

**Visual Arts Work:  
Key Research Findings, Implications and  
Proposed Actions**

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**A report for industry,  
fundors and policy makers**

**Grace McQuilten, Jenny Lye, Kate MacNeill,  
Chloë Powell, and Marnie Badham**



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This report provides a summary of key findings and policy implications from the four-year research project Visual Arts Work: sustainable strategies for the Australian visual arts and craft sector. This large-scale research project examined the incomes and career lifecycles of visual and craft artists and arts workers in Australia. In response to significant gaps in existing datasets in relation to visual arts work, the project undertook two surveys of artists and arts workers – the first in 2022, and the second in 2024 – gaining information on sources of income and modes of work and employment over several financial years: 2018-2019; 2020-2021; 2022-2023; and 2023-2024. Alongside these surveys, we also conducted long-form, qualitative interviews with 20 artists and arts workers to better understand hybrid career patterns; and hosted a symposium with guest speakers discussing key issues of precarity and working conditions in the visual arts sector in 2023. We worked closely with our industry partners the National Association of the Visual Arts (NAVA) and the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) on the research including submissions to several government inquiries and appearances as part of the Australian Fair Work Commission's Modern Award Review of 2023-2024.

Multiple discussion papers and journal articles have been published from this research and can be found at our website: <https://www.visualartswork.net.au/>. We have also edited a book, Visual Arts Work: Careers, Perspectives and Practices in an Australian Context (Palgrave MacMillan, 2025) which combines an analysis of art world economic value chains alongside alternative and emergent cultural, social and political economies

At the end of this report, we provide a list of proposed actions to improve incomes and working conditions for the visual arts sector. This list has been developed from our evidence-based research in collaboration with our industry partners, NAVA and AMaGA, and is offered as a proposition for good practice. The detail of what, why, where and how these actions can be undertaken is a future task for industry, policy makers and funders to enact.

with new quantitative and qualitative insights from artists and arts workers. With interdisciplinary methodologies and industry engagement, it examines multiple and hybrid systems of value and includes the perspectives of visual artists, craft artists and arts workers with diverse lived experiences.

## Executive Summary

The prevalence of Australian creatives working in multiple jobs both within and outside of the visual arts and craft sector is well

known. A central purpose for undertaking this research was to better understand the circumstances contributing to the hybridity of artists' and arts workers' careers, and to provide practical recommendations for policy makers, funders and industry.

### Population of artists in Australia

It is impossible to provide a single estimate of the number of visual and craft artists in Australia, as different surveys and datasets use different definitions of 'artist'. However, we have discovered that existing datasets, which rely on definitions of 'professional' artist including an artist's 'main job', largely underestimate the size of the workforce.

According to the 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census, there are 6,793 visual art and craft professionals in Australia, 64% of whom identified as women – this count is based on reporting on the 'main job' undertaken the week prior to the census survey. As most visual art and craft artists support themselves through other work – either related to their artwork, such as in academia or arts management, or in an entirely different field – they would not be identified in the census as visual or craft artists.

A more accurate estimate is likely provided by the ABS Survey of Cultural Participation. In this survey, 106,000 Australians reported earning some income from a visual art activity, and 94,800 from a craft activity, in the 2021–22 financial year. These figures cannot be totalled as those engaged in both activities will be double counted. Nonetheless, at a minimum the survey identifies an additional 100,000 visual and craft artists not captured within the census definition. For these reasons, we invited survey respondents to self-identify as artists regardless of their main source of income or hours worked in any role – so we could capture a broader population than that currently reflected in existing data.

### Population and definition of arts workers in Australia

The term 'arts worker' refers to those in the visual arts sector who contribute to the development and delivery of cultural activity in a range of ways and contexts. Often, their

work supports visual and craft artists to access opportunities or realise professional, cultural and institutional goals – for instance the curators, technicians and gallery staff who work with artists to present exhibitions. Educators also comprise a significant portion of this group; training artists in the conceptual and technical aspects of making art, they are often artists themselves.

With recent conversations around the labour involved in creative practice, some artists have begun describing themselves as arts workers as a way of acknowledging that their practice is also a form of work, even when it is not immediately understood as such by the broader population. While this is interesting in the broader context, for the purposes of our survey we have adopted a more conventional division between artist and arts worker.

