

Creative State 2028

CREATING TOGETHER FOR A GROWING VICTORIA







We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands now known as Victoria. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and acknowledge the importance of their creative expression, culture and connection to Country.

We acknowledge that First Peoples' self-determination is a human right as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and that Aboriginal Victorians hold the knowledge and expertise about what is best for themselves, their families and their communities.

Throughout this document the term Victorian First Peoples is used to refer to Traditional Owners of Victoria and all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who reside in this state.

Welcome To Country – Now You See Me: Seeing The Invisible, designed by artists Maree Clarke (Yorta Yorta/Wamba Wamba/ Mutti Mutti/Boonwurrung) and Mitch Mahoney (Boonwurrung/ Barkindji) is Australia's first 3D tapestry. Commissioned as part of the Victorian Government's new Footscray Hospital project, and part of a 3-year arts program led by Footscray Community Arts, the work was hand woven by the Australian Tapestry Workshop, with a 16-person team dedicating more 10,000 hours to bring the artists' vision to life. Photo: Astrid Mulder.

From the Premier

Victoria is proud to be the creative state – where ideas are brought to life, and art and innovation are celebrated.

From the NGV, ACMI and Arts Centre Melbourne in the CBD, to our incredible regional galleries, every corner of our state is shaped by creativity.

In my hometown, the Bendigo Art Gallery and its blockbuster exhibitions are not only a source of pride, but also make a huge contribution to the local economy.

That's true across our state. Victoria's creative economy is worth \$41.2 billion, and underpinned by diverse industries: writing, music and art, festivals and theatre, design and fashion, game development and visual effects, and film and TV production.



Our Creative State 2028 strategy lays out the Victorian Government's vision for the future, to back our artists, creators, creative institutions and businesses.

It recognises the enormous impact of our creative industries, and looks at how the sector can grow even stronger into the future.

So, I want to thank everyone who has contributed to this strategy – and who shapes Victoria with their ideas and imagination.

You are at the heart of what makes our state the cultural capital.

And we can't wait to see what you do next.

**The Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier**

From the Minister for Creative Industries

Creativity is fundamental to who we are. Songs, stories, art, design, performances and events change how we think, feel and live.

They connect us, lift us up, and help us better understand ourselves and each other. They also drive productivity and economic growth through innovation, job creation and new experiences, making Victoria a fantastic place to live, learn, work, visit and invest.

We have an extraordinary living legacy of creativity on this land. Today, First Peoples artists are creating distinctive work and reviving crafts, language and creative practices that honour, and are inspired by, over 60,000 years of continuous culture and knowledge.

Creativity doesn't just mirror our world – it helps to shape a better one. Now, and always, it is artists and creatives who open us up to new perspectives, explore important and complex issues, and show us new ways of seeing and imagining what is possible.

In 2015, the Victorian Government broke new ground, establishing Australia's first creative industries portfolio. We brought together a range of industries fuelled by creative thinking and innovation. This mix of fields collectively delivers economic, social and cultural value to our state.

Since then, through the creative industries portfolio, we have invested more than \$3.5 billion in the state's creative industries.

This has included more than \$2 billion for creative infrastructure projects and more than \$1.5 billion to support the work of the state-owned creative industries portfolio agencies and the independent creative sector. And through our two *Creative State* strategies, we have worked with Victoria's creative sector to deliver long-term benefits for creative workers and businesses, and for the broader community.

Over this period, creative industries jobs in Victoria have grown by 41%, and the size of Victoria's creative economy has increased from almost \$31 billion in 2016-17 to \$41.2 billion in 2023-24, with continued growth predicted locally and globally in the years ahead. These industries now employ nearly 9% of Victoria's workforce – more than 331,000 people.

As we navigate uncertainty in an increasingly fast-changing world, creativity is an invaluable resource that has significant potential to fuel economic growth, create jobs and power our state into the future.

Through this strategy, the Victorian Government will help drive Victoria's creative industries into a new era with partnership and equity at its core.

We will work with partners across our creative industries, government and beyond to address barriers to growth and leverage investment. We will find ways to harness the potential of emergent technologies and stay strong in the face of disruptions such as climate change. We will enable more Victorians to access and benefit from the creative industries as creators, audiences, workers and consumers, and cement Victoria's reputation as a place to build a creative career and discover a diversity of creative experiences.

Aligned with the Victorian Government's commitment to Truth and Treaty, this strategy deepens our commitment of First Peoples First. A commitment to walk together, learn from – and with – the First Peoples of Victoria, and respect and honour their ways of knowing, being and doing as we forge our shared creative future.



I thank the First Peoples Directions Circle who have determined the strategic direction and priority actions we will take through this strategy to grow Victoria's First Peoples creative industries. This approach ensures that self-determination remains at the heart of our work.

Creative State 2028 draws on input from over 1,500 Victorians right across the state, including more than 200 First Peoples. I thank everyone who shared their perspectives by making a submission, completing a survey, or attending a roundtable or forum. This strategy is stronger for your ideas and input.

A creative state is a place where innovative thinking, critical reflection and new approaches are fundamental to living, working and doing business.

A creative state is a place where all members of our community, in all parts of the state, can benefit from the creative industries.

A creative state is a place of bold, ambitious ideas where creativity helps us tackle the challenges we face and build a new collective future.

This is our opportunity, and our commitment. I look forward to working with you to achieve this together.

**The Hon Colin Brooks MP
Minister for Creative Industries**

From the First Peoples Directions Circle

Art and creativity are part of life. Creating art is part of what I do, but it's not my ultimate aim. For me, art is not an end product, it is about intention, working in a community, sharing stories and transferring knowledge.

This also describes the way we work as the First Peoples Directions Circle. We bring the community voice to the development and delivery of Creative Victoria programs and initiatives. This work is deeply informed by this inherent cultural approach and our First Peoples First principle that ensures that Government initiatives and programs for the First Peoples creative sector respond to, and fit, the community, not the other way around. This requires big picture thinking, imagination and collaboration.

Since the Directions Circle was established, together we have created real change and laid the foundation for the First Peoples creative sector on this land to flourish, now and into the future.

The First Peoples Directions Circle and the Victorian Government's *Creative State* strategies are forever entwined. The first action of the very first strategy focused on strengthening the practice of First Peoples creatives in Victoria and deepening engagement with the unique First Peoples cultures and creative practices here. Amongst other initiatives, this commitment led to the establishment of the First Peoples Directions Circle in 2019.

First Peoples First was a guiding principle of the second *Creative State* strategy and through this we worked together on initiatives to better reflect and embed self-determination in Creative Victoria's work, and to continue to strengthen and raise the profile of the First Peoples creative sector. Initiatives like the introduction of dedicated First Peoples streams in competitive funding programs, the incredible Victorian First Peoples Art and Design Fair showcase exhibition held in 2025, and the first ever First Peoples creative industries forum which brought together over 200 First Peoples from across the state to share knowledge and insights, to meet and explore partnerships.

The forum also gathered insights and feedback that have been vital to the development of this third strategy. First Peoples First is a pillar of this strategy, with specific directions and actions. But it's not limited to that or something separate, it's a commitment and self-determined approach that continues to be integrated across Creative Victoria's work and throughout this new strategy.

Deep listening helped guide the development of this strategy and it will continue as we collaborate with Creative Victoria and First Peoples creatives and communities across the state to bring it to life.



Among the dedicated First Peoples actions of this strategy, we will introduce deep listening yarns creating direct engagement to hear from community about challenges and opportunities ahead, and how best to address them.

Deep listening is a phrase coined by Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann from the Daly River mob in the Northern Territory. She described deep listening as an Aboriginal way of being, and understanding, connecting to and belonging in the world. We will be true to this and look forward to the ideas the community shares about how we can collectively bring our stories, knowledge and unique creativity to the world.

I want to acknowledge the members of the First Peoples Directions Circle, past and present, for their ideas, insights and leadership. I want to pay tribute to the creatives, artists and cultural leaders who have made our First Peoples creative industries sector what it is today. And to the many and diverse First Peoples creatives working, practicing, sharing culture, and establishing creative careers and businesses in Victoria today – we are listening, and we are ready to forge a stronger creative future for our community and everyone who calls this land home.

**Yoolongteeyt, Associate Professor
Vicki Couzens
Chair, First Peoples Directions Circle**

First Peoples consultation and collaboration

This strategy has been developed in collaboration with the First Peoples Directions Circle, a group of esteemed First Peoples leaders and professionals working across the creative industries, education, community and philanthropic sectors, who use their knowledge and insights to ensure First Peoples creative industries thrive across Victoria, now and into the future.

The First Peoples Directions Circle guides the work of Creative Victoria, driving initiatives and policies related to First Peoples arts and culture in Victoria and ensuring that self-determination, community voice, and the principle of putting First Peoples First is embedded into Creative Victoria’s work.

The First Peoples Directions Circle and Creative Victoria’s dedicated First Peoples Unit have collaborated on the development of this strategy. This includes leading the inaugural First Peoples creative industries forum with over 200 First Peoples across the state, which garnered ideas and insights that have informed the First Peoples First pillar and actions.

Through Creative Victoria, the Victorian Government will continue to be guided by the First Peoples Directions Circle as this strategy is implemented and as we work together toward achieving a sustainable, equitable and thriving creative economy.

In November 2025, Victoria become the first state or territory in Australia to legislate Treaty with First Peoples. The *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* (Vic) establishes Gellung Warl as the first permanent First Peoples representative and decision-making body, empowered to make rules, guidelines and standards about matters that directly affect First Peoples.

Creative Victoria has ensured this strategy is flexible enough to adopt outcomes of future treaties under the framework.

Find out more about the First Peoples Directions Circle at creative.vic.gov.au/firstpeoples

First Peoples Directions Circle principles

In 2025, the First Peoples Directions Circle outlined six agreed principles for activities, programs and initiatives delivered through the Victorian Government’s Creative State strategies.

LEGACY	To lay the foundations to ensure that there is a continuation and transmission of culture, generationally.
SOVEREIGNTY	To reinforce the position of First Peoples as the custodians and stewards of the lands, skies and waterways.
FIRST PEOPLES FIRST	To respect the leadership, authority, cultural knowledge and creative practice of Traditional Custodians, first and foremost.
SPIRITUAL WELLBEING AND HEALING	To acknowledge the importance of creative practice to the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities, and support First Peoples to get back to spirit and reinvigorate relationships with the Dreaming.
FIRST PEOPLES SELF-DETERMINATION	To honour a commitment to transfer power and resources to First Peoples and make space for Aboriginal Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing.
TREATY & TRUTH-TELLING	To support the aspirations and realisation of Victoria’s Treaty to create a better and fairer future, grounded in truth, justice, understanding and respect.

