

Report to the Future Melbourne Committee**Agenda item 6.2****MI3: Generating New Employment Opportunities for the Creative Sector****22 November 2022****Presenter:** Katrina McKenzie, General Manager City Economy and Activation**Purpose and background**

1. To inform Councillors of the employment challenges facing the creative sector and seek endorsement of the activities and opportunities being pursued by Council administration in response.
2. This report supports Council's Major Initiative 3 'Implement the Economic Development Strategy' and Priority 2 of the Strategy 'A Creative Resurgence' that addresses the design of a new value proposition for the city in response to changes in worker and visitor behaviour and how the city is used.
3. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have had a major impact on the creative sector. Creative workers have long struggled to establish sustainable business models and the pandemic shone a light on the longstanding structural vulnerabilities of the sector. The volatility and insecurity of creative work has meant these workers were among the first and hardest hit. Since many arts workers also work in hospitality and/or retail, the impacts of lockdowns and business closures had a double-hit.
4. Council plays a critical role in employing creatives to curate, manage and deliver events, services and programs in addition to directly funding the sector via grants programs. This provides creative sector workers with income security, supports their wellbeing, and increases access and inclusion in our community. See Attachment 1 for highlights of Council's activities across 2021-22 and those planned for 2022-23.
5. Council also plays an important advocacy role to support employment in the creative sector. While Federal and State governments set the policy parameters, it is local government that has a direct relationship with creatives and their peak bodies. This unique relationship means Council is well-placed to advocate through bodies such as the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors (CCCLM), and via other networks for the needs of the sector.

Key issues

6. The creative sector has been significantly weakened in recent years as large numbers of skilled workers have left to secure more reliable and well-paid employment in other fields. This is particularly evident in the technical and production areas. This exodus has left a skills and resourcing shortage in the sector that is likely to continue for some time.
7. During COVID-19, many creatives shifted the production and presentation of their work to digital platforms. While this opened up opportunities for reaching new audiences, it highlighted a lack of digital capabilities in the sector, along with challenges accessing digital infrastructure. This has negatively impacted the independent and small-medium creative sector's successful shift to digital forms of content and production. An uplift in digital literacy and more accessible digital infrastructure would assist this digital shift and create employment opportunities.
8. A lack of affordable living and working spaces in the municipality is seeing artists leave the city to develop and present their work in neighbouring municipalities. While larger organisations and productions can still present in Melbourne; independent, small and medium sized arts organisations are moving out. As the city positions itself to attract a professional hybrid workforce, the vibrancy that the creative sector brings to the city cannot be over-stated. This dynamic environment when partnered with a thriving night-time economy, underpins the appeal of the city to knowledge economy workers and attracts visitors.
9. Council's Arts Investment Framework will be reviewed next year with strong creative sector engagement, ensuring that investment is channelled in ways to maximise employment, as well as creative, outcomes. This presents a timely opportunity for Council to re-think and potentially re-position its approach to funding to best support Melbourne's creative resurgence.

Recommendation from management

10. That the Future Melbourne Committee endorses management's approach to strengthening the sustainability of the creative sector in the City of Melbourne through the following activities:
 - 10.1. Supporting improved digital capability via targeted programing for creative workers and access to digital infrastructure to create additional employment opportunities.
 - 10.2. Continuing to advocate for and broker additional creative spaces in the city via Council's Creative Spaces program acknowledging that providing development and presentation space supports employment.
 - 10.3. Undertaking a thorough review of Council's Arts Investment Framework with strong sector engagement to ensure investment is best placed to enable the city's creative resurgence.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 5)
2. Highlights of Council's Activities (Page 4 of 5)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. Legal advice will be provided as required on matters arising from the recommendation from management.

Finance

2. Council directly supports employment for creatives through its existing event, investment and program budgets. In partnership with the Victorian Government, the Melbourne Recovery and Revitalisation Funds have delivered successful initiatives such as reactivating shopfronts with artists, start-ups and pop-up libraries, all focused on strengthening the creative sector.

Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

4. A strong and sustainable creative sector will provide workers with income security, support their wellbeing, and increase access and inclusion in our community.
5. A vibrant creative sector will also contribute to the city's revitalisation and provide residents, workers and visitors with a greater inspiration to engage and collaborate in city life.

