

Submission
No 55

INQUIRY INTO ARTS AND MUSIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Live Performance Australia

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Inquiry into arts and music education and training in NSW

July 2024

Live Performance Australia (LPA) is the peak body for Australia's live arts and entertainment industry, established in 1917. LPA is a registered employers' association under the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*.

LPA's national membership is diverse in its scale and scope. More than 400 members cover all performing artforms including contemporary and classical music, musical theatre, theatre, comedy, dance, opera, cabaret, and circus/physical theatre.

Our Members include national performing arts companies and organisations, commercial and independent producers, music promoters, venues (performing arts centres, commercial theatres, stadiums and arenas), arts festivals, music festivals, service providers (such as ticketing companies and technical suppliers), independent cinemas and exhibition providers.

LPA has a clear mandate to advocate for and support policy decisions that benefit the sustainability and growth of the live arts and entertainment industry in Australia.

Introduction

Live Performance Australia (LPA) welcomes the Joint Select Committee's inquiry into arts and music education and training in New South Wales.

The inquiry comes at a critical time for our cultural and creative industries as they rebuild from the severe disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as adjust to and manage post-pandemic challenges which are both industry-specific and occurring across the broader economy.

LPA's membership is made up of performing arts companies and organisations of different scale and scope, ranging from not for profit small to medium and national performing arts organisations and companies through to our major commercial theatre producers and music promoters. They deliver a tremendous diversity of live performance works across different genres in our local communities, our regional centres and major cities, as well as internationally.

NSW is home to many of our leading companies and organisations that have a well-deserved national and international reputation for industry training and live performance.

As such, it should be ideally placed to leverage this proximity and harness their expertise and capability in the development and delivery of world-leading educational and training outcomes for current and future generations of cultural and creative industry workers, as well as the demonstrable social, cultural and economic benefit that comes from engagement in arts and cultural activity.

In this submission, we focus on:

- The significant contribution of live arts and entertainment to the economy and jobs;
- The critical skills and training issues currently facing the live arts and entertainment industry, and the imperative to cultivate and develop our future workforce; and
- The vital contribution our performing arts organisations and companies are currently making in delivering education and training, and the opportunity to build on this to deliver stronger outcomes in future; and,
- NSW's unique opportunity to be a leader in arts and music education and training.

Live arts and entertainment – a key driver of economic activity and jobs

The live arts and entertainment industry is a key driver of economic activity and employment opportunities across the community.

According to the Australian Government's Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (BCARR), cultural and creative activity involves human creativity as a major input and is increasingly recognised as an important component of economic growth. It also has the potential to continue to increase as the economy transforms through the growing use of

advanced technologies and the rise of automation. Its contribution to the Australian economy grew by 27 per cent over the past decade to \$122.3 billion in 2019-20.

According to a study prepared for the Live Entertainment Industry Forum, live performance in 2019 contributed \$15.6 billion in direct and indirect output, added \$7.1 billion in direct and indirect value, and supported 52,340 full time equivalent jobs.

LPA's annual *Ticket Attendance and Revenue Report* found that NSW had the second-largest share (after Victoria) of live performance revenue and attendance in 2022, recording \$676.1 million in ticket revenue and 7.3 million attendances across 12 categories, including contemporary music, music and multicategory festivals, musical theatre, comedy, theatre, ballet and dance, children's and family entertainment, opera, circus and physical theatre and special events. These figures represented a significant recovery in both attendance and revenue compared to the most heavily pandemic-impacted years of 2020 and 2021.

Skills and training critical for industry sustainability and growth

The live arts and entertainment industry is a dynamic ecosystem comprising a diverse range of art forms and supported by small, medium and large businesses, not for profit organisations, sole operators, and providing employment opportunities for tens of thousands of performers, artists, creatives and production and technical workers.

The industry covers a wide range of performing, creative, technical and production occupations, on and off the stage. It is currently experiencing a significant industry-wide skills shortage, particularly for technical and production roles, which is affecting organisations and companies of all sizes.

This can be attributed to the large number of experienced workers who left the industry during the pandemic for more secure forms of employment given the constant disruption and repeated closures for live arts and entertainment performances and venues.

The shortage of skilled workers is being felt across the board but is particularly acute for small to medium not for profit organisations which are challenged in recruiting and retaining staff due to their more constrained revenues. These same organisations provide many of the early-stage career opportunities for new and emerging artists and creative workers.

LPA has conducted regular surveys of its Members to identify those areas of most critical need for skilled workers. Data collected from these surveys has also been used to advocate for the inclusion of occupations on the national Skills Priority List. As a result of these surveys, lighting and sound technicians were added to the 2023 Skills Priority List and the 2024 Apprenticeships Priority List.

