

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the Cultural and Creative Industries in Victoria

Melbourne – Thursday 13 March 2025

MEMBERS

Georgie Purcell – Chair

Richard Welch – Deputy Chair

John Berger

Katherine Copsey

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PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Gaelle Broad

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David Davis

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Michael Galea

Renee Heath

Sarah Mansfield

Rachel Payne

WITNESS (*via videoconference*)

Kate Fielding, Chief Executive Officer, A New Approach.

The CHAIR: I declare open the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee's public hearing for the Inquiry into the Cultural and Creative Industries in Victoria. Please ensure that mobile phones have been switched to silent and that background noise is minimised.

I would like to begin this hearing by respectfully acknowledging the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of the various lands we are gathered on today, and paying my respects to their ancestors, elders and families. I particularly welcome any elders or community members who are here today to impart their knowledge of this issue to the committee or who are watching the live broadcast of these proceedings. I also welcome any other members of the public watching via the live broadcast.

To kick off, we will just have committee members introduce themselves to you, starting with Mr Welch.

Richard WELCH: I am Richard Welch, Member for North-East Metropolitan Region.

The CHAIR: Georgie Purcell, Member for Northern Victoria Region.

Gaëlle BROAD: Hi. I am Gaëlle Broad, Member for Northern Victoria.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for appearing before us today. All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during this hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing, and then transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

For the Hansard record, can you please state your full name and the organisation you are appearing on behalf of.

Kate FIELDING: Hello. I am Kate Fielding. I am the CEO of A New Approach, otherwise known as ANA.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you so much. We now welcome your opening comments but ask that they are kept to around 10 to 15 minutes to ensure plenty of time for discussion and questions.

Kate FIELDING: No worries. Thank you so much for having me today. I really appreciate the opportunity. I am joining you from Ngannawal Ngambri country here in Canberra, where it is, as I look outside, a beautiful sunny day. I pay my respects to elders past and present.

For those of you who may not be familiar with the work of A New Approach, or ANA, we are Australia's national arts and culture think tank. We believe that by 2035 Australia can be a cultural powerhouse whose creativity is locally loved, nationally valued and globally influential. Making this vision real is at the heart of everything ANA does. We do this because the evidence shows that arts and culture are crucial for a vibrant, equitable and prosperous future for our country. We already have real strengths in this area, and I would like to give a particular shout-out here to the 15-year-olds right across the country who collectively came fourth in the world for creative thinking in the OECD's recent PISA results. They were announced around the same time as Australia came fourth in the world for our Olympic gold medals, so we are fourth in the world for creative thinking and fourth in the world for gold medals.

ANA was initiated by and is entirely supported by philanthropy, which means we are independent of both government and industry. Our work strives to bridge the gap between art and policy. Our goal is for all levels of government to have access to relevant, contemporary and useful evidence and insights when making decisions about cultural policy. Our work is publicly and freely available for governments but also to ensure industry has

access to this evidence and insight when they are making decisions about their own businesses and their own planning. Again, we do this because the evidence shows us Australia will benefit from having an arts and culture system that delivers for all people and communities. That of course brings us to today's topic. I am really looking forward to your questions and hope we can help you in this inquiry. I would like to say a few things at the outset in terms of the topic of this inquiry, hopefully to give you some information but also to help seed a really great conversation today.

Firstly, ANA is really pleased that you are undertaking this inquiry because we know from the evidence that everyday Australians believe that access to arts and culture makes their lives better. Through our three-year national focus group study with middle Australians across suburban and regional Australia, we know that middle Australians believe arts and culture helps them connect with their families and their communities, that it enriches their lives and it helps them understand each other better, even when they do not agree.

Secondly, these beliefs are backed up by international and Australian evidence on the transformative impacts of arts and culture on prosperity, cohesion, security, health and sustainability. There are serious, measurable positive impacts of cultural and creative engagement on people, on communities, on society and on economies.

Thirdly, we will of course be talking a lot about government investment today, and I really look forward to getting into the detail of that with you. I am a bit of a nerd. Government investment in arts and culture is an important part of making arts and culture accessible and an important part of the revenue mix for the cultural and creative industries broadly. But the data shows us that in normal times it is by no means the largest source of revenue, even for the many not-for-profit organisations with a culture subtype. However, we can see in the data that COVID-19 significantly disrupted the normal revenue mix. Noting it was five years ago earlier this week that COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, we can now say that COVID disrupted many things but it particularly impacted on businesses and organisations whose business model is based on people being able to gather together, and certainly significant parts of cultural and creative industries were disproportionately impacted by that.

