

Supporting Our Young and Emerging Artists



The arts, cultural experiences and creative artists are vital to the social wellbeing, economy and cultural life of Australia. The Australian Greens are committed to supporting and promoting Australian artists and their work. Young and emerging artists have particular needs as they establish their careers. Many young artists struggle to develop their creative work while they are working other jobs to pay for their basic living costs.

The Australian Greens are proposing three measures to support young and emerging artists. These measures include implementing recommendations from previous reports into the arts sector. The measures are:

- Recognising artistic work for the purposes of meeting social security requirements;
- Establish a \$3 million Artists Fund to ensure artists are paid for their exhibitions and performances, which will be particularly beneficial for young and emerging artists; and
- Reinstating the policy of the Australian Parliament to purchase art works from young and emerging Australian artists.

Background

A recent Australia Council report into Australian participation in the arts found that attitudes towards the arts: are positive; that Australians “widely believe that the arts should be an important part of every Australians’ education; make for a richer and more meaningful life; and that there are plenty of opportunities to get involved.”

By accepting the importance of the arts in our society, we must also recognise that artists and in particular young and emerging artists need support to make their contributions to our cultural life. Many young artists struggle to make a living from their art which limits their ability to produce creative works.

There is clear evidence that the value of the contribution to Australian life made by the artistic community is not reflected in the income artists receive from their work. Half the artists surveyed for the 2003 Australia Council report “Don’t give up your day job: an economic study of professional artists in Australia” had a creative income of less than \$7,300. The report concluded that Australian artists have little employment or income security from their creative work.

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Young and emerging artists find it even more difficult to sustain their artistic endeavours before they have established their artistic careers. There is a need for additional support in those first few years when the capacity to earn income is potentially quite small.

The Greens initiatives

Recognising and valuing artistic endeavours

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. The “Don’t give up your day job” report found that while around a third of artists face periods of unemployment, of those around 44% do not apply for income support. For those artists that do need income support for periods of unemployment, some experienced difficulties accessing benefits due to their occupation. Further a majority of artists, particularly in the visual arts, were not able to continue to practise their art as an approved activity under the requirements for a social security payment.

The Australian Greens support the calls from many in the arts community, including the National Association for Visual Artists (NAVA) and discussed in the Myer Report on Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft in 2002, for artistic endeavours to be better recognised in the social security system.

At the 2007 federal election, the ALP promised to develop a ‘Social Security and the Arts’ policy which would determine a new way to treat earnings and royalties for artists seeking welfare as well as increase opportunities for artists on welfare to produce work and obtain employment. The government has not yet delivered on these important initiatives. The Government has instead provided funding for start up assistance for around 200 young and emerging artists which is administered by the Australia Council.

The Australian Greens believe better support for artists in the welfare system it is an idea worth pursuing and implementing. Under the Greens proposal artists actively engaged in recognised art programs or organisations likely to improve their employment prospects or income from 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.

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Establish a \$3 million Artists Fund to pay artists fees

Artists' fees are an important source of income for artists. There are different forms of fees artists should be paid. For example, in terms of the creation or installation of art, they should be paid for their labour as well as material and service costs. Artists should also be remunerated for lectures or talks they provide in connection with their art.

Artists' fees should be paid when an artist lends their work for a non-selling exhibition. As NAVA submits, such "fees are paid in recognition of the value being provided to the public, and the potential loss of income to practitioners while their work is on loan... and not available for sale." In 2006 NAVA conducted research into the payment of artists' fees by publicly funded galleries and found that a vast majority of artists did not receive artists' fees and of those that did, the majority received less than \$1000. The NAVA report recommended a funding program of \$3 million be established to assist publicly funded galleries to pay artists fees. The Myer report also recognised the importance of artists' fees and made recommendations with respect to the payment of such fees.

The Australian Greens proposal adopts the recommendation by NAVA for the establishment of a \$3 million Artists Fund for additional funding to be made available to pay artists fees according to an artists fees scale.

Reintroduce the policy of the Australian Parliament supporting young and emerging Australian artists

The Australian Greens will reinstate the art procurement policy for the Australian Parliament to purchase art works from emerging and living Australian artists. Before it was changed in 2004, the policy used to express a preference for first point of sale acquisitions thereby directly assisting emerging artists and the arts community. The purchases of works from emerging and living artists also meant that the value of the collection increased considerably over the initial investment.

The policy was changed in 2004 after a review based on complaints from some members of parliament that the art works were 'too modern'. The current policy requires the artist to have appropriate professional standing and that the artwork is suitable to be added to the collection.

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In 2008–09 the Parliament purchased 93 new works and in 2007–08 124 new works were added to the collection. An acquisitions policy that prioritises young and emerging Australian artists has enormous practical benefit to those artists whose work is purchased and it also sends a powerful symbolic message of support to our artistic community.