Victorian dance company Chunky Move is known for redefining the boundaries of dance and taking Victorian creativity to the world. *U>N>I>T>E>D* is a groundbreaking collaboration bringing Chunky Move together with Javanese experimental electronic duo Gabber Modus Operandi, Bali-based streetwear label Future Laundry, and Melbourne-based global leaders in animatronic design, Creature Technology Co. The performance premiered in Melbourne as part of Asia TOPA before touring to Venice, Singapore, Taipei and Hong Kong throughout 2025. Photo: Gianna Rizzo



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Executive summary



Victorian Opera Follies (2025)
Photo: Jeff Busby

Creating together for a growing Victoria

Creative State 2028 continues the approach initiated by the Victorian Government in 2015 to bring together a broad span of arts, cultural and creative sectors under one portfolio, and deliver a cohesive policy response for the benefit of more Victorians.

This integrated approach seeks to break down silos, maximise the impact of public investment and foster increased collaboration across creative communities.

The driving theme of this strategy—*creating together for a growing Victoria*—acknowledges the many ways in which the creative industries draw people, businesses and communities together. It also highlights our renewed focus on partnership to contribute to a thriving creative ecosystem, and the fundamental role of collaboration in the success of creative endeavours, careers, organisations and industries.

This strategy sets out how we will prioritise our efforts, and the ambitious way we will work over the next three years in pursuit of this vision. We will work with the Australian Government, other states and territories, local government, investment partners and Victorian artists and creators – from independent artists and organisations to businesses of all sizes – so that our creative industries are future-ready, and more Victorians can experience the benefits the creative industries generate.

We will strengthen our alignment with the national cultural policy, *Revive*, galvanise partnerships across government and the private sector, and work with our creative industries to build greater links, create new opportunities and achieve an impact together that is greater than the sum of its parts.

A new strategy for fast-changing times

The importance of the arts and creative industries to Victoria is enshrined in legislation. Guided by the *Creative Victoria Act 2017*, the Victorian Government works to strengthen the state's creative ecosystem across all creative fields, promote participation, and facilitate equitable and sustainable industry growth.

While the objectives of the Act are well-established, changing times require us to find new ways to achieve them. This strategy has been developed in a period of rapidly advancing technology and disruption across society.

As we navigate the changing social and economic context of our growing state, and respond to global challenges and opportunities, more than ever we must nurture and value human ingenuity and the connections that artists and creatives build with communities.

The creative industries hold great potential to support social cohesion, shape a positive vision for the future, and drive productivity and growth.

This strategy renews our commitments under the Act and champions creativity as a driving force in Victoria's future growth and prosperity.

Creative State framework

Creative State 2028 is organised around four pillars – the enduring ambitions that underpin Creative Victoria’s work. The pillars align with our responsibilities to the Victorian community under the *Creative Victoria Act 2017* and reflect what we heard during state-wide consultation.

Under each pillar is a series of directions. These directions set out focus areas that Creative Victoria will prioritise over the life of this strategy.

Each direction will lead to a set of actions that Creative Victoria will implement or partner on.

This document details actions we are committed to in the first 12 months of the strategy, including new partnerships, programs, projects and initiatives designed to respond to emerging needs of the sector.

Where further opportunities and challenges arise over the life of the strategy, we will develop new actions guided by the framework.

Tracking our progress

Creative Victoria will report on the progress and impact of *Creative State 2028* via our website. Find out more at creative.vic.gov.au/creativestate





FIND YOUR VOICE COLLECTIVE

The choir that led to a creative movement

Warrnambool's Find Your Voice Collective started in 2017 as a choir, consciously welcoming all ages, abilities and backgrounds. The Collective has grown into a multi-faceted creative organisation with a year-round program encompassing music, movement, film and visual art programs and career development for d/Deaf and Disabled artists and arts workers.

With a mission to create an accessible space that celebrates the unbounded creativity and stories of regional artists, the Collective has rapidly grown in size and profile. Find Your Voice has graced stages at Port Fairy Folk Festival and Triple J's One Night Stand, joined forces with musicians including Sarah Blasko and The Wiggles, made countless television appearances and collaborated with leading creatives and organisations including Snuff Puppets and TEDx.

In 2026, with support through the Music Works program, the Collective will take to their biggest stage yet, Arts Centre Melbourne's Sidney Myer Music Bowl with the 180-member choir performing original music and repertoire devised over 12 months in collaboration with composers, musicians and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

"Find Your Voice artists demonstrate why diversity of experience is so important and how the deepest truths often come to us from the most unlikely places."

**Sean Kenny, Executive Director
Find Your Voice Collective**

Photo: Kirsty Hill Photography

Creative State 2028: At a glance

PILLARS	1. First Peoples First Strengthening Victoria’s First Peoples creative industries to embed practice and culture, grow the creative economy and connect Community and Country	2. Growing our creative community <u>Making creative experiences more equitable and inclusive for the benefit of more Victorians</u>
DIRECTIONS	<p>Strengthen Victorian First Peoples cultural infrastructure to embed First Peoples practice and culture, increase participation and generate positive and long-lasting economic outcomes.</p> <p>Continue to develop inclusive, transparent and culturally strong governance structures and funding models to progress self-determination.</p> <p>Listen to Victoria’s First Peoples artists, creative workers and leaders to create a culturally safe industry.</p> <p>Invest in First Peoples creatives to practice, connect and tell their stories on Country.</p>	<p>Increase the availability of inclusive, accessible and rewarding opportunities for children and young people – as audiences and creators.</p> <p>Foster the growth of local creative industries in regional and outer suburban communities.</p> <p>Increase the diversity of creators, creative workers, and audiences to better reflect the Victorian community.</p> <p>Increase community participation in arts and creative practice to stimulate and expand Victoria’s creative talent and enhance community wellbeing.</p>
NEW ACTIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and pilot a First Peoples designed creative industries fund to support a vibrant ecosystem of First Peoples creators and organisations. 2. Embed the First Peoples Directions Circle principles into Creative Victoria’s work. 3. Build on our First Peoples Forums and hold deep listening yarns with Community to better understand priorities and barriers in the creative industries. 4. Prioritise creative activities that enable First Peoples creatives to practice, connect and tell their stories on Country. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Expand collaboration with the Department of Education to explore opportunities to upskill and inspire the next generation of artists and creative thinkers and provide creative resources to teachers. 6. Work with the creative sector, local government and communities to redesign Creative Victoria’s regional programs to better align with the contemporary aspirations of regional and outer-metropolitan communities in delivering creative opportunities and experiences across the state. 7. Pilot a dedicated regional and outer metro Creative Projects Fund round to support the development of new and exciting regional works. 8. Establish a Creative Industries Children and Young People Advisory Council to inform Government on initiatives to increase participation and promote the benefits of creativity for young Victorians. 9. Increase representation of young people on creative industries portfolio boards through Creative Victoria’s public expression of interest process.

PILLARS	<h3>3. Expanding our creative economy</h3> <p>Working with Victoria’s creative industries to fuel creative activity, strengthen our creative workforce and facilitate growth</p>	<h3>4. An inspiring creative future</h3> <p>Build a strong, resilient and prosperous creative sector and promote the value of creativity for more Victorians</p>
DIRECTIONS	<p>Recognise and support the roles of independent creators, businesses and not-for-profit organisations to strengthen Victoria’s cultural life and economy.</p> <p>Invest in, and partner with, Victoria’s cultural institutions to provide ongoing sector leadership, economic growth and equitable access.</p> <p>Empower VicScreen to elevate Victoria as a global screen destination, drive industry growth and jobs, develop skills and talent, and build market and audience engagement.</p> <p>Support and invest in Victorian artists and creators to develop and monetise new works and intellectual property, turning ideas into careers.</p> <p>Unlock the potential of Victoria’s creative industries by enabling artists, creative workers, businesses and organisations to reach new audiences and markets.</p>	<p>Make it easier to build, sustain and scale up successful creative enterprises in Victoria.</p> <p>Enhance data collection to better demonstrate the creative sector’s social, cultural and economic value to identify opportunities for growth.</p> <p>Build on Victoria’s reputation as the creative capital to stimulate growth and elevate Victoria’s position as a place to create, visit and invest.</p> <p>Work with the creative industries to identify and respond to technological, environmental and other industry disruptions and opportunities.</p> <p>Work with creators, researchers and leaders across the Victorian community to develop a longer-term vision for Victoria’s creative economy.</p>
NEW ACTIONS	<p>10. Redesign project-based grants for independent creatives to ensure they are efficient, sustainable and effective in supporting the development of new intellectual property and creative careers.</p> <p>11. Partner with The Wheeler Centre to develop a state-wide Victorian Literature Strategy to leverage Melbourne’s UNESCO City of Literature status and champion our vibrant literary culture, diverse writers, publishers, bookshops, and reading community.</p> <p>12. Partner with Business Victoria to provide training and resources for artists and creative workers to build sustainable careers.</p> <p>13. Back new Victorian musical theatre works to increase export potential and meet growing demand locally and worldwide.</p> <p>14. Strengthen Victoria’s position as Australia’s digital games hub through a new purpose built co-working space and investment fund, in partnership with leading Victorian games studio Massive Monster.</p> <p>15. Grow the international profile and reach of Melbourne International Games Week, and opportunities for Victoria’s games industry, through a new delivery model led by ACMI.</p>	<p>16. Partner with the NSW, SA and WA governments to make a joint submission to the Australian Government’s consultation on its next National Cultural Policy, including recommendations on national tax reform.</p> <p>17. Partner with the Department of Treasury and Finance to convene an industry roundtable on red tape to understand barriers to growth in the creative industries.</p> <p>18. Improve the way we measure the value of the creative industries, including cultural identity, social cohesion and wellbeing, to support future policy makers, researchers, businesses and creators.</p> <p>19. Work with MAP Co and precinct organisations to build the profile of the Melbourne Arts Precinct as a global creative destination in readiness for the completion of the \$1.7 billion transformation project.</p> <p>20. Partner with ACMI to host a forum on the opportunities and risks of generative AI for the creative industries and advocate for adequate protections and fair remuneration of intellectual property.</p> <p>21. Develop a contemporary music strategy in partnership with the Victorian Music Industry Advisory Council to leverage and enhance Melbourne and Victoria’s position as a global music destination and exporter.</p>

Why creativity matters



Air Playground at Scienceworks
Photo: Wilk

Created by Museums Victoria's team of experts, this interactive exhibition provides fun STEM learning opportunities for children aged 6-10 and their families. The exhibition proved to be one of the most popular Scienceworks exhibitions ever, reaching 197,952 attendees. The exhibition is now available for export with the first stop in 2025/26 at The Whare Taonga o Waikato Museum & Gallery in Hamilton, New Zealand.

Our state is powered by creativity and innovation

Creativity plays a role in all our lives. From the design of our homes, schools, workplaces and public spaces, to what we wear, read, watch, and listen to, and how we work, learn and connect.

Creativity is just as integral to our economy, driving us to come up with new solutions, pursue new ideas, and unlock future growth. It is at the heart of innovation and Victoria's reputation as Australia's ideas capital¹. When we use the term *creative industries*, we refer to a broad and evolving spectrum of fields, creators and supporting roles. These include the arts, which span music, theatre, literature, craft and visual art; cultural institutions, like ACMI, State Library Victoria and Arts Centre Melbourne; more commercially focused creative industries, like architecture and design, and newer fields, such as digital games and creative tech.