Finally, my overarching message to the committee is this: having an arts and culture system that delivers for all people and communities right across the country will deliver significant benefits. To get there ANA thinks governments need to do two things. Firstly, establish a ministerial council reporting to national cabinet focused on cultural access and the cultural and creative industries. This would be a formal ministerial council reporting to cabinet with the federal, state and territory cultural ministers and, to make sure all levels of government are involved, ideally with a representative from the Australian Local Government Association as well. And secondly, develop a national cultural strategy modelled on the new national sport strategy called *Sport Horizon*. All state and territory sport ministers have signed up to this national strategy along with the Commonwealth.

From the perspective of public policy – so what governments can do to help make this happen, to help make arts and culture accessible – the only way we can achieve an arts and culture system that truly delivers for all people and communities across the country is if the three levels of government work effectively together. On the supply side industry will do the heavy lifting, and on the demand side it is the public who will turn up, who will buy tickets and who experience those benefits. But to make this possible right across the country governments need to work better together. They need to do that to better serve their public, who want access to creative and cultural engagement and to also be better partners to industry and philanthropy, who want to make that access possible. Without being cute about it, we need a new approach, a matured approach to cultural policy, and a national cultural strategy will help us do that. I really look forward to talking with you all about this further. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you so much for that, Kate. It is super useful. I will kick off with questions. This idea of a ministerial council – is that something that you have had conversations about with any government at any level, and if so, what sort of feedback have you received?

Kate FIELDING: Thank you. We are extensively on the public record about this and also have had a number of private conversations with different ministers around the country, and also, because we work very deliberately with the opposition, shadow ministers as well. So we have had conversations –

David DAVIS: I can vouch for this, Kate.

Kate FIELDING: Yes, this is a core part of what we have been discussing right across the country over the last 12 months. There is real interest in this. I think there is an understanding that purposeful engagement between ministers across states and territories and with local government is really beneficial. We can get into the changes in the cultural funding mix from different levels of government, but when we look at the trends over the last 15 years and how they have changed, it is obvious that governments working together is the most effective way to do this. The short answer is yes, and the longer answer is there is interest in this.

The CHAIR: Okay. Great. Thank you.

Kate FIELDING: Sorry, if I could just say: there is currently an informal, I think it is called, intergovernmental ministerial engagement process, which does happen. This is an elevation of that type of meeting, properly resourced with accountability to national cabinet. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Great. Thank you. Just a question: in your submission you highlight how with the different funding streams from state and federal they tend to go into different areas of arts and creative industries, with the state going towards museums and libraries and the federal going more towards film, radio and television. Do you think that there need to be clearer definitions around funding and where it should go? Through this inquiry we are hearing from such a diverse range of people that are often being left out of funding conversations and broader conversations partly because there is such a broad scope in the industry. So would clearer definitions around what is what be a helpful way to move forward and to help governments and ministers understand different areas of work?

Kate FIELDING: The short answer is yes. I would say that one of the real barriers in this space is a lack of understanding of what levels of government can do what and where different types of investment are focused and why. Certainly the work that we are doing has been around trying to actually do the basic analysis so we can have a data-led conversation around what levels of government focus where. I guess I would fast-forward there and say that it is really clear in the data that particularly the Commonwealth and the states and territories have a really different focus on where they put their investment at really broad levels. For those who are not looking at the submission, we have grouped data by film, radio and television – that is one grouping; museums, archives, libraries and heritage are another grouping; and then arts are another grouping.

The CHAIR: Okay. Thank you so much for that. I will pass to Mr Davis.

David DAVIS: Kate, can I just put on record my thanks to you for briefings provided to me in the past – I have taken a lot out of those – and for your submission to this inquiry. We are obviously interested in supporting sectors of the industry thoughtfully, and we obviously have some concerns about the spread of funding. I think it is true to say that state government funding has struggled – and I am talking about Victoria specifically here – in this recent period. I do not know whether there is anything you want to say about that and whether that funding has kept up. That is the first point.

The second is the federal funding. They appear to have struck a focus on funding things in New South Wales in particular and other states, and we have heard a lot of evidence even this morning from La Mama and a series of other groups that have had their federal funding stripped back or cut to zero. I just wonder whether you want to comment on that. Thirdly, even if there were a ministerial council, how would we ensure that Victoria is not short-changed? How do we ensure that Victoria is not pushed to the back of the queue and that key institutions here – and I am just picking La Mama because they were just here now – are not damaged or left without support gratuitously by a distant Commonwealth government? That is three things.

