

23 March 2020

## Culturally Diverse Creatives Fear They'll be Hit Hard by the COVID-19 Pandemic Shutdowns: 91% predict income loss

The Australian arts, performance, live events and creative industries will feel unprecedented impacts of COVID-19. Artists and creatives of colour are among the most vulnerable in an already precarious sector.

"We need a thriving, diverse creative community to sustain and reflect contemporary Australia through these challenging times. Artists and creatives of colour were already amongst the most marginal in our sector and now their situations are worsening due to COVID-19. Data obtained in Diversity Arts Australia's [Lost Work for Artists and Creatives of Colour](#) survey shows just how vulnerable our talented creatives are." said Diversity Arts' Executive Director Lena Nahlous

Last week, Diversity Arts Australia, the national voice for cultural diversity in the arts, cultural and creative industries, launched a survey to measure the impact on culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) creatives in the Australian sector.

### SURVEY RESULTS

Launched on Wednesday 18 March, 163 responses have been received and our still streaming in. Diversity Arts will continue to update results as the survey stays open. To date, artists and creatives speaking over 29 community languages have responded to our survey. Survey respondents spoke over 29 community languages and 85% identified as CaLD, 8% identified as First Nations, 17% as LGBTIQ+, and 9% as a person with disability.

Of the responses received by COB on 23 March **91% were expecting to lose income over social distancing measures.**

Respondents felt the impact of travel bans (as many are closely connected with creative communities overseas) and the cancellation of classes, which provided much-needed income.

Particularly vulnerable are artists/ creative workers from refugee backgrounds, and other migrants who are on bridging visas or not yet permanent residents or citizens, who do not qualify for the Centrelink and stimulus package benefits announced by the federal government.

The survey revealed an overriding sense of trepidation about the future among CaLD and other marginalised artists:

"On Monday 16th March I opened my emails. Subject lines read Cancellation or Postponed. All shows, and creative youth arts projects cancelled. No payments. no extra options."

Many respondents feared COVID-19 would affect them more than other artists:

"Freelance writers and artists of colour experience the usual industrial precarity which is then redoubled by our economic and social marginalisation within the Australian culture industries."

"Not only have I lost creative work, as an Indigenous performer I have also lost the essence that feeds it, eg being able to go home (I am from a rural community at high risk)...this virus not only threatens my professional life but also my cultural life as an Indigenous woman."

Respondents feared the effect on their interconnected communities.

“I am a musician, band leader and mobile stage owner. My art advocates for Romani Gypsy culture. I have lost 100% of my work in the foreseeable future....Our band and mobile stage contributes income to around 10 sole traders, contractor musicians and event workers.”

Respondents also commented on adverse effects on their mental health.

“I was already chronically unemployable for anything stable mainly due to years on a bridging visa. I only just got to the point of parity with my peers - and then this happens.”

“I am now feeling despondent and unsure as to how to move forward when my graphic design work comes to a halt. I also suffer from depression and anxiety. I'm trying hard not to be affected psychologically but unsure as to how long I can keep this up, especially without an income.”

Even before the outbreak of COVID-19, the Australia Council for the Arts' 2017 *Making Art Work* report revealed that twice as many artists from non-English Speaking Backgrounds cited a lack of financial support as the biggest limit to their work compared to other artists, and that these artists were less likely to be successful in funding applications. “This is why we are calling for specific programs and initiatives to support those creatives who are already marginalised,” said Ms Nahlous.

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

Diversity Arts Australia is making an urgent call to governments to ensure adequate support packages reach the most under-represented sections of the creative sector. Any measures to support the arts, and indeed all sectors of the Australian economy, **must include equity provisions to ensure that our most vulnerable community members are not left out.**

- **Ensure Adequate Support Packages**

Governments need to ensure adequate support packages reach all sections of the arts. We support measures such as [Live Performance Australia's \\$850 million package](#). Similar measures will need to be implemented across all creative sectors, including screen, visual arts and writing.

- **Equity Test Support to Reach the Most Vulnerable**

All support packages must be equity tested to ensure they support the most vulnerable people in an already precarious industry. **We need to ensure our creative industries do not become more inequitable and unrepresentative than they already are as a consequence of this crisis.**

- **Support the Supporters**

Support the organisations that advocate for marginalised and underrepresented creative workers. Dedicated funding streams to be distributed through relevant peak bodies and organisations who are connected with the affected creative workers (e.g. Diversity Arts, Multicultural Arts Victoria, CANWA, regional arts orgs, Aboriginal arts organisations and Disability arts organisations)



- **Become a Micro-Patron**

Commission a work from an artist, a new song or recording from a musician. Set up an online lesson in your favourite art form. Donate to an organisation or directly to an independent practitioner. Make contributions for online performances. Buy music, books and artworks from diverse artists. Connect with diverse creatives via **Multicultural Arts Victoria**, Community Arts Network WA, Brisbane Entertainment Multicultural Arts Centre.

- **Employ Creatives (to Help Manage Shutdowns)**

To read more about the survey results visit [diversityarts.org.au](https://diversityarts.org.au)

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