Acknowledging the same issue in terms of how the census asks for respondents to describe their 'main job', and consequentially how arts workers are categorised, it is very difficult to estimate the true population of arts workers in Australia – many of whom are juggling multiple roles inside and beyond the arts sector. For the purposes of our survey, we worked with existing Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) definitions and categories in identifying those professionals that may be considered arts workers (ABS 2021b). Under this definition, arts workers are those who spend at least some of their paid working time in one or more of the following categories: arts professional (e.g. curator, gallerist, creative producer); arts technician (e.g. studio technician, exhibition installer); arts educator (e.g. lecturer, workshop leader); arts researcher (e.g. academic, market analyst); cultural advisor; community arts and cultural development worker; and designer (e.g. graphic designer, web/digital designer). In our survey, to address the gaps in existing data and recognising that there is significant overlap between artists' and arts workers' creative and professional activity, we asked survey participants to self-identify as arts workers regardless of their primary source of income or hours worked.

### A gendered workforce

In our survey and interview data, we did not impose any requirements that respondents devote a certain amount of time to their art making, nor earn a particular level of income from creative practice. We were inclusive of both visual artists and craft practitioners, and we left it open to respondents to self-identify as an artist or an arts worker. This

inclusive definition has likely produced a slightly higher proportion of women workers in the sector than existing and previous datasets. According to the responses of our 2024 survey, over 74% of the visual arts workforce – including both artists and arts workers – identify as women. By way of comparison, the 2021 ABS census found 64% of artists to be women, while David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya’s 2024 report, ‘Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia’, found 69% of visual artists in Australia are women. Our higher proportion of 74%, however, aligns with other estimates of the gender breakdown of the industry. The ABS Cultural Participation Survey of 2017-18 estimated 67% of people who earned income from visual art activity and 79% who derived income from craft activity were women.

In our survey, 6% of artists and 3% of arts workers identified as non-binary. In the following section on findings, we present relevant data about non-binary artists, as the sample size is sufficient to do so, however we do not report on non-binary arts workers due to the smaller sample size.

There is a significant gender pay gap faced by both artists (47% on average incomes 2024) and arts workers (23% on average incomes in 2024). This is detailed further in the survey findings below. This is much higher than Australia’s gender pay gap of 11.5% in 2024 (based on base pay for full-time workers, according to ABS data).

### Overview of findings

Work in the visual arts sector is both complex and heterogeneous, where no two careers are alike. Despite this diversity, we found some clear patterns across the work of both artists and arts workers. This included:

- high levels of education that do not match with their salaries, which are well below the average for professional workers;
- large amounts of unpaid work and volunteerism and high levels of self-employment;
- a highly gendered, largely women workforce experiencing a significant gender pay gap;
- barriers to opportunity and career progression for artists and arts workers with disability and from CALD backgrounds<sup>1</sup>; and

- the invisibility and opaque nature of the visual arts workforce outside of the industry, which was particularly evident in the ways both artists and arts workers were ineligible for income support from government during the COVID-19 pandemic (Lye et al 2023).

Alongside these findings, we also identified an important overlap between arts work and arts education – revealing that, in effect, the ‘industry’ of arts education plays an important role in cross-subsidising incomes and providing a degree of career stability for artists and arts workers.

### Visual Arts Work 2022 and 2024 Surveys

In 2022, we conducted a survey with over 700 visual art and craft practitioners and arts workers which explored their economic and financial circumstances. Of these, 75% were completed by respondents who primarily identify as visual or craft artists and 25% were completed by respondents who primarily identify as an arts worker. This survey also asked specific questions around COVID-19 pandemic impacts.

In 2024, we conducted a second survey with nearly 900 visual art and craft practitioners and arts workers. Of these, 75% self-identified as an artist, while 25% self-identified as an arts worker. This survey retained the focus on their economic and financial circumstances and asked additional questions around cost-of-living and wellbeing issues.

The two populations of artists and arts workers sometimes overlapped in that respondents whose primary identification is as an artist might also be arts workers, and respondents whose primary identification is as an arts worker also maintain an arts practice. As mentioned above, we share findings for non-binary artists but the response rate of 3% for arts workers did not generate enough data to report on for non-binary arts workers.

