

Mr Andrew Abbott
Chief Executive
Creative Victoria
Level 31, 121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

30 August 2019

Dear Mr Abbott

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the development of Victoria's Creative State 2020+ strategy.

This is an important strategy for Victoria's vibrant and rich arts and creative industries, and it will allow Victorians to continue telling their stories and demonstrating their creativity and ingenuity to their communities and the world. Participating in the arts – either as a creator/practitioner or an audience member/user – plays an important role in many Victorians' lives.

VicHealth has a long history of working with the arts and creative industries due to the strong evidence that they are settings and approaches through which we can promote health, particularly mental health (see Appendix 1). They can support community cohesion and inclusion, and have great potential to influence knowledge, attitudes and behaviours to promote health and wellbeing.

This submission focuses on the discussion themes that are most relevant to our work and current [Arts Strategy 2019–2023](#). When using the term 'participation' in the arts and cultural industries, we are referring to the full spectrum of participants: those practising, performing, administering, watching, experiencing, using or consuming the product of arts and creative approaches.

VicHealth's recommendations

VicHealth's overarching recommendation is that Creative State 2020+ harnesses the capacity of the arts and creative approaches to promote Victorians' physical and mental health and wellbeing

VicHealth has 15 specific recommendations to inform the consultation on Creative State 2020+, which are provided below under the relevant consultation discussion themes:

Equality of Access and Diversity at All Levels

VicHealth strongly supports these consultation discussion themes, and reiterates the need to remove any existing barriers to participation. Priority should be given to groups within our community who experience greater barriers to health, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, women and girls, people with a disability, regional and rural residents, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, gender diverse, non-binary and intersex (LGBTIQ) people.¹

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation

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- 1) Integrate diversity, inclusion and equality across all programs of work under Creative State 2020+, to ensure those experiencing barriers to participation are prioritised and engaged. To track progress against this recommendation, diversity and inclusion indicators could be included in monitoring and evaluation tools for all programs (if not already incorporated).
 - a) This includes rolling out *Fair Play: Equity, Inclusion & the Creative Industries* to include people from rural and regional areas and people from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The learnings from the initiative should be integrated into all future Creative Victoria investments, and a capacity program established for the fullest range of arts and creative industries organisations not currently engaged in the program.
- 2) Prioritise participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, as affirmed by the Creative State guiding principle 'First Peoples first'. This can be particularly beneficial where arts participation is increased alongside other health promoting factors, such as connection to culture, employment and social connection² (see the case studies in Appendix 2 for examples).
- 3) Prioritise participation of other communities experiencing greater barriers to participation and health. This can be through recognising the existing rich creative and cultural activities of certain groups, and/or creating new opportunities for them to engage and participate in other artforms.
- 4) Continue the current commitment to deep engagement and collaboration with priority community groups, and seek opportunities to work with existing organisations (particularly major institutions) to build capacity in co-creation.
- 5) Broker partnerships between arts and creative organisations and key community groups, as they will have the best access to and relationships with groups experiencing barriers to participation.

Safety and Wellbeing

- 6) Broaden this theme's focus beyond just the health and wellbeing of practitioners and employees to include all participants in arts and creative industries' activities.
- 7) Build awareness and capacity within the arts and creative industries about how they can act to promote health. This can be through strategies such as formal training, sharing evaluation findings and/or communities of practice.
- 8) Bring together new collaborative partnerships between organisations working in the arts and creative industries and the health sector to engage the public in tackling complex health and social issues, such as mental wellbeing, gender equality, healthier masculinities, physical inactivity and Aboriginal health (see Appendix 2 for example projects).
- 9) In partnership with VicHealth, establish a two-way knowledge exchange between organisations working in the arts and creative industries and the health sector on using the arts and creative industries as settings for health promotion.

Creative Spaces and Precincts

- 10) Make arts and creative industries spaces and precincts healthy workplace settings, while also supporting the health of audiences and other participants. This can be achieved by collaborating with arts and cultural venues and local governments to develop and implement policies that:
- a) create welcoming and inclusive spaces
 - b) promote healthier food and drink choices and environments
 - c) prevent risky consumption of alcohol, substance abuse and tobacco use
 - d) address gender inequality and cultures that enable workplace bullying and discrimination.

