success too. For us, there are multiple versions of success.

Senator CADELL: Viability and getting out there.

Ms O'Mahony: There are hugely successful shows that maybe haven't travelled as well internationally, like *Little J & Big Cuz*, which was a school readiness program for Indigenous kids. It's an animation series on NITV and ABC, and it's now, as of today, on Netflix.

Senator CADELL: It's that one, is it?

CHAIR: Just to be clear, you're saying that, just because it has a domestic success, that doesn't mean it will—

Senator CADELL: Travel well.

CHAIR: necessarily travel well overseas. Some do and—

Ms O'Mahony: Some do and some don't. Certainly, the way that we look at them—we look at projects and go: 'That is a very commercial project. It has a resonance and a cultural value in Australia but will also travel.' Then there are other shows, like *Little J & Big Cuz*, where we say, 'It's just really important for Indigenous kids to see themselves in school in an animation to encourage them to go to school.' We know they're watching television, and the lower the socioeconomic group often the more television they watch. And then there are really successful commercial shows. *Maverix*, which is on Netflix in every territory in the world, was shot in Alice Springs during COVID. It's a drama series set in the world of motocross. That's in 38 territories around the world, dubbed into 20-something languages by Netflix. *Dance Academy* was hugely successful around the world.

So there's a real mix of projects. They're all Australian with Australian voices and Australian accents—our kids' world. There are those that are more commercial, and then there are those that are just really important for Australia. And it's very hard, often, to get the international market to buy into Australian children's content upfront. They want to wait and see it made, and then they'll decide whether it's going to work for their audience. An example is *Little Lunch*, which travelled really widely internationally. We couldn't get anyone internationally to buy it upfront, but once it was made they all jumped on the bandwagon.

Senator CADELL: I grew up with Humphrey B Bear and *Romper Room* back in the day. I still remember them to this day.

Senator HUGHES: Miss Helena!

Senator CADELL: To Carclew and Windmill, some of the previous people talking about creativity and arts generally, nothing specific, were talking about early inclusion and accessibility. Vouchers were raised from New South Wales that gave access to creative things and other things like that, and there was the inclusion of other artists getting a living wage by involving them in the early parts. What are the things we can do to get inclusion and to get more people involved earlier and exposed? That's what we're talking about—we're talking about exposure that suddenly ticks something in a child's creativity or their desire. What do you think are the successful policies that we should be looking at to touch more children with the arts and creativity?

Ms Crowe: I'll jump in first, if that's alright. I think there are lots of ways, when we talk about arts for children and young people, for them to engage. They engage as makers and participants in workshops, as audience members and as artists or future creatives themselves. I think there are as many mechanisms as there are children in this world, but, when you talk about living wage and the aspects of strong cultural institutions and art workers having careers with reasonable industrial conditions, you cannot ignore the emerging arts sector, because that is actually where you transform the future of the industry. If you raise generations of artists who start from their teen years when they start to get paid as assistants, and they move into early career where they're actually the lead artist running workshops, and you are providing good industrial conditions across that sector, you will transform the cultural institutions into the future. So I actually think you see it as a foundational shift that needs to happen in that space.

As far as participation, I think you'll find that youth arts has been probably one of the most entrepreneurial and innovative sectors going. Because there are so many children to access this work, when we are funded to create a program, we come up with 10 models with which we can amplify that to broader socioeconomic groups who maybe have the means to access it. So I think the key is really around ensuring that you have accessibility for the broadest range of young citizens in this country at the lowest socioeconomic aspect so that you can then amplify and expand the government funding that exists from a user perspective. I think I'd let Ross speak about an audience perspective.

Dr McHenry: I think it's important to acknowledge that Australia has a very rich history of youth arts practice and youth performing arts in particular. We are viewed as global leaders in that space, and, particularly here in South Australia, there are many, many incredible organisations that service thousands upon thousands of children around Australia. So the companies that do exist have been very successful in taking their Australian stories around the country. Companies like Windmill do some of the most extensive regional touring of any company. We create works that go far, far into the regions, and sitting alongside those are tours on our major stages. So we have an outsized impact for the size of the company that we are. A company like Windmill is also producing film and television work. We're creating a TV series called *Beep and Mort* here in South Australia.

Senator CADELL: What is that called?

Dr McHenry: It's called *Beep and Mort*, and it's bringing millions of dollars of additional investment into the South Australian arts sector and providing hundreds of new jobs here in South Australia, building on the legacy of our theatre company and the longstanding support of artists through the creation of our work. We also have an expansive international touring program that, alongside many other leading youth arts companies, we've been leaders in developing global markets for Australian work. The reason that I bring up these things is that our youth performing arts companies are really regarded as leaders in this regard at every level. So I think the issue is: How do we support that? How do we grow that? Well, it starts with supporting youth arts practice in general, which has been among the most severely impacted in terms of its national funding since 2008. In 2008, we had 21 federally funded youth arts companies, including arts companies that were supported in regional Australia. That has dropped to just five in 2023. That's a 76 per cent decrease in funded organisations in 15 years.

Senator CADELL: That's the number of organisations. What has been the decrease in funding over that period? Do you know that?

Dr McHenry: I'll have to take that question on notice, but I could come back to you, absolutely. We have 4.9 million Australians aged between four and 25. That's roughly 20 per cent of the population. But they're among the most marginally supported citizens when it comes to the art of the future. So the key message is that the arts and culture that's been developed for them is regarded as an international benchmark when it comes to screen projects, when it comes to live performances and when it comes to the way that we support artists and provide access and inclusion. A company like Windmill gives away 15 per cent of all of its tickets for free to disadvantaged children. In South Australia, we go above and beyond to provide access. We keep our ticket prices incredibly low because we understand that families are doing it tough, and our priority is to have access for those children. But to do that we need more support so that we can provide what I think we all acknowledge is a kind of a critical platform for the development of young Australians through the telling of new Australian stories.

Senator CADELL: This is my last question. I currently have four kids in my house between the ages of nine and 16. Even across a period of only seven years, there's been a massive change in the consumption of media to digital platform devices, even in creativity in apps—Mister Maker had an app that one of them was addicted to. I know that gaming fits within our arts policy. Where's the interaction or otherwise between creators, producers, the public and apps and games? Is it still in the same space to get that Australian culture into children's learning? I know that *Bluey* has that. I've seen it. But I've not seen a lot of Australian input into child's early learning social apps and creativity apps. Is there any cooperation or structure there?

Ms Khaleel: Canva is one of my most used apps. It is an incredible free resource. There is a fee if you'd like to use the premium features. It's an incredible graphic design app, if you're ever wanting to start. Apps like this are extremely essential for young creatives, but the problem is how to access them. For example, at Carclew, we have one communal computer, so only one person is able to access that app if they were to sit in front of it. Technology and devices are a massive part of accessing these apps. We were saying that things are moving into the future. Not every household has access to several laptops for their kids. So technology and the arts, as I was saying before, are coming together, and this is the peak time for everything. We need to look more into funding rather than speaking in abstract terms about what the future would look like. This is it. We are in the future. AI is so accessible to us. I wish I'd brought my iPad; I would have shown you everything I have.

Senator GROGAN: We can use mine later.

Ms Khaleel: Happily. For a five-year-old to ask me if I use AI in my art, which I started doing, is an incredible question. I had no idea what was happening in the world at the age of five, but for these children it's at their fingertips. Training people to train these kids—educators, young artists, young creatives—to manage these apps and understand them ourselves. It's rapid change. For us to try and teach ourselves and the next generation, it's the adults' responsibility.

Ms Crowe: Melak just hit the nail on the head. I've been in the role at Carclew for four weeks now, and I think the most common conversation I have had across those four weeks has been about the power of regeneration. Creating great industrial conditions for emerging artists and bringing that big group of children through to the more focused group of teens and emerging artists and future audience and future creative industries, whatever they might be, to professional artists who then go back and teach that big group means that you're actually taking the most innovative, excited teachers to the next generation, not to teach the old ways but to teach with what they're inspired by in that moment. You want to get the most forward-thinking new art practice in the world? We'll get it by empowering our emerging artists and dispersing those artists to teach our youngest.

Dr McHenry: If I could just make one comment, there's no end to the opportunity that exists. I really believe that our sector is one of the most innovative sectors in the world. I think that's demonstrated through things like Windmill Pictures that leverage original Australian stories into a major children's television series as well as touring across the world and deep into our regions with unique Australian stage works.

But we do face real challenges with the level of support that's available. Anything is possible. We can go as far as we like and we are entrepreneurial, but we're also facing historic increases simply to undertake our core work. We're facing a 30 per cent increase in touring costs, for example, which was in the LPA submission to this inquiry. We have skyrocketing costs for international engagement. The cost of making and presenting new works has gone up something similar to that 30 per cent, with the material costs compounded with inflation and compounded with other major factors.

There's no end to our possibility for entrepreneurship and for innovation, but at the present moment the youth arts are so severely impacted by the historic cuts that have taken place that even those companies that are thriving are having to really reassess how they make their core work, which in our case is original theatre works and screen work. So I think that we need to do something about that because we really are talking about the future of Australian arts practice, and the stakes are high.

Senator BILYK: Dr McHenry, could you just give me those numbers again? I think you said from 2008—

Dr McHenry: Certainly. In 2008 there were 21 federally funded youth arts companies, and now we have just five.

Senator BILYK: Would COVID have played a role in that?

Dr McHenry: That was a direct result of decisions around federal funding and support. Certainly COVID had a strong contextual impact on all of those companies, but many of these cuts were felt before. A very significant aspect of that was the removal of funds from the Australia Council in 2014.

Senator BILYK: When Catalyst was temporarily introduced.

Dr McHenry: That's correct. So there really has been an outsized impact specifically on youth arts since that moment.

Senator BILYK: Ms Crowe, in your submission you talk about a network in the UK called Common Practice and a report, *Size matters*, from 2011. I haven't seen that report. Can you just talk to us about that—what that basically said and what impact that has in Australia?

Ms Crowe: I will have to take that on notice and send that through.

Senator BILYK: That's fine. If you could, that would be greatly appreciated. Maybe we could get a copy of that report from you as well.

Ms Crowe: Absolutely.

Senator BILYK: Thank you.

Senator GROGAN: I'm very interested in your approach and that notion that we are living in the future now and we have to do something now. A lot of the conversations are when we're talking about the cultural policy—it's new and it's a framework as opposed to a detailed step A and step B. What would you say, in practical terms, would be the key things to do as soon as possible?

Ms Crowe: The most obvious, from my perspective, would be a commitment of funding dedicated to youth arts, through the Australia Council.

Senator GROGAN: Just in general? Is it a technology piece or is it multifaceted?

Ms Crowe: Probably trying to problem-solve that right now is a bit bigger than I could manage. What I think was interesting, and what we put in our original submission, was around a youth advisory group. I think actually what would be the most interesting would be to get experts and young people leading that decision-making, because they know better than anyone where they want to go with the arts sector in the future. I know the Office for Youth has set up a number of advisory bodies, but there is no arts advisory body under that Office for Youth. There is a call for an Office for Youth in Revive, but, of all of the advisory bodies that have been set up, there is not one around arts and creativity. I think there should be the creation of that, and an injection of funds, and then taking the major players across the country, and a youth arts advisory panel, and forming and scoping what that might look like as a rollout. From Carclew's perspective, it would be really invested in the emerging-artist sector and the delivery of their projects. Carclew is a platform with which children and young people's voices can inform the future. I need to be able to access and leverage opportunities, funds and pathways for those children and young people to make decisions about what they deem important and where their art-making practice is going in the future.