<sup>1</sup> Coined by the ABS in 1999, the term ‘Cultural and Linguistic Diversity’ was used to acknowledge “linguistic and cultural characteristics of multicultural populations living in Australia” (ABS 2019). These characteristics are defined as whether a person living in Australia was born overseas, has one or more parents who were born overseas, and/or speaks a language other than English at home. In recent years, the term has been queried and largely renounced by many in the arts and cultural sector for its inherent bias towards Anglo-Celtic people as the primary culture. The researchers recognise that CALD is not the preferred term but have adopted in this project to enable comparison to ABS data.

In the following findings, we report mainly on the 2024 survey data, although noting where there is a relevant comparison to 2022 data. Before reporting on the overall responses of artists and arts workers, however, we will firstly discuss responses specifically from artists and arts workers who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

### **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander survey respondents**

In our 2022 survey, we only had 3 respondents (0.04% of total) who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. In 2024, we had 28 completed surveys (3% of the total), and approximately 20 incomplete surveys, from respondents identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. For the purposes of analysis and discussion here, we have focused on the 28 completed responses, to maintain consistency in our analytical approach across the surveys, where we only analysed complete responses. Of these 28 respondents, 19 identified primarily as artists, and 9 primarily as arts workers. The majority were located regionally with some of the artists reporting they lived in rural locations and some in cities.

Barriers to participation in the visual art sector was noted as a significant concern by many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander respondents (68%), with qualitative comments providing insights. Several respondents, for example, talked about geography as a barrier, with lack of resources, opportunities and the costs involved in visual arts practice in regional and remote communities. Others talked about lack of cultural safety, for example "Most decision makers in the arts including funders, boards and senior workers are white with zero understanding of cultural safety or willingness to even address this." Another more simply responded, "Colonial systems and language are a barrier." To avoid the risk of generalising from a small subsample, we have decided not to detail the specific survey results for this group in the following findings section. However, the 28 complete responses from this group are included as part of the larger results detailed below.

## Research Findings: Artists

### A picture of the workforce

- The survey was designed for participants to self-nominate as a visual or craft artist regardless of the proportion of their time allocated or income drawn from their practice, which resulted in a larger cohort than is represented in other surveys. This larger cohort, in turn, produced a higher number of women-identifying respondents: 71% identify as women, 20% men, 6% non-binary, and 3% other or prefer not to say.
- The mean age of artists is 53 with 22% aged 65 or older; this is considerably older than the general working population's average age of 44 (according to the 2021 census).
- 16% speak a language other than English at home.
- 17% identify as being of CALD background.
- 21% identify as living with disability.
- Artists are highly educated: over 35% report having a relevant postgraduate qualification.
- The average income from a visual art or craft practice in 2023-24 was \$13,937 with significant gender disparities: men artists report an average income from their practice of \$23,130, women artists of \$12,330 and non-binary artists \$14,074.
- We note average incomes have remained similar, or have dropped slightly, since the previous survey in 2022 when an average income from work as a visual or craft artist was \$12,343 in the 2020-21 financial year (= \$14,726 in 2023-24).
- The average career length is 22 years, with an average for men artists of 26 years. This points to our survey respondents working in the industry for a long time.
- Gender differences are also notable in terms of the ways in which visual and craft artists identified their career stage, with women and non-binary artists more likely to identify as early to mid-career, with male identifying artists more likely to identify as mid to established career.
- Only 25% of respondents spend 100% of their working time as an artist, with 82% receiving at least some form of income from work within and outside the arts sector. 45% of artists work in the broader visual arts and craft sector and 36%

undertake work in areas outside of the sector.

- Many artists also work as educators. A particularly high percentage of artists surveyed, 24%, report working as an arts educator, while the top three industries for those artists working in the non-arts sector are education and training (non-arts); followed by health care and social assistance, and administration and support services.
- Other sources of income reported included government support (16%), private income (11%) and family support (7%).
- The most common source of income from an art practice is that of sales directly between the artist and buyer. The second most common source is that of sales and/or commissions through a gallery.
- Income precarity is compounded for those artists who also work as arts workers. Only 10% are employed on a fixed-term contract; 22% on a casual basis and 38% are self-employed.
- Unpaid work is an issue, with nearly 50% of artists participating in unpaid work in the arts sector, spending on average 28 hours per month. There is a gendered aspect to this work, with higher number of women (50%) and non-binary artists (55%) undertaking unpaid work compared to men artists (46%).
- Significantly, 67% feel there are cultural and/or access-related barriers to participating in the visual arts sector.