Kate FIELDING: Okay. We are going to get really nerdy here. Bear with me. I am going to give a bit of chunky detail on Commonwealth funding to help answer this question. I will try and do it as clearly as possible, but please ask questions where you can.

The first thing I would say is that I am going to draw here on the cultural funding by government dataset. This is the best dataset that we have in Australia to give a comprehensive view of expenditure into the cultural space. It picks up the three levels of government, it picks up broad arts and culture expenditure by government and it picks up things inside the designated arts portfolio as well as expenditure in other portfolios – that could be in health, that could be in regional development, it could be in education, it could be in a range of other places. This is the most comprehensive data in the country on government expenditure in this space. The frustrating answer that I have to give you, and I wish it was a different answer, is that the federal expenditure in that

dataset – the data for jurisdictions, states and territories – is not released; the Commonwealth does not release the data around that big cultural expenditure piece by state and territory.

David DAVIS: Do they have that data, in that way? They must.

Kate FIELDING: I would really strongly encourage you to direct that question to the Commonwealth. It would be very beneficial right across the country if that was transparent. Whether they do or do not have it, I find it difficult to see that it would not be possible to do that. I think it would really help move a lot of conversations forward, if that was done.

With that frustrating answer, I am going to give you the Victoria-specific things that I can. Firstly, I am going to talk about the cultural funding piece broadly. Then I suspect that what you would also like to hear about is Creative Australia, who for some of the organisations you have been speaking to would be one of their main contacts into the federal government.

David DAVIS: Correct.

Kate FIELDING: Great. I will start by talking about the big piece and then will go into the Creative Australia piece. Broadly across government, investment in arts and culture is not keeping pace with population. Across the last 15 years there has been a 22 per cent increase in population but only a 14 per cent increase in cultural funding by governments. That means we are trying to service a bigger population with less, essentially, and I would say that probably in those 15 years the demands have become more complex as well. Internationally, Australia lags behind our international peers. We rank 26 out of 33 OECD countries for investment in recreation, culture and religion in 2021. My apologies, that is the packaging –

David DAVIS: The broad category, yes.

Kate FIELDING: Yes, that is what is available at that international comparative level. So how much money are we talking about? Total investment in arts and culture across all three levels of government and across all portfolios was \$7.7 billion in 2021–22. That excludes COVID-specific measures that were in place at that time. That \$7.7 billion in 2021–22 was a 4 per cent increase from the previous year. That includes things like the very important ABC providing emergency broadcasts into northern New South Wales and southern Queensland, through to the types of organisations that you would have been talking with today over this hearing.

So that is the big picture. I am going to talk through a couple of changes and then we can dig in. Over the last 15 years, the big change has been in terms of the relationship between federal government and state and territory. It used to be that the Commonwealth was very much the large partner in cultural funding, broadly. That shifted, and now state and territory governments collectively and the federal government are neck and neck. So 37 per cent of all cultural investment came from state and territory governments, 38 per cent was from the federal government and 24 per cent from the local governments, and I just really call out the fact that local government is a serious partner in this space.

Is the committee happy for me to move to the Creative Australia piece?

David DAVIS: Yes.

Kate FIELDING: Great Thank you. With all of that big picture in mind, I am going to put the Creative Australia expenditure in context, and then I will give you the Victorian figures. As some of you may be aware, I am a previous board member of Creative Australia. I think they are a great organisation who do really important things and that they have an important national leadership role. When we look at the data – these are the figures from 2021–22, that is where we have comparable data – Creative Australia's budget in 2021–22 was roughly \$220 million. As a percentage of the total cultural spend by all three levels of government, that is 3 per cent, so Creative Australia's whole budget is making up 3 per cent of cultural funding by governments. If we look at that as a percentage of the combined state and territory and federal art spends, it is 10 per cent. So if all the money that state and territory governments and federal governments spend –

David DAVIS: Is it fair to say, though, that as a share of discretionary money, it is a bigger share? This is the other important point.