We draw on the ongoing work of the Australian Government, through its national cultural policy *Revive*, as well as models developed by the UK Government², to better reflect the work, purpose and impact of the cultural and creative sector through our own definition of the creative industries:

Industries that have their origin in human imagination, expression and the creation of intellectual property, and which have the unique potential to generate economic, cultural and social value.

As industries change, and new ones emerge, this definition will keep us focused on a creative ecosystem that is driven by people, generates economic and community outcomes, creates fulfilling experiences, sparks imaginations, and brings people together. We will continue to refine the way we measure the creative industries to ensure that their economic and social contribution is properly recognised and valued.

From medical innovations that have changed healthcare thanks to local industrial designers, to festivals and live performances that bring people together, to songs, books, films, and games that capture hearts and minds across the globe, our creative industries have enormous social value, influence and strong potential for growth.

As we continue to face economic, technological, environmental and societal challenges, the creative industries are uniquely placed to help us develop and navigate new paths.

1. Victorian Government. (2024). *Economic Growth Statement*.

2. UK Government. (2025). *DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates Definitions*.

The creative economy

The creative industries are a key driver of the Victorian economy, in expenditure, jobs and businesses. They are also a strong factor in Victoria's competitive edge and global reputation.

- The creative industries collectively contribute \$41.2 billion to the state's economy – representing 8.4% of the total Victorian economy.³
 - More than 331,000 Victorians are employed in the creative economy, accounting for 8.8% of the total Victorian workforce.⁴
 - In the year ending December 2024, the total number of creative businesses in Victoria was 48,197, representing 6.5% of all Victorian businesses.⁴
- The creative industries are growing and outpacing the broader economy. The economic contribution of the creative industries increased at an average annual rate of 4.1% over the last seven years, compared to a rate of 2.2% across the broader economy.⁴
 - From sole traders to independent not-for-profit organisations to global companies, the diversity of business models in Victoria's creative industries drives productivity through agility, innovation and collaboration.

Creativity and society

The arts and creative industries are a catalyst for social progress. They have the capacity to bind us together as a community, create shared meaning and improve our collective wellbeing. They enable more Victorians to feel culturally connected and understood – and provide an opportunity to share stories and reaffirm our shared values.

In an increasingly polarised world, the arts and creativity have an important role to play in opening us up to new ideas and perspectives, exploring complexity, and facilitating important social dialogues. This is crucial to the health of our democracy and society, and to our individual growth and resilience.

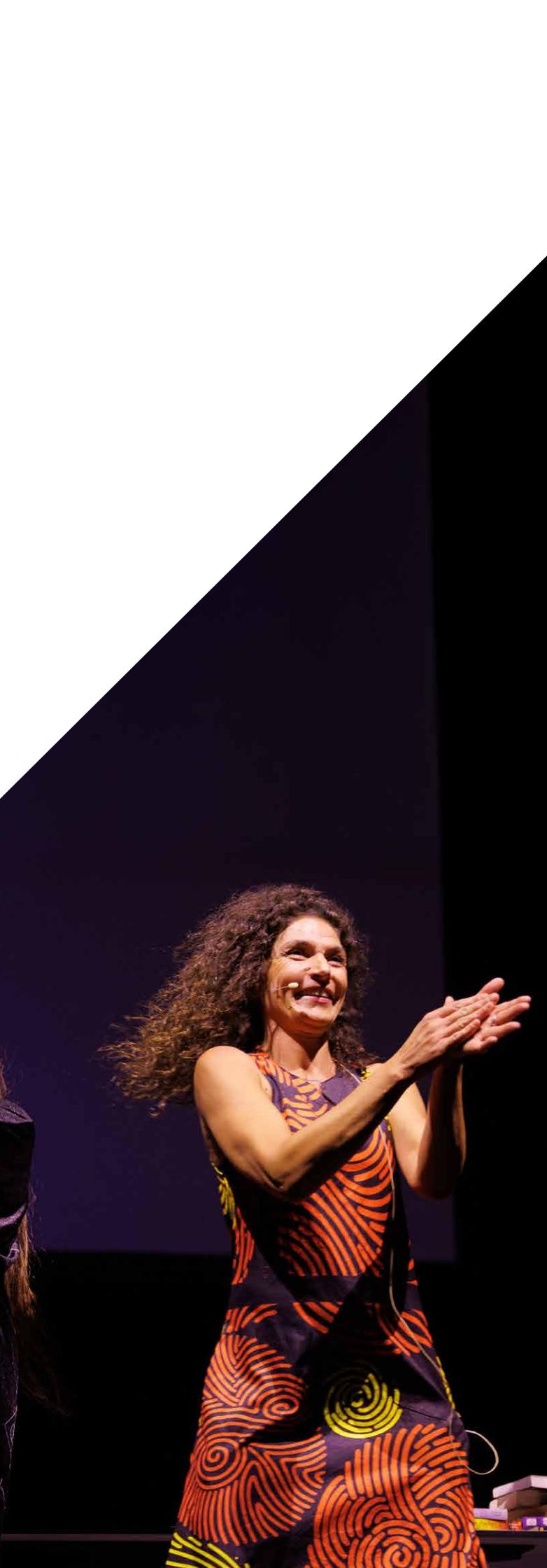
When the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted our world, it was creativity – music, books, podcasts, film, television, games and more – that kept us connected to the broader world, and it was creativity – festivals, gigs, exhibitions, events – that helped bring us back together.

Society will continue to face new challenges, and the creative industries can play a key role in supporting us to prepare, connect, reflect and imagine a better Victoria.

3. Creative Victoria. (2025). Victoria's creative economy.

4. Ibid.





BLAK & BRIGHT

A new chapter for First Nations literature

Established in 2016, Blak & Bright works to amplify the work and perspectives of First Nations writers and storytellers and to help First Nations writers build sustainable careers. Guided by the belief that Blak stories are for everyone, Blak & Bright began as a biennial festival but quickly grew into a year-round organisation that runs an annual program of events and workshops as well as delivering the Blak & Bright First Nations Literary Festival.

“Since 2016, this much-loved celebration of Blak literature has championed an extraordinary range of creative talent, and has grown to be a highlight in the cultural calendar. We are proud of the work we’ve achieved, from our powerhouse festival, to the many events and projects we’ve delivered outside of this.”

**Bebe Oliver, CEO & Artistic Director
Blak & Bright**

A Daylight Connection at Blak & Bright (2024)
Photo: James Henry

CREATIVE LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS

Next generation creativity

Launched in 1982, Creative Learning Partnerships is the Victorian Government's longest running creative grants program. It connects Victorian artists and creative professionals working across all fields with schools to develop creative projects linked to the curriculum. In addition to supercharging learning, the program provides skills development to students and teachers and new career opportunities for creative practitioners.

Over four decades, the program has supported residencies for over 1,650 creative practitioners, upskilled close to 4,000 teachers and brought creativity and learning together for more than 76,000 Victorian students.

"To create a sense of community we need to know who our people are, and our people need to know who they are.

"And that is where art has so much power in really harvesting that sense of confidence and empowerment in terms of 'this is who I am, and I have a story to tell.'"

**Francine Scully, Teacher
Sunshine Heights Primary School**

Be You by Sunshine Heights Primary School, Inkresive and Wild at Heart Community Arts





BENDIGO ART GALLERY

How a fashion exhibition redefined a city

In 2008, Bendigo Art Gallery defied expectations when it presented *The Golden Age of Couture: Paris & London 1947-1957*, a fashion exhibition from London's Victoria and Albert Museum. Not only was the exhibition a hit – attracting more than 75,000 visitors – it proved transformative for the gallery and for Bendigo.

Since then, the gallery has forged global collaborations, and a partnership with Visit Victoria, bringing smash hit exhibitions to Bendigo that have generated \$113 million for the region, and celebrated icons from Grace Kelly and Marilyn Monroe to Frida Kahlo.

The 2022 blockbuster *Elvis: Direct from Graceland* hit the record books as Bendigo's most successful exhibition ever with more than 220,000 attendees, including 24,000 people who travelled from interstate to see the show.

During its 4-month season, the exhibition injected \$67 million into the Bendigo economy and an additional \$22 million for the wider Victorian economy, demonstrating the powerful role creativity plays in driving tourism, stimulating local businesses and shaping a new future for the region and its community.

With an expansion project now underway, the impact and reach of the gallery is expected to grow, generating benefits for the community and the region all year round.

"These exhibitions don't just attract new audiences, they inspire loyalty and repeat visitation. We regularly welcome guests from Melbourne, across regional Victoria and interstate who come specifically for the gallery's world-class exhibitions."

Martin Shew and David Cook-Doulton
Hotel Ernest Bendigo

Bendigo Art Gallery, *Elvis: Direct from Graceland*
Source: Bendigo Art Gallery

The role of Creative Victoria and the portfolio agencies



Creative Victoria

Creative Victoria is the Victorian Government body dedicated to the arts and creative industries. Established under the *Creative Victoria Act 2017*, Creative Victoria has a wide-ranging function to support the growth and impact of the arts and creative industries. This includes:

- Supporting and promoting the creative and cultural practice of First Peoples
- Investing in Victorian creative talent, organisations, programs and projects

- Developing and maintaining cultural infrastructure
- Policy, research and industry development
- Sector engagement and partnerships, and
- Promoting and championing the state's creative industries and their value to Victoria.

Creative Victoria oversees a portfolio of 11 state-owned portfolio agencies and works with and alongside these entities to strengthen Victoria's creative ecosystem, and deliver creative opportunities to Victorians.

Victoria's creative industries portfolio agencies

Victoria's nine state-owned arts and cultural institutions and two screen agencies are important partners in the delivery of this strategy.

Guided by Creative Victoria, these agencies play a vital role in Victoria's creative industries, driving participation both within their venues and through outreach activities across the state, providing sector leadership, and offering a range of employment and career development opportunities for artists and creative workers.

The agencies range from major public-facing cultural institutions – which in 2024-25 welcomed more than 11.6 million visitors – to entities working to strengthen and develop Victoria's screen industry.

The agencies support local creative jobs and engage local creative talent, including through commissioning and presenting new work by Victorian creators, and delivering training and professional development opportunities. They provide free and low-cost access to creative experiences for Victorians and visitors of all ages, and run extensive curriculum-linked education programs that engage close to 550,000 Victorian school students each year and support Victorians of all ages to learn new skills.

Beyond their venues, our agencies undertake outreach and touring activities to bring their programs and experiences to Victorians in regional and outer metropolitan areas, partnering with the early childhood education sector, schools, hospitals, aged care centres, community centres, libraries, galleries, performing arts centres and more.



The agencies work with First Peoples Traditional Owners, communities and creators, and collaborate with diverse Victorian communities. They partner with creative organisations to deliver events and festivals and provide peak bodies, independent creative organisations and creators with office accommodation and spaces for research, creative development, rehearsals and presentations.

Behind the scenes, our agencies undertake world-leading research and scholarship, and partner with institutions across the globe, strengthening Victoria's international reputation as a centre for creative industries excellence and generating new opportunities for the state.

ACMI, Arts Centre Melbourne, Museums Victoria, NGV and State Library Victoria are the custodians of state collections worth almost \$6 billion⁵, caring for priceless items on behalf of current and future generations of Victorians.