Senator GROGAN: Cool, and thank you for hosting the Yes event on Sunday.

Ms Crowe: Did you go? It was lovely, wasn't it?

Senator GROGAN: It was excellent. Thank you very much for that. As an emerging artist, do you feel like there is a pathway for you to be a professional artist into the future or do you feel like the industry is going to be a starving-in-your-garret kind of scenario?

Ms Khaleel: It's a little bit of both. The realist in me thinks, 'Where are we going?' but the optimist in me, the artist in me, thinks, 'There's no stopping us.' I feel like Carclew is an amazing place for me to start. It's my first year as a professional artist, and Carclew has changed my life forever. We were talking about it on the way here. I feel like programs like the emerging-artist program are an incredible opportunity, but it comes with the lack of funding which a lot of my cohort struggle with, focusing on our projects while still having jobs and studying full time on the side. That comes in with the idea that we were never supported when we were younger, because we didn't have the opportunities, and now we have to catch up later on in life. The idea of the starving artist plays in the minds of all of us, and funding is a huge part of it. If you go into a place, and there is no funding, you fall into the idea of, 'I'm going to starve forever,' or 'I'm going to go.' That's where the realist comes in. But committees like this and talks like this, I think, are the only way we can see change.

Senator GROGAN: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Ms Crowe: Can I just add one more thing? There are organisations like Vitalstatistix, where we are here, that have been working with emerging artists since they existed. I think one of the powerful things about investing in art for children and young people is actually expanding and empowering those major institutions and small companies to have a really powerful next wave of artists coming through. The connection and the pathway to those major companies is vital and fundamental for any policy in this space as well.

Dr McHenry: If I may also add to that, Windmill is a major employer. We employ hundreds of artists, and we pride ourselves on the level of valuable employment that we give to artists across the stages of their careers. We have to develop young artists. We employ emerging artists. We are dedicated to creating valuable, longstanding employment for artists through our touring programs and through things like our TV productions. But we have to have pathways for those artists to come through, because we are in the business of creating the next generation of leaders, and that starts with independent practice and then through companies like Carclew. Then, as you come up, you end up at a company like Windmill, and you might get commissioned to make a show that then travels around the world. So I think that it's really important to acknowledge the role that the entire ecology has to play in creating jobs of real value that have a profound impact on young people across the country and around the world.

Senator GROGAN: As emerging young artists get older and get to the point—which I'm assuming, Ms Khaleel, is where you are—where they finish school or maybe go and do some further study at TAFE or university or whatever, they're looking down the pathway of: 'What do I do next? Can I stand on my own as an artist?' There's a kind of shift there because a lot of young people who engage in artistic practice do it as part of an educative piece and therefore are not expecting to be paid for it. So what does that transition look like?

Ms Crowe: I think the most interesting thing of that cycle that I was talking about before, with the biggest group and then focusing, is the people who leave throughout. I think one of the things that are evolving with future generations and young people today is that they don't do just one thing. It is not a single career for 30 years. The focus is around a gig economy and the importance of research into that gig economy. And I want to underline

that one because I think, whatever happens in this space, there needs to be some holistic, long-term body of research across multiple organisations from presenting to creating.

It's those people that step in and out that are that interesting add-on that none of us can predict, because that's where the future technologies come from. That's where the synergies between different bodies or different industries might actually come together to solve the problems of the future. What we hear most when we talk about AI or future technologies is that our humanity is the most needed skill in the future. I've heard people at the space industries at Lot Fourteen saying that they need artists and engineers. They need people who can think creatively about a world that doesn't yet exist. And I think we need to worry less about necessarily where they'll go, because we don't know what it'll be yet. I couldn't possibly imagine. It's the imagination of the next three generations that I want to ignite to help find those pathways of where they'll go, and then I want to help create the steps that they identify what they need to get there. And I think that's where that policy needs to be put in place. It's actually not about forming the path; it's about forming the platform with which that path can be formed.

Senator GROGAN: Indeed. I'm going to chew over that vision piece for a little bit longer. But, on the skills shortage piece, this policy, like I say, is a framework. It's a policy piece. It's a first step. Do you think that will assist to fill some of those gaps from a confidence base?

Ms Crowe: Absolutely. South Australia has launched its population strategy. They are targeting 24- to 35-year-olds to move to this state. We need between 8,000 and 15,000 jobs, and we're trying to attract 500 at the time, right? Twenty-four is when you're young enough to still participate in Carclew programs, and 35 is when you're making the next generation of participants. What arts does, whether it's a major presenting company or a small organisation or a cultural institution or an organisation like Carclew, is weave through the systems. We're funded currently under the Department for Education for this state. You need solid education systems in any organisation in any state, but what the arts can do is move in and out and create the little synergies and synapses to ignite and make the connection between what somebody is studying and where they want to go. Melak, do you want to say what your degree was when you started this?

Ms Khaleel: I was studying law for five years. I got to my final semester and said, 'I'm done. I need to get into arts,' and I've never been happier. I feel like an opportunity like this has merged my two worlds together, from my legal background to my arts, and it can't be better than this.

Ms Crowe: We also have a young resident who has a biology, a chemistry and an education degree, who's just moved into curatorial studies. These are not linear paths, and I think that's actually the most exciting part about investing in this generation and the next generations to come.

Senator GROGAN: Fantastic. Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Thank you, Senator Grogan. I have some final questions before we move on to our next panel. I'm interested in the Australian Children's Television Foundation's perspective on this. We've heard quite a bit from previous witnesses in the film industry, but also from the Screen Producers association and others, about their concerns not just around the quota to have the creation of Australian stories on streaming and catch-up services—I want to be really clear about that because it's not good enough just to have Netflix involved in this; others have to be involved as well. One of the other elements beyond the quota is the concern around intellectual property and the rights of the producers and the creators to actually keep the IP. You do a lot of negotiation of contracts and deals, even those that go overseas. Can you unpack that a little bit for us? I can imagine that if Netflix is to commission a show, they'll be looking for something that is commercially viable in the global Netflix sphere. How do we make sure the IP actually stays in Australia?

Ms O'Mahony: There are different models for different SVODs. We're currently doing an animation here in South Australia called *Eddie's Lil' Homies*, which is Netflix and NITV's first-ever co-commission, and Netflix have just taken Australia and New Zealand—they're not taking the world—so there are different models. Others, like Apple, want the world and things like that.

Part of retaining the IP is having really robust funding mechanisms in Australia. If broadcasters, whether it's the ABC or Netflix or Apple or whoever, are fully funding the show and paying the whole cost of it then it's a different negotiation with them compared to the model where we say, 'Okay, we're providing funding from the ACTF and funding from Screen Australia and from the producer offset.' That gives us a very strong negotiating position and a position where you can argue: 'It's not all your money, guys. Australians own this portion of it. It's only what you put in.' That has been the model for all of the shows we have done so far. The streamers haven't wanted to fully fund the shows. They might license it for different periods of time, in some instances 15 years, but they've also allowed us to have—they have an exclusive period and then we can sell it to other broadcasters

around the world after a couple of years because the ACTF has put money into that show. Netflix haven't fully paid for it, or Disney haven't fully paid for it or whoever.

It does come down to the way a show is financed and having those mechanisms in Australia where the ACTF is funded to a point where we can be a major contributor with Screen Australia alongside us—although they have every genre to invest in, so there are obviously different pressures there, whereas we solely focus on kids, our money only goes to kids—and then the producer offset. You need all of those mechanisms in place to fund these shows, but they are also your bargaining tool that buys you those rights in the show. If any broadcaster, it doesn't matter who it is in the world, is going to fully fund a show then they are obviously going to want a different rights proposition. It's always a negotiation on that front.

CHAIR: So there needs to be a maintenance of some type, either through public investment or some other funding mechanism. I'd argue that producer offset is public investment.

Ms O'Mahony: It is! It is taxpayer investment. And it's supposed to be owned by the producer. That is their equity in the show. That is the biggest part of the proposition that SPA are trying to deal with and argue, and we back them in that. It was brought in as the producers' mechanism to build their businesses. No broadcaster should say that's their money. It's not Screen Australia's money, it's the offset and it should be treated—

CHAIR: I guess this comes to the point you raised in your opening statement about prominence. I like the idea of having the prominence conversation and that it's not just about having Australian broadcasters prominent on smart televisions or devices through those manufacturing regulations, which we've been promised, but a prominence of Australian children's television. With that in mind, how do you feel about the commercial broadcasters who basically, over several years, have just junked all of their kids content to the most unwatched channel, either on free to air or on the most difficult place to find it on their catch-up service? Do you think it's ironic that those very same people are now arguing for prominence?

Ms O'Mahony: Yes! There is a history of dozens and dozens and dozens of programs that the taxpayer has helped fund that were commissioned by those commercial networks. They haven't necessarily taken them off air; they sit on Go or they sit on their catch-up service or their online platforms. If there was a children's television app on smart TVs, it would enable the audience to find them wherever they are. And they could be programs that are 10 or more years old. Whether that's on the commercial platforms where all the shows that they've had under license still sit—the ABC, NITV, Netflix, whoever—there's such a history of Australian children's content made over the last 30 years, a lot of which is still out in the marketplace sitting on those platforms.

CHAIR: But that's the beauty of those—

Ms O'Mahony: Every three years there's a new audience who've never seen those shows. That's the difference kids and adult television: every three years you've got kids who are finding it for the first time, and they think it's new and they think it's theirs and they own it. We've had arguments with little kids who go, 'I found this new show,' and you haven't got the heart to tell them it's 15 years old because they think it's new. They've just discovered it.

But parents don't know where to find it and kids don't know where to find it because it's not promoted very well on any of the online platforms, to be perfectly honest. Whether it's the public broadcaster or the commercials, it's hard to find those shows. Unless you know the name of the show, how do you find it?

CHAIR: So what you're proposing—

Ms O'Mahony: If you had the app—

CHAIR: Yes, so you're proposing—

Ms O'Mahony: It aggregates. So you have an app, you click on that, and it says, 'Okay, you've got *Little Lunch*, you've got *Bluey*'—our proposal is that it will be broken into age groups and then it would show you there's *Maverix*, there's *Bluey*, there's *Little Lunch*, there's this, there's an animation. It would show you that this one's on ABC and Netflix, that one's on Channel 9Go et cetera. So it doesn't require us to have the rights to those shows; it's just saying to parents: 'If you have Netflix, you can find it on that one. If you have the ABC'—and you can click on the button and it will take you to that platform if you are a subscriber, or to the ABC or NITV. It will take you to that show. But you don't have to know the name of the show to see how many Australian children's programs are actually available across all of the platforms.

CHAIR: Senator Hughes wants to jump in here.