The Next Generation

- 11) Explore the potential to strengthen creativity within early learning and primary and secondary education systems to maximise the use of creative approaches, with the aims of:
- a) Improving mental wellbeing
 - b) improving educational outcomes³
 - c) building the specific skills and expertise needed to join the arts and creative industries workforce
 - d) developing and enhancing the creative skills and knowledge that will be needed by the future workforce across a range of sectors⁴
 - e) strengthening the emotional and social development that provides the basis for a healthy and happy adulthood.⁵

Evaluation and Governance

- 12) Allocate specific Creative State funds towards health and wellbeing outcomes, as well as leveraging existing funding or partnerships to promote health and wellbeing.
- 13) Create governance and leadership roles within the arts and creative sectors that are significantly more representative of the community's diversity, both within organisations supported by Creative Victoria and within the broader sector.
- 14) Measure the health and wellbeing outcomes of all investments under Creative State 2020+, in line with the protocols of the Department of Health and Human Services' Centre for Evaluation and Research, to:
- a) enable comparison with other non-arts health interventions
 - b) establish which interventions have potential to be scaled up and intensified for health outcomes, particularly those that can support the response to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.
- 15) Ensure the Creative State Advisory Group and its sub-committees include representation from people with expertise in arts-based approaches to the primary prevention of ill health and the promotion of health and wellbeing, to complement the skills, knowledge and expertise of current Advisory Group members.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a response to this important consultation. Should you require any further information on our submission, please contact Cassie Nicholls, Senior Policy Officer, or cnicholls@vichealth.vic.gov.au or 03 9667 1317.

Kind regards

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink on a light background. The signature on the left is a stylized, cursive 'L' followed by a horizontal stroke, representing Dr Lyn Roberts AO. The signature on the right is a more complex, cursive script, representing Cassie Nicholls.

Dr Lyn Roberts AO
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Appendix 1: Background

1.1 About the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth)

At VicHealth, we believe all Victorians have the right to live healthy, happy lives. We know there are barriers to good health and wellbeing for people in our community, and we work with partners to discover, implement and share solutions to these challenges. Our work in health promotion addresses the *causes* of ill health, rather than focusing on treatment and cure.

VicHealth was established as a statutory body of the Victorian Government in 1987 and we have over 30 years' experience in promoting health. Our aim is that every Victorian, no matter their situation or resources, has the best chance for good health and wellbeing.

1.2 VicHealth's history in the arts

Arts and the creative industries have long been key settings for our work in areas such as mental wellbeing, race-based discrimination, gender equality and physical activity. We have partnered with arts organisations and local governments whose reach spans local communities in the inner-city, outer metropolitan and regional areas through to the Victorian public as a whole and beyond. Examples of our past and current investments are included in Appendix 2.

Our new [Arts Strategy 2019–23](#) is focused on:

- increasing participation and diversity in art
- embedding the arts and creative approaches across our work
- harnessing arts and cultural settings as powerful enablers to influence awareness, attitudes and behaviours.

1.3 The health benefits of arts participation

The arts and creative industries provide an important community setting for health promotion, a partnership model for the co-design and delivery of initiatives, a unique participatory experience with the potential to build connection, and a vehicle to inform and create behaviour change.

The evidence for the benefits of participation in the arts across the lifecycle is strong:

- In early childhood, participation is associated with positive social and emotional development, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.⁶
- For young people, participation is associated with strong social and emotional skills, including better peer interaction and self-confidence.⁷
- Younger Australians (aged 15–24 years) create and experience the arts at the highest rates.⁸
- For older people, participation is associated with positive cognitive, mood and quality of life outcomes.⁹
- Arts programs can lead to improvements in parenting, mental health, social inclusion and ability to absorb health information.¹⁰
- Arts projects can lead to greater empowerment and social inclusion, and better mental health.¹¹
- People with 100 or more hours per year of arts engagement (at least two hours a week) were found to have significantly better mental wellbeing than those with no or lower levels of engagement.¹²
- Promising research has indicated that small participatory arts projects in disadvantaged areas of London also resulted in 55 per cent of participants reporting an increase in healthy eating, 76 per cent an increase in physical activity, and 85 per cent feeling more positive.¹³

Appendix 2: VicHealth case studies

Promoting Aboriginal health through the arts

VicHealth has a long and proud history of supporting First Nations initiatives in the arts and creative industries. Our most recent suite of projects will use engagement with the arts and creative industries to create pathways to further opportunity. While building skills, confidence and connections among participants these projects will provide safe spaces for the development of a new generation of brilliant First Nations creatives.

Barpirdhila Foundation's Youth Programs

These programs will provide platforms that nurture, develop and support Aboriginal excellence within the creative industries through regional youth camps, performance opportunities, artist development programs and music industry/business workshops. These programs will provide structure around offering guidance for young people to enter (and excel) within the music industry and to provide better outcomes for youth. Projects will be delivered in partnership with Girls Rock! Melbourne and Korin Gamadji Institute (KGI).

Melbourne Writers Festival (MWF) First Nations Capacity Building Project

This project is the first step in the process of building ongoing First Nations engagement, a priority in their new 2019-2023 strategic plan. MWF will employ a First Nations program advisor to drive relationship building, strategy and staff development as they move towards the launch of an ongoing self-determined First Nations program within MWF. This program will lead to greater employment and engagement opportunities for Victorian First Nations artists and community.