### Funding

- Overall, similar numbers of women, men and non-binary artists are applying for and receiving funding, with men artists reporting only a slightly higher success rate. Early career artists are most likely to report missing out on funding applied for (22%) and not applying for funding at all (40%). Established artists are the most likely to receive grant funding applied for, with 33% reporting success compared to 18% of early career artists and 28% mid-career artists.
- There are observable gender differences in where artists apply for funding. Men artists are much more likely than women artists to apply for funding from Creative Australia (previously the Australia Council for the Arts) (58% as opposed to 33% women, 40% non-binary) and philanthropic organisations (19% as opposed to 10% women, 7% non-binary). Conversely, women and non-binary artists are slightly more likely to apply for state funding (54% of women and 53% of non-binary

compared to 48% of men artists) and local government funding (48% of women artists and 53% non-binary artists, compared to 39% for men artists).

- Early career artists are more likely to apply for local government funding, mid-career artists for state funding and established artists are most likely to apply to Creative Australia.
- In terms of where funding is allocated, funding is deemed most beneficial for individual projects, followed by infrastructure, then research and development time. Individual project funding is particularly favoured by established artists; while infrastructure funding, for example studio space and equipment, is particularly preferred by early career artists.
- As for career stages, across the board, artists indicated that funding is most beneficial from the early to mid-career stages. Early career artists are most likely to report 'not sure' to this question (50%), while established artists favour mid-career as the most beneficial stage for funding.

#### Cost of living issues, mental health and work-life balance

- Financial stress has an impact on future careers for artists. 35% chose financial pressures as the main reason they would not continue working in the sector in five years' time.
- Current cost of living issues indicate that artists' financial situations are vulnerable. 63% describe their financial condition in terms of paying for essential goods and services as very or moderately financially stressed.
- Further evidence of these stressors can be found in the number of artists seeking financial and other forms of support. 28% accessed supports in the previous 6 months to filling out the survey such as a foodbank, financial counselling, debt management and/or emotional support.
- Of particular concern, food security is a considerable issue for artists. 23% have had someone in their household skip meals or have smaller meals than usual because they couldn't afford food.
- 50% of artists rate their mental health as poor or fair.
- 59% rate their work-life balance as poor or fair.

#### Higher impact of identified barriers on CALD artists and artists with disability:

- Artists from CALD backgrounds and artists with disability report more significant financial pressures. 70% of artists from a CALD background and 78% of artists with disability describe their financial condition in terms of paying for essential goods and services as very or moderately financially stressed.
- Artists with disability report greater concern about the increase in living costs. 28% have made significant changes to cope and 16% report not coping.
- The need for financial and other supports to manage cost of living challenges is higher for CALD artists and artists with disability. 36% of those from a CALD background and 47% of those with a disability accessed supports such as a foodbank, financial counselling, debt management and/or emotional support.
- Food security is a significant issue for artists with disability: 40% have had someone in their household skip meals or have smaller meals than usual because they can't afford food.
- Mental health issues are also a significant concern for artists with disability, with 69% rating their mental health as poor or fair.
- Work-life balance is an issue for both CALD artists and artists with disability. 66% for those from a CALD background and 62% of artists with disability, rate their work life balance as poor or fair.