Kate FIELDING: In terms of it being a place where there are competitive grant rounds, yes, it plays a particular role. There are, however, different types of competitive grant rounds that the Commonwealth funds in other spaces. It is definitely the most visible, I would think, of those. Creative Australia, if we dig down into the federal total spend on cultural funding, is about 7 per cent, but of the total federal arts spend it is about 36 per cent. I am getting very nerdy here, but I am trying to give you the sense that Creative Australia, whilst important, is only part of the story. If we get right down into the detail of what Victoria gets from Creative Australia, we have done some analysis that looks at all of the data that is available about their funding programs. That includes the national performing arts framework, which is a major part of their investment, and all the different types of competitive grant rounds as well as the four-year funded organisations. From our analysis of that – and this is just Creative Australia – Victoria is the only state or territory that is getting exactly its fair share on a per capita basis. You have 26 per cent of the population, and our analysis shows that you are getting 26 per cent of Creative Australia money.

I am going to give you a couple of other bits of information there. There are some states and territories that are getting above their population share. The most notable of those is New South Wales; it gets 5 per cent above its population share. And there are states and territories that get below their population share; Queensland get 8 per cent less than what they should on the basis of their population. I would not be a person who has spent most of their life living and working in regional and remote Australia if I did not point out that there are questions around economy of scale and there are questions around different costs of delivery et cetera that should come into play and discussion as well. But on the raw per-capita basis Victoria is the only jurisdiction that is getting exactly what it should.

David DAVIS: But when you take into account the other arts organisations – we had SBS here yesterday, and we have got a very small percentage of their funding in Victoria, and the ABC, and then you can move to others – it becomes a different situation.

Kate FIELDING: Absolutely, and that takes us back to the bigger point, which is that we do not have visibility on cultural funding by government. As we spoke about earlier, if the cultural funding by government dataset was released, cut by state and territory data in terms of where federal government is sending its cultural expenditure on a state and territory basis, we would be able to have a data-informed conversation about that in a coherent way. But because that data is not released at the moment, we are really left with a very partial view, as you are putting together – getting bits of information and trying to see the whole picture from that.

The only other point I would make, and again it is with my regional hat on, is that when we cut the data from Creative Australia by region using the accessibility/remoteness index of Australia – ARIA – definition, which has 40 per cent of Australians living in regional Australia, the total of Creative Australia's investment that goes to regional is 17 per cent, so 23 per cent less than what they should be getting. Again, I know that is an area of interest for the committee, and it is one of things that is really striking in the data. Thank you.

David DAVIS: Thank you. I am very appreciative. That is actually helpful to have all that context, and with the Chair's support we will try and pursue those national figures.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Mr Davis. We will go to Mr Welch.

Richard WELCH: Thank you, Kate. It might be useful for me if you could just explain the value of a national cabinet. I will give you the cynical view that you can refute. It seems to me some states lean into the cultural industries and the cultural market more than others. In Queensland – no disrespect, but we do not have a sugarcane national cabinet, because it is not that relevant to all states. We do not do sugar cane in Victoria. Victoria leans heavily into it. We have invested for generations into it. Isn't there an argument to say, 'If you just give us our share of the money, we know what to do with it'? Joining a national cabinet actually dilutes our voice, makes us one of many and brings us down to the lowest common denominator rather than leaning into our strength. What does Victoria benefit from being in a national cabinet, encouraging another layer of bureaucracy that is further remote from our specialisation?

Kate FIELDING: Great question. The first thing I would say there is in 2024 every state and territory either had a cultural policy in place or were developing one. I was born in Victoria, so I do have some loyalty to Victoria as a leader in this space. But I would say that, while it is a real strength of Victoria, it is also an area of significant active interest for state and territory governments right across the country. Yes, that is a very

important role and a very important part of Victoria, but it is a shared interest. Secondly, I would say two things on what the advantages are. Firstly, there is the cross-government learning. As an organisation who work across all three levels of government and work particularly across state and territory governments I am constantly asked – sorry, I should say ‘and talking with all our shadows’ – about what other jurisdictions are doing and constantly asked, ‘What’s interesting that we can learn from? Can you point us in the direction? We’re thinking about this; is anyone else doing it?’ While that is an excellent role for us to play and it is a key part of what we do play, we think that there is real value in state and territory governments learning from each other and sharing what works in that shared purpose of making cultural and creative engagement possible.

On a practical level there are a whole heap of things that happen in a cross-border way. You have many instances or examples of cross-border communities where there are practical ways for cultural and creative engagement to happen in those places. It is really important. Likewise there is a bunch of stuff in terms of touring and in terms of organisations servicing cross-border communities. There are really practical reasons why having good relationships around arts and culture is just common sense, and a ministerial council is one of the ways that that can be done. From my perspective I think that there is a real benefit in the formality of it in the sense of the resources that that brings. We have heard about some of the data gaps. A formal ministerial council would have a better positioning to be able to discuss and advance those types of really practical things around data that allow for a mature public policy conversation.

