

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
ACT Government
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

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2024-25 ACT Government Budget Consultation Submission

We, a collaborative group consisting of Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra Glassworks, Craft + Design Canberra, M16 Artspace, Megalo Print Studio, and PhotoAccess, collectively advocate for the continued allocation of funds for the arts within the ACT Government's budget. We are the future resident arts organisations of the forthcoming Kingston Arts Precinct, collectively representing the forefront of visual arts in Canberra, with a history of over forty years of local, national, and international cultural contributions.

We express our support for the Minister for the Arts' *Statement of Ambition for the Arts (2021-2026)*, which seeks to position Canberra as Australia's Arts Capital through increased investment and inclusive cultural support. To effectively realise this ambition, we urge a substantial increase in funding for the ACT Arts Fund in the 2024-25 ACT Government Budget and subsequent years. Such an increase will enable artists and organisations to cope with rising operational costs, ensure that our staff are remunerated at industry recommended rates, and will yield positive economic and well-being benefits for the Canberra community. Additionally, it will aid in the recovery of arts communities and organisations still grappling with the lingering effects of COVID-19 disruptions.

Additional funding for the Canberra arts sector is in alignment with the objectives outlined in the *Switched On - ACT's Economic Development Priorities 2022–2025*, with a particular emphasis on the mission priorities of supporting a city that enhances well-being and liveability while fostering knowledge-based economic growth through inclusive innovation and responsible investment: "Canberra is a city with a deep history in world-leading innovation and has always been a place for people who embrace arts, culture and creativity. Creative thought is essential for enabling innovation and entrepreneurship and the intersection of these provides a platform for great ideas to come to life".¹

The arts sector has faced unique and profound challenges due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, necessitating tailored solutions as we adapt to a post-pandemic environment. While we appreciate the 10% increase to the ACT Arts Fund in the 2022-23 budget, it has proven insufficient to sustain existing programming levels, let alone support growth, meet competitive staff salary rates offered by the public sector, diversify income sources, or attain financial benchmarks set by the ACT Government.

The arts reflect our society, providing depth to our city and enriching our diverse communities. We provide a platform which gives a voice to and empowers minority groups including First Nations Peoples, CALD people and the LGBTQI+ community. Integrating the arts into our lives and civic investments enhances society and contributes to overall well-being. Investment in the arts benefits everyone. According to Creative Australia, 98% of Australians engaged with the arts in 2022, with the arts industry contributing significantly to Australia's GDP and employing a substantial portion of the population. Moreover, 56% of Australians believe the arts have a positive impact on their well-being, with an increasing number attending arts events for this purpose. Arts and creativity are vital to breathing life into our cities, cultures, and economies.

The Kingston Arts Precinct is set to become a national destination, with global reach, for visual arts and culture in Canberra, offering audiences contemporary art that sparks curiosity and expands thinking. It can significantly contribute to the Chief Minister's *Statement of Ambition for Canberra* to develop our city as a global destination and is already identified as one of the large-scale developments in our city that will see Canberra develop new strengths as a tourist destination (as outlined in the *T2030 ACT Tourism Strategy 2023-2030*)². It will also serve as a hub for creative growth, supporting artist and sector development and inspiring advocacy. The success of the Kingston Arts Precinct in attracting 'high-value' travellers—those likely to spend more, explore further, and prolong their stays—hinges on the robust support given to resident arts organisations, enabling the delivery of high-quality experiences, encompassing extended opening hours,

¹ *Switched On - ACT's Economic Development Priorities 2022–2025*, page 41

² *T2030 ACT Tourism Strategy 2023-2030*, page 15

community engagement initiatives, diverse audience programs, educational offerings, and recreational experiences. This also hinges on securing additional investment leading up to the Kingston Arts Precinct, to guarantee proper capacity development for the resident arts organisations.

The *ACT Infrastructure Plan Update* emphasises the role of high-quality cultural and recreational facilities in promoting well-being, fostering a sense of community, and enhancing sense of place³. The Kingston Arts Precinct is well-positioned to fulfill these goals. While investing in quality arts infrastructure is crucial, it becomes ineffective without concurrent investment in the people behind it. A precinct filled with artistic excellence, creativity, and vitality cannot thrive without artists. An equally significant investment is required to support both the production of artwork by artists and the programming of the facility by arts workers. Investing in people is in line with the ACT Government's *Skilled to Succeed: Skills and Workforce Agenda for the ACT*, which states that building resilience in the arts relies on "establishing a strong local skills pipeline to develop and retain workers".⁴

Our collective has a long-standing commitment to nurturing arts and culture in the nation's capital, and we applaud the ACT Government for its enduring commitment, investment, and support of the arts in our city.

Yours Sincerely,

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³ The ACT Infrastructure Plan Update, *Built for CBR* (June 2023), page 62

⁴ ACT Government *Skilled to Succeed: Skills and Workforce Agenda for the ACT*, page 14