## Research Findings: Arts Workers

### A picture of the workforce

- Arts workers are most likely to name their occupation as arts professionals (55%). The next most common self-defined area of work is as an arts educator (44%), followed by community arts and cultural development worker (20%).
- Work in the visual arts industry is highly gendered. Of our survey respondents, 83% identified as women; 13% men; 3% non-binary; 1% preferred not to say.
- Arts workers have an average age of 46, which is similar to that of the general working population (mean age 44 according to the 2021 census).
- 13% of arts workers speak a language other than English at home.
- 20% identify as being of CALD background.
- 14% identify as a person with a disability. This is lower than the general population, of which 21% have a disability (PWDA, 2024).
- A very high proportion of respondents, 78%, feel there are cultural or access-related barriers to participating in the visual arts sector.
- Arts workers are working long hours with low pay. In the 2023-24 financial year, on average 45 hours per week was spent working as an arts worker and the average income from this work was \$63,031. Despite working more hours, arts workers are earning significantly less than other working professionals, with an average annual income of \$100,017 for the general population.<sup>2</sup>
- Arts workers are working longer hours (45 hours per week in 2024) than was reported in our 2022 survey (average 38 hours per week), yet incomes have not increased commensurate with those additional hours. 2018-19 financial year earnings, for example, were \$53,851 (which equals \$64,249 in \$2023-24).
- At 23%, the gender pay gap for women arts workers is high. This is partly explained by men arts workers undertaking more hours of work per week than women arts workers (53 hours compared to 44).
- Despite working long hours with (an average of 45 hours per week), 60% of respondents report wanting to work more hours. This speaks to inadequate remuneration for hours worked and a trend of underemployment in the sector.
- 25% of arts workers are employed on a fixed-term contract; 12% on a casual

basis and 18% are self-employed.

- 33% of arts workers are supporting their careers with income sources from beyond the visual arts sector. 18% are undertaking paid work in areas outside of the sector, with other sources of income reported including government support (4%), private income (10%) and family support (4%).
- Arts workers are undertaking a large amount of unpaid work. 56% of arts workers reported undertaking unpaid work in the sector, with an average of 14 hours per month. We did observe a significant fall in the number of hours of unpaid work undertaken since our 2022 survey, which reported 62% of arts workers undertaking unpaid work with an average of 26 hours per month. This could be related to current cost of living issues impacting on capacity and time to undertake additional, unpaid work. There is also a notable gender divide in this work, with 57% of women arts workers undertaking unpaid work, compared to 45% of men arts workers.
- Work insecurity is exacerbated by lack of cultural safety for many CALD arts workers. Uncertain or precarious visa conditions further compound these issues for CALD arts workers on temporary visas.

### Funding

- Women arts workers are less likely to receive part or all of an arts grant applied for; while men arts workers are slightly more likely to apply for and receive part or all of a grant applied for.
- Mid-career and established arts workers are more likely to apply for and receive arts grants. Early career arts workers are most likely to not apply for arts funding and least likely to be successful when applying.
- Across career stages, arts workers are tending to focus more on State Government funding, followed by funding from Creative Australia and then Local Government funding. Philanthropic funding and funding from Creative Partnerships Australia are less of a focus, although established arts workers are more likely to apply for philanthropic funding compared to early to mid-career arts workers.

<sup>2</sup> The definition of "professional worker" is based on the occupational definition outlined by The Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) (ABS 2021b)

- In terms of areas where funding is considered most beneficial, arts workers overall prefer funding for a specific project and research and development time. This is particularly true for mid-career and established arts workers, and women arts workers. There are some notable differences for early career arts workers, who strongly prefer funding for a specific project over other types of funding (39%) and for men arts workers, who strongly prefer infrastructure funding, for example equipment and studio space (43%).
- Early and mid-career arts workers report that funding is most beneficial in the early-career stage, followed by the mid-career stage. Established arts workers report that the mid-career stage is the most beneficial for receiving funding.

### Cost of living, mental health and work life balance

- Cost of living pressures, combined with relatively low wages, are impacting on arts workers perspectives on their future careers. 26% chose financial pressures and 19% chose higher and/or steadier pay in other industries as the main reasons they would not continue working in the sector in five years' time, should they choose to leave the field.
- Financial stress is a significant issue. 63% describe their financial condition in terms of paying for essential goods and services as financially stressed.
- Current cost of living challenges are having an impact on arts workers. 38% are worried about the increase in living costs; while 18% need to make significant changes to cope with this increase and 5% report that they cannot cope.
- 28% of arts workers are relying on additional supports to manage these current cost of living challenges, such as foodbank, financial counselling, debt management and/or emotional support.
- Food security is also an issue. 19% of arts workers had someone in their household skip meals or have smaller meals than usual because they couldn't afford food.
- Mental health is a significant concern, with over half of arts workers (52%) rating their mental health as poor or fair.
- Work-life balance is an even more significant area of concern, with 68% of arts workers rating their work-life balance as poor or fair.