Richard WELCH: Thank you for that answer, Kate. Ultimately, when you distil things down to their lowest elements, it comes back to funding again and again and again. In your view, though, what are the other ways governments can assist outside of funding?

Kate FIELDING: What an excellent question. I am delighted to tell you that we will be releasing a whole new report on exactly that in a couple of months. It is a useful and important question in terms of yes, direct funding is an important part of what governments can do, but there are a bunch of other things that governments already do in this space that help foster and facilitate creative and cultural engagement and opportunities for that. And there are, again, things that we can see that different governments could learn from each other. We have engaged with all three levels of government on this and got advice from all governments on this to understand what it is that they are currently doing. On notice I am happy to provide you a very high level summary of that for the committee to help inform that thinking. Given that it is in development at the moment, I do not want to speak off the cuff.

Richard WELCH: Sure. That is really interesting to know. But something we have heard and something we have been exploring with other witnesses is that it would be a concern, layers of government getting together, because when layers of government get together typically there is a tendency to say, ‘Well, if we just provide a bit more reporting and we just provide bit more and we can encourage the industry to lean into this a bit more,’ it ends up adding more bureaucracy, in a sense. We were using the term ‘scope creep’. So the individual artists or the artists organisations end up, in order to satisfy the grand vision of the bureaucratic machine, having to do a whole lot of things that actually are away from their core artistic missions in order to satisfy government. And it is almost like the priority is being turned on its head: you are doing this because this is a government mission, rather than the government supporting your mission. Do you have a view around that scope creep?

Kate FIELDING: Yes. Look, I think what you are describing there is perhaps the experience of some individual artists and arts organisations in funding applications and reporting requirements. I have said before having worked in this space and also extensively in regional development, the disproportionate reporting requirements in the arts and culture space – disproportionate to the scale of investment – is an area of concern. But to your broader point of what would be the purpose of governments working together, I am not thinking that three levels of government should get together to create more reporting requirements. It is really about that basic piece of understanding who is doing what, understanding who is responsible for what, and there being a level of data visibility and shared understanding of the direction that things are headed in and what governments are responsible for, partly so that governments can have that conversation with industry. I think it was the Chair that mentioned in the early part of this session the frustration of: who is doing what, where are we meant to be going and would it be better if people understood which levels of government were doing what? This would help that as well.

Richard WELCH: Great. Thank you, Kate, and thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Great. Thanks, Mr Welch. We will go to Ms Broad.

Gaëlle BROAD: Thank you, Chair. Hi, Kate. Gaëlle here. I am just interested – Arena Theatre were the previous witness before you, amongst other theatre companies, but they just mentioned that the Commonwealth has no requirement to provide funding in regional areas – or regionally based funding, I should say. But you mentioned, talking Australia wide, about 40 per cent of people being based in regional areas. And I think it was 17 per cent of funding you said is allocated to regional areas by the Commonwealth.

Kate FIELDING: By Creative Australia, which is a small portion of the total Commonwealth expenditure.

Gaëlle BROAD: Okay. What are your thoughts on funding? Particularly because the terms of reference for this inquiry look at regional Victoria's share of national arts and cultural spending and we look at recommendations to make to the government, what are your thoughts on funding for the regions?

Kate FIELDING: Broadly I would say – I am going to give you a qualitative answer and then a quantitative answer – that based on the middle Australia work, which focuses on outer suburban and regional and remote locations, there is a significant appetite for and a significant expectation that governments will help make cultural and creative engagement possible in local communities. Emphatically from that middle Australia work we can see that people want things to be available in their local communities for them and their families, especially their children, to be able to go to. The public demand is there. We can share with you some statistics on the participation and cultural attendance specific to regional. We will provide those on notice. But we can see, both through that sentiment research and through the data, that there is demand there.

More broadly, my short answer is the cultural funding by government dataset is also not released by remoteness level or geography or any of the things that would help us answer these questions – as in us collectively, us who are interested in a public policy outcome that means that there is access for people right across the country. The Commonwealth have some specific programs which focus on regional Australia. The Regional Arts Fund, which is managed by Regional Arts Australia, is a Commonwealth program that is specifically focused on regional Australia. There have been uplifts to that fund in recent years. For transparency, I am a former chair of that organisation. There are specific measures that the Commonwealth does focus on in that area separate to what happens through Creative Australia. But the overarching answer, and I hate that I have to keep giving you this answer, is there is not good data visibility to answer the kinds of questions that you are asking. I guess I could reassure everyone in the committee that you are not the only ones asking this question. This is an area where I think there would be really good progress, and it would be a source of reduced frustration for everyone, if there was that kind of data available.