Each agency is governed by its own board and makes its own programming and operational decisions. Collectively, our agencies are vital to maintaining Victoria's national and global profile, and maximising the reach and impact of this strategy.

Victoria's creative industries portfolio agencies

- ACMI
- Arts Centre Melbourne
- Docklands Studios Melbourne
- Geelong Arts Centre
- Melbourne Arts Precinct Corporation
- Melbourne Recital Centre
- Museums Victoria
- National Gallery of Victoria
- State Library Victoria
- VicScreen
- The Wheeler Centre

⁵ ACMI, Arts Centre Melbourne, Museums Victoria, NGV, State Library Victoria. (2024). Creative Agencies 2024 Annual Reports.



TAKING LOCAL STORIES FROM PAGE TO SCREEN

In 2015, Jane Harper's debut novel, *The Dry*, received the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an Unpublished Manuscript at the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards which are managed by The Wheeler Centre. In 2016, *The Dry* was published, going on to sell more than 3.5 million copies.

In 2020, a film adaptation, backed by VicScreen and produced by Melbourne based Arenamedia, injected \$8 million into the Victorian economy and created 450 employment opportunities, including roles for actors, extras and crews. Shot primarily in the Wimmera and Mallee regions, the film contributed almost \$1 million directly to the regional economy, providing a boost for local businesses after a long drought while creating a new angle for tourism.

In 2021, the film grossed more than \$20 million at the Australian box office making it one of the most successful Australian films of all time. Now a full-time writer with a dedicated following of readers worldwide, Harper's subsequent novels *Force of Nature* and *The Survivors* have also been adapted for the screen and brought to life by Victorian talent, again injecting millions into the economy and supporting hundreds of screen jobs and businesses.



NGV Indian Community Day (2024)
Photo: Eugene Hyland

Our creative state in numbers

\$41.2 BILLION

the contribution Victoria's creative industries make to the state's economy, representing **8.4%** of the total Victorian economy.

MORE THAN 331,000

Victorians are employed in the creative economy, accounting for **8.8%** of the total Victorian workforce.

48,197

the total number of creative businesses in Victoria as at December 2024, representing **6.5%** of all Victorian businesses.

52%

of all Australian games studio head offices⁶ are located in Victoria.

4.1%

the average annual growth rate for the creative economy, which means our creative industries are growing and outpacing the broader economy which is growing at an average of **2.2%** year on year.

4 UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES

Melbourne (City of Literature), Ballarat (City of Craft and Folk Art), Geelong (City of Design) and Bendigo (City of Gastronomy). Victoria is the only state in the world to simultaneously hold four designations in different creative fields.

LIVE MUSIC LEADERSHIP

Melbourne is home to more live music venues per capita than any other city in Australia.⁷

Source: Creative Victoria. (2025). Victoria's creative economy.

6. Interactive Games & Entertainment Association. (2025). *Australian game development survey: FY2024 report*.

7. Music Victoria. (2023). *Victorian Live Music Census, 2022*.



Victoria's creative leadership

Among many examples of Victoria's leadership position, we are proudly home to:

- ACMI, Australia's national museum of screen culture, and the most visited museum of its kind in the world
- Museums Victoria, the most visited museum organisation in Australia
- Melbourne International Games Week, the biggest games event in Australia, hosting more than 70 events and over 135,000 attendees in 2025
- State Library Victoria, Australia's most visited public library and the third most visited in the world
- National Gallery of Victoria, Australia's most visited gallery
- Arts Centre Melbourne, Australia's largest and best attended performing arts centre and home to the new Australian Museum of Performing Arts (AMPA)
- The longest running First Peoples theatre company in Australia, ILBIJERRI
- Australia's oldest professional orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra
- Australia's national ballet company, The Australian Ballet, and many of the most innovative and renowned contemporary dance companies in the country
- Australia's highest concentration of commercial⁸ and public⁹ art galleries
- Geelong Arts Centre, Australia's largest regional performing arts centre
- An enviable network of regional galleries and performing arts centres – from Wangaratta to Warrnambool, Warragul to Wodonga.

8. Boston Consulting Group. (n.d.). *Melbourne as a Global Cultural Destination*.

9. Public Galleries Association Victoria. (n.d.). *Our Creative Heart*.

Victoria's competitive advantages, opportunities and focus areas



Victorian artist Lisa Roet's inflatable primate sculptures have taken over landmarks from Melbourne to Beijing, London and Edinburgh. Fabricated in Melbourne at workshop Airena, Roet collaborated with a team of Victorian artisans including puppet makers and sewists. *Great Ape* draws attention to issues of deforestation and climate stability while serving as a testing ground for presenting public art to worldwide audiences utilising a sustainable model to limit the environmental footprint. Photo: John Gollings

Victoria's competitive advantages

A STRONG BRAND AND REPUTATION AS THE CREATIVE STATE

Victoria is well established and recognised as Australia's creative capital. Our arts and creative industries draw tourism, investment, creative talent and new residents to our state, boosting our national and global profile.

In addition to a community of Victorian artists and creatives who have trained and established careers at home, our state has built a national and international reputation as a destination for artists, creative businesses and industry leaders who move to Victoria to join our creative community and develop their careers.

Victoria has maintained an enviable reputation as Australia's creative capital thanks to the commitment, hard work and ingenuity of artists, creative workers, venues and organisations who continue to produce and present bold and ambitious work for enthusiastic local audiences.



XM2 Training a lens on creative possibilities

Once a local start up and now a global enterprise, Victorian screen technology company XM2 has revolutionised the film and television industries while showcasing the impact, and export potential, of creative tech across different industry sectors and markets worldwide.

With a multidisciplinary team of creatives, engineers, pilots and technicians, XM2 develops and operates specialised camera, drone systems and accessories which have been used on local film and television productions such as *Better Man*, *The Mongoose* and *War Machine* as well as global movie franchises such as *Star Wars*, *Mission: Impossible* and *James Bond*.

Beyond entertainment, XM2's creative technology is used for industrial, telecommunications, environmental and emergency services applications. In the summer of 2024/25, XM2 partnered with Parks Victoria to adapt its drone camera systems to monitor and deliver food to critically endangered wallabies during the Grampians bushfires.

"XM2 was founded in Melbourne and we're proud to be working around the globe with technology that was designed, built and operated by our in-house team. As an Australian company with innovation at our forefront, we have made a definite impact on the global stage."

**Stephen Oh, CEO and Founder
XM2**

The XM2 Stealth Bike is an electric camera vehicle that was developed by the XM2 team in Melbourne and used all around the world.



MELBOURNE FRINGE FESTIVAL

Putting independent artists centre stage

Founded in 1982, Melbourne Fringe champions the independent creative sector through the annual Melbourne Fringe Festival and a year-round program of talent and industry development programs, microgrants and commissions.

Showcasing music, theatre, dance, comedy, cabaret, circus, visual art, design and multi art experiences, Fringe is a place for artists to explore and test new ideas.

The annual festival also provides a significant, and rapid, economic boost to Melbourne and the suburbs and regions hosting Fringe events. The 2024 Festival generated \$23 million in gross economic value to Victoria in just 20 days, with every \$1 of Victorian Government funding Fringe received generating \$16 for the economy. The festival reached 266,750 attendees, supported 148 Victorian jobs and provided \$2.8 million directly to artists through commissions, fees and ticket sales.

“Melbourne Fringe commissions and supports Victoria’s independent artists to experiment, try new ideas and push boundaries but just as importantly, it really does provide a platform for artistic risk taking that also encourages audiences to go outside their comfort zone.”

Simon Abrahams, Melbourne Fringe Creative Director and CEO

Fringe Flavours Night Market, (2024)
Photo: Tom Noble Creative

DRAWCARD FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

Victoria’s year-round creative calendar is a significant competitive advantage with drawcard festivals and major events that boost tourism, support creative careers and event workers, provide a platform to test new work and ideas, bring communities together and stimulate the broader economy.

Victoria’s busy festivals calendar spans a diverse range of signature events including:

- *Midsumma*, which brings together a diverse mix of LGBTQIA+ artists, performers, communities and audiences
- *Melbourne Fringe Festival*, Australia’s most significant testing ground for independent artists
- Destination music festivals across the state – from Echuca’s *Riverboats Music Festival* to Port Fairy *Folk Festival*, *Meredith* and *Queenscliff Music Festival*
- *Melbourne International Film Festival*, the largest film festival in the Southern Hemisphere
- *Melbourne International Jazz Festival*, Australia’s biggest jazz event
- Regional gems including *Castlemaine State Festival*, *Nati Frinj Biennale* and *Shepparton Arts Festival*
- *Melbourne Fashion Festival*, Australia’s largest consumer fashion event
- *Melbourne International Comedy Festival*, the biggest dedicated comedy festival in the world
- *Melbourne International Games Week*, the largest games festival in the Asia Pacific
- *RISING*, our winter celebration of new art, music and performance
- *Melbourne Writers Festival*, which has been bringing writers and readers together since 1986.

These, and many other festivals across the state, play a vital role in our creative industries ecosystem. They provide career making opportunities for local talent, foster national and international collaborations, commission and platform new works, attract and develop new audiences, and offer Victorians unforgettable and inspiring creative experiences that would not otherwise happen.

Complementing our schedule of festivals, major creative events such as the annual *Melbourne Winter Masterpieces* exhibition series, grow our audiences and attract visitation from interstate and overseas. Since the first exhibition in 2004, this series has generated more than \$700 million in economic impact for Victoria and welcomed more than 8 million visitors.

ENGAGED AUDIENCES

Along with a diversity of creative organisations, popular creative attractions and drawcard events, the local market for creative works and products is significant. Victoria has the most engaged audiences of any Australian jurisdiction, topping the *National Arts Participation Survey* results in 2022 for participation in the arts (97%), live attendance at arts events (63%), and creating art (43%).¹⁰ In 2024, Victoria also had the highest live performance ticket spend per capita at \$161.37, significantly higher than the national average of \$122.42.¹¹

According to *Audience Atlas Victoria 2024*, virtually every adult in Victoria, 99%, is in the market for arts and culture – meaning they have attended an arts or cultural event in the last three years. This is higher than any other jurisdiction where this research has been undertaken – from the UK to New York City.

10. Creative Australia. (2022). *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey – Victoria Factsheet*.

11. Live Performance Australia. (2025). *2024 Live Performance Attendance and Revenue Report*.

STEPHANIE LAKE COMPANY

Creating a global success, one step at a time

Dancer and choreographer Stephanie Lake has forged a remarkable career – and a thriving company – from Victoria’s vibrant contemporary dance scene. A graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts, she began her career performing and creating with leading local companies Chunky Move, Lucy Guerin Inc and BalletLab, with some of her earliest works premiering at Melbourne Fringe.

Since founding Stephanie Lake Company (SLC) in 2014, Lake has created a string of highly acclaimed works including *Colossus*, *Manifesto*, *The Chronicles* and many more – shows that have toured nationally and to 16 countries worldwide. The company collaborates across theatre, film, music video and visual art, as well as mass-scale participatory performances involving thousands of community dancers. Today, SLC employs more than 100 people each year, including dancers, musicians, rehearsal directors, designers, collaborators, technical and production personnel, teachers and administrative staff. The company remains committed to nurturing the next generation of artists through commissions, classes, workshops, internships and development programs.

