

The Childers Group 2024-2025 Budget Submission

For twelve 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 2024-2025 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, A New Approach and Creative Australia.

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

Opening Statement:

The Childers Group would like to acknowledge the ongoing support from the Government in relation to the arts and creative industries in the ACT and Region.

In particular we would like to acknowledge the specific support offered through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts Program. The work of the Indigenous Arts Network and the responsible artsACT officer is to be commended.

However the ACT Arts Sector is at a crucial crossroad (post Covid) and a greater response in terms of funding from government is needed to consolidate and grow the sector.

Minister Cheyne's Statement of Ambition is now 2 years old and whilst it was positively received the sector has expressed major disappointment that the increased funding needed to realise that statement has not been committed. Childers believes that it is essential that the 2024-2025 Budget addresses this shortfall and that government commits to increased Budget outcomes in 2024 and the outgoing years.

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

The Childers Group acknowledges the Government's ongoing support for the arts and creative industries.

Canberra is one of the most liveable cities in the world. This achievement is due in part to the rich diversity of creative opportunity available to us to experience and participate in. Our city continues to grow quickly and we must be courageous and imaginative in ensuring these opportunities grow with us. As our city has grown the contribution from government to arts funding has not grown to match it. This is a serious misstep. Additionally we do not have a "local Council" function in our government structure (as distinct from the states) and as A New Approach (National Arts and Culture think tank based in Canberra) has noted through its research, that is where the greatest increase in funding for the arts has been seen over the past 10 years.

The Arts Minister's Statement of Ambition has called for Canberra to be the Arts Capital of Australia. A bold plan and it must be met with **increased investment into the arts portfolio. This needs to be for our Arts Centres, our Arts Organisations, our Emerging Arts Organisations and our individual artists.**

Ongoing research from national arts think tank "A New Approach" shows that increased investment in arts and culture brings measurable outcomes, not only for the artists and companies concerned but for society more widely.

<https://newapproach.org.au/>

With the adoption of the **ACT Government's Wellbeing Framework** Childers Group believes that the arts can play a central role in bringing the framework into focus and can generate real measurable returns for the arts investment.

What more can the ACT Government do to improve community well-being in Canberra?

The Wellbeing Framework : Once again : Where are the Arts???

As mentioned in our 2023 Submission and as of January 2024 there is still no data or comments in relation to the impact of arts and culture in the Framework. Government has given undertakings to respond to this but has so far failed to deliver. This should be addressed as a matter of priority.

Across the 12 Domains of the Framework the arts can play a significant role. We note that research done by the Canberra based arts, creativity and culture research think tank A New Approach (ANA) (www.newapproach.org.au) clearly shows :

“...when a considered effort is made to direct cultural and creative activities towards improving social cohesion , the impacts are significant including :

- building feelings of community belonging and trust, enhancing empathy and inclusion
- help in combating the growing issues of loneliness and isolation.
- increasing civic participation and making cities, suburbs and regions more liveable
- help individuals and communities recover from disasters and trauma”.

In relation to building a healthier Australia ANA research has shown that :

- “engagement with arts and cultural activities reduces health risks particularly for mental health
- arts and cultural tools have also been successfully used to improve outcomes in terms of both prevention and treatment of physical illnesses and diseases.
- the arts can improve in-patient outcomes, can improve recovery from long term conditions, can reduce dementia risk and can improve elderly quality of life.”

Our priorities for the 2024-2025 Budget

Every Canberran should have access to the key arts organisations to inspire and engage them. Every Canberran artist should have a Centre and an arts organisation that will support them to grow and develop. Every visitor to Canberra should be able to find the key Canberra arts organisation that invites them to share in the wonderful cultural life of our city. **“Sure come for our National Institutions but stay a day or two longer to see the rich Canberra Arts Experience : galleries, theatre, dance, music, visual arts, writing and our wonderful Indigenous Stories.”**

PRIORITY ONE : FUND THE VISION, INVEST IN WHAT IS NEEDED, GROW THE ARTS SECTOR

The current government funding categories cover 3 areas **Arts Centre Investment, Arts Organisation Investment and Emerging Arts Organisation Investment.**

When asked “how much do you need to run your programs” and “what is your vision for the future” Centres, Organisations and Artists responded to the Minister’s Vision and Creative Policy with artistic passion and careful consideration. “We’ll tell what we need, please fund us properly.”

However the outcome of the new investment program has left most affected companies feeling extremely disappointed.

Government is urged in this year’s budget to invest in what is really needed.

RECOMMENDATION 1 : The Childers Group strongly advocates for an increase of an extra \$10,000,000 into the Arts Portfolio for the 2024-2025 Budget.

We would see \$5M for Art Centres, \$3M for Arts Organisations and \$2M for Emerging Arts Organisations and Individual Artists

PRIORITY TWO : STRATEGIC GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVES AND DIRECTORATE LINKS

RECOMMENDATION 2

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

Stronger links between arts organisations, practitioners (companies and individuals) , Events Canberra and Visit Canberra has commenced and need to be continually pursued with some urgency.

Tourism and the Arts are a strong area for ongoing development.

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, JACS and Transport.

This should be done at the Senior Officer Level. The position would coordinate, identify and implement strategies across Directorates 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. There should be arts projects across the Health and the Community Services Directorates. There should be arts programs being run at AMC. Arts programs being run and co-ordinated through the courts and justice system. Imagine an arts program run in connection with the Drug and Alcohol Court.

The Childers Group notes that the Arts Centre Group (Tuggeranong Arts Centre, Ainslie/Gorman Arts Centre, Belconnen Arts Centre and the Canberra Glassworks) and the Kingston Arts Precinct Organisations have submitted 2024 Budget submissions. Childers gives strong endorsement to those submissions.

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

Yours Sincerely

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On behalf of the Childers Group

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