Gaëlle BROAD: Thank you. You did speak to this earlier in response to Richard's question, and I understand you are going to provide some information on notice about alternative ways that governments can help aside from funding. Just with our previous witness, one of the theatre companies in particular said that without government funding they will die. I note in your submission you want to dispel that myth. But is it different for theatre companies? What is your response to that?

Kate FIELDING: Firstly, I would want to say really up-front that every single organisation has a different revenue mix, and I do not know the individual circumstances of that organisation. It has obviously been an incredibly difficult five years in the industry, and I really want to acknowledge that there are organisations who have been really pushed to the wire in this time.

David DAVIS: The theatre more than almost any other.

Kate FIELDING: I think that particularly those forms which get people being able to gather together have been really exposed in this time in terms of the impact on their own earned revenue. Within our analysis, and I will talk to this within the submission, acknowledging the scope of this committee's inquiry, the broad cultural and creative industries – yes, it includes theatre, but it also includes architecture, it includes design; it is the really broad version of this space – when we do analysis on that, pre COVID 87 per cent of revenue was from sales and services income. That is those broad businesses and cultural and creative industries. When we dig down into the pre-COVID data for not-for-profits of a culture subtype, we can see that goods and services accounted for 47 per cent of the revenue. While it is significantly less as part of the revenue mix – so 87 per cent across all cultural and creative industries; within this not-for-profit culture subtype it is 47 per cent – it is nonetheless the largest revenue source. I guess the key point I am trying to say there is earned revenue is a

really significant part of the revenue mix, but when we look at that we can also see that government grants are also a significant part of that revenue mix. Pre COVID, not-for-profit culture subtype government grants were 30 per cent. This is as a group across Australia, all of those things; it is not about any specific company. But we can see that during COVID that really switched – that government grants became, understandably, a far more significant part of the revenue for those not-for-profits – and that the recovery has been slow. These are Australian figures. I acknowledge that there was a specific experience in Victoria, and we do not have the Victorian-specific data. I expect, as a guess, that probably those trends would be exacerbated, but it is a guess.

Gaelle BROAD: Yes, it was certainly a very unique experience in Victoria. I am just interested – in your submission you do talk about training. Could you just take a moment to shed some light on that, because the terms of reference do talk about the ongoing financial sustainability of the seven national performing arts training organisations and whether Victoria's share of this funding is adequate. Can you speak to that?

Kate FIELDING: I can speak to it in general terms, but I do know that those organisations have done really substantial financial analysis and sustainability analysis. As a nerd, I would really encourage you to seek that evidence from them, because I know there is some really robust analysis that they have done and I think that is going to be the most useful material for you in terms of the investigation.

Gaelle BROAD: I am just interested too – one of the previous witnesses said the cultural scene in 40 years will not exist, and I note too on your website that you have done some work on AI. I guess I am just interested in the risks and the opportunities, because obviously we do want a cultural scene in 40 years. Are people getting medals for creative thinking? What does the future look like in your view?

Kate FIELDING: Great question. I too would like there to be a cultural scene. I would like there to be local festivals that I can go to, I would like for the kids that I care about to be able to go to dance school and I would like to be going, 'Whoa, there are amazing creative technology things that I never even imagined as a child that I can experience.' I think that we should be ambitious and hopeful about the future without being naive about the fact that there are significant challenges.

Specifically on AI, I would say that we can see that it has been the case for a number of years already that artificial intelligence is being used in the way that we create, that we access and that we consume arts and cultural products and services. To talk about it like it is a thing that is going to happen in the future is to ignore the fact that it is already helping to create subtitles for the shows that we watch on TV and it is already in the filters on our phone when we are posting cute, silly photos to our friends. That is different of course to the bigger questions around the role of AI and the role of intellectual property and how we navigate the trade-offs in this, but I think it is really important that we understand that in our day-to-day, often minute-to-minute experience AI is embedded in the way that we experience and create arts and cultural engagement and creations. So I guess that is: yes, let us be hopeful, let us be realistic, let us be informed about the fact that this is not off in the future, this is now. We are already using it. There are benefits and there are definitely risks in that, and that is what we need to grapple with.

Gaelle BROAD: Thank you, Kate.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Ms Broad. Thank you so much for your time today, Kate. It was super, super helpful. That is the end of the public hearing, so we will leave it there.

Witness withdrew.