Indigenous Runway Project's Scholarship Program

This program will provide opportunities for Indigenous people to participate in a Fashion Boot Camp. IRP will partner with Kangan Institute to introduce participants to an exciting world of fashion where brands and independent creativity matters. The new bootcamp will utilise fashion as a vehicle to reveal new career pathways to young Indigenous people (certificate, diploma and advanced diploma options) and help push Indigenous young people's creative boundaries.

Promoting gender equality through the arts

Artists, game-developers and performers are teaming up with their local councils to promote gender equality in their communities thanks to more than \$630,000 in VicHealth funding. A selection of projects are:

Art for a Better Democracy

Bayside City Council and partners are developing an art project encouraging more women to participate in local democracy through a creative exploration of the gendered nature of Bayside's local government history. The artists will create new portraits of Bayside women to replace historical portraits of past Mayors.

Reclaim the Lanes: Girls Own Space

South Gippsland Shire Council and partners are inviting young women of all abilities from the South Gippsland Shire to take part in a creative participatory project to reclaim a laneway or public space in their own town, through art.

Musical Sprouts –Start Upstream

City of Yarra and partners are developing a musical theatre show for young children that explores empathy, respectful relationships and gender equity. The show will be delivered in childcares, kindergartens and primary schools and feed into the social emotional curriculum. In addition, there will be resources and a workshop developed for educators.

Promoting mental wellbeing through the arts

Bandmates – Maribyrnong City Council

Bandmates is a program that connects young people to attend music gigs together, building independence, social connections and wellbeing through a love of live music. The program will engage young people with disability, and those who experience mental health issues, with young people from a range of different backgrounds, as participants and volunteers. Since the pilot program this partnership between four LGA's, Arts Access Victoria and Music Victoria, has expanded across Melbourne and regional Victoria to include more socially isolated young people.

MRelay – MPavilion

MRelay was a series of relay-style discussions where the baton is passed from one interviewee to the next in 15-minute intervals. In MRelay, thinkers, philosophers, community leaders, activists, architects, activists share insights and ideas in a marathon conversation. Across each 2.5-hour long session 10 speakers was a thematic response to issues ranging from diversity to ageing and ableism, wellbeing to gender neutral design.

Victorian Design Challenge - NGV

The Victorian design community were invited to join forces with other sectors to focus on the application of design thinking, process and methodologies to target real-world problems. Increasing youth resilience, connection and engagement was set as the inaugural Challenge theme with the intention of raising the profile of the issue and generating an innovative and effective project designs.

Promoting physical activity through the arts

Gallery Workout – Arts Centre Melbourne and NGV

First staged in 2017 at the New York MET. dancers Monica Bill Barnes and Anna Bass reimagined the cultural tour as part of MELNYC. Before and after hours, Gallery Workout saw participants performing choreographed exercises in two of Melbourne's highest profile cultural institutions. Part tour, part performance, part workout – this popular format encouraged more than a thousand Melbournians to become more physically active, while increasing cultural access and participation.

Big Dance – Ausdance Victoria

Big Dance is a biannual dance initiative that originated in the United Kingdom in 2006. Big Dance 2018 extended this project throughout a range of Victorian locations with a focus on connecting participants to local dance/performing opportunities. Community activations leveraged on-going events, classes, workshops and performances as well as social and digital media leading up to concurrent larger scale mass participation events.

Active Arts Program - Greater Shepparton City Council

Together with arts and education partners' Council worked with young people, including Indigenous, CALD, LGBTIQ and people with a disability to develop a range of high profile and locally delivered activities across various streams including music, creative and performing arts. The program aligned with Council's Activities in the Parks program with around 350 activities delivered across the municipality.

References

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- ⁴ VicHealth & CSIRO 2015, *Bright Futures: Megatrends impacting the mental wellbeing of young Victorians over the coming 20 years*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.
- ⁵ Menzer, M 2015, *The arts in early childhood: Social and emotional benefits of participation: A literature review and gap-analysis (2000–2015)*, National Endowment for the Arts, Washington DC, <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/arts-in-early-childhood-dec2015-rev.pdf>; DSG (Development Services Group) 2016, *Arts-based programs and arts therapies for at-risk, justice-involved, and traumatised youths: Literature review*, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Washington DC, <https://www.arts.gov/publications/arts-based-programs-and-art-therapies-risk-justice-involved-and-traumatized-youths>
- ⁶ Menzer, M 2015, *The arts in early childhood: Social and emotional benefits of participation: A literature review and gap-analysis (2000–2015)*, National Endowment for the Arts, Washington DC, <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/arts-in-early-childhood-dec2015-rev.pdf>
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- ⁹ Noice, T, Noice, A & Kramer, A 2013, 'Participatory arts for older adults: A review of benefits and challenges', *The Gerontologist*, vol. 54, no. 5., <https://academic.oup.com/gerontologist/article/54/5/741/627657>
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- ¹³ Ings, R, Crane, N & Cameron, M 2012, *Be creative be well: Arts, wellbeing and local communities. An evaluation*, Arts Council England, London, https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Be_Creative_Be_Well.pdf