Stakeholder consultation

6. In developing this report, management drew on the issues shared at a recent round-table with peak bodies. COM regularly meets with creative stakeholders, peak bodies and cultural institutions to stay abreast of sector concerns and developments for small, medium, large and independent arts organisations.
7. COM also regularly meets with colleagues in Federal and State government using these channels to feedback issues being experienced by the creative sector with regards to employment and advocate on their behalf.

Relation to Council policy

8. The recommendations are consistent with Council's Major Initiative 3 'Implement the Economic Development Strategy' and Priority 2 of the Strategy 'A Creative Resurgence'.

Environmental sustainability

9. Demonstrating environmental sustainability is a requirement for all creative workers engaged directly by Council via arts grants, programs and events.

HIGHLIGHTS OF COUNCIL'S ACTIVITIES

Attachment 2
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Employment Generating Activities 2021-22

The City Reactivation Event Grants (CREG) program funded events in partnership with the Victorian Government via the Melbourne City Recovery Fund (MCRF). Of the 52 events that preceded, 418 artists and performers were engaged. Of COM-delivered Premier Events, 5820 creatives were engaged in roles such as performers, producers, designers, projection artists, curators, AV Specialists and face-painters.

The city-initiated program Flash Forward was a jobs-creation scheme funded in partnership with Working for Victoria. 168 local creatives were directly employed in art and technical delivery roles. The program also provided a pop-up store to sell artist merchandise including albums. The store supported 83 artists with total sales of over \$40,000. In addition to Flash Forward, a further 52 artists were engaged through Test Sites, public art and music programs.

Arts House, Melbourne's home for contemporary performance, employed 398 artists and arts workers (i.e. technical support and front of house). ArtPlay and Signal creative programs delivered both online and onsite programming for children and young people, engaged a total of 529 artists, technicians and stage managers. Across our libraries, a total of 37 creatives including writers in residency and artist-run community exhibitions, were engaged.

Council's arts investment program funded a total of 8,486 artists enabling direct employment and support.

Central to Melbourne's economic recovery is the Night Time Economy (NTE) which helps drive visitation. Melbourne's NTE comprises a particularly strong entertainment sub-sector. In 2020-21, Melbourne gained 51 entertainment establishments (+9%). The biggest growth was in creative and performing arts activities (+33) which make up more than half (54%) of Melbourne's entertainment sub-sector. By June 2021, more people were employed in this industry than in June 2019.

Projected Employment Activities 2022-23

52 artists will be engaged through Test Sites, new public art and music programs.

ArtPlay and Signal anticipate engaging 558 artists, technicians and stage managers this year. While Arts House will engage 450 artists and creative workers.

The Melbourne Library Service plans to engage 35+ creatives through programming including writers in residency and artist-run community exhibitions.

With the program still to be confirmed, Council's YIRRAMBOI First Nation's Festival anticipates engaging over 200 creatives (including artists, technical and production staff) as part of the May 2023 Festival.

The Events Partnership Program was approved by Council in September 2022 and contracts are currently under negotiation. Along with the Premier Events calendar, management anticipates a similar or greater engagement of creative performer and producers in 2022-23.

Council's commitment to engaging artists at the start of city projects will see the continued employment of a curator/artist as part of the developing Munro Library and Community Hub and as part of the Greenline project.

Other Activities and Opportunities Being Pursued

Council has introduced a range of new support measures and grants to advance NTE including extending the Night Time Economy Advisory Committee (NTEAC) for a further twelve months.

With the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors, Council has advocated for the adoption of the Federal Government's National Cultural Strategy that presents the strengthening and sustainability of the creative sector as a guiding principle.

COM role-models fair and often above-standard remuneration when engaging creative workers on assessment panels or to support policy development i.e. the Arts House's Disability Action Plan.

HIGHLIGHTS OF COUNCIL'S ACTIVITIES

Council's Creative Spaces program continues to advocate for and broker additional creative spaces in the city acknowledging that providing development and presentation space supports employment opportunities. In addition to these efforts, COM is investing in the Creative Spaces website to improve connection between the sector and property industry; is developing the Tenant Advocacy Framework; and, led by Creative Victoria, has developed the (embargoed) Creative Spaces Design Guide with technical and best practice advice to support developers and city planners.