



The Childers Group 2020-2021 Budget Submission

For eight years the Childers Group has been contributing to the development of the ACT budget through ACT Treasury's budget consultation process.

The Childers Group welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the 2020-21 ACT Government Budget development process.

The Childers Group is an independent arts forum established in 2011. Our advocacy is based on the principles of:

- independence;
- objectivity;
- valuing the arts; and
- pride in Australia's national capital city and the surrounding region.

The Group has delivered yearly forums, involved MLA representation from the three main political parties, held a variety of meetings with stakeholders such as the Cultural Facilities Corporation, and advocated our ideas with the ACT Government, the Federal Government, and the Australia Council for the Arts.

Consequently, what follows is informed, considered, and situated in a national policy context.

- **A brief summary of our submission.**

The Childers Group acknowledges the Government's ongoing support for the arts and strongly recommends increased investment in the arts as outlined in our submission. Canberra is rightly recognised as one of the world's great cities, and one of the most liveable cities in the world. This phenomenal achievement is due in part to the rich diversity of creative opportunity available to us to experience and participate in. With the growth of our city and surrounding regions, we must be courageous and imaginative in ensuring these opportunities grow with us.

We note the positive developments from the previous budget including : the ongoing development of programs and policies involving ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. We also welcome the appointment of the designated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Officer within artsACT. Formation of the Minister's Creative Council and funding for Sector Capacity Building for Non-Funded Arts Organisation were both seen as a positive initiative.

Clearly the Arts are Important to the Canberra Community

Participation in and access to the arts in the ACT (data from artsACT)

- The ACT has the highest attendance rate at cultural venues and events (93.6%) than any other jurisdiction in Australia (Source: Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events 2013-14, Australian Bureau of Statistics).
- The ACT has the highest cultural participation rate (38.5%) of all Australian jurisdictions (Source: Participation in Selected Cultural Activities 2013-14, Australian Bureau of Statistics).
- There were 36 targeted inclusion programs in artsACT-funded organisations in 2015 (Source: artsACT SmartyGrants).

Great art and great artists

- 14 artsACT-funded arts activities were presented nationally and three artsACT-funded arts activities were presented internationally in 2015 (Source: artsACT SmartyGrants).
- Close to 729,000 domestic and 128,000 international cultural tourists visited the ACT in the year to September 2014. (Source: *Events: Drivers of Regional Tourism*, Tourism Research Australia, 2014).
- Arts and culture is the biggest driver of visitation to the ACT (Source: *Visitor Perceptions of the ACT*, Tourism Research Australia and Visit Canberra contracted BDA Marketing Planning, 2014).

Vitality of the Canberra Region arts ecology

- There were 6,937 persons employed in the arts and cultural sector as their main job in the ACT in 2011 (Source: Census, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011).
- As of June 2014, the ACT had nearly 1,200 active businesses in the creative industries (Source: Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, Australian Bureau of Statistics).
- Almost one third (76,500) of all people living in the ACT undertake some paid or unpaid work in culture and leisure activities (Source: Work in Selected Culture and Leisure Activities 2007, Australian Bureau of Statistics).
- In 2015, there were 504 volunteers at artsACT-funded organisations, who worked for 17,659 hours. (Source: artsACT SmartyGrants)
- Canberrans spend approximately \$211 million per year on arts and culture, which is a higher per capita level than other capital cities (Source: Household Expenditure Survey 2009-10, Australian Bureau of Statistics).

Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures

- More than half (68.2%) of Indigenous people living in the ACT are involved in selected cultural events, ceremonies or organisations (Source: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2014-15, Australian Bureau of Statistics.).
- There were 64 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons employed in cultural occupations for their main job in the ACT in 2011 (Source: Census, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011).
- Three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were supported through the ACT Arts Fund in 2015 at a total of \$6,000 (Source: artsACT SmartyGrants).
- There were 17 targeted programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in artsACT-funded organisations in 2015 (Source: artsACT SmartyGrants).