In addition to her work with SLC, Stephanie Lake is Resident Choreographer at The Australian Ballet and Artist in Residence at Dresden Semperoper Ballett (Germany), reinforcing her position as one of Australia’s most sought-after choreographic voices.

“I am deeply inspired by the phenomenal dancers that work in this city. It truly is a hub for dance. Not only that, we create our work in a city surrounded by brilliant musicians, theatre makers, visual artists and filmmakers and have the support of a really broad, enthusiastic audience base.”

**Stephanie Lake, Artistic Director
Stephanie Lake Company**

Rachel Coulson performing in *Manifesto* (2023)
Stephanie Lake Company.
Photo: Roy VanDerVeg



TARRYN LOVE

Taking creativity to new heights

A proud Gunditjmara Keerray Woorroong artist, curator and producer, Tarryn Love was one of four artists commissioned to create groundbreaking work that is embedded in the fabric of the \$140 million redevelopment of Geelong Arts Centre's Little Malop Street building.

Tarryn's work centres on yoowak (the night), and represents the distinctiveness of Gunditjmara ways of Knowing, Being and Doing.

Tarryn worked with architects, theatre and acoustic designers and a specialised crew of 10 installers to translate the 1600sqm artwork across the walls of The Story House theatre – over three levels. A tribute to her culture, her Ancestors and as reminder for everyone of how to walk respectfully on Country, the commission was Tarryn's first major public artwork and it has led to exhibitions, showcases and opportunities that have set a solid foundation for her career.

"I grew up surrounded by a really strong and proud family. I've been lucky enough to always know who I am, so I hope that young First Nations kids can walk through these spaces and see themselves not just reflected but heard and seen and celebrated."

Tarryn Love

The Story House Theatre, Geelong Arts Centre.
Photo John Gollings



Opportunities

A GROWING MARKET FOR FIRST PEOPLES CREATIVITY

Demand for First Peoples creative products and services in Victoria is strong. The 2024 *Audience Atlas Victoria* research found that 80% of Victorian adults were in the market for First Peoples arts, including an estimated 1.49 million who have yet to engage but would consider it.¹²

Victoria's First Peoples creative sector is well placed to meet this untapped demand, whether that is through ILBIJERRI, Australia's leading and longest running Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander theatre company, Birrarangga, Australia's only dedicated First Nations-led film festival, Koorie Heritage Trust or many other First Peoples-led independent creative organisations, artists and creators working across dance, design, game development, film and television, literature, fashion, architecture and more.

In visual art, Australia's First Peoples art industry is valued at over a quarter of a billion dollars¹³ and is experiencing significant growth. In the first six months of 2025, global auction sales for Australian First Peoples art reached \$11.7 million compared to \$13.5 million for all of 2024. At the same time, the distinctive South-Eastern Australian First Peoples creative practice has not yet gained significant recognition – either domestically or overseas. This creates an opportunity for Victoria's First Peoples creatives to tap into this significant wave of demand, through events such as the Victorian First Peoples Art and Design Fair, to increase cultural impact, create jobs, and grow revenue.

12. Creative Victoria. (2024). *Audience Atlas Victoria 2024*.

13. Australian Productivity Commission. (2021). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Crafts*.

CREATIVITY AS A CHANGEMAKER, SUPER-CHARGING OUR REGIONS

From festivals and venues that have put regional communities on the map, to drawcard events and public art projects that generate tourism, many regional towns are using creativity to enliven their community and economy. For example, the Port Fairy Folk Festival attracts an estimated 20,000 visitors to south-west Victoria every year, driving economic activity in the district.

Victoria's tourism strategies *Experience Victoria 2033* and the *First Peoples Tourism Plan for Victoria* identify creative experiences and products as key competitive advantages for the state and magnets for visitors to regional Victoria.

As several regions across the state navigate economic transitions, with less reliance on traditional industries such as fossil fuels, forestry and manufacturing, the creative industries can add diverse local jobs and business opportunities to regional communities. In addition to economic opportunity, creative industries can enhance the social fabric of communities and support their resilience as they navigate industry transition and environmental change.

During the pandemic, many people moved from metropolitan Melbourne to regional and rural Victoria.¹⁴ This trend continues, with the Victorian Government estimating a quarter of homes in Victoria will be in regional Victoria by 2051.¹⁵

This population growth builds the audience required for a sustainable creative economy, creating new opportunities for Victoria's established regional cultural facilities, organisations, events and creative communities, and attracting new ideas and talent.

14. Ghin, P. & Ainsworth, S. (2022). *The Great Migration: Leaving our cities for the region.*

15. Victorian Government. (2025). *More homes for regional living.*



CIRCUS CENTRE MELBOURNE Taking training and collaboration to new heights

Once a technical school, then the home of Circus Oz, 50 Perry Street is a publicly owned facility that has transformed into a new state of the art hub for Victoria and Australia's circus and physical theatre sector.

Opened in October 2025 and operated by Albury-Wodonga's Flying Fruit Fly Circus, Circus Centre Melbourne signals a new government and creative sector partnership model which has seen the renowned circus training organisation take on the lease and management responsibilities for the site. They have expanded their presence into metropolitan Melbourne developing an exciting new vision for how circus is made in Victoria.

The first expansion for Flying Fruit Fly Circus in 45 years, Circus Centre Melbourne provides their graduates with space to build professional careers and networks in Melbourne while also backing the broader circus and physical theatre sector through new creative and skills development programs.

"We now operate two world-class facilities that interconnect across the state. Our regional centre is home to our full-time circus school, while Melbourne is a unique hub for artists to train and collaborate. It's certainly transformational for our company and, I hope, for circus in Australia."

**Richard Hull, CEO
Flying Fruit Fly Circus**

Circus Centre Melbourne
Photo: Aaron Walker

BACK TO BACK

Putting local talent on the world stage

One of the 8 Victorian-based organisations supported through the National Performing Arts Partnerships Framework, Geelong's Back to Back Theatre has become a leading global voice in contemporary theatre, spending approximately six months of each year touring theatre, screen and community projects nationally and internationally.

In 2022, the company, which devises and performs theatre works with an ensemble of neurodivergent and disabled artists, received Norway's International Ibsen Award, known as the 'Nobel Prize for Theatre', in recognition of their work.

In 2024, they received the prestigious Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement in Theatre award at the Venice Biennale, solidifying their position as Australia's most highly acclaimed and globally celebrated theatre company.

"The best thing about my job is to get to tour the world and also to perform for you guys. It was an honour to win the awards at such a capacity. Winning the Ibsen award was probably the finest achievement of my career."

Scott Price, Back to Back Theatre ensemble member

"(When people see a Back to Back performance) I'd really like them to be captivated and that and we're grabbing their attention and we're really well driven. I want people to see that we can be seen."

Grace Kenny, Back to Back Theatre ensemble member

Multiple Back Things, Back to Back Theatre (2024)
Photo: Jeff Busby





A YOUNGER, EDUCATED AND MORE DIVERSE POPULATION

Victoria's young, growing and increasingly diverse population is key to sustaining our creative industries, driving originality, variety, industry renewal and audience growth.

Victoria's population has the strongest growth across all Australian jurisdictions, driven by the highest natural growth and the second-highest overseas migration¹⁶. Victorians come from more than 300 ancestries, speak more than 290 languages and dialects and follow over 200 faiths.¹⁷

The 2024 *Audience Atlas Victoria* research identified young culturally and linguistically diverse audiences as key to the future success of creative organisations. These audiences are more likely than average to have recently spent money on arts engagement and anticipate a higher level of arts attendance in the next 12 months.

Victoria is home to exceptional learning institutions that provide world-class education and training programs in the arts and creative industries. From secondary to tertiary, across all sectors of the creative industries, Victoria's comprehensive skills and education systems produce excellent, job-ready arts practitioners and creative workers.

Melbourne is also highly attractive to international students, ranked as Australia's 'Best Student City' and #5 in the world.¹⁸

A greater diversity of worldviews, ideas and business models drives inclusive growth. This is important socially and economically – a greater diversity of creators, audiences, goods and services promotes better economic outcomes, sustainability and resilience in our creative community.

GROWING THE MARKET FOR VICTORIAN CREATIVITY – AT HOME AND ABROAD

When it comes to spending our time and money, Australians consume and experience more international creative and cultural products than local content. It is estimated that for every \$1 that Australia exports in creative goods, the nation imports \$9.20.¹⁹ There is an opportunity to address this imbalance, both by enticing local audiences and consumers to choose local content and products, and increasing the export of local music, performances, screen productions and other forms of creative work and intellectual property to the world.

There has been significant global growth in creative goods and services. According to United Nations Trade and Development, between 2010 and 2022, total creative goods and services exports increased by 230%.²⁰

Stronger creative exports will grow the market for Victorian creative businesses, attract more international investment to our economy, and build our cultural profile on the world stage.

Creative State 2028 supports the *Revive* national cultural policy objective of exporting more Australian stories to the world.

Victoria's creative industries already have an international profile. Taking advantage of growing global demand represents an even greater opportunity for Victorian artists, creatives and creative businesses.

16. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2025). National, state and territory population.

17. Department of Health, (2024). Victoria's cultural diversity.

18. Quacquarelli Symonds Limited. (2025). Best Student Cities 2026.

19. A New Approach. (2024). *Transformative Edge 2024*.

20. Creative services include intangible services that utilise creativity and intellectual capital, such as design services (i.e. architecture, communications design and product design), and advertising. Creative services now represent 19% of all global service exports. Creative goods are tangible goods with a strong cultural element, such as books, music, films, digital games and crafts. Creative goods constitute 3% of total goods exported globally.

Focus areas

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The use of generative AI in content creation and creative practice represents a new chapter in the relationship between technology and creativity.

With the rise of widely available consumer tools, generative AI is now used to make stories, songs, videos, and other content, challenging our conceptions of originality, creativity and even how we relate to art itself. Generative AI offers potential opportunities for creatives to incorporate emerging technologies into their practice, at the same time, the protection of artists and creative workers' intellectual property is vital.

The exploitation of intellectual property in the training of generative AI systems must be acknowledged to ensure artists and creative workers retain agency over the use of their work, and are fairly remunerated.

The Victorian Government supports Creative Australia's principles for *Generative AI and creative work*. These principles, listed below, are founded on the fundamental principles of fairness, transparency, consent and the centrality of human creativity:²¹

- Value the human creative inputs used to build AI applications
- Support artists and users to ethically engage with AI
- Uphold the transparency of AI usage
- Support policy approaches that enable innovation and support the unique identity of Australian culture and creative work
- Recognise the impact of global ownership of AI technologies on accountability and government capacity to shape ethical development of AI technology
- Include creative leaders in policy design and decision-making for development in AI.