### Higher impact on CALD arts workers and arts workers with disability:

- Financial stress is a very serious issue for arts workers from a CALD background. 70% describe their financial condition in terms of paying for essential goods and services as financially stressed. For those with a disability, this is even greater with over three-quarters, or 77%, describing their condition as very or financially stressed.
- Increased living costs are a significant issue for CALD background arts workers and arts workers with disability. 52% are worried about the increase in living costs, 29% need to make significant changes to cope and 3% cannot cope. For those from a CALD background 11% report that they cannot cope with increased living costs.
- The need to access support to cope with financial pressures is greatest for arts workers with disability, with 42% reporting that they accessed supports in the last six months such as a foodbank, financial counselling, debt management and/or emotional support.
- Food security is an even greater concern for CALD background arts workers and arts workers with disability. 26% for those from a CALD background have someone in their household skip meals or had smaller meals than usual because they couldn't afford food. This was even higher at 32% for those with a disability.
- Mental health is also a significant issue. 61% of arts workers from CALD backgrounds and those with disability reported their mental health as poor or fair.
- Concerns about work-life balance are slightly higher for CALD background arts workers, with 71% rating their work-life balance as poor or fair.

## Workforce Policy Implications

### Policy Implication #1

A comprehensive agenda is needed urgently to address low incomes and poor working conditions across the visual arts and

craft sector, as identified in the findings from this research report. This needs to be a priority for Creative Australia and state-based agencies and would address the fact that it is over 20 years since the last comprehensive examination of the sector was undertaken (Myer 2002).

### Policy Implication #2

The gendered nature of the visual arts and craft sector suggests that gender segmentation is in part a contributor to lower incomes. The workforce is largely women (74% of artists and arts workers in our data), and there is a significant income gender gap (47% for artists and 23% for arts workers) that needs to be addressed. Gender segmentation is known to contribute to income disparity, with work predominantly performed by women being valued less than that carried out by men. Even in women dominated sectors of the workforce, senior and hence higher paid positions still tend to be held by men. Women in the visual arts and craft sector are doubly disadvantaged: working in a lower paid sector, often on short term or casual contracts, and without the comprehensive workplace protections and security of employment that exists in more regulated or unionised areas, and where well-paid leadership roles (such as CEOs and Directors of major galleries and arts organisations) are often held by men. This is creating barriers to career progression and artistic success. These issues must be central to the development of visual arts related policy. To address this, regulatory measures should be introduced to:

- Require gender pay gap reporting from organisations receiving public funding, alongside action plans to address identified disparities.
- Ensure transparency in recruitment and promotion processes for leadership roles.
- Introduce commitments to gender equity targets in leadership positions and workforce representation.

Further, qualitative research is needed to explore the gendered experience of work in the sector and how this is impacting on the pipeline of future artists and arts workers.

### Policy Implication #3

Unpaid work is endemic in the visual arts sector. This load is disproportionately carried by women and those that identify as non-binary. There must be greater, more transparent recognition of the amount of unpaid labour in the arts, and a commitment to moving away from this model. In part, this continues due to inadequate award coverage of the sector. An examination is needed into whether work currently performed in a voluntary capacity should be paid in accordance with employment legislation and agreements. Monitoring and reporting of unpaid labour should also be part of reporting mechanisms for arts organisations and employers, ensuring greater accountability and equity in the sector.

### Policy Implication #4

Policy that is confined to those visual and craft artists whose practice is their main occupation or profession, as commonly seen in existing datasets, will be based on a distorted gender profile. Consideration must be given to supporting visual and craft production more broadly, by which we mean arts practices that generate some kind of income but may not be a main source of work or income. This approach better captures the representation of women than is achieved by a focus on 'professional' visual art and craft practices. It is also likely to capture a wider diversity of arts practices. We recommend the ABS works with experts across the visual arts sector and the broader workforce to change the Census data collection to capture multiple job holdings: a phenomenon endemic to the visual arts sector.

### Policy Implication #5

The transition from an early career to a mid-career practice appears to be particularly challenging. When asked to self-identify their career stage, visual artists and craft practitioners remain in the early career phase for a much longer period than might be reflected in eligibility criteria for grants and awards. In other words, it takes a long time for artists to establish their careers. This suggests that financial and professional supports, including mentorship programs and professional development alongside funding, need to

be expanded during this period to ensure that early career artists can maintain a practice for a sufficient time to enable them to move through into a more stable mid-career status. Likewise, mid-career artists require support and resources to progress toward sustaining their careers in the arts.