- **What services do you believe are most important for the Territory?**

We believe creativity and engagement in the arts are vital components of a healthy city. The ACT Budget is an opportunity to make adequate provision for the arts to flourish. The Childers Group reiterates its previous concerns about creating opportunities and resources for key arts organisations and artists to deliver the cultural services that are central to a vibrant and healthy city.

ACT KEY ARTS ORGANISATIONS (KAO'S)

The Childers Group notes that the KAO'S funding agreements are being brought into alignment, starting in 2020, and that this will offer the ACT Government an unprecedented opportunity to design a network of key arts organisations that provides comprehensive cultural services to the Territory, across geography, artform and level of practice.

Every Canberran should have access to the key arts organisations to inspire and engage them. Every Canberran artist should have a key arts organisation that will support them to grow and develop. And every visitor to Canberra should be able to find the key arts organisation that invites them to share in the wonderful cultural life of our city.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Childers Group encourages the ACT Government to fund the growth of the ACT's Key Arts Organisations to fulfil their potential and support their sustainable growth as an essential part of what makes the ACT such a great place to live.

The Childers Group analysis of arts grants in the ACT shows that there still is **an ongoing significant decline in ACT arts grants on a per capita basis, and as a proportion of funds available** to Government. This is also happening on a national basis as reported in the first research paper prepared by the new independent arts think tank **A New Approach**.

<https://www.humanities.org.au/new-approach/report1>

It is Childers Group understanding that if 2020-21 arts activity were funded at an equivalent proportion of Total ACT Government Revenue as in 2004-05, total grants to the arts would be increased by around \$2,000,000.

Special Funding Increase for the Arts Activities Funding - \$5000-\$50000 sector

The “small to medium” company and independent individual artist sector of the grants funding process is the engine room for the growth of exciting and new arts activities in the ACT. **This is where our great “new works and companies” are created and it is Childers view that this needs to grow. Currently around \$700,00 is put aside to develop this area. The Childers Group calls for this to be increased to \$1,500,00 for the 2020 Budget.** We recommend that this amount be earmarked for the 5K-50K arts rounds.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Childers Group strongly advocates for an increase of an extra \$3,500,000 into the Arts Portfolio for the 2020-21 Budget.

Are there particular services that you consider the Government should stop delivering or should deliver in a different way?

While it is crucial to recognise the immense direct contribution that arts and culture makes to the quality of life in the ACT, it is also important to factor into strategic whole of government planning, their broader social and economic impact. Through their central role in content creation, arts and culture are inextricably linked to ACT creative industries, which in turn sit at the heart of the knowledge economy of the future. As such they have an important part to play in fostering innovation and fuelling a clever and inventive society in which good design plays a central role in industry, urban environments and public policy.

Currently, the arts are not adequately integrated within policymaking or service delivery at a whole of government level. For comparison, there are existing strategic objectives to achieve ‘higher than average participation in sport and physical and recreational activities.

No such strategic objective has been stated for the Arts. Cultural Tourism would appear to be an obvious inclusion given the strategic importance and economic benefits of cultural tourism to the region.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Government should commit to incorporating clear Strategic Objectives for the Arts and Cultural sector within the ACT Government’s Budget Objectives.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Childers Group recommends that the ACT Government establish links between Government Directorates to maximize Arts Development in the ACT and region.

Childers Group understands that a Whole of Government Working Group on the Arts has been established but isn’t aware of any reports/strategic directions coming from it. Reports from this Group would be useful for the arts community.

In line with ACT Government strategic priorities of enhanced liveability and social inclusion, suburban renewal and health and education investment, the role of the arts in these areas should be recognised with the establishment of officer positions in ACT Government Directorates, including Education and Training, Health, Environment and Planning, and Capital Metro, **at the Senior Officer Grade 3 level, to identify and implement strategies where arts activity can multiply existing value and enrich outcomes. In the first instance, this should be a 3-year initiative.**

Establishing and consolidating existing links between artists, arts organisations and the stakeholders of each Directorate should be a key component of the work. For example, engagement in the arts throughout a child’s schooling, including early childhood, has immeasurable benefits which are now both quantifiable and proven in countries that have invested in strong arts programs within their schools.