Senator HUGHES: I've been dealing with some Australians who are based in the US who want their kids to be able to watch Australian content—*Play School* et cetera—as their children are going to grow up between the US and Australia. ABC Kids is geoblocked internationally, so we've been in touch with the communications

minister and the ABC. From a public broadcaster perspective, wouldn't that at least open up international markets to children's shows that are produced in Australia? ABC Kids would be a very good model that might then open up interest internationally. If you've got kids overseas all of a sudden starting to watch an Australian produced show on an ABC Kids app or whatever it is—my kids watch YouTube; everything's on YouTube—wouldn't that just help open up the market as almost a free advertising platform?

Ms O'Mahony: It's tricky. If the ABC fully own the show, if they're fully funded or they've made it in house, then they own all the rights and they could choose to do that. But most of the children's shows that are on the ABC are funded by multiple parties. They might have an international broadcaster. They'll have the ACTF as a distributor or another international distributor and things like that. The ABC just buy the rights for Australia, and then other territories buy the right to that show to screen it in their territories and on their broadcasters. The issue with the ABC is that they wouldn't have the right to make that program available to the world.

Senator HUGHES: But they make content though, don't they? They make content.

CHAIR: They commission stuff.

Ms O'Mahony: They don't make very much. They make *Play School* and they make some other short-form content.

Senator HUGHES: But, seriously, it's *Play School*. These parents want *Play School*. That's what they want.

Ms O'Mahony: If it's a program that the ABC fully make and own, then I presume they could make those available ungeo-blocked, but the programs that they commission where they only pay 20 per cent of the budget, like *Bluey* and things like that, they don't own all the rights for the world. They just own the Australian right to screen it. They pay a licence to have it for a certain period of time in Australia.

Senator HUGHES: But they're international shows, not Australian shows. Or are they Australian shows?

Ms O'Mahony: They're the Australian shows. The way children's programs are funded, the broadcaster generally just pays a licence to have the rights just for their territory. The ABC, unless they make it in house themselves, just have the right to that show. They've paid a licence fee, which is a small part of the budget, to have the right to show that program in Australia for five years, and then the rest of the budget is made up of selling it around the world to other broadcasters to try and make the money back or finance it in the first place. The ABC wouldn't have the ability or the rights to make every show that they have available internationally, probably, other than the ones that they make in house themselves.

Senator HUGHES: Still no luck for our ex-pats!

Ms O'Mahony: *Play School* maybe.

Senator HUGHES: No. They won't do it; no-one will. I've written to them all—they won't do it.

CHAIR: Dr McHenry, I was listening to your opening statement and thinking about a proposition that was put to us by a previous witness around the comparison between sports vouchers in schools and for families so that their kids can go and participate in community sport. It was an initiative of the state government. Do we need to be thinking like that in relation to creativity and generating arts audiences and participation, whether it's performing arts or extracurricular music and visual art programs? I'm not opposed to the sports voucher; I think it's a great idea, but not every kid wants to play sport. In fact, just because you play sport doesn't mean you can't also be interested in drama or music.

Dr McHenry: Absolutely. I think that we would welcome any initiative that encouraged broad access for children of diverse backgrounds to the arts. The research and evidence that exists really clearly points to the incredible benefit. In fact—I'd have to find this statistic exactly—I did read in preparing for this statement that every \$3 invested in the arts represented a \$7 saving in health for children, which is pretty remarkable value, I think you'd agree. So, yes, I think we do need more initiatives. I would welcome any kind of new thinking around this matter, including voucher systems or really whatever's required to help support that, because ultimately we're in a situation now where the rising cost of living, inflation and the cost of housing mean that parents are having to make very difficult decisions about what their children can and can't access. That's a very sad statement, but it's the truth. We need ways to support children to be able to engage with the arts across Australia. I think it's very important.

CHAIR: Thank you to each and every one of you for participating today and coming to speak to us.

ADAMEK, Dr Cathy, Board Member, Director, Ausdance ACT/Vice President, Ausdance National

BEYER, Ms Nicole, Executive Director, Theatre Network Australia [by video link]

HOBBA, Mr Julian, Executive Director, State Theatre Company South Australia

SILBY, Ms Michelle, Executive Director, Ausdance Victoria

WILLIAMS, Mr Jacob, President, Ausdance National [by video link]

[14:59]

CHAIR: I now welcome representatives from Ausdance National, Theatre Network Australia and the State Theatre Company South Australia. I understand that information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses giving evidence to Senate committees has been provided to you.

I'll start with Mr Hobba. Do you have an opening statement?

Mr Hobba: Yes. State Theatre Company South Australia is the flagship professional theatre company of the state and we've been operating since 1972. We're a statutory authority of the South Australian government. We're the resident company of the Dunstan Playhouse and a home company of the Adelaide Festival Centre. We're a member of CAST, which is a group of the country's theatre companies including Sydney, Queensland and Melbourne theatre companies, Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA, Bell Shakespeare, Belvoir St Theatre and Malthouse Theatre.

We play to about 40,000 audiences per year, with over six to eight productions in Adelaide, plus touring and co-productions with local and interstate companies. We're the only theatre company in South Australia that can make theatre from first principles—that is all the set construction, commissioning of plays, developing plays and putting plays on stage. We're one of the companies funded through the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework.

We welcome the Revive national cultural policy that has been put in place, and I'll speak briefly to a selection of the things we welcome about it. We welcome the strong statement of support in the forewords that the policy has been established as a framework, in anticipation of further investment; that the policy recognises the power of the arts intrinsically, socially, economically, diplomatically and in health and education. We welcome that the policy therefore understands the benefit of a whole-of-government approach to culture, and that at both levels of government there can be a better appreciation of how a strong arts and cultural sector can support wider economic and social goals. We welcome the preservation of arms-length funding and the reinforced independence of Creative Australia. We welcome the commitment to place First Nations arts and culture first and to resource partnerships and works of scale in that area.

We welcome the establishment of the Centre for Arts and Entertainment Workplaces. CAST companies like ours are proud to have historically been standard-bearers for employment conditions in the arts and we remain a lead negotiator in many of the key industrial agreements that apply in the theatre sector. We, like many sectors of the economy, are experiencing workforce shortages, especially in production and technical areas, and that's hampering our opportunities.

We welcome the works-of-scale fund that's foreshadowed and along with that the encouragement of increased collaboration between organisations, both inside and outside the national performing arts plan. We welcome the recognition of the importance of arts in education but think the policy could go further. CAST companies do a lot for arts education, and that's not appropriately recognised.

We welcome the focus on diversifying the artist and audience pool. It's how our work will reflect the country and how we will grow sustainable audiences into the future.

We welcome the restoration of previously cut funds. I came from the small to medium independent sectors before I worked at the State Theatre Company South Australia and, like a lot of people, I've watched with dismay at the way our industry has been decimated through cuts to recurrent funding among small to medium companies over the last 10 years. When I was in Perth before this I was in a round of four-year funding where the Blue Room Theatre and Barking Gecko got so cut that there was then no recurrently federally supported theatre company in Western Australia below Black Swan. Now I'm in South Australia, and it has the same situation at the small to medium independent level. I also see the deep scarring and attrition within one of the majors—the State Theatre Company.

The basic point I want to leave today is that we welcome the cultural policy and its objectives. What we need to achieve those objectives through the policy is more and sustained investment, not for the sake of it but because

there are massive missed opportunities in the sector and the difference between failure and success is relatively easy to bridge.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. Ms Silby?

Ms Silby: My colleague is going to give an opening statement and then I'll add to it. We weren't sure if we were both allowed to give one. Before she starts I want to thank you so much for those comments. We echo and agree with all of them. We're super happy to actually have a cultural policy back, but I'll pass to my colleague.

Dr Adamek: I have a little bit about Ausdance first. Ausdance is the not-for-profit peak body for dance in Australia that provides support services for the dance sector. We represent Ausdance National and the Ausdance Network, which spans the states and territories with varying levels of funding. Australia-wide, Ausdance has over 10,000 members and many more subscribers, consisting of professional artists and companies, tertiary institutions, schools, small to medium dance studios, community and social dance and dance for health and wellbeing.

We celebrate Australia's new NCP Revive and we support its broad recommendations relating to all art forms; however, there are gaps that we would like to see addressed. There needs to be more support for First Nations dance across the sector. In fact, there is little reference to dance, or language specific reference to dance, across all pillars, which primarily emphasise visual arts and music. Dance is a major contributor to cultural storytelling. It's one of the most diverse art forms and is one of the top three most popular forms of physical recreation in Australia.

CHAIR: What was that figure, sorry?

Dr Adamek: This is taken from the sport institute of Australia. It is one of the top three most popular forms of physical recreation once you take walking out.

We ask that dance is explicitly recognised across the five pillars. Over the past decade there has been decreasing support for small to medium dance companies and independent dance artists. We look forward to renewed levels of support, including further investment in the promotion of dance therapy and dance for health and wellbeing. We want to see more investment in dance support organisations, centres, festivals, peak bodies and service organisations that provide dance practitioners with access to performance opportunities, safe dance spaces—and I emphasise how important space is for dance at every level—and administrative and workplace support.

Ausdance requires recognition and support to assist in the delivery of NCP policies in partnership with government and to continue the development of accreditation and industry standards of safe dance practice and child safety to be implemented across the dance sector. We need consolidated data, which is currently divided between different government agencies, to provide a true reflection of Australian dance engagement. Dance is a female dominated industry, and dance artists are some of the lowest-paid arts workers. That's from a report from the Australia Council in 2017. Awards need to be clarified and dance practitioners remunerated consistently with other disciplines and industries to address issues of equity. As founding members of the National Advocates for Arts Education, we want to see their recommendations fully implemented. The Ausdance network has, over the last 45 years, engaged with the dance sector and communities across the country. We request that Ausdance and its members be engaged with and represented in all Creative Australia task forces. Ausdance looks forward to working with Creative Australia and the government to address these opportunities for the benefit of dance and the broader Australian community.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms Silby: May I add a couple of notes to echo my colleague here? It's very similar to what she said in terms of small to medium and the cuts basically imposed on the Australia Council. For example, specific to dance, the small to medium companies and the 2008 round of multi-year funding, I can speak to this because I was at the Australia Council at the time as the manager for dance. There were 16 small to medium dance companies funded, 12 of which were called key organisations—the more established ones—and then four key organisers emerging. From four years ago and the funding round before, we're now down to between six and eight. That's a 50 per cent loss of small to medium companies funded across the entire country. As someone who's been in the country about 17 years, even just having 16 companies alone across such a huge continent is quite small. I know there are similar issues in theatre, particularly in the youth performing arts practice area. I wanted to put those figures forward for consideration. I was very happy to see in the report that we're, hopefully, going to renew some of what was lost from the Australia Council—now Creative Australia.

The same goes for independent artists between 2008 and 2012. Each project round would fund between 22 and 35 artists to substantial levels. In the past several years, sometimes that has been as low as between six and 13

across the entire country. I know you know all of these things, but this is just to bring it to the table. We're here to work with you guys and with Creative Australia so we can all pull together across all the art forms and culture to bring our country of the wilderness now we've got a policy back again.

CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Beyer.