#### **Policy Implication #6**

A very high proportion of our survey respondents (67% of artists and 78% of arts workers) identified cultural and access-related barriers to participating in the visual arts sector. This was emphasised further in qualitative data, which includes free-text survey responses and interviews, and points to the need for organisational change amongst arts organisations and employers.

A priority for policy is to invest in cultural competency and safety professional development for staff and Boards to attract, retain and support the career progression of CALD staff.

Visual arts and craft organisations and arts agencies should undertake an assessment of their workplace accessibility and recruitment processes and diversity requirements to support people with disability entering the arts and sustaining careers in the industry.

To drive meaningful change, funding incentives should be introduced to support diverse leadership, including higher pay to compensate for the cultural load carried by CALD leaders. Greater transparency and reporting of CALD and disability representation in staffing and leadership roles, including Board roles, is required to promote accountability and drive cultural change.

#### **Policy Implication #7**

Artists and arts workers represent a financially vulnerable group in the community in terms of cost-of-living pressures, with clear flow on impacts on mental health and wellbeing. These concerns are even greater for those artists and arts workers in the visual arts sector from CALD backgrounds and with disability. Emergency and crisis support, including crisis relief funds, are required to assist visual arts sector workers to navigate economic, social, and environmental challenges.

## Funding Policy Implications

### Policy Implication #1

All arts funding agencies should review application and assessment processes to ensure that they do not indirectly discriminate

based on age, cultural background, disability, or gender identification. Transparent, externally reviewed reporting is required to ensure greater accountability in terms of diversity, inclusion and potential discrimination in arts funding programs.

### Policy Implication #2

The diversity of visual arts and craft practices, career stages and gender identification among artists needs to be recognised by philanthropic organisations and funders across all levels of government to ensure:

- that the range of all visual and craft practices are encompassed within funding programs, including broader infrastructure requirements, support for artists as entrepreneurs, and income support.
- Prestigious, generous and flexible grants, such as Fellowships, are available to those in the early-mid stages of their career.

### Policy Implication #3

When short term measures are introduced to mitigate against the impact of catastrophic events such as pandemics, the precarious, hybridised and self-employed nature of arts work and artistic practices needs to be taken into account to ensure equal access to government support payments.

Such funding policies should take a broader view of employment that recognises the increased casualisation of many workplaces and the number of people working multiple jobs to make a living, particularly in the arts. As major employers of arts workers and artists—and the workforce in general—universities and local government art galleries must be included in financial supports provided by government in such circumstances.

### Policy Implication #4

Consistent and sufficient operational funding for arts organisations is directly linked to opportunities for artists and arts workers gaining secure work in their field. This then influences their career development, as secure work enables people to improve their skills and progress through different roles and levels. With a number of visual arts and craft organisations supported by operational funding from state and federal government agencies, further measures should be taken to mitigate unpaid labour and insecure employment terms. For example, the provision of secure employment could be part of funding contracts; along with requirements to follow industry best practice (e.g., NAVA's Code of Practice) to enable these agencies to better support artists and arts workers and uphold best practice employment standards across the sector. All methods of funding need to be explored to ensure that, so far as possible, project-based work is minimised, and ongoing positions are created.

### Policy Implication #5

Given the large number of artists and arts workers who report secondary employment in arts education, secure and appropriate funding for visual art and craft education, particularly in the secondary and tertiary sectors, has direct and indirect impacts on the sustainability of artists' and arts workers' incomes and employment, as well as on their career pathways. Greater investment in visual art and craft education has the flow-on benefit of increasing incomes and employment for artists and arts workers.

### Policy Implication #6

Concerns relating to access barriers for CALD and disability communities point to the need to revise grant funding processes. Grant applications should be made more streamlined, accessible, and simpler to respond to (for example reduced number of questions and alternative modes of responding including video/audio options), to ensure that applications received reflect the diversity of artists and arts workers.

**Policy Implication #7**

Citizenship, residency and visa status can also contribute to artists and arts workers having fewer opportunities to secure work or be eligible for some art grant programs, which can in turn impact their ability to progress in their career. Funding agencies and employers who require staff to be permanent residents should review these criteria to ensure that they do not operate as a form of direct or indirect discrimination based on cultural background

## Proposed Actions

This list is offered as a prospective roadmap for improving incomes and working conditions in the visual arts sector and has been developed in collaboration with our industry partners NAVA and

AMaGA. The detail of what, why, how and when these actions can be taken is a future task for industry, policy makers and funders to enact.