- **How can the Government deliver current services more efficiently, productively or to better meet the needs of Canberrans?**

The Childers Group welcomes the decision by Minister Ramsay after positive consultation with the Arts Sector to form a Minister's Creative Council. We wait advice from them to the Minister and consultation with the arts community on the priorities for the growth of arts in Canberra.

- **What can the Government do to make Canberra even more liveable?**

The Childers Group's objective is to contribute to the Government's ability to deliver its agenda in the most effective way –

- building an understanding of where ACT arts and culture intersects with the national cultural institutions and tourism
- the central role of the ACT in the cultural life of the region and the benefits this delivers back to the ACT
- the national significance of much of the ACT's arts and cultural presence
- the importance of ACT arts and culture in providing a productive environment for creative and other knowledge-based industries and fostering a clean, clever and inventive society
- the importance of research and evaluation in demonstrating the broad value of the arts.

Partnership with Government

The government continues to make many positive decisions about the arts and we have been in discussions with Minister Ramsay and members of the Assembly about them. We believe that much has been achieved over the recent past and that the ACT arts and culture sector has matured and moved to a new level.

We also acknowledge the Canberra Wellington Indigenous Artist Exchange pilot which will provide the opportunity for a local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander artist to spend up to six weeks in Wellington.

Whole of government and whole of society

The Childers Group believes it is crucial that the arts are seen in terms of "whole of government and whole of budget issues". The Arts needs to be seen as not the responsibility of only artsACT and its Minister but of "whole of Government".

This is about the bigger picture for the ACT. As a small self-contained jurisdiction, the ACT can choose areas where it wants to be nation-leading, and the arts is a great candidate for this. The arts sector in the ACT has all the foundations required to be recognised as amongst the best in the country in a relatively short period of time. Much is already underway. To grasp the opportunity requires only political will and only a limited investment of funds compared to other aspirations the Government might have.

Sustainable Canberra – the crucial importance of the clean and clever knowledge economy of the future and the arts and creative industries at its heart

It is crucial to recognise the immense direct contribution that arts and culture makes to the quality of life in the ACT, but it is also important to factor into strategic whole of government planning their broader social and economic impact, the substantial secondary benefit they provide. We are pleased that *Confident and Business Ready – Building on our Strengths*, the ACT Government's Business

Development Strategy clearly acknowledges this. The challenge is to move beyond recognising and acknowledging this to integrating it practically across whole of government day to day work. Often this may not even require new funding but repurposing, refocusing or linking up of existing initiatives.

The arts are a good investment in their own right, but it is also an economic driver and enabler, with far broader outcomes than cultural ones. This is shown clearly by the ACT Government's 2015 Economic Overview of the Arts. It demonstrated that arts and culture is a significant local economic sector but, far more importantly, it's indirect economic and social impact is crucial.

The arts are capable of adding value to any other strategy the government has – liveable spaces and creative precincts, improvements in healthcare, links to the major education and research institutions to foster innovation, enhancing social inclusion and valuing the role of diversity in fostering a vibrant and innovative society. The arts are inextricably linked to creative industries and the clean and clever knowledge economy of the future and this is the context in which we would like to discuss them further.

Cool little capital – a desirable place to live, work, visit and invest

The arts have a crucial role to play making the ACT a desirable place to live, work, visit and invest (for the 'cool little capital', arts and culture is much of the cool). Interestingly, the Economic Overview of the Arts noted that 40% of ACT population growth comes from interstate and international migration, so creating an attractive place to live and work is critical to this driver of economic growth.

Sustainable tourism means cultural tourism

Tourism numbers are increasing in the ACT however Childers Group would like to see an additional focus on what great "local" arts possibilities there are for tourists beyond the National Institutions. Great performing arts, music, local galleries. What do our visitors do at night!!

Visitors to large blockbuster exhibitions at the national cultural institutions can augment their visitor experience when a wide-ranging, dynamic cultural milieu exists, so the whole visit is a rich and stimulating one. This increases the likelihood of longer and repeat visits.

The Childers Group looks forward to engaging with government over our Budget Submission in the next few months.

Yours Sincerely

Michael White

On behalf of the Childers Group

October 2019