Ms Beyer: TNA is a national organisation. We're based in Melbourne on Boonwurrung country, and I pay my respects to elders past and present. We represent theatre, dance and circus, with a focus on small to medium and independent companies and artists. Like my colleagues, we greatly welcome the national cultural policy and the additional investment it brings to our nation's arts and culture. Of note, we are extremely pleased to see a cross-government approach for the first time. The policy steering committee, which is committed on page 96, will comprise representatives from across government and will provide a robust mechanism for finding cultural solutions to civic issues and vice versa.

I imagine it like this: representatives from regional health, aged care, youth, tourism, NDIS, education and environment will sit alongside our colleagues in Creative Australia and the Office for the Arts, aligning their policies and pursuing radical ideas for truly reviving the arts and cultural lives of all Australians. Well, I hope that's how it'll work. As an example, I know of a regional youth arts organisation which provides so much more than cultural support to their young people. You heard earlier from other young people organisations. They are one-stop shops for all sorts of issues. They are already doing this work and have the trust of the young people, so let's upscale their work.

We were also pleased that the final report of the previous parliament's inquiry into the creative industries resulted in a bipartisan report calling for a national cultural plan. The Labor members supported the recommendations and added one or two. It would be a very welcome act if the coalition and Greens endorsed this national cultural policy regardless of who is in government.

As for areas for future focus, review of funding levels for the national performing arts framework companies is well overdue. We know that all of these companies suffered severely during the lockdowns and need an uplift to rebuild reserves, but it's worth noting that the theatre, contemporary dance and circus companies receive a much smaller percentage of the overall funding but bring in the largest percentage of audiences. I don't have up-to-date statistics, but I urge the committee to ask for those statistics from Creative Australia and take a look.

Independent arts workers are still suffering. TNA's survey of 300 independents showed that 51 per cent were considering partial or full retraining or leaving the sector altogether. Two areas of investment would help: returning project funding to 2014 levels to support creative development and making new work, and reinvesting in international touring, which has been severely reduced in recent years. International touring and national touring are where many independent artists can actually make a living.

Lastly, the area that the workforce shortages are hitting hardest is the small to medium companies, who can't offer salaries competitive with other industries yet are providing training programs, mentorships, placements and leadership programs that will help build new talent. We need to invest in those existing companies and programs.

CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Hobba, you've outlined a number of the concerns in relation to investing in the small to medium size theatres and theatre companies. We know the devastating impacts of some of those changes that were made when Minister Brandis was in charge. I'm thinking particularly of theatre and performing arts. There were other issues, but I know that it had a huge impact on theatre companies and performing arts companies in particular. There were the cuts to funding and then the flow-through from the Australia Council, but then COVID happened. What are the concrete things that have been put in place since COVID that are allowing you to get back up on your feet and allow not just audiences but investing in the actual artists themselves and giving people a pathway—or is there nothing?

Mr Hobba: I don't think there is anything. Certainly, in South Australia, as a statutory authority, we survived COVID with a kind of guarantee against loss insurance scheme, but our underlying funding levels and mechanism didn't change and haven't changed. I was writing in an application the other day that I feel like we've saved the furniture, but why aren't we valuing it now that we've saved it? What did we save it for? But I think there's a real opportunity now to reinvest in it and reimagine. I think COVID has, in a way, thrown up a lot of possibilities for change, opportunities for more collaboration across different parts of the sector and this kind of thing. I think the policy settings have a way to catch up with the level of change that's occurred, but at least this natural national cultural policy sets the framework within which that can happen. We'd hope to see a bit more evolution in the mechanisms themselves.

CHAIR: In relation to Ausdance, I remember speaking to the organisation in the midst of COVID. It's as if, in particular, dance schools really fell through the gaps. They weren't considered to be sporting organisations and

they often weren't able to access broader educational funding support. Many of the very small dance schools are small businesses, sole traders. It just seemed to me that, that figure of the top three that have physical and wellbeing activity, thousands and thousands of particularly young people, but not just young people, were disadvantaged because there was no safety net for Australian dance.

Dr Adamek: One of the things that we spent so much time doing during COVID was advocating specifically for those small businesses that you're talking about, and the fact that their award is covered by sport and rec meant that they weren't getting the advantages. As you said, they really fell through a gap. And we had to decipher that for them, because dance studios were sort of buried underneath along with gyms. So we had to do a lot of explaining. I spoke to Steven Marshall at the time, directly explaining the specifics about dance studios and how they needed to be addressed separately when it came to restrictions around COVID. A lot of our members are asking for greater delineation and focus on dance and dance studios as part of that award. That's just the award, but it's also restrictions and other definitions around dance studios for that reason.

Ms Silby: Building on Cathy's points, during COVID, I had both an Ausdance Vic and a New South Wales hat on. I was just a glutton for punishment. It was also because dance, like other art forms, sat in four different departments during COVID. When we wrote the Return to Dance guidelines, we had to deal with four different ministers, departments et cetera. But also, in terms of falling through the cracks, there were the tax codes. I'll give you one example just for Victoria. We did some advocacy around relief from small to medium business grants, which arts and dance weren't part of. They said, 'Yes, of course, we would love to have you.' But then there weren't the right tax codes. So just on a minutiae level, getting that through government to go, 'Can you alter some tax codes or recognise these new tax codes,' takes a bit of doing, and that's why you need peak bodies and service orgs. We did a survey across the country, but I'm just going to use Victoria as an example, because Melbourne and Victoria were so hit by COVID and had so many lockdowns, as you all know. This reached over 10,000 people, whether it was dance studio owners, their parents or workers et cetera.

At that point, at the end of 2020, if the lockdowns continued, the rate of potential closure and bankruptcy was looking at eight to five per cent. The survey then extended to independent artists and companies that worked with those communities, because it's a contract gig economy—so you may be a dancer for five months, but you're also a teacher over here and a producer over there. The ecology is interlinked. So, while the top end of town was looked after—maybe not as much as they wanted—whether it was the Australian Ballet, Bangarra or the Sydney Dance Company, everyone else in the ecology was struggling a lot more, particularly dance studios, to your point, and the independent artists that serviced them. We took that survey. We presented it to four different sets of ministers in Victoria—who, thankfully, agreed to meet us in the one go, which was most helpful—their advisers and the Chief Medical Officer, and they asked us for some solutions, not just the problems. One of those that did get up, which was an easy win for the time, was a dance voucher we proposed. I heard you talking about it earlier in terms of a sports voucher. Creative Victoria, when dealing with Jane Crawley and Minister Foley, was like, 'Great, love that, as long as we don't have to do the admin.' So, thankfully, our colleagues—because they have a very good cross-portfolio working situation—in sports and rec did the admin. We did it for dance. We agreed on \$45 million over two years. That helps with this part, but then there are the other parts that, as my colleague said, we need to look to.

There are massive gaps in skills and training—not for everyone, just to be clear; some people do things most excellently—around governance, business management skills, and how to recover after COVID when you're only used to running a small dance school, or some of the big ones. We hear a lot of stories. I'll pause there because you've probably got more specific questions. But the ecology is all interlinked like it is in most art forms. So if one part fails or doesn't get funded—like JobKeeper/JobSeeker didn't really work for most people.

Dr Adamek: No, because most independent artists for dance are sole traders, so they couldn't get JobKeeper, for example.

Ms Silby: They didn't meet the criteria.

Dr Adamek: If you had a proprietary limited company, that was fine, you could qualify for JobKeeper. But so many independents, as you said, are moving between teaching and the occasional gig as a dancer or a choreographer. They're sole traders or freelancers and they certainly fall in between the gaps.

CHAIR: Earlier today we heard that festivals are a wonderful way of providing the first experience that many people often have with the arts, creativity and the creative sector.

Ms Silby: Yes.

CHAIR: I'd argue that dance schools and community theatre programs are the same. Lots of parents send their kids to dance for the first few years of life, and, if they are into it, they're into it, they love it and it creates a whole

new avenue for them. I think that kind of pathway and that education element is so often missed. It's interesting that all of you named that as something that isn't really explicitly mentioned or given funding in relation to this new policy. Are there specifics that you think we as policymakers should be advocating for in this area? If you take the National Cultural Policy as an overarching document, what are the things we need to plug in to see it realised?

Ms Silby: Would you like to go first?

Mr Hobba: One of the things that we've been talking about as major theatre companies is advocating for federal education department support and involvement in what we do because each of our companies subsidises the work we do, bringing particularly secondary school students into theatre making and appreciation and as the necessary precursor to them applying for tertiary studies. As funding has decreased, subsidising the price for students and disadvantaged students has become more and more difficult. So one thing we would like to see in the spirit of that whole-of-government enterprise is whether the education department can be more involved. Also we are increasingly plugging gaps in skill and knowledge development that might previously have been delivered in schools. So we need more resourcing to do that as well.

Ms Beyer: Can I jump in here?

CHAIR: Yes, Ms Beyer.

Ms Beyer: Thank you. Sorry, it's really hard because I can't read the body language. I think the cross-government piece that Julian just mentioned, and that I noted in my opening statement, is really important. We haven't seen that done properly in the history of cultural policies. We've seen mention of it, but then we haven't seen those mechanisms coming out. So I think that through really supporting this steering committee which is cross-government—that's what it says—it will be really interesting to see what happens as a result. One of the things that's mentioned is the Office for Youth. When we're talking about young people and pathways, we really need to work with this new Office for Youth which, as Mimi Crowe said previously, is undertaking consultation right now. We need to engage with that consultation process and say, 'Okay, what are the cultural and creative opportunities that you're providing to young people through this Office for Youth?' I think those sorts of ideas are already there in the National Cultural Policy. We need to just jump on them.

CHAIR: Yes, and make sure they're resourced.

Ms Beyer: That's right.

CHAIR: I'll come back to Ausdance soon. Ms Beyer, you mention in your submission—and you're not the only ones—the fact that investment in international touring has been a problem for a number of years, and then COVID happened.

Ms Beyer: Yes.

CHAIR: What do we need to do to ensure that Australia is engaging in the world when it comes to performing arts and theatre?

Ms Beyer: Thank you for the opportunity to talk about that. As I said, international touring is often where small companies and independent artists actually make some money. We've been exporting a whole lot of performing arts practices for a long time, and we need to do more of it. So, yes, in 2019 during COVID the Australia Council had to change its policy and basically reduce the international strategy down to nothing very much at all, and that needs to be reinstated, but it needs funding. Yes, the return of \$11 million a year is handy, but that's already gone. It didn't touch the sides, because the small-to-medium companies, as we've heard already, will need a little uplift to get back those youth companies, dance companies and theatre companies that were lost previously. So there's nothing much left. To have international touring happening again, we need another investment there.

CHAIR: It strikes me that, with the amount of money that has been spent in the film sector, in comparison, in getting big international blockbusters to be shot and created, or partly created, here in Australia, a bit of extra support to ensure that our Australian artists can be selling our wares overseas wouldn't go astray.

Ms Beyer: Absolutely.

CHAIR: I will go to Senator Cadell.

Senator CADELL: Thank you, Chair. I have a couple of questions specifically around dance. We heard earlier, in estimates, about the role of APRA AMCOS OneMusic. In the music industry, ARIA gives about \$35 million out through their money to recording artists. APRA AMCOS use more than double that to administer their organisation. Some of the barriers in regional Australia—we're feeling that participation and exposure are very

important. In regional Australia a dance studio may not be viable in just one town, so they visit many towns, I'm sure. APRA AMCOS are insisting that they pay multiple licences for multiple businesses in each town.