21. Creative Australia. (2025). *Creative Australia Principles: Generative AI and creative work*.

RISING OPERATING COSTS AND CHANGING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

While Victoria's creative industries remain strong, the recovery from the pandemic has been uneven across the creative sector and recent events such as global conflicts that impact supply chains, the cost of living crisis and changing audience behaviours bring new challenges.

Production and insurance costs remain high, challenging the viability of some traditional business models and organisations.

For many creatives and creative organisations, the rising cost of accommodation and the lack of available fit for purpose spaces to develop and present work are key pressures.

Changes in consumer and audience behaviours, such as the trend of buying tickets to events at the last minute, are creating cashflow, marketing and other operational challenges for organisations.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The impact of climate change is being felt across all communities and industry sectors, including the creative industries. Increasingly we need to consider the risks of extreme weather events for outdoor festivals and events, the environmental cost of staging and touring creative activities, and changing consumer behaviours and expectations.

Beyond the environmental gains, a focus on sustainability also makes sound business sense. Consumers across a range of fields are choosing activities and supporting businesses with a sustainability focus – and they are willing to pay for it. People are willing to spend an average of 9.7% more on sustainably produced or sourced goods, even in the face of cost-of-living pressures²². This is even more prevalent amongst younger people and women.

The creative industries have a part to play in the Victorian Government's commitment to net zero emissions by 2045. Many creative organisations, businesses and artists are already working to help transition to a more sustainable future including designers and artists working on sustainability and climate readiness projects and festivals, tours and events that have introduced initiatives to reduce their environmental footprint. The majority of Victoria's state-owned creative agencies have already transitioned their purchased electricity to 100% renewable sources, with others to follow.

SOCIAL COHESION

By telling stories, sharing different perspectives, and bringing people from all walks of life together, the creative industries can play a key role by opening a path to empathy and a reason to come together as a community where diversity is recognised as a great strength.

Whether it is through exhibitions, films, podcasts, performances, concerts, theatre shows, graphic novels or poetry, creativity also provides space to engage with challenging ideas and explore multiple viewpoints, including the voices of those who feel underrepresented.

Creativity can play a role in all our lives and help us to unite, harmonise or appreciate and celebrate our differences. Whether that is young people who are finding their identity, older people looking for ways to connect with others, migrants starting a new life, LGBTIQ+ Victorians coming together for events that celebrate their diversity and strength and welcome allies, or communities seeking ways to process or recover from events that have shaken them.

Despite these benefits and the widespread availability of creative events, experiences and activities, some Victorians do not feel that arts and creative experiences are for them. We heard through our consultation that some people feel unwelcome in theatres, galleries and other creative spaces, or face other barriers to access.

By helping more Victorians feel welcome and included in our creative spaces and places, we can share the benefits of our creative industries more broadly, while growing audiences, markets, supporters and creative leaders for the future.

SKILLS SHORTAGES, PAY AND CAREER UNCERTAINTY

Segments of Victoria's creative industries saw a significant loss of skilled workers during the pandemic. For example, a 2024 survey of Victorian performing arts centres found that 46% of organisations had lost half or more of their technical workforce since 2020.²³

Addressing skills shortages is a challenge for some creative sectors, with roles such as lighting designers, game developers and visual effects roles suffering acute shortages.²⁴ New talent can be wary of entering the creative workforce if it offers uncertain pay and conditions, limited job security and growth opportunities, and unclear career paths. This, in turn, constrains the capacity for these sectors to renew and grow.

22. PricewaterhouseCoopers. (2024). *Voice of Consumer Survey 2024: Five imperatives to strengthen consumer confidence in Australia*.

23. Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres. (2024). *Framework Position Paper: Addressing the Technical Production Workforce Shortage Crisis*.

24. Creative Australia. (2025). *Creative Workforce Scoping Study: Summary*.

Our Strategic Framework

PILLAR

1. First Peoples First

Victoria's First Peoples are proud custodians of ancient cultures and distinctive creative practice, and are generating unique and exciting contemporary creative works today across all disciplines.

Under the *Creative Victoria Act*, and through this strategy, we will work to strengthen First Peoples cultural and artistic practice, empower communities and generate long-lasting economic outcomes.

First Peoples First means listening to First Peoples artists, creative workers and leaders to determine their own policy and programs. This is the essence of self-determination.

Creative Victoria is led in this by the First Peoples Directions Circle. Following their leadership, experience and deep cultural knowledge strengthens every aspect of Creative Victoria's work.

Under the principle of self-determination, the actions in this pillar have been developed by the First Peoples Directions Circle, working with Creative Victoria's First Peoples Unit.

Strengthening Victoria's First Peoples creative industries to embed practice and culture, grow the creative economy and connect Community and Country

ILBIJERRI Theatre Company *Big Name, No Blankets* at Barunga
Photo: Harry Paton Courtesy ILBIJERRI Theatre Company



DIRECTIONS

Strengthen Victorian First Peoples cultural infrastructure to embed First Peoples practice and culture, increase participation and generate positive and long-lasting economic outcomes.

Creative Victoria will continue to strengthen the First Peoples cultural infrastructure to provide the support that First Peoples artists, businesses and organisations need to establish and embed their practice.

Cultural infrastructure includes non-physical infrastructure, comprising peak bodies, platform events, such as the Birrarangga Film Festival, and other industry enablers.

We will continue to invest in established First Peoples arts and creative organisations through the dedicated First Peoples stream of the Creative Enterprises Program, supporting their leadership, operations and capacity over the next four years.

By strengthening First Peoples creative infrastructure, the Victorian Government will facilitate more opportunities for Victorian First Peoples artists and creatives, and enable them to respond to and benefit from strong international interest in First Peoples arts and culture²⁵.

25. Australian Trade and Investment Commission. (2025). *Australia's visitor economy in 2024: Annual benchmark report*.

Continue to develop inclusive, transparent and culturally strong governance structures and funding models to progress self-determination.

For Victoria's First Peoples creative industries to grow, culturally strong and self-determined governance and funding structures are required.

With guidance from the First Peoples Direction Circle, the Victorian Government will improve how its funding programs are designed and delivered for First Peoples creatives across the state.

First Peoples funding streams will continue to be offered for Creative Victoria grant programs, like the Creative Projects Fund and Music Works, offering a self-determined, culturally safe application and assessment process for First Peoples artists, businesses and creative organisations.

Listen to Victoria's First Peoples artists, creative workers and leaders to create a culturally safe industry.

Advancing self-determination and reclaiming First Peoples sovereignty requires a greater understanding of our history and a greater cultural capability in the broader Victorian community.

Culturally safe arts and creative industries generate greater opportunity and prosperity for all Victorians. To achieve this, the Victorian Government will continue to work with the First Peoples Directions Circle to upskill the creative industries in cultural safety and improve knowledge and understanding of First Peoples' history and aspirations across Victoria, deepening connections between First Peoples communities and others.

We will continue to undertake First Peoples-led cultural protocol reviews of applications to Creative Victoria funding programs to ensure that funded activities involving First Peoples are culturally safe and adhere to cultural protocols. We will also continue to share cultural competency resources with Victorian creative organisations and others working in and with our creative industries.

Invest in First Peoples creatives to practice, connect and tell their stories on Country.

The deep and enduring connection that First Peoples have to Country – to the land, waterways and skies – is central to cultural and creative practice and to strong First Peoples communities.

Recognising this important connection, and the unique role of Victorian Traditional Custodians in the transmission of culture across generations, we will work to facilitate more opportunities for First Peoples creatives to practice and tell their stories on Country.

This includes backing First Peoples creatives to undertake creative and cultural research, development, presentations and performances on traditional lands, to connect with and share their culture, history and stories.

NEW ACTIONS UNDER THIS STRATEGY

- 1.** Develop and pilot a First Peoples designed creative industries fund to support a vibrant ecosystem of First Peoples creators and organisations.
- 2.** Embed the First Peoples Directions Circle principles into Creative Victoria's work.
- 3.** Build on our First Peoples Forums and hold deep listening yarns with Community to better understand priorities and barriers in the creative industries.
- 4.** Prioritise creative activities that enable First Peoples creatives to practice, connect and tell their stories on Country.



PILLAR

2. Growing our creative community

Equity and inclusion are fundamental to a healthy and thriving society, and to building a vibrant and sustainable creative economy.

Through the strategy and guided by our Act, Creative Victoria will work to strengthen equity and inclusion in the arts and creative industries, including through the state-owned creative agencies. All Victorians should feel they can equally participate in, contribute to and succeed in the rich cultural life of our state.

Our approach will be intersectional, focusing on how people's experiences are shaped by their identities, relationships and social factors. Income, gender, race, ethnicity, age, and postcode, among many other attributes and life experiences, shape how people engage with and benefit from the creative industries.

By expanding the diversity of artists, creators and audiences, we can open up new perspectives, generate more ambitious and interesting works, deepen our social and cultural connections, and drive inclusive industry growth.

Making creative experiences more equitable and inclusive for the benefit of more Victorians

Audiences at *Club 8: INAMO Kiki Ball*. Presented by Asia TOPA, Arts Centre Melbourne
Photo: Namchops 2025



Temple of Desire.
Karma Dance
(2024). Photo:
DUNCOGRAPHIC



DIRECTIONS

Increase the availability of inclusive, accessible and rewarding opportunities for children and young people – as audiences and creators.

Children and young people are important participants and audiences in the arts and creative industries. They are also the next generation of artists, innovators and leaders.

Participation in the arts has long-standing benefits for children, including their social connections, cognitive development and emotional resilience.²⁶ Investment in creative education for children and young people is understood to deliver long-term dividends for the community, including future workforce adaptability and resilience, economic innovation and engagement in lifelong learning.²⁷

The Victorian Government's long-running Creative Learning Partnerships program – which places artists and creative organisations in residence in Victorian schools – demonstrates each year the ways creativity can enhance learning and education outcomes across the curriculum, build children's confidence and sense of identity, and contribute more broadly to school communities.

Victorian company Polyglot are recognised around the world for their work empowering children through participation in playful, participatory creative experiences, while Bendigo based Arena Theatre last year engaged almost 15,000 children and young people through their productions, in-school activities and workshops.

Beyond these many benefits, providing opportunities for children to participate in creative activity, attend creative venues and enjoy creative events from a young age, means that they enter adulthood confident and comfortable to engage with the creative industries – a powerful way to strengthen equity and inclusion for the future.

Through our agencies we will continue to deliver diverse programming across the state designed for children, young people and families – from Geelong Arts Centre's Wonder Children's Festival to Art Centre Melbourne's First Call Fund which brings students from regional Victoria to Arts Centre Melbourne, to the dedicated children's spaces and programs at Melbourne Museum and State Library Victoria focused on the youngest Victorians.

26. Giles, S. and Abraham, S. (2025). *Next Generation Now*.

27. OECD. (2022). *Fostering students' creativity and critical thinking*.



Foster the growth of local creative industries in regional and outer suburban communities.

Every Victorian town and suburb has its own history, community and story.

Creative Victoria will find new ways to amplify and leverage the unique creative potential of each community by leveraging existing infrastructure and forging new connections.

Whether that is through Victoria's well-established network of public art galleries and performing arts facilities, regional festivals, or the diversity of independent creative organisations and creative communities that drive local activity and opportunities.