Our most recent survey, completed in February 2024, informed our submission for the 2024 Skills Priority List and revealed ongoing shortages of vitally important roles in the production and presentation of live arts and entertainment performances.

The top ten most critical skill shortages identified in our surveys are summarised below. LPA considers that roles for which 40% or more respondents noted an undersupply of workers are in critical undersupply.

May 2022: Top 10 shortages	November 2022: Top 10 shortages	January 2024: Top 10 shortages
Electrician (100%)	Lighting technician (91.5%)	Stage manager/Assistant stage manager (65%)
Production Manager/Coordinator (100%)	Stage Manager/Assistant stage manager (89%)	Sound technician (64%)
Staging technician (100%)	Stagehand (89%)	Lighting technician (64%)
Site Supervisor (100%)	Sound technician (88%)	Production manager (58%)
Crew (89%)	Food and Beverage (84%)	Staging technician (51%)
Lighting technician (89%)	Production Manager (83%)	Stagehand/crew (49%)
Sound technician (87%)	Entertainment rigger (79%)	Technical Director (48%)
Stage manager/Assistant stage manager (87%)	Production coordinator/assistant (74%)	Set/Scenic Designer (44%)
Performing arts road manager (ie tour manager) (83%)	Performing arts road manager (ie tour manager) (72%)	Costume maker/wardrobe assistant/wardrobe coordinator (45%)
Wardrobe assistant (83%)	Crewing coordinator (65%)	Producer (44%)

These shortages have highlighted the need for more formal education and training opportunities in industry-related occupations, as well as opportunities to deliver more on the job training and retraining to help attract and retain skilled workers.

Many of these roles are business critical for the safe and successful development and presentation of live performances. The loss of skilled workers means that fewer people are required to carry more of the load in many organisations which leads to higher rates of burn out and more people leaving the industry, compounding the problem.

Industry-led solutions

The NSW Government's 10-year plan for the cultural and creative industries identifies the importance of building a skilled workforce: '*Creative Communities recognises the need to support sustainable careers by reforming arts education and creative industries training. This will give young people, career-changers and creative workers access to skills needed to grow creative businesses across NSW. (Creative Communities, December 2023, p.69)*

LPA has called on the Federal Government to provide funding for industry-led traineeships to help address industry skills shortages. They would enable organisations to attract, retain and retrain workers in key roles, including production and technical occupations.

Many LPA Members are willing to provide on-the-job and practical training opportunities but are constrained financially from doing so. In our submission for the 2024 Federal Budget, LPA proposed funding of \$3.5 million a year over three years to develop an industry-led traineeship program. The NSW Government should support a similar program.

These could be modelled on the successful approach taken in Queensland where funded organisations are also eligible to apply for funding to support industry placements. In addition to their project funding, organisations can apply for up to \$60,000 towards a full-time industry placement for 12 months (or a pro-rata equivalent for part-time.) Additional funding can also be provided for a second year.

The advantage of industry-based traineeships is they provide participants with directly relevant and immediately deployable skills in the workplace which are readily transferable, enabling new entrants to the industry to build workplace experience and industry relationships which support their career development and progression.

LPA Members are demonstrating industry leadership in addressing the need for more skilled workers, as highlighted in the following case study of *Get Technical! – Behind the Curtain of Moulin Rouge! The Musical* which was developed in Australia and has also been taken to international locations.

Several LPA Members offer structured work experience placements for students. These programs are offered by not for profit and commercial organisations, ranging from the Australian Theatre for Young People and Bell Shakespeare through to Sydney Opera House, Sydney Theatre Company and Foundation Theatres.

- 1. We recommend the NSW Government provide funding for industry-based placements and traineeships, including for school experience placements, to help our performing arts organisations address current skills shortages and build their future workforce.**

INDUSTRY CASE STUDY: Global Creatures presents industry event showcasing backstage roles in *Get Technical! – Behind the Curtain of Moulin Rouge! The Musical*

In 2022, Global Creatures developed an industry program across Australia to connect people with careers in theatre, through its outreach program *The Bohemian Project* underpinned by its box office and critically acclaimed production of *Moulin Rouge! The Musical*. *The Bohemian Project* aims to support emerging artists and creatives through arts education and work force training and development.

Around the world significant numbers of backstage staff and crew left the theatre industry during the global pandemic and the usual practice of recruitment and up-skilling on the job ground to a halt. With productions coming back with a vengeance in 2022 in Australia there was a serious lack of trained and experienced backstage staff and an urgent need to find the next generation of production creatives, crew and technicians, to engage and train them into the theatre backstage work force.

One of the key initiatives of *Moulin Rouge! The Musical – The Bohemian Project* developed in Australia was to solve the challenges around crew shortages and to celebrate the technical knowledge and expertise of the live performance arts practitioners. The production team at Global Creatures developed the very first *Get Technical! – Behind the Curtain of Moulin Rouge! The Musical* event to showcase the various back-stage departments and the roles in the performance of large-scale commercial musicals performing eight times a week.