Ms Silby: Yes.

Senator CADELL: It's a concern for getting these things back and viable. What is Ausdance doing there?

Ms Silby: It's a massive concern.

Dr Adamek: Certainly, OneMusic have been reaching out to us. We held a seminar recently—they did it for free and we made it available to all our members—to answer and address these sorts of questions. They seem fairly responsive at the moment to tailoring packages specific to the needs of the people. In terms of that specific one about getting different licences, the feedback I gave to them was: 'You need to start charging the venues. Stop hitting the users of the venues for licensing fees.' That was one of my key feedbacks. It should be the bigger fish who pay those broader licensing fees, which would mean that every individual that hooks into that venue isn't then having to pay as well.

Ms Silby: And then the feedback we get, on top of that, from the venues is more nuanced because they say: 'We're a local government authority venue. This is the amount of funding we've got, and suddenly with the licence it's gone like that.' For example, the 60 or 70 venues that we liaise with through VAPAC in Victoria have all given the feedback that, 'Maybe over five years we might be able to stagger up the costs for licensing, but it's prohibitive right now.' It will impact not just on international touring but on people locally coming out to their local theatre, because if you can't pay the fees or you have to then put up the price of tickets—people's incomes are down right now with COVID impacts and utility prices. I would say it's something that needs a lot more discussion. Certainly, our dance users cannot afford to pay what's being proposed—that's the shorter answer—but it needs an in-depth, real look. We have got a good relationship, but a lot of the venues, even though that could be the solution, can't afford it either, because they've had cuts in their local, state or federal government funding.

Mr Hobba: It's true in terms of theatre as well. We used to pay under a venue licence, which was a much easier and more efficient scheme for us.

Senator CADELL: I note for the *Hansard* record that their permission to be the ACCC's nominated person to do this expires next August, so I look forward to that going forward. It is a barrier to re-establishing and getting things travelling around, for both theatre and dance?

Ms Silby: Absolutely, for any kind of performing—anything that needs music, basically, and that licensing. They don't want to become like the Sky version of music licensing.

Mr Hobba: And it's a very complex setup.

Senator CADELL: Does it take a \$90 million organisation to charge licence fees?

Ms Silby: You know what? Give me \$70 million and I'll tell you what I could do with it! To be really blunt—I know that's a cheeky thing to say—no.

Senator CADELL: One of the other interesting things, when we're talking about fair wage and minimum wages and stuff in the industry, is that there is no award for dance instructors. That comes under the fitness award.

Dr Adamek: That's right, and it's lost under the fitness award. It's neglected there as well. A lot of our members who are from dance studios, who are teachers and run their own dance studios, are begging for clarity around the dance teaching award for them.

Ms Silby: There are some conflicting awards. There are some that come under the LPA. Some people then look at NAVA and their awards, which are again different. In theatre there are some other aspects.

Dr Adamek: One of the problems is that the hourly rate, if you look at that, is horrifically low. It's something like—

Senator CADELL: It's \$28 or \$29.

Dr Adamek: It's terrible. It presumes that you're employed by a gym for four days a week—so it's like an hourly rate. But the fact is: when dance artists are teaching, they might employ teachers who just come in and teach two classes a week. We'll always charge the three-hour minimum rate, which is what we do in the live performance area.

Ms Silby: We have specific guidelines that we give to our members in terms of who's teaching, what level, what standards we take, recommendations. Then it's down to the studio, the company. We liaise with what's called the national dance managers meeting, where we have regular discussions around rates of pay for dance artists and choreographers. There is quite a debate going on at the moment around rates of choreographer pay, for dancers in some big companies right now, which I'm not going to comment on at this hearing, and also different

rates of pay for artistic directors, or EDs. In the gender pay gap, there's a whole realm of things in this space that need to be sorted out.

Dr Adamek: And choreographers moving into the film industry as well—I've done a number of gigs as a choreographer in film, and it's new territory for the film industry to understand. Even Bob Fosse is just listed under 'miscellaneous crew' on an IMDb profile.

Ms Beyer: This is the piece of work that the National Cultural Policy talks about, the creative workplaces organisation. One of the things that it's supposed to do is help us establish rates and publish the ones that exist, because we all do that benchmarking. We also do a salary survey for companies and we do a salary survey for independents because they're not covered under any awards. This centre for workplaces will be able to be a one-stop shop for all those rates of pay, we hope.

Senator GROGAN: Yes, we most certainly do hope that will be the case! We've been quite intrigued today by some of the things people have told us—including that theatre technicians get wrapped up with medical theatre technicians, and dance getting mixed up with sport. It's a difficult unpicking piece, I would imagine. Are there any places around the world that do it better? Is there somewhere to look for some ideas?

Dr Adamek: Do you want to speak to the UK?

Ms Silby: Yes. There are lots of good things here, but I'm going to start off with that. There is lots of great talent—artists, creatives, politicians et cetera—but there are other models. France, for many times, has a living wage for artists, whatever art form they do. If you're not currently delivering a project—it's probably changed since COVID; I'm talking pre-COVID—you won't just have a dole that's some pathetic amount of money; it will recognise that, in between your active gallery or theatre show, you are creating the concept and the work. They have different things on tax. They have different things on affordable housing and child care. We see a massive drop-off at certain ages—

Senator GROGAN: That specifically relate to dance or the arts in general?

Ms Silby: The arts in general, not just dance. It's brilliant. It's all equitable; we don't want to be divisive here. Again, we see a huge drop-off—and this happens in other art forms—at certain ages because people might want to afford their rent, or have a child or even a mortgage, and then we see a huge loss in dancers, choreographers, producers and arts administrators. If people don't have a partner, the comment's often been given back to us, 'I can only afford to do this job if I have a partner who also has a good job.' The arts are usually subsidised not just by the individual but by their partnerships—as in romantic partnerships. The UK has multiple models of a lot of good cross-government working. It's only two levels of government; they've only got governments national and local. Here, there are three levels of government. I've been here 17 years, and I'm still working it out!

Dr Adamek: The tax breaks seems to have changed. There's more information about what you can and can't claim as a performing artist now, but it's a bit more restrictive now than it used to be. You used to be able to claim audition expenses broadly.

Senator GROGAN: Sorry, here or—

Dr Adamek: In Australia. In terms of tax reform, we wouldn't want to see more restrictions put on what you can't claim. We want to broaden what you can claim as an independent performing artist.

Ms Silby: Also, with the rising cost of housing and the gentrification in various areas and various states: that often happens because there are cultural and arts activities and arts workers, and then the house prices go up and they're forced to move out—or they may wish to move out. That's something that really needs to be looked at because in certain other countries they will ring fence some of those areas so there is affordable housing or a combination where you can part rent and part buy; that happens in several different countries. That's something that could be looked at more broadly. The whole night-time economy and how that works—that's happening a bit in Sydney and in some other places. Coming back to licensing: whether it's music fees from a pub or whether it's licensing in a theatre, it's different depending on where you are and what the scale is.

Dr Adamek: The living wage has been something we've heard a lot about generally through advocacy facilitation, too. France has one for its artists.

Ms Silby: Just coming back to what one of you said about cross-department working—and I'm sure this is what's going to happen, with the various things being proposed: you're going to work with the department of education and training, and you're going to work with training and skills, or whatever it's called, in each state and territory. It's going to be called the council—it's a very long title around arts, hospitality, retail, blah, blah, blah, looking at training and industry. How is that going to work with the existing IRCs—independent reference committees—for training and workforce? I'm the chair of that for arts and culture; I know that's in that whole new

cluster model. There are also certain things that exist that we could work with—'we' being everyone—so that we're not doubling up but we're not falling between the gaps. Maybe this part of existing government infrastructure that's been going for 10 or 15 years can dovetail into Creative Australia. I'm really interested in how that looks and the mapping out of it.

Dr Adamek: I want to say, just quickly, that I think the fact that dance works across a number of portfolios is to be embraced. I call us 'the superfood of the arts' because we have a stake in health because of dance, for health and wellbeing, and the strong evidence based work around dance therapy—particularly dance for Parkinson's and dementia. In terms of therapy based and wellbeing, dance is remarkable in that particular space. I note there was reference to therapy for music and for visual arts, but the evidence base is showing dance is even more effective. The fact that it's in sport is great in terms of the popular imaginary—the arts tend to not be understood from that perspective. The fact that there are more people doing dance, more young people and mostly females doing dance sports, broadens the understanding of dance outside of people's concept of the arts. And indeed—what's the other one? Well, the fact that it's in the arts. Have we got any more we're in?

Ms Silby: We're across most things—social, economic, health and wellbeing. Just one last thing, where things are done in other countries—and certain parts of Australia did this really well pre-COVID. In terms of a pillar for the cultural infrastructure and institutions—and they need support across all art forms, not just dance: looking at that intersection between the obvious of hard infrastructure venues like buildings, galleries etcetera and soft infrastructure like human capital—whether that's the independent artists of smalls to mediums—and how they intersect is key. I know that's a really obvious thing to say, but sometimes you fund a building but have nothing to go in it, and they become white elephants. That's been done very badly in the past in the UK, so I'm just putting that out there so we can learn from people's mistakes. In certain countries, if they've got a particular infrastructure—and some people are doing this really well here—they have a dedicated artist-in-residence program, whether it's theatre, dance or visual arts. Some people do this really well alongside their curated performance program or gallery programs. Germany used to have every single theatre have a company in residence—not anymore. But there are models like that we can build on and look at relative to the state and the culture.

Dr Adamek: In terms of dance and education, Ausdance runs a number of dance-artists-in-schools programs in different states. Teachers come to us for referrals, and we source a particular expert in an area of dance. They're often looking for cultural dance or for First Nations dance. That's where we sometimes find the gaps are, particularly with First Nations dance. It would be great for us to be able to go to a particular body in that state where the rates are set and we might even be able to get a subsidy for small-to-medium organisations. We've got Folk Dance Canberra really wanting a welcome to country that's dance based, but it's quite expensive for them to be able to do that. So I think there are abundant gaps there, particularly in terms of young people engaging with dance. The fact that it's on the curriculum is relatively new. I think it was in the nineties that dance was first put on as a compulsory part of the curriculum. That still goes in and out because we really need expert teachers in the school system being able to teach it. That's where arts organisations like Ausdance come in, because people can turn to us at Ausdance and we can bring in an expert to teach for them.

Senator GROGAN: That's actually where I was going to go in terms of education, picking up on something you said earlier, Mr Hobba. On that whole piece about arts in school and having dance teachers, theatre teachers or whatever in the school versus bringing in a sort of artist-in-residence within a school system, I was just keen to know if you had any examples or any thoughts about that.

Mr Hobba: We do that interface in a number of ways. We go into schools, we have schools visit us and we also do professional development programs for teachers.

Senator GROGAN: Quick question: who pays for that?

Mr Hobba: The schools pay us a nominal fee for their teacher professional development, which is because a lot of teachers don't necessarily have a background in the art form that they're teaching in. That's where we are increasingly being asked to step up our input, into their learning resources. But our company has always considered that fundamental to our purpose in the state because, now, successive generations of people have found their way to the arts by coming to one of our shows as a student. So education is one of the bedrocks of our activity, I would say.