Programs like Small Regional Presenters have helped build the capability of community presenters across regional Victoria to attract and present performing arts events in their towns. We acknowledge the dedication of the many volunteers who power this work in regional communities and will continue to build their skills and capacity.

The Victorian Government also continues to invest in creative infrastructure to enhance creative opportunities and communities across the state, from the redevelopment of Bendigo Art Gallery to the Old Kyneton Primary School, and the recently completed Castlemaine Goods Shed.

Through the Victorian Live Music Festivals Fund we are supporting the staging of live music festivals in regional Victoria that bring visitors and business to local economies.

Increase the diversity of creators, creative workers and audiences to better reflect the Victorian community.

Many Victorians face barriers—financial, physical, psychosocial and otherwise—to feeling included and welcomed in artistic and creative activity and spaces. We will continue striving to deliver for all Victorians, particularly families and children from cohorts and communities experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability.

By reducing these barriers, we can embrace and promote more diverse voices and perspectives—so that our public institutions and creative industries can better reflect the vibrancy, diversity and potential of Victorian communities.

This includes increasing the diversity of creative industries boards. We continue to grow Creative Victoria’s board talent pool for future government appointments with a focus on attracting candidates from currently under-represented cohorts.

We also continue to offer dedicated Deaf and Disabled funding streams in key grant programs to level the playing field for Deaf and Disabled artists, increase representation and support creative organisations which serve the Deaf and Disabled community.

Our agencies will continue to provide programming and resources to increase accessibility for audiences, through initiatives including relaxed or low sensory sessions and Auslan interpreted events and tours, and partnerships such as ACMI and The Other Film Festival.

Increase community participation in arts and creative practice to stimulate and expand Victoria’s creative talent and enhance community wellbeing.

Getting involved in creative pursuits, events and activities delivers individual and community benefits. It enhances wellbeing, fosters social connections and strengthens community cohesion. This is the case whether we participate in creative activities as an audience member, a professional creative practitioner, a student, or a hobbyist.

Community projects and events play a vital role in strengthening our creative industries by nurturing talent and building enthusiastic and engaged audiences. We will continue to facilitate greater access and participation in creative opportunities at the community level.

Our agencies will continue to present programming and initiatives to broaden community participation – from the diverse roster of open-air community cultural events and festivals at Fed Square to the NGV’s annual Lunar New Year and Indian Community Day celebrations, as well popular programs such as Nocturnal, Melbourne Museum’s after dark program, and NGV’s Friday Nights series.

NEW ACTIONS UNDER THIS STRATEGY

5. Expand collaboration with the Department of Education to explore opportunities to upskill and inspire the next generation of artists and creative thinkers and provide creative resources to teachers.
6. Work with the creative sector, local government and communities to redesign Creative Victoria’s regional programs to better align with the contemporary aspirations of regional and outer-metropolitan communities in delivering creative opportunities and experiences across the state.
7. Pilot a dedicated regional and outer metro Creative Projects Fund round to support the development of new and exciting regional works.
8. Establish a Creative Industries Children and Young People Advisory Council to inform Government on initiatives to increase participation and promote the benefits of creativity for young Victorians.
9. Increase representation of young people on creative industries portfolio agency boards through Creative Victoria’s public expression of interest process.



PILLAR

3. Expanding our creative economy

Victoria is home to a diverse ecosystem of artists, creators, businesses, industry bodies and institutions that drive our \$41.2 billion creative economy.

From our independent artists and creative sector to our nation-leading cultural institutions, to partners and funders, each part of the ecosystem has a vital role to play, contributing to – and drawing strength from – this interconnected whole.

This is a time of both significant opportunity and challenge for the creative industries. Over the next three years, we will work with the sector, and all levels of government to address barriers to growth, embrace new opportunities, and provide targeted and strategic support to maintain our creative ecosystem.

Working with Victoria's creative industries to fuel creative activity, strengthen our creative workforce and facilitate growth

Courtesy of The Australian Ballet. *Seven Days*
Photo: Kate Longley





Melbourne visual effects house Framestore was the only VFX studio globally to work on the blockbuster *How to Train Your Dragon*, with its Melbourne studio contributing to the creature effects.

DIRECTIONS

Recognise and support the roles of independent creators, businesses and not-for-profit organisations to strengthen Victoria's cultural life and economy.

At the heart of Victoria's creative industries is a vibrant mix of independent artists and creators, supporting workers, businesses and not-for-profit organisations, varying in business models and scales of operation. Innovative, diverse and dynamic, this independent sector is the lifeblood of Victoria's creative ecosystem and our reputation as the creative state.

We will continue to provide four years of investment in a diverse portfolio of high-performing independent creative organisations, supporting organisational capability and leadership, through the Creative Enterprises Program. With a new cycle of this program commencing in 2026, the incoming cohort will be critical partners in the delivery of this strategy, and in generating and presenting creative work and opportunities for participation across the state.

We will also continue to work with these organisations and the independent sector more broadly to identify gaps in knowledge, skills and capabilities that are critical for the sector's sustainability and growth, and to forge successful and sustainable organisations, businesses and careers.

We partner with and promote organisations like Support Act and Creative Australia's Creative Workplaces which focus on the unique challenges independent artists and creative workers face, support mental health and wellbeing, and foster fair, safe and respectful workplaces across the creative industries.

Invest in, and partner with, Victoria's cultural institutions to provide ongoing sector leadership, economic growth and equitable access.

Victoria's state-owned cultural institutions and major companies are a cornerstone of our creative industries and essential delivery partners for this strategy.

The Victorian Government has increased investment in our state-owned cultural institutions over the next four years to ensure they are positioned to provide sector leadership, deliver outreach, industry development and training initiatives, and provide equitable access to creative opportunities and experiences.

Not only do these institutions house and present collections and cultural events that connect us with ideas and stories from Victoria and the rest of the world, they play a vital role in developing the artists, creators and audiences of tomorrow.



With a state-wide remit, our agencies provide professional development, training and capacity building opportunities in their respective fields. For example, the NGV's Conservation department undertakes outreach initiatives to support the care of regional collections, including partnering with the Public Galleries Association of Victoria (PGAV) to present conservation workshops; while State Library Victoria partners with Public Libraries Victoria to strengthen the sector through advocacy, literacy and reading projects, and professional development opportunities.

Through the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework, we continue to partner with the Australian Government to invest in nation-leading Victorian performing arts companies that drive our creative economy through diverse and growing audiences.

Empower VicScreen to elevate Victoria as a global screen destination, drive industry growth and jobs, develop skills and talent, and build market and audience engagement.

Victoria's screen sector continues to deliver across film, television, post-production, visual effects and digital games. With a wealth of highly skilled screen professionals, diverse and compelling locations, and world-class production facilities, Victoria is well-placed to attract large international productions, which bring significant economic benefits and provide invaluable workforce development.

This is balanced with investment in local productions and projects that bring Victorian stories and ideas to screens around the world.

The Victorian Government will continue to invest in VicScreen to build on our established strengths, and deliver a strong pipeline of local and international productions that create jobs, generate revenue for the state, and strengthen our screen culture.

We will deliver world class training in digital games, animation and visual effects to meet growing demand for skilled, job-ready workers, through the GameChanger Academy. We will connect our local talent to international producers, publishers, platforms and investors through initiatives like MIFF's 37°South and Play Now Melbourne.

Support and invest in Victorian artists and creators to develop and monetise new works and intellectual property, turning ideas into careers.

Victoria's creative industries are fuelled by new ideas and projects but development takes time and artists and creators need to benefit from their investment. It is vital that artists and creators have the right information, team and resources to turn their creative ideas into a sustainable career.

Creative Victoria's flagship project funding, now called Creative Projects Fund, has been available to Victorian creators for decades, supporting the development of new creative works. Across the life of this strategy, this program will invest in the careers and ideas of Victorian artists and creators, helping them bring their projects to fruition.

We will work with the sector to focus this program on addressing the contemporary needs of creators and ensuring they are able to generate the greatest benefit and career impact from their original creative ideas or intellectual property.

Our agencies also back the careers of Victorian artists and creators. For example, ACMI fosters the next generation of screen creatives through moving image commissions, the co-working space ACMI X and by programming crew networking events and Audience Labs for testing work. Geelong Arts Centre's Creative Engine programs support artists to undertake creative development, with funding, access to space, mentorship and other support; and The Wheeler Centre's Hot Desk Fellowships provide emerging writers a dedicated workspace in the building over a ten-week period, a stipend, and access to a creative community.

Unlock the potential of Victoria's creative industries by enabling artists, creative workers, businesses and organisations to reach new audiences and markets.

We will assist artists, creators and organisations to identify and reach new, larger and more diverse audiences and markets. Whether it is connecting more with regional and national audiences, or growing export revenue, we will work to provide platforms and information to identify new sources of audience demand.

Thriving businesses create more employment and creative opportunities for artists and creative workers to build sustainable careers.

We will work with a range of partners to explore opportunities for industry development through Creative Victoria's new Industry Development team, and we will continue to work with the Victorian Music Development Office (VMDO) to uncover new markets for Victorian music and help build sustainable music industry careers and businesses.

We will also continue to promote and celebrate the value of good design and the impact of the design industry through Melbourne Design Week, delivered by the NGV, and the Victorian Premier's Design Awards.

NEW ACTIONS UNDER THIS STRATEGY

- 10.** Redesign project-based grants for independent creatives to ensure they are efficient, sustainable and effective in supporting the development of new intellectual property and creative careers.
- 11.** Partner with The Wheeler Centre to develop a state-wide Victorian Literature Strategy to leverage Melbourne's UNESCO City of Literature status, and champion our vibrant literary culture, diverse writers, publishers, bookshops, and reading community.
- 12.** Partner with Business Victoria to provide training and resources for artists and creative workers to build sustainable careers.
- 13.** Back new Victorian musical theatre works to increase export potential and meet growing demand locally and worldwide.
- 14.** Strengthen Victoria's position as Australia's digital games hub through a new purpose built co-working space and investment fund, in partnership with leading Victorian games studio Massive Monster.
- 15.** Grow the international profile and reach of Melbourne International Games Week, and opportunities for Victoria's games industry, through a new delivery model led by ACMI.

PILLAR

4. An inspiring creative future

Victoria's reputation as Australia's creative capital has been built on decades of dedication and hard work, vision, leadership and collaboration across the state's creative ecosystem. It is Creative Victoria's role to protect and strengthen this ecosystem so that Victoria remains at the forefront of Australia's creative and cultural development for years to come.

Governments and publicly funded institutions have a clear role in optimising the cultural, business and regulatory environments for artists, creators, businesses and organisations to thrive, and deliver the best possible outcomes for Victoria.

Through addressing priority actions now, we will build the resilience of our creative industries, promote and encourage innovation, reduce barriers to success, and help to manage change, setting the creative industries up for longer term success.

Build a strong, resilient and prosperous creative sector and promote the value of creativity for more Victorians

Big Wonder Weekend, Geelong Arts Centre (2024)
Photo: Peter Foster



Melbourne International Comedy Festival (2023). Photo: Nick Robertson

DIRECTIONS

Make it easier to build, sustain and scale up successful creative enterprises in Victoria.

