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## **WESTERN SYDNEY ARTS SECTOR RESPONDS TO NSW GOVERNMENT STIMULUS PACKAGE FOR THE ARTS**

The Western Sydney Arts Sector welcomes the NSW government announcement of \$50 million in stimulus for the arts and urges the government to remember Western Sydney's small to medium sector and local government run arts centres, theatres, galleries and studios who contribute directly to the states hospitality, employment, community, tourism and health sectors.

The impact of COVID-19 on the Western Sydney Arts Sector has been significant, with organisations losing between 60 - 100% of self-generated income from ticket sales, tours, education programs, hospitality and venue hire.

The Western Sydney Arts Sector improves the lives of the people in Western Sydney, the most culturally and socio-economically diverse region in NSW. The artistic offerings from this region are so strong and culturally unique we also attract audiences from regional NSW and wider Sydney. With the Aerotropolis and other major infrastructure investment in the area, the Western Sydney Arts Sector needs support now in order to meet future demand.

Our social, economic and cultural impacts include:

- Access to the mental health benefits of a creative life for people/communities otherwise excluded;
- Innovative education pathways to 'future jobs' for young people, in a region already disproportionately un/underemployed though skills-based workshops, internships and capacity building programs; and
- Community building though events and public programs where diverse communities meet in their local area, forgoing the need to travel, which will be an increased barrier due to COVID-19 health concerns in relation to public transport.

Everyday local citizens fought hard for the creation of a Western Sydney arts ecology. We cannot see our region lose these essential services in this crisis. Western Sydney communities are the fastest growing in the country and will be dramatically affected if any one organisation in the region is ineligible for this stimulus package.

We are an interconnected network and call for all arts organisations to be eligible for this stimulus. The Western Sydney Arts Sector is one of the most resilient arts ecologies in Australia, but COVID-19 has imposed massive challenges. We are agile and will adapt but we need support to do so.

Impacts on the sector due to COVID-19 include:

*"Dance Makers Collective have lost our entire service income stream; we have a comprehensive program of education offerings for young people and school-aged students that disappeared and is unlikely to pick up again until 2021. As a company this generates revenue that is invested in the development of new Australian dance works and provides casual employment for a range of freelance dance teachers."* Carl Sciberras Dance Makers Collective GM

*"Casula Powerhouse is losing all of its income stream from catering, box office sales, commercial hires, internal and community hires."* Craig Donarski, Director CPAC

*“Campbelltown Arts Centre is preparing to cut 30% of its arts program starting this July to accommodate the loss of income and increased costs. This includes postponing and cancelling exhibitions, performances and the commission of new Australian works by First Nations artists visual artists, musicians and performers.” Michael Dagostino, Director, Campbelltown Arts Centre*

*“Sixty-five percent of FORM's core program has been cancelled or postponed including participation of local Western Sydney, NSW regional, national and International artists. Although taking some programs digital, we are disappointed to lose the momentum establishing the We Are Here Company, with all the fabulous young dancers from diverse Western Sydney communities, we have fostered over the last 20 years through our artistic and education programs.” Annette McLernon, Director FORM Dance Projects*

*“The good news is that we are continuing to program online, even so UTP is predicting a 61% decrease in performance income in 2020. We have also seen a 57% decrease in anticipated sponsorship and donations for 2020. This affects our ability to annually employ the 40+ casual staff, 90 artists, not to mention the support of local business we would normally engage this year, and into the future.” Dr Jessica Olivieri, Artistic Director/ CEO UTP*

*“Where we can we have adapted to digital delivery and creation – but even so the closures mean that our casual wages for the year are 55% down on budget and artist fees are currently 60% down – that’s a lot less local creative employment.” Hania Radvan, CEO, Penrith Performing & Visual Arts; Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre, Q Theatre, Penrith Conservatorium and Penrith Regional Gallery, Home of the Lewers Bequest*

*“As a small emerging organisation, with no current funding, such a body blow at the impact of losing small projects or postponement for a year. Just as we completed a two-year residency with a successful production in the old Granville Town Hall... Just as new creative connections were opening.” Alissar Chidiac, Arab Theatre Studio*

*“From March to June, Riverside Theatre had to cancel 57 events, which impacted 1,141 cast and crew” Joanne Kee, Executive Producer, Riverside’s National Theatre of Parramatta.*

*“Parramatta Artists’ Studios has had to cease face-to-face community engagement programs which see our diverse creative residents and families come together to share important cultural stories and social connections through art-making. While we continue to reach out to our community in new ways through the digital space, this is a loss to our local community that will have ongoing impacts.” Hayley Megan French, Programs Officer, Parramatta Artists’ Studios Rydalmere*

We have consulted widely with Western Sydney organisations including FORM Dance Projects, UTP, Dance Makers Collective, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Penrith Performing & Visual Arts, Cumberland City Council, Arab Theatre Studio, National Theatre of Parramatta, PYT Fairfield, Curious Works, I.C.E, Parramatta Artists' Studios, Riverside Theatres, PARI and Blacktown Arts.

We urge the government to ensure that the whole of the Western Sydney Arts Sector is supported during this crisis.

Yours Sincerely,  
Western Sydney Arts Sector