I just want to say that—I don't know if this is appropriate or inappropriate—I was listening earlier in the day to the talk about festivals, and I completely agree about the level of activity, visitation and those kinds of things that they bring. One of the traps we fall into is pitting certain activities against each other. I'm not trying to do that, but the importance of investing in a company like ours and the small-to-medium sector is that we have to resist becoming, especially in the smaller states, constant importers of the arts. One of the reasons that we were

established in the first place and have continued to exist is the idea that you have an export economy of arts and you're allowing aspiration in our society for people to make their way to a career in the arts. They could find their way onto the Dunstan Playhouse stage. Sarah Snook was in one of our shows and is now the star of *Succession*. There is Xavier Samuel. None of those types of people are allowed to emerge in what becomes an import economy. The 'import' part is important because it's putting our sector in conversation with broader forces. But we've got to see it as a kind of investment in a local infrastructure that's also a local economic driver.

CHAIR: Import and export?

Mr Hobba: Import and export, yes.

Ms Silby: I particularly agree with the local economic driver point. Could I make a comment on that? It's in relation to what you said and what you were saying earlier about pathways; they are both interconnected. I would echo everything you just said. It all stands with our broad range of membership and what people do. We look at the cradle-to-grave mentality—lifelong engagement and lifelong learning. It really is about pathways, which could be literally from when you're born, and what your opportunities are. It is about educational, extracurricular and youth pathways, whether it's theatre, dance, music or whatever form of arts. Thank goodness there's going to be youth office for the arts—that's brilliant—but it is about looking at those pathways. Some of the things we do are the subject association expert matter—it's very hard to say!—and our RTO, registered training org, where we've also developed some both accredited and non-accredited training for young people, professionals in the industry and people at the mature end. It's the same point you're saying. Whether it's through engagement as a member of the community or in a profession, what does that journey look like for you at age 21, 25, 30 and 40? It is about ensuring that there are opportunities not just across art forms but across industries.

A long time ago, there was a brilliant program around transition for artists when they go to the next age and stage of something called SCOPE. That was funded through a combination of the Australian Institute of Sport, the Australia Council and some private backers. It looked at transition, where you take those skills—you might have been a dancer or a choreographer—and you might continue in that type of journey or you might become an artistic director or a physio. One person became a banker. They're quite different. But, again, investing in our artists from when they're a potential maker and they're playing in the kindergarten and they're going to take that creativity just to be the next generation of community leaders or actual artists is super important, but how do we recognise those people's contributions when they need to transition, whether it's in the arts or to another industry?

Dr Adamek: Dancer skill sets are particularly attractive to employers after, as well, because of their discipline and resilience.

CHAIR: Thank you, everybody, for participating today. Ms Beyer, thank you for your contribution. If there was anything that you wanted to jump in on and you missed—because, as you said, it's hard to prompt if you're not here—please don't hesitate to give us some further thoughts through the secretariat. Thank you very much.

AMATO, Ms Maria, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Independent Record Labels Association [by audio link]

MASSO, Mr Alexander, Executive Officer, Australian Music Association [by audio link]

SCHLOITHE, Ms Christine, Chief Executive Officer, Music SA

[15:52]

CHAIR: I now welcome representatives from the Australian Music Association, the Australian Independent Record Labels Association and Music SA. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Ms Schloithe: I am also a representative of AMIN, the Australian Music Industry Network.

CHAIR: I will ask you to give us a short opening statement, and then we can go to questions. We might start with Ms Amato from the Australian Independent Record Labels Association.

Ms Amato: We're a trade body that looks after Australian independent artists and record labels. We promote their interests. We try and help educate them where possible through our annual conference and through mentorship programs. We're currently running the Commonwealth funded Women in Music Mentor program, which ends this year, and we have an annual awards program. That's a very brief summary.

CHAIR: Thank you, I appreciate that. Mr Masso from the Australian Music Association?

Mr Masso: I'm calling from Poland, so I'm just on a bit of a dodgy line. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. The AMA, or the Australian Music Association, represents the music products industry. Our members are wholesalers, retailers, manufacturers and associated businesses. Our submission to the cultural policy consultation and this inquiry addressed four areas of interest to us. They were music education; participation in music more broadly; spectrum allocation for wireless audio devices; and musical instrument certificates, which relates to the Samuel review of the EPBC Act. We didn't really refer to the main elements of Revive, like Music Australia and the other institutional changes, but there are lots of things to be optimistic about in Revive.

I'd just like to focus on music education in my introduction. Revive clearly references—as its predecessor, Creative Australia 2013, did—the importance of arts education in schools, including music. However, we know that access to quality music education is not consistent, and many Australian children miss out or have insufficient musical opportunities. The 2023 policy does not, and the 2013 policy did not, take steps to address systemic issues of provision.

Provision of quality music education in primary schools is the focus of Music Education: Right from the Start, a great initiative led by Alberts music. The AMA is an enthusiastic supporter of this, and I sit on the advisory group. They recently published an important report on initial teacher education, or ITE, for music, called *Fading notes*, and I've asked if I could table that report; I've sent that in advance. As the name suggests, the report did not find that the situation is improving. The research concludes that diminishing levels of music education within generalist primary teaching degrees leave most teachers underprepared to meet the reality of the classroom and the expectations of the curriculum. Music training and ITE in degrees has fallen by 53 per cent in 14 years, from an average of 17 hours to just eight hours in 2022. That includes the nine years of implementation of the national curriculum.

We really need more data to identify what is improving or declining; how many teachers are able to teach music; how many students have access to a quality, sequential, ongoing education in music; where the gaps are; and how many students play a musical instrument. These basic questions really can't be answered with any confidence.

The goal of quality school music education for all Australian students is implicitly supported by Revive, but there's no explicit commitment to take the steps needed to achieve this important and beneficial aim. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you. And Music SA?

Ms Schloithe: Music SA is the peak body for the South Australian contemporary music industry; it's not-for-profit, has operated for more than 25 years, and, importantly, is one of eight state based peak bodies that represent the interests of the state music industry. Together, the eight peak bodies make up a coalition called AMIN, the Australian Music Industry Network. Music SA specifically exists to promote, support and develop the local music industry by nurturing careers, creating pathways, delivering industry and professional development and connecting artists, audiences, venues and businesses.

Music SA provided a submission to the consultation process for the development of the national policy, contributed to a submission by the coalition of the eight state based peak bodies, and was a signatory to the submission by the national music industry. Music SA, along with QMusic, Music Tas and WAM, West Australian Music, also wrote to Minister Burke following the launch of Revive, drawing attention to the importance of the new national cultural policy equitably supporting capacity-building and activity outside of the concentration of music industry businesses on the eastern seaboard.

Collectively, AMIN, as a body, works to connect and represent the Australian music industry, with a particular focus on artists, venues and industry professionals. Together, we represent more than 12,000 artists, venues, managers, promoters, labels and allied music businesses, and we deliver programs and services that develop the music ecosystem, including professional development programs, best-practice guidelines, mentorships, skills development and advice on how to navigate a tricky industry. Most importantly, the eight state peak bodies are removed from specific sectional or commercial interests, and we are the only state and territory music organisations in Australia that represent music artists without vested interests.

We welcome the national cultural policy and the introduction of the Music Australia governing body. While the details around Music Australia are yet to be announced, we consider it of paramount importance that: the referenced co-investment agreements with states, territories and the industry align with the purpose and activities of AMIN and enhance what our peak body organisations have successfully developed over the years in response to industry need; a thriving national industry is a product of healthy and dynamic state industries, and states, cities and regions that lie beyond the commercial and business music industry hubs of the eastern seaboard are equitably supported, as, historically, cities and regions outside of decision-making centres can be disadvantaged in terms of national programs, funding, access and engagement; the Music Australia governing board is diverse, is representative of the diversity of the sector with a strong artist voice and generally represents all the working parts of the industry and balances out more dominant voices of a loud few; and sector development and activity is mapped, with a view that successful programs and initiatives are further enhanced and extended and that there is no duplication and wasting of resources. I'm really pleased to be here. We appreciate the opportunity to speak and underline Music SA's aim in support of REVIVE as a policy that will significantly contribute to the betterment of the Australian contemporary music industry.

CHAIR: Thank you. Maybe to you first—I think it's interesting you were saying you've got concerns and there are issues in relation to Music SA, but what you're saying is the concerns that you have as a state based body are very similar to the other state based bodies around the country. One of the concerns that has been put to us in relation to the creation of Music Australia—and, for the record, we pushed very hard in the Greens for the establishment of Music Australia, so I'm very pleased to see it occur—is making sure that that representation on the board, the type of expertise, is broad enough that it actually encapsulates the ecosystem of the music industry. The minister could hand select or propose a variety of wonderful and amazing musicians, but that doesn't necessarily mean that we're looking after the venues, looking after the promoters, looking after the festivals—all of which are needed to ensure that we actually have a music ecosystem. Could you speak to that a little bit, in terms of the need for representation that actually covers the breadth of the industry and what those facets are?

Ms Schloithe: Gosh, that's quite a complex issue. I think you're exactly right about needing to be mindful that the ecosystem is generally represented. The music industry is a complex industry. It's a very broad church, and there are many working parts. Perhaps one of the best ways that I've heard it described recently is it's made up of a vast ecosystem of micro and small businesses. There aren't large tranches of huge organisations that lead the way. It really is a working ecosystem made up of many working parts.

Compiling a governing body for Music Australia that is representative is not an enviable job. I would suggest that that really needs to be made up of state representatives and representatives from all those working parts. Music SA would define the key stakeholders inside the industry as predominantly artists—without artists we don't have an industry. It is the venues. It is the businesses that support artists and the venues: the labels, the recording studios, the allied industries of hospitality and technical production. They need to be accounted for in the music industry. I think there really needs to be a balanced view to the commercial elements of the industry, which definitely do need support to leverage better commercial outcomes, and we do know the economic benefit of a healthy music industry and the export potential. I don't think anyone disagrees that that needs building blocks, but the industry also encompasses quite a vast non-commercial aspect of artists; of venues; of genre; of music; and of different ways of making, performing and composing, and just making sure that that's inclusive as part of the process.

CHAIR: Do either Maria or Alex have anything to add to that question of diversity?

Ms Amato: I think Christine succinctly encapsulated how diverse and niche the ecosystem is in Australia. All of these bodies exist because they represent an area of the industry that's not captured by one large organisation. Many of the peak bodies don't receive core funding, so they try to deliver their education, mentorship, promotion and advocacy for their members on a subscription or project-by-project basis, applying for funding for projects. I think Christine was able to encapsulate it all.

Mr Masso: I want to make a couple of points. I've sat on a few panels at the Australia Council in the past. What I've observed is that it's pretty easy to compile a group of seven people that has a pretty good understanding of the whole sector, if you're talking about individuals. That's the way governance has always been managed at the Australia Council. It's people, not representatives of organisations. What would be difficult is if they start trying to include representatives of every stakeholder group. That's going to be difficult with seven or eight people or whatever it is. There's really no precedent for having representatives of industry bodies on the governance panels, so it will be interesting to see how that plays out.