Creative Victoria will work with Victoria's creative industries and across government to identify and remove barriers to innovation and industry growth. By making Victoria an even better place to establish a creative business or launch a creative career, we can cultivate, attract and retain people with invaluable talent, ideas and capabilities.

This work may include regulatory reform, intergovernmental relations, or the provision of information, insights and data to arm the creative industries with the tools needed to navigate an increasingly complex business environment.

Our artistic and creative talent pool is central to the future success of our creative state, and it comes from both within and outside of Victoria. Along with favourable business conditions, cultural safety is paramount to attracting and retaining people with diverse and highly sought after skills, expertise and perspectives from all around Australia and other parts of the world.

Enhance data collection to better demonstrate the creative sector's social, cultural and economic value to identify opportunities for growth.

Being able to clearly demonstrate the true value and extensive impact of our creative industries will be key to securing future public and private investment, and diversifying income streams.

The social, cultural and economic benefits of the creative industries are vast, but not always well articulated.

Through up-to-date and reliable industry insights, we will strengthen our evidence base to demonstrate the achievements, impact and growth potential of our arts and creative industries. This will help unlock new sources of support for Victoria's creative sector – public, corporate and philanthropic – and assist individual creative organisations and businesses to attract new investment.

Creative Victoria will improve the measurement and reporting on the diversity and equity impacts of our programs and initiatives to improve equity of access and participation for all Victorians.

We will continue to work with our Commonwealth and State counterparts as part of the Cultural and Creative Statistics Working Group convened by the Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (BCARR), providing leadership and expertise on creative industries data.

We will also continue to publish up-to-date data on the economic impact of Victoria's creative industries, as well as employment, business and cultural visitation data.



Build on Victoria's reputation as the creative capital to stimulate growth and elevate Victoria's position as a place to create, visit and invest.

Victoria is rich in iconic arts venues and cultural institutions, both publicly and privately owned, and a vibrant and ever-evolving independent creative scene. From our flagship libraries, galleries and performing arts centres, to our nation-leading theatre district in Melbourne's CBD, to boundary-pushing artist-led spaces and initiatives, we are renowned as the place to create, visit, enjoy and invest in creative and cultural work and experiences.

Melbourne has long been recognised as the nation's cultural capital. This title is hard earned, proudly held and nurtured through continued investment in people, organisations and projects. The Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation – the largest cultural infrastructure project in Australia – builds on this legacy, reshaping, connecting and expanding our precinct into a contemporary global cultural destination.

When complete, the transformed precinct will include Australia's largest contemporary art and design gallery, The Fox: NGV Contemporary; significant upgrades to Arts Centre Melbourne's Theatres Building; and a new 18,000 square metre urban garden, *Laak Boordap*, that will provide new pedestrian pathways through the precinct and be a new destination in its own right. The precinct will also be enhanced following the December 2025 opening of the new Australian Museum of Performing Arts (AMPA) at Hamer Hall.

Beyond the arts precinct and across the city and state, arts and culture are recognised as Victoria's calling card. In 2024, Victoria welcomed 11.5 million domestic and international cultural visitors. The Victorian Government's strategic plan for the visitor economy, *Experience Victoria 2033*, identifies arts and culture as one of the top tourism strengths of the state. We will continue to work closely with the Tourism, Sport and Major Events portfolio to attract more cultural visitors to Victoria and ensure our creative sector reaps the benefits they bring.

We will continue to invest in and optimise our creative and cultural infrastructure to strengthen our reputation and draw more creative people, audiences and resources to our state.

Work with the creative industries to identify and respond to technological, environmental and other industry disruptions and opportunities.

The creative industries are experiencing increasingly rapid waves of technological, social and cultural change. As we enter a new era of AI-influenced innovation and change, we also face international trade challenges and rapidly evolving industry models.

The impact of climate change is acutely felt by many parts of the creative sector, such as our world-renowned festivals and events. With weather events becoming more extreme and more common, climate resilience and adaptation are, and must be, an increasing focus. Recognising the implications of climate change to the creative industries, this strategy renews a commitment to the Victorian Government's net-zero emissions by 2045.

Creative Victoria will proactively respond to risks and opportunities at the whole-of-sector level. This could include assistance to improve discoverability for Victoria's emerging artists and creators, or practical steps to reduce emissions caused by touring activities. We will achieve this through coordination of industry and government activities, thoughtful policy design, and advocacy.

Work with creators, researchers and leaders across the Victorian community to develop a longer-term vision for Victoria's creative economy.

Some strategic responses require more than three or four years to take full effect, and complex policy issues will persist beyond this horizon. Acknowledging this, we will develop a longer-term vision for Victoria's creative economy, setting strategic objectives and outcomes that extend beyond the life of this strategy. The creation of bodies such as the Victorian Music Industry Advisory Council and the Creative Industries Children and Young People Council, which will be established as part of this strategy, alongside peak bodies and industry leaders, are crucial to this process. They will advise government on emerging opportunities and challenges, as well as long term visions for their respective sectors.

By taking both an immediate and longer-term view, Creative Victoria aims to implement system reforms and strategic initiatives that set Victoria up for the future. We will work closely with the creative industries to prepare for future growth in an inclusive and sustainable way.

NEW ACTIONS UNDER THIS STRATEGY

- 16.** Partner with the NSW, SA and WA governments to make a joint submission to the Australian Government's consultation on its next National Cultural Policy, including recommendations on national tax reform.
- 17.** Partner with the Department of Treasury and Finance to convene an industry roundtable on red tape to understand barriers to growth in the creative industries.
- 18.** Improve the way we measure the value of the creative industries, including cultural identity, social cohesion and wellbeing, to support future policy makers, researchers, businesses and creators.
- 19.** Work with MAP Co and precinct organisations to build the profile of the Melbourne Arts Precinct as a global creative destination in readiness for the completion of the \$1.7 billion transformation project.
- 20.** Partner with ACMI to host a forum on the opportunities and risks of generative AI for the creative industries and advocate for adequate protections and fair remuneration of intellectual property.
- 21.** Develop a contemporary music strategy in partnership with the Victorian Music Industry Advisory Council to leverage and enhance Melbourne and Victoria's position as a global music destination and exporter.

A coordinated approach

Creative State 2028 leverages policies, reviews and strategies across all levels of government, including:

- *Revive*, Australia's national cultural policy's five interconnected pillars and supporting principles are closely aligned with this strategy's framework, from First Peoples First, through to equity of place and engaging audiences.
- Local Government strategies, including City of Melbourne's *Creative Strategy 2018-28*, the *South West Creative Industries Strategy 2025-29*, Macedon Ranges Shire Council's *Arts and Culture Strategy 2018-2028* and the City of Greater Geelong's *Arts and Cultural Strategy 2021-2031*.
- The Victorian Government's *China Strategy* and *India Strategy* list creative industries as an area of distinct competitive advantage for Victoria. They also present Victoria as a premier destination for film, television and games.
- The *Yuma Yirramboi (Invest in Tomorrow)* strategy celebrates the economic and entrepreneurial success of Aboriginal Victorians, and ensures parity is considered in all government activities.
- The Victorian Government's *First Peoples Tourism Plan 2025-2030* highlights the vital role that First Peoples play in shaping the unique character of the state's visitor economy.
- The *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework* is Victoria's overarching strategy to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians by advancing self-determination through systemic and structural transformation.
- *Victoria's youth strategy 2022-2027: Our promise, your future* aims to improve outcomes for young people in areas like health, safety, training, employment and civic participation.
- *Experience Victoria 2033* shapes the future of Victoria's visitor economy by building on the state's competitive advantages through five product priorities, including arts and culture.
- Victoria's *State Disability Plan* aims for an inclusive, accessible and safe Victoria, and includes a clear action to improve access to employment opportunities, promote participation and celebrate achievements in the creative industries for people with disability.
- *Victoria's anti-racism strategy 2024-29* sets out a plan to tackle racism and discrimination so we can build a safer, fairer and more inclusive state.
- The *2025 Multicultural Review* made a range of recommendations to help support a united Victoria, including developing a new whole-of-government multicultural strategy, strengthening the role of the Immigration Museum and investing in multicultural museums.

Measuring our success

Creative State 2028 aims to deliver positive outcomes for the creative industries and for the Victorian community.

To ensure that we are delivering benefits to the Victorian public, evaluation is a vital and ongoing part of our work. All actions of this strategy will be designed, developed, implemented and evaluated in line with goals spanning:

- First Peoples – how the activity demonstrates or furthers self-determination and cultural safety
- Social – how the activity has benefited more diverse communities
- Cultural – how the activity is leading to diverse and original creative outputs
- Economic – how the activity delivers sustainable growth for Victoria’s creative industries.

Strengthening our data and insights on the creative industries is key to this work and will enable us to set a base level from which we can see the impact of this strategy in the next three years, and beyond.

CREATING A FEEDBACK LOOP

During the consultation period, participants asked us to collate and share more data and insights about Victoria’s creative industries, government investment and the work of Creative Victoria. As we implement this strategy, we will provide regular reports to communicate to the public how we are progressing against *Creative State 2028*.

This information will make it easier to understand what we are doing and why – and most importantly, create a meaningful, and constructive, feedback loop on how we work to drive positive social, cultural and economic outcomes for Victorians. This information will be shared on Creative Victoria’s website – visit creative.vic.gov.au/creativestate



West Set Festival, Footscray (2022)
Photo: Phillip Gao

Next steps

Creative State 2028 is a Victorian Government strategy and an invitation to collaborate. No matter what role you play in the creative industries, we invite you to be part of the next steps for Victoria's creative future as this strategy is implemented.

If you have questions about this strategy, ideas for how we can bring it to life or feedback on emerging challenges and opportunities, we encourage you to reach out at info@creative.vic.gov.au.

Acknowledgements

Creative State 2028 was developed through research and consultation with Victoria's creative community over the course of 2024 and 2025.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed by making submissions, participating in forums or completing a survey. In total more than 1,500 individuals and organisations helped shape this strategy.

In particular, we would like to acknowledge the members of the First Peoples Directions Circle and Creative Victoria's dedicated First Peoples Unit who led consultation with more than 200 First Peoples across the state.

We also thank Victoria's creative industries peak bodies and our portfolio agencies for their sector leadership and contributions.

King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard Live at Fed Square (2025). Photo: Maria Troncoso

Fed Square's Open Air at the Square program presents a diverse offering of free events over summer. The 2025 program ran from January to March, welcoming more than 3.2 million visitors and supported 143 artists and performers.



Cover: *Staunch ASF* by Amelia Jean O'Leary performed as part of Deadly Fringe, Melbourne Fringe Festival (2023). Photo: Alliah Nivall

Amelia Jean O'Leary is a proud Gamilaroi Yinarr woman from Northern New South Wales living in Naarm (Melbourne). After graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Dance) from the Victorian College of the Arts in 2021, Amelia has choreographed and performed in multiple works in Victoria and Australia. *STAUNCH ASF* was supported by the Victorian Government through the Fringe Fund.

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