

A vibrant future for Australia's performing arts



The Greens believe that a vibrant future for Australia's performing arts will involve both the traditional arts, which enrich us and have provided so much to our culture for centuries, and a newer, more open approach to cultural policy, which brings arts into every aspect of our lives. The two can, and must, interact if either is to thrive.

The Greens' performing arts policies focus on:

- *Supporting innovation in performing arts;*
- *Taking performing arts to the community;*
- *Supporting our artists; and*
- *Cleaning up copyright.*

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Supporting innovation in performing arts

Every sector of our society needs innovation to survive and thrive and the arts sector is no exception. However, whereas in the sciences it is acknowledged that many experiments will fail, there is very little acknowledgement of this in arts funding.

The Greens propose an Arts Research and Development Fund, with an initial \$5 million allocation per year, to support new Australian work, risk-taking work and truly innovative social artistic ventures. The competitive grants program would support ventures as diverse as:

- performing arts in community development, such as Big hArt which is operating in indigenous communities in the NT and disadvantaged communities in north west Tasmania;
- providing access to space, resources and mentoring within Major Performing Arts Groups to small companies for the partnering of specific innovative projects; and
- major innovative production concepts that need support for creative work before being pitched as festival events and supported by the ongoing and highly successful Major Festivals Initiative.

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This new fund will incorporate an expanded Interconnections program, the successful grants program which brings together major companies with smaller groups to collaborate on new works. Interconnections is currently funded at \$150,000 a year. This will be doubled to \$300,000 as part of the Arts Research and Development Fund, with a specific focus on innovation and touring successful collaborations.

Touring artists around Australia and the world

The performing arts enrich and stimulate us all and we should ensure that as many Australians have an opportunity to share them as possible. Touring performing arts productions also creates jobs for the longer term – allowing companies to employ cast and crew for many months rather than just a few weeks.

The Greens also believe that our performing artists are as effective ambassadors for Australia as our sporting stars and should be celebrated as such by our leaders. Why do politicians love to be seen farewelling sports teams as they leave for major events but ignore our orchestras and theatre companies when they head overseas to wow audiences in Europe and America?

The Greens wants to see funding for Playing Australia, the body which administers grants for touring performing arts in Australia, increased from \$6.3 million to \$8.3 million a year, in line with suggestions from the Australian Major Performing Arts Group, the Australian Performing Arts Centres Association and Regional Arts Australia.

The Greens also support the call from Australian Performing Arts Centres Association (APACA), the Australian Major Performing Arts Group (AMPAG) and Live Performance Australia (LPA) for a new fund for overseas touring of new Australian works. This fund of \$10 million a year, for an initial period of three years, would both promote Australian creative work to the world and encourage the creation of more Australian works by increasing its potential audience and the duration for performance schedules.

Supporting artists in an uncertain world

The Greens recognise that, given the unpredictability of income from creative work and the lack of job stability, many artists need income support to survive at various times in their careers. We have already released a policy during the campaign to recognise artistic work for

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the purposes of meeting social security requirements. This was launched in the context of our visual arts policy, but would apply equally to those in the performing arts.

Under the Greens' proposal artists actively engaged in recognised art and performance programs or organisations likely to improve their employment prospects or income from their art will be recognised as part of the mutual obligation requirements by Centrelink. Guidelines outlining the eligibility requirements of such programs will be developed in consultation with relevant arts organisations and Centrelink staff will be trained to better assist artists needing income support.

Cleaning up copyright

One aspect of the arts that the great majority of those involved agree on is that our copyright system is struggling to keep pace with the times. A system that is meant to be about nurturing creativity by rewarding it is at risk of stifling such creativity in complexity. At the same time we need to recognise that copyright protects the intellectual property of an artist and provides an important income stream. We need a copyright structure which rewards creators while respecting fair use and avoiding administrative complexities.

There may not be the need for wholesale change but it will certainly require political engagement for any kind of reform to take place.

The Greens commit to hosting a series of round-table discussions with a broad cross-section of representatives from the creative industries to begin serious political debate in Australia about the future of copyright. The first of these will take place before the end of 2010.