Music Australia and MusicNSW, which is also coming on board, are conceptually based on Screen Australia and Screen NSW models. The Screen Australia board has two governance people from outside the sector, three practitioners who are actors, one producer and one person who's from an industry body. I think that's another way of thinking about it. If you actually get artists, they are generally across a lot of the issues, they have a broad view of things and they're not coming from one position. It's pretty essential that they have artists on those boards, and I think that is possible. But with a limited number of people, not every industry body will be happy. They all want a seat.

Ms Amato: I agree with Alex, but we should also have a manager, a label rep and other practitioners on the board as well, not just artists. Also, if people are on the advisory boards, it would be a conflict of interest if those organisations receive funding, so it's really tricky.

CHAIR: Understood. Maria, could you give us a little bit of a rundown about how the Women in Music program works and whether that is something that has been picked up? Can you see where that would fit within the broader national policy?

Ms Amato: It hasn't been picked up at the moment. It was a 2019 funding agreement. This was pre COVID, when we thought we'd be delivering the program in person. Anyway, to cut a long story short, instead of delivering only 80 mentorships over the four-year period, COVID gave us an exclusive opportunity to deliver some of the professional development and mentorship online. Over the four years we've put 350 people through, which is phenomenal. When we gave feedback to the department of the arts, and even as part of this whole industry group, we emphasised that mentorships are vital and that they deliver results and empower people to believe in themselves and further their business aspirations. We view artists as entrepreneurs in that regard.

We pitched that perhaps AAM, the Association of Artist Managers, and other peak bodies could benefit from a mentorship program because it would really benefit their members. We hope that AIR gets to expand on the program to make it genderless and to enable its members to take advantage of mentoring because it will really help the artists they represent and the label they represent.

We ask applicants to tell us three business objectives that they would like to achieve as a result of mentoring. We ask them to tell us who, in the industry who has the skills, they would like to be mentored by. If I were the fairy godmother and could give them one of five people, who would they be and why? Then we put it to an independent body which vets all the applications and looks at who the applicants have selected as one of their preferred mentors, and then we match them. In 80 per cent of cases we have matched them with one of their preferences, who has been appropriately skilled.

In addition, we provide professional development on how to put a marketing plan together, how to be financially literate and how to understand legal contracts. All these skills are taught in short doses because no-one's going to go and do a TAFE course when they're out there in business, but they will take a two- or three-hour course and get some benefit from it.

CHAIR: Mr Masso, I'm interested in the Australian Music Association's submission. You've spoken heavily around the need for improving access to quality music education. You're not the only one to point this out. We've had many people today point out that the education element is really missing from the national cultural policy. If this is going to be a policy that is about the future of the creative industries, a genuinely national cultural policy, then we really need to see that foundation within our educational institutions. I don't just mean the tertiary institutions or the performing-arts institutions; I mean actually in our schools.

Mr Masso: That's right. I think one of the issues is that maybe too much faith is put in the national curriculum to deliver arts education. Often when you ask someone from the school system or government—I've asked this

question in New South Wales, where we know for sure lots of kids miss out on music education because there aren't specialists, and lots of teachers aren't trained. You ask the government, 'How many kids receive a music education?' and they say, 'All of them, because the curriculum requires it.' But that's really not the case, and we know that that's not the case. There was a national review of music education in 2005, and it really thoroughly went through all the issues. It's over 300 pages. And we're really still talking about the same issues. In that report, they talk about the exact thing I mentioned in my introduction—the decline in initial teacher education for music, so people who are training to be a teacher aren't confident going into the classroom to teach music. That's one of the problems. That's not the only problem—there are lots—but that's one of them.

The other thing I'd say is, because the federal government isn't involved in direct delivery of music education, I think it allows it to be a little bit more strategic. We don't necessarily need a huge investment from the federal government. We do need coordination and we need it to go on the agenda of the education ministers. If we as a country say—I'm talking about music, but you could also apply it to dance, drama and everything else—'All kids should learn music,' then we should have systems in place to make sure that that happens, and we don't. We have lots of different systems that do different things well. Certain things are much better in Queensland than in other places. There are certain things in New South Wales that are fantastic. Certain things in WA are terrific. South Australia is really the gold standard. Right now they've got a 10-year strategy. They're doing really well. Victoria had a parliamentary inquiry in 2013, and they still haven't got all those things implemented that it recommended. There are a lot of different good things happening, but there is a lot of work to do in the system.

CHAIR: Does anybody else want to add to the education element?

Ms Schloithe: Education can be a complex issue, because it's not necessarily the traditional education pathways that people follow to work in our part of the contemporary music industry. That's incredibly valuable, and it is the modelling and the learning that happens in primary and high schools that exposes children to arts, and we know the benefits to that. There are some really great tertiary courses, but there also needs to be a really healthy dose of vocationally based pathways, mentorships. At the moment, traineeships with organisations would really meet a need. We experienced pretty horrendous losses of people, capacity and expertise as a result of COVID, and the staffing shortages are really significant. But also at the moment we're grappling with the fact that we lost three years of audience going, particularly young people learning to go to their first gigs. It's often by going through that process and experiencing that, and having opportunities like the Women in Music Mentor Program, that people identify career pathways other than learning an instrument or the more traditional job roles that exist within something like the music industry.

CHAIR: You mentioned skills shortages, and we've heard that a lot both today and in previous hearings. Can you just unpack for us what some of those are? As you just alluded to, we're not just talking about the musician per se; we're talking about what enables a music and creative ecosystem and economy. There are a whole lot of people and skills we don't have, right?

Ms Schloithe: First and foremost, it is the artist moving through that pathway. Some of the associated businesses that support the transition of an artist would be the technical production, and that can be in a prerecording or recording environment, as much as in translating to onstage. I'm very aware of crew shortages and technical production shortages that are facing a whole range of festivals and events at the moment. PR—

CHAIR: Is that because people left the industry during COVID and we haven't—

Ms Schloithe: I think it is specifically in response to that. But I also think there is the erosion of arts being taught in schools. We've seen the erosion of arts, which has been pulled out of the curriculum and out of opportunity in public schools for decades.

CHAIR: That meant that there wasn't enough of a resilience there.

Ms Schloithe: Yes. Quite often children and adults see artists performing, playing and recording, so they know what an artist is and they understand that. What they don't see and what is not visible are all those allied businesses that provide support. It's the labels. It's the tech production. It's marketing and PR. Although some artists are great business people—I'd say they're the exception—artists are not great business people. They need a team of business people. They need artist managers. They need agents. They need booking people. They need PR people to help write their bios, to position them publicly and to navigate the world of streaming and technology, which is very complex these days. They're the roles that you don't see. So, growing up, if you love music but you're not musically inclined and you're not interested in being an artist, you don't necessarily have visibility on the whole plethora of jobs that are out there, and there aren't traditional pathways for training in a lot of those businesses.

CHAIR: Good point. Senator Grogan.

Senator GROGAN: I would really just like a sense from each of you of the eastern seaboard focus piece that has been referenced already.

Senator BILYK: Well, Sydney and Melbourne, I think.

Senator GROGAN: Said the Tasmanian, yes.

Senator BILYK: Tasmania's the eastern seaboard.

Senator GROGAN: From the perspective of South Australian and, obviously, other places, you've talked about that tripartite arrangement you have of the three states looking to work together, there's that piece which wants our industry to be more available across the whole country—and we're not just talking Taylor Swift here. But there's also that piece about regional and rural engagement. How are we faring and how can we do better on that? What's the opportunity, with this new cultural policy, to enable us to do so?

Ms Schloithe: I'll specifically reference South Australia because that's what I know most about, but I also know that what I'm talking about is endemic across a number of other states. Regional engagement for contemporary music was in decline before COVID, and COVID really shattered that. We've got a dichotomy where a lot of population transitioned into regional centres for other business reasons, but we have not had the infrastructure in place to boot contemporary music in regional areas.

Part of MusicSA's focus in the next three years is to deliberately target regional engagement. We know that there are artists working regionally whom we want to connect with. We know there are venues regionally that have fallen off the touring map and we need to find ways to connect those. We believe that not only are there viable touring networks for local bands coming out of Adelaide that need that on-the-road experience—and quite often you can best get the start in that by touring regionally in your own backyard—but there is also opportunity for other bands travelling from interstate to transition into a touring network across South Australia.

This also marries with the rise of domestic tourism and local regions really owning that tourism experience of art, culture, food and wine, and music is a natural part of that. MusicNSW pioneered a really fantastic website resource called the Regional Touring Network 18 months ago, and it would be the aim of the other states to be able to replicate that and transition that website right across. It literally builds an interface between touring artists and venues so that anyone thinking about touring has got access to resources to say: 'Well, if I travel through that town—oh, there's a venue there. Oh, it's got a stage. It's got a PA. This is how much it would take to hire it.' And it starts to marry those two interests and give rise to a growing touring regional network.

Senator GROGAN: So that's New South Wales?

Ms Schloithe: Yes, so that would be an example of what I consider to be a terrific project for Music Australia to support to enable capacity building across the other states. They could replicate and push that program.

Senator GROGAN: Yes. What's that website?

Ms Schloithe: It's called RTN, the Regional Touring Network. It's out of MusicNSW.

Senator GROGAN: Does anyone else have a perspective on the whole regional engagement music piece?

Ms Amato: In my interactions with South Australia and the Music Development Office, I think they've had some programs and grants to enable regional access in the past, and I think they kind of led the way really. Mentoring is not exclusive to a capital city, so mentorship programs or education programs, as Christine said, can be irrespective of capital cities. In fact, they do enable people from the regions to reconnect and learn. They may not be able to tour under that premise, but I think the MDO has good examples of how it has connected with regional South Australia.

Mr Masso: I'm probably not the best person to ask because I actually live on the eastern seaboard. When I'm not in Poland I live on Wangal land in Sydney. But, broadly speaking, we want every community to have sufficient opportunities for people to pursue diverse music. We want venues presenting different kinds of music everywhere. We want community bands and choirs for people to participate in everywhere. We want music education programs that are interacting with their community everywhere. We want performance opportunities everywhere. We want opportunities for young people to perform. That's the standard we want.

It's difficult to do that—and there are very good initiatives in different places to support some of those things. For example, there is the program called Live Music Australia. It's a federal government program. It has been good because it brings sort of cultural infrastructure money into different areas. I will give you one example: Murrah Hall, which is a really nice venue on the far south coast of New South Wales. It is a tiny little hall, but it's one of the best music venues. Separate from this job I tour a lot with my jazz band. We play down there. It's one of the best venues we play at. It's great. They got a grant and now they have a full PA and a green room out the back. That was I think Live Music Australia or maybe a state government cultural infrastructure grant. These little

injections of \$10,000 or \$20,000, or whatever it is, help with a PA or a piano. If they have a piano, they can get lots of great music coming through. Those things are really important.

It's hard at a cultural policy level to make sure everyone has a place to play, but you can do things like fund small community halls to have the resources to put on shows. That's a basic thing that we need. Now heaps of people play at that hall. They've a PA. It's a really great space to play.

Senator GROGAN: Thank you very much.

Senator BILYK: You mentioned that there was a downfall prior to COVID in the area. What do you think caused that?