The event hosted by Simon Burke, AO (Harold Zidler) launched in Sydney, Australia and provided a new and unique opportunity to showcase backstage roles to a targeted audience: anyone interested in a career in theatre, ranging from Year 11 and 12 students, tertiary students and adults with transferable skills looking to change careers. At *Get Technical!* attendees experienced the unique opportunity to hear from theatre creatives, crew and technicians that work behind the scenes to create a world-class theatrical performance about their career pathways into theatre production and how a career in theatre can be professionally rewarding and potentially enable you to work around the world.

The team went on to hold the event in Perth in February 2023 to 1,300 attendees, Brisbane in June 2023 with 1,400 attendees. The Brisbane event featured special co-host Catherine Martin, four-time Oscar winning set, production and costume designer. Another *Get Technical!* event was held in Melbourne in November 2023. By then the event had performed to almost 5,000 students across Australia. Due to the success of the event in Australia, Global Creatures has rolled out *Get Technical!* on Broadway called *Creating the Magic* in partnership with Inside Broadway and the West End production team ran their own *Get Technical!* at the Piccadilly Theatre in London. *Get Technical!* is now an award-winning event. Awarded Best New Event (National) and Best Cultural, Arts or Music Event (QLD) at the 2023 Australian Event Awards.

Source: <https://global-creatures.com/industry-development/> (2023)

Performing arts organisations delivering positive education and training outcomes

Our performing arts organisations and companies are already investing in highly impactful programs that support quality arts and music education and training across different age groups, as well as contributing to broader positive education outcomes.

We understand the Committee will receive separate submissions from a number of organisations (including LPA members) that will highlight the scale and impact of these projects and programs which are being provided to students at primary, secondary and post-secondary levels, as well as professional development support for teachers and schools in the delivery of arts and music-based programs.

These programs are reaching many tens of thousands of NSW primary and secondary students in hundreds of schools across the state, including in regional and rural communities. They play an essential role in providing students with exposure to experience different music and art forms, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds who may not otherwise have the opportunity for engagement with arts and culture. This also encourages students to think about career opportunities in the performing arts, potentially building our future workforce.

Much of this valuable work is being funded by the organisations themselves with donor or philanthropy support. In some cases, organisations are offering their programs for free because schools do not have the budgets to support them, although they attract overwhelmingly positive feedback from teachers and students on their benefit and impact.

As it currently stands, these education and training activities delivered by performing arts organisations do not receive dedicated funding support from the NSW Government. Teachers need to compete within constrained school budgets for resources to fund arts and music education focused activities. There is scope to build on the excellent outcomes achieved to date with more targeted investment from the NSW Government through the Education Department and other portfolios.

Additional funding is especially needed to help support delivery of these programs in regional areas due to the significantly increased travel and touring costs. Ensuring that regional students have similar opportunities for arts and music education to their metropolitan peers should be a priority for the NSW Government.

- 2. We recommend the NSW Government commit dedicated multi-year funding to support education and training delivery by performing arts organisations in NSW schools and communities.**

The opportunity for NSW to lead in arts and music education and training

NSW is already home to many of our leading artists and creative workers, performing arts companies and organisations.

It hosts many of our national performing arts organisations and training institutions of international standing, including the National Institute of Dramatic Art (recognised as one of the world's top 25 drama schools, and the only school outside the UK and US to achieve that ranking.)

The NSW Government's Creative Communities policy advocates for a whole-of-government approach to advocate for, to enable and invest in the arts, culture and creative industries. It says the NSW Government will establish formal partnerships between Create NSW and the NSW Department of Education, TAFE NSW, the Ministry of Health, Transport for NSW, Placemaking NSW and other agencies to further develop priority streams of work.

The policy also states that 'The NSW Government recognises the importance of the state's universities, the National Art School, National Institute for Dramatic Arts (NIDA) and the Australian Film TV and Radio School to our cultural ecosystem and will strengthen partnerships with them.' (*Creative Communities, December 2023, p.75*)

LPA welcomes this commitment to a whole of government approach which should include a strong focus on addressing the education and training needs of our industry.

There is a tremendous opportunity for the NSW Government to build on the expertise and experience our performing arts organisations and training organisations have already developed in the delivery of arts and music education and training and who can be invaluable partners to government in future with the right policy framework and resourcing.

- 3. We recommend the NSW Government engage closely with our Member organisations who are actively engaged in delivering education and training outcomes to ensure their capabilities and expertise are fully harnessed, and that they are incorporated into future policy approaches and actions across different portfolios, and particularly with the Education Department.**