### 1. Modern Award Coverage

- a. Expand and improve existing Award coverage for arts workers
- b. Recognise artistic practice as work in existing Awards
- c. Nation-wide educational campaign to increase application of Award conditions across the sector to ensure minimum work standards are applied consistently

### 2. Industry Standards

- a. Mandate application of NAVA's Code of Practice in funding contracts and provide additional funding to ensure standard rates of pay can be provided
- b. Adherence to the National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries across the sector
- c. All tertiary art schools should deliver professional development courses that introduce students to the Code and the National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries
- d. Assess barriers to implementing the Code and support sector-wide compliance

### 3. Funding

- a. Increased funding to Creative Australia and State governments to support the arts ecosystem, with a focus on improved payment and secure employment of artists and arts workers
- b. Simplify funding application processes to improve accessibility and diversity of applicants (addressing language, cultural and technological barriers)
- c. Mandated public reporting on funding outcomes in relation to diverse gender, CALD, disability and First Nations representation of funding applicants and funded grants

- d. Provide further tax incentives for gifts to public and non-profit arts institutions and organisations

### 4. Arts organisations

- a. Sustained and increased funding for small-to-medium arts organisations with longer term funding cycles to provide secure employment, fair pay and working conditions to artists and arts workers
- b. Support through funding and training for arts organisations to undertake regular impact evaluation to measure and articulate value and return on investment for funding
- c. Sector wide reportable organisational targets to reduce unpaid labour
- d. Paid mentorship and professional development opportunities to support career progression in arts organisations
- e. Arts organisations should be required to provide annual reporting that includes:
  - i. details of unpaid work undertaken including number of unpaid workers and total hours of unpaid work
  - ii. breakdown of employment provided e.g. casual/part-time/full-time and short-term and long-term positions
  - iii. employment statistics and leadership representation (organisational and Board positions) by gender, CALD communities and people with disability

### 5. Arts education

- a. Increased and sustained investment in arts education in recognition that the education sector is a major employer of artists and arts workers
- b. Protect and expand existing art programs across all tiers of education (Primary, Secondary and Tertiary) to support development of sector
- c. Increase arts professional development training opportunities, including TAFE or vocational training and higher education

## 6. Living wage for artists

- a. Explore implementation of a National Artists Wage Scheme
- b. Expanded and new fellowship funding opportunities to support early to mid-career artists
- c. Income tax relief for artists and arts workers

## 7. Secure work

- a. Operational funding agreements should prioritise secure employment for artists and arts workers by stipulating the creation of permanent contracts or minimum fixed terms
- b. Mandated paid internships across the sector
- c. Financial incentives to convert unpaid, volunteer roles into paid positions

## 8. Cost of living and financial security

- a. Increase awareness of foodbank offerings, crisis financial support funds, and mental health support services for artists and arts workers
- b. Provide specific, additional funding to support CALD artists and artists with disability to address cost of living issues
- c. Rent subsidies for studio spaces
- d. Affordable childcare for artists with care-giving responsibilities in line with the broader workforce

## 9. Gender pay-gap and gendered workforce

- a. Increased financial support available for artists and arts workers returning to work from parental leave
- b. Include 'relative to opportunity' provisions when assessing career trajectory in grant applications
- c. Qualitative 'deep dive' research into why women leave the sector prematurely; and why women are not progressing to 'established' career stages in line with men
- d. Targets to increase incomes and career outcomes for women and non-binary artists and arts workers

## 10. CALD artists and arts workers

- a. Funded cultural competency training for all arts organisations
- b. Tailored culturally appropriate and paid mentorship programs and career pathways for entry-mid career level for CALD arts workers and financial incentives for CALD leaders to participate in mentoring programs
- c. Targets for equitable representation of CALD artists and arts workers in paid leadership roles and Board positions
- d. Greater employment protection for inbound artists and arts workers who may not hold permanent residency status and/or have temporary working visas

## 11. Disability

- a. Address barriers to participation including access requirements and flexible work arrangements
- b. Targets for equitable representation of employees with disability in paid leadership roles including Board positions



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