Ms Schloithe: Particular regional areas of South Australia have gone through quite significant change as a result of the style of business and economies. I also think—and this is something that I think is reflected across all areas of the arts that have an audience component—audiences' attitudes to live engagement are changing. I think audience numbers for live music in regional areas were starting to decline. I think there are a whole lot of reasons for that. I think it's about suitability of venue, pathways, artists and choice of music. Someone said recently on another panel when we were talking about the state of the music industry that COVID broke a lot but COVID also created larger fissures where there were already problems starting to emerge. I think this is one case.

As Alex quite rightly pointed out, in a lot of cases some of the remedies are really simple. That community owned hall in a regional area can be specced at a very small budget level as being suitable. That then provides a point of connection for the community and an access point for someone travelling through. I think part of it are the changes in regional areas and the economic pressures that a lot of regional areas are dealing with. But, also, the shift in audience attitude is a whole other big thing that I think arts and culture needs to have a more serious conversation about.

CHAIR: Senator Cadell.

Senator CADELL: I'm going to stay on venues for a little bit, but on a different thing. Back when I was growing up around the Hunter, there was a very vibrant music scene back then. There were a lot of licensed venues—Cambridge closed just last week—where a band could get paid a fair deal to show up, because there were alcohol sales and all this stuff going on. Urban encroachment on a lot of these venues is taking them away. Is that happening here? What can we do to stop that? It's like if you go to sport; it's no use practising soccer if you haven't got a field to play on.

CHAIR: Live music venues.

Senator CADELL: What can we do to keep more live music venues going for that mid-tier? I know about a small hall; I know that stuff. What can we do mid-tier, where people can get paid a fair price to put their shows on? Anyone?

Mr Masso: I can jump in here just quickly. It's a big issue, and part of the issue often is councils. They're juggling the interests of their residents and ratepayers and the interests of the local businesses, and sometimes the people who live next door win, and that's not much fun for the venue. I'm thinking of a few places in particular here. But it's a pretty rough time for some venues to have to navigate all those controls, and they get hit with all this red tape and they get told they have to get a DA when they know they don't have to.

What's happening to solve this is that the Live Music Office is doing really good work. They've been doing really good work for 10 years. That was actually brought in under Creative Australia, the previous cultural policy. What they're doing is finding solutions in different areas and bringing them across. So if something worked well in Fortitude Valley, that's brought down to City of Sydney. Or if something's happening in Melbourne that's working really well, they'll meet with someone from South Australia and tell them about that. So we're trying to improve policies.

One of the really good things that has been happening in the last few years is live music precincts. We have legislation in New South Wales and, I think, maybe other states—I'd have to check that—where you can actually create a live music precinct over any area. It could be a whole street. It could be the whole of Enmore Road, or it could be—I'm trying to think of a street in Adelaide—or it could be a busy street or somewhere in Fortitude Valley, or it could be just a venue. You could create a precinct over just a single venue, which creates a more friendly planning environment, shall we say. So it's very, very important and I think work needs to continue on that.

Senator CADELL: There is another one I'll touch on. I asked some questions earlier about the amount of retained earnings from APRA AMCOS going to writers. But there is also the disparity between the funding that ARIA gets, especially with radio caps, and the amount they can disburse to artists. APRA AMCOS are pulling in,

I'd say, five times the amount for performers compared to the amount through ARIA. The radio caps have to go for Australia, don't they?

Ms Amato: Yes. We've been lobbying for that for decades, I believe. I think John Howard came close, but it hasn't happened since.

Senator CADELL: Yes, for a long time. Are there any other easy ways to get in? The way I'm going about this and looking at how it is is very grassroots based. In different industries there are different barriers. Some things are easier to get into. Let's say this: I can pick up a guitar and destroy it, but if I want to I can put some time in and do it. You can get the beginning here; it's that next step in music that I think is really difficult. And then there's that prominence thing once you do get good and you get there again. That's why, when we go to screen, I think Screen Australia will give you plenty of money if you've got some runs on the board, but it's getting those first. There's not an area in arts where there is a process to get from where you begin. In every little development there's a hiccup. In music, what can we do to better put the pathway between picking up that guitar and Hilltop Hoods, a great South Australian band—seeing that I'm here—that's playing at Supercars in front of 10,000 people in Newcastle at the beginning of the month? What's the line?

Ms Schloithe: I think it's all the things that we have talked about. I think it starts with education. I think it starts with education. It's about good policy settings, but that needs to happen at a local council level, a state level—which is happening in a lot of states—and nationally, which is a conversation that's happening now. It is also about genuinely supporting those career pathways and building block pathways from the state based orgs. Other than the state based orgs, there really isn't any other professional network for people to move into to be accelerated. So it is about supporting industry development and professional development at the state level. Then, as people are ready to take that next step, we need to look at the national programs and investment at discrete levels that promote an opportunity for excellence and support at every step of the way. You're right that you can pick up a guitar, but the steps to get to a main stage are just as hard as when you get to that main stage and need to go to the next level.

Senator CADELL: If I go to another venue and find a two-piece with a drum machine playing covers again, I'll scream. It's everywhere because it's easy. It's just horrible.

Ms Schloithe: And it is cheap.

Ms Amato: There are a lot of national bodies that try to hand-hold the journey of a self-releasing artist—AIR, for example; AAM for the manager side; the engineers societies, publicists, [inaudible] that deals a bit on the side and is a national body. With venues and so forth that are live music, they try to help promote and advocate nationally. These are like wages. A lot of artists are going into venue and getting bar tabs rather than getting paid proper session fees. I know that South Australia is enforcing that in all the contracts for funding everyone must pay super—the threshold disappeared from 1 July last year—and earn minimum rates. I think that's excellent and should be adopted nationwide. That will prevent artists getting exploited when they're performing at gigs.

Senator HUGHES: To follow up on some of the stuff that I've asked previously about the different areas of the arts we've heard from: there seems to be a lot of duplication. There are so many industry bodies. There are so many state based bodies. Then there's the federal body. There are the bodies that cover every single aspect of the arts you could imagine. When does it get to the point that it's overadministrated? Is there any sense of looking at consolidation within any part of the sector? To come back to the staffing, business or governance sides, if you're a PR or marketing person or if you're a ticketing agent, can't you do that for a music concert as well as you do for a theatre show? If you're a lighting person or stage technician, aren't you doing that for multiple different types of performances? I'm not saying every performance. Is there any crossover, or are you only a lighting person that does one particular thing, and no wonder you're going to find it tough to make a full-time living?

Ms Schloithe: On the ground it's very different. People working in occupations are very flexible and multiskilled. In a place like Adelaide or South Australia, if you're a lighting technician, you will earn your living by working musicals, Adelaide Festival Centre, small venues and music festivals. In a lot of cases there is not enough work for someone to be very specific to a very small part of the arts and culture ecology.

My personal view—and I say this with 30 years of working across arts and culture in Australia and coming back into music—is that contemporary music is a radically different industry from arts and culture. I think there are too many shades of grey in the arts and culture conversation for there to be a simple solution. I do think there are opportunities for more collaborative work as long as it doesn't homogenise the art, which can be one of the big risks, but I also say that, having been at Music SA for 12 months now, on coming back to the music industry, I was reminded again that so much of the industry does have commercial capacity that is fundamentally different from many other working parts of arts and culture, which generally need a level of government subsidy to do the

work. They're not commercially viable by themselves. While there are many disparate parts to the nature of music, and many different businesses, I actually feel that, by default, it is a very lean sector in itself, and it punches far above its weight based on the business capacities it has right in front of it. But I think music is a very different conversation to the other areas of the performing arts where there might be some more synergies.

Senator HUGHES: Okay, but you've had experience across other areas?

Ms Schloithe: I've worked in theatre and visual arts. I've worked for statutory cultural organisations. I've worked in government, writing policy for arts and culture. I feel like, as an employee, I've had the full experience across arts and culture. And I don't think it's as simple—

Senator HUGHES: And did you ever think, 'That person's doing the same job as this person over here, who's doing the same job as the person over here, but we're paying three lots of office rents, we're paying three CEO wages?'

Ms Schloithe: I think there are efficiencies, but I think the efficiencies cannot be made at the expense of the art form, and sometimes there are reasons—

Senator HUGHES: But a business manager can do the books for a multitude of different artists.

Ms Schloithe: They can, but a busy company will have a full-time business manager who—

Senator HUGHES: That, you'd hope, would be a commercially viable business then if they've got a full-time business—

Ms Schloithe: No, not necessarily.

Ms Amato: No.

Senator HUGHES: When do the arts ever expect to be non-government funded, or is it always operating to a point of government intervention?

Ms Schloithe: I think those arts organisations and those artists that are in the creating business, particularly in the visual arts or the performing arts, will very rarely have the opportunity to be commercially successful in their lifetime. That's why artists and the people who make need to be supported.

Senator HUGHES: And do people who make a lot of money out of the arts, and there are people who are incredibly wealthy out of the arts, give back? Do they pay it forward? There are Australian artists who have been very well supported, have gone through schools here, who are now worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Ms Schloithe: I would say they're the rarity—

Ms Amato: Yes, they do.

Ms Schloithe: but also, I don't know. I can't speak on behalf of—

Senator HUGHES: But if an Australian taxpayer who's struggling to put food on the table at the moment, who's struggling to pay the electricity bill, whose mortgage has just doubled, is looking at some artists earning hundreds of millions of dollars, and then the arts sector is saying, 'Woe is us,' you can understand why they're saying, 'Really?'

Ms Schloithe: Yes, I understand. Sorry, Maria, I can hear you there. Would you like to jump in quickly?

Ms Amato: Sorry; I should wait for you to finish. Did you want to finish speaking about this? Because I would just like to say that there are very few artists that are earning hundreds of millions of dollars. But if they are, they are giving back because every time they perform, they're engaging graphic artists, hotels, restaurants, staff, venues. So it is giving back in that regard. They're creating employment opportunities for other people in the industry. They need managers. They need lawyers. They need publicists. They need a whole plethora of people to support them on their way. It's not one person pocketing it.

And most times this journey of them being able to earn that kind of money has happened over a 10-, 15-, 20-year period—it rarely happens overnight—and they've had to struggle. If you talk to any Australian artist, they're usually poor and pretty much homeless when they begin their careers and they've needed help in understanding how the industry works, how the royalty breakdowns work. They've needed a good lawyer to negotiate contracts for them. They've needed a good manager to help them on the road, getting heard and engaging with fans. Then we had the advent of streaming, which diluted their fund base because they now only get a fraction of a cent from streaming as opposed to the days of nonstreaming where they might have got \$2 out of an album sale, if they were lucky. That's how little they get.

I think it's a very big generalisation to say that they're earning hundreds of millions and taxpayers are not getting the benefit, because they are. It's helping the GDP of Australia, the export value of it, and they are actually returning—for every dollar that's invested, they are giving a return.

CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Amato. Look, we've had lots of evidence today about how the arts in and of itself is a public good, and there's a reason why Commonwealth, state and local governments all invest in different ways. We're going to conclude our hearing now. Thank you so much to the Australian Music Association, Australian Independent Record Labels Association and Music SA. Thank you to all the witnesses who appeared. Thank you to Hansard and Broadcasting for your assistance, particularly being on the road, and thank you to Vitalstatistix for hosting us today. We appreciate it.

Committee adjourned at 16:40