

PERFORMING ARTS INFRASTRUCTURE

Report on What We Heard

A NEW CANBERRA THEATRE COMPLEX

Funding was allocated in the 2018-19 Budget to develop a business case for a new Canberra Theatre complex.

To guide the revitalisation of the area around Civic Square and the Canberra Theatre, the City Renewal Authority are developing a Civic Arts and Cultural Precinct Plan.

We know that gaps exist in regard to types of venues and spaces in Canberra to accommodate performing arts and live music. We wanted to find out from the people directly involved in venues and performing arts what gaps they see and how Canberra could benefit from addressing these gaps.

THE CONVERSATION

A workshop was held on Friday 3 August 2018 at Ainslie Arts Centre to consult with members of the performing arts community on strengths and gaps of Canberra's performing arts infrastructure.

We heard feedback about a number of existing venues across the Canberra Region, as well as ideas about what could be improved for the future. The conversations we had highlighted that we need to commit to improving access to our current arts facilities, as well as considering priorities for any new venues.

WHO ENGAGED

Workshop invitations were extended to a diverse range of performing arts and live music venues, organisations and practitioners across the Canberra region.

Twenty-seven people attended the workshop, representing a mix of government and non-government owned performing arts venues, as well as representatives from the dance, theatre, circus, classical and contemporary music sectors. We heard views from the perspectives of venue owners, hirers and audience members.

Representatives from over seventy organisations were invited to attend, including government funded and private entities. We encourage people who attended, as well as those who could not attend the workshop, to continue the conversation with us.

Key insights from the community

Access

- 1 There is strong support for considering access in new builds for front and back of house facilities.
- 2 There was also support for upgrading existing venues.
- 3 A range of additional ideas included more relaxed shows and lowering concession prices.

Improving existing venues

- 4 Government commitment to improvements was a primary consideration.
- 5 Additional support existed for improving amenities at venues that accommodate arts events well, for example access to toilets at the Fitters' Workshop.

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Identity

- ⑥ There is also strong support for building the capacity of creative communities to guide specific infrastructure.
- ⑦ Additionally there was strong support for not 'siloeing' the arts, rather including arts in precincts with places for food, drinks, good foot traffic etc.

Need for a new medium scale venue

- ⑧ Access to a medium sized venue 400-800 seats that could be a 'black box'
- ⑨ More specific facilities for art forms, e.g. acoustics, a sprung floor for dance, a flat floor with no seating for live music.

Circus

- ⑩ There was some support for dedicated and right-sized circus training space, including a rehearsal room.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This 'What We Heard' report is an important step in providing the sector with a snapshot of what people said during the workshop, while government considers the feedback received in more depth and determines the next steps.

You can continue to provide us with feedback anytime by emailing artsACT@act.gov.au

Key Timings

Step 1 – 3 August 2018

Sector workshop

Step 2 – October 2018

'What We Heard' report released

Step 3 – November 2018

new Canberra Theatre Complex business case commences