

2019 Theatre Network NSW's Health of the Sector Survey Key Findings

"We need to divert funding for the NSW arts wherever and whenever we can. We need a sociocultural shift to value the arts, increase funding and pay all artists across the board above minimum wage. We're in an uncertain climate which is incentivising artists to create in order to understand. Artists cannot be replaced by technology, and therefore this is a sector which should be highly incentivised and emphasised as an affordable and sustainable model for economic growth in not just NSW, but the entire country."



photo by Peta Addy

The Health of the Sector Survey was divided into four parts: identity and work; economic health; creative health; and Personal Health and wellbeing. Respondents were also asked to nominate their top three challenges that the Arts face in 2019. All quotes are anonymous comments from survey respondents.

1. Identity / Statistic Data

201 people responded to the survey.

- 43.28% of respondents were Independent Artists – the highest of any category. Producers were the next highest respondents with 41.62%.
- 30.35% of respondents are TNN members, 30.85% are members of MEAA; and 30.35% were not affiliated to any organisation.
- 51.74% of respondents lived in Sydney; 14.43% lived in a regional NSW; and 13.43% live in Western Sydney.

2. Economic Health

"The entire sector is under funding pressure and a competitive model that despite the best attempts of peer assessment panels results in many excellent projects, programs and artists unfunded."

"Peer reviewing in theatre is hugely depressing given the tiny percentage of works that are funded in S2M."

- 37.71% indicated that the annual turn-over of the company they work for is less than \$50,000 per year. This was the biggest proportion of respondents. Next largest was 15.43% who indicated that the company they worked earned between \$1million to \$5 million
- 40.80% of respondents had not received any funding (government, philanthropic or private) for their work; 32.43% had received Australia Council funding; 37.31% had received Create NSW; and 33.83% had received Local Council funding. Only 24.38% had received philanthropic support.

"Wages don't match to other industries, especially corporate, across all levels of admin. The Arts sometimes find it hard to attract top quality workers when other industries pay a lot more."

"I've given it up as an income source. It's too hard, especially Theatre. I still practice but for no money and no artistic restriction."

- 44.78% indicated that 100% of their annual salary was from working in the Performing Arts.
- 26.37% indicated that less than 25% of their salary was from the Artists.
- 53.23% work full time in the performing arts and 46.77% have another job outside of the performing arts

3. Creative Health

"I would much prefer to work creatively on a full time basis but it's impossible. I need to take on non-creative roles in the Performing Arts to survive."

- 25.97% (largest response) indicated that they spent between 26-50% of their work in the Performing Arts doing creative roles. Only 8.44% indicated that 100% of their work in the performing arts is creative.
- 83% of respondents had carried out their work in NSW over the past two years.
- Where in NSW? The answer is very diverse. Our sector obviously gets out and about. 127 of respondents had worked in metro and Western Sydney, 209 of respondents were working in regional and remote areas of NSW and 228 were working in other states of Australia. 38% also worked internationally during this period. And all of you intend to work in similar places in the next two years.
- 98% of respondents have training or significant professional experience in the performing arts or related fields however only 55% do not undertake regular training or professional development but more would if it were more affordable or they had more time.

"There is not much scope for original creative thinking in the performing arts in Australia at the moment. Most of the money goes to major organisations that are not forward-looking about where the artform could go. Huge amounts of the creative talent of performing artists, young, mid-career, and mature, is underutilised. Our creative potential as a nation is therefore seriously diminished."

"Artists from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds find it difficult to have entry points into the sector and to grow their skills/experience in writing/performing/producing and in developing partnerships with organisations or venues that have knowledge of culturally sensitive and ethical processes. , Without strategic and regional investment in development for artists from new/emerging refugee or minority communities or emerging artists in general, especially in Western Sydney, these voices are isolated and not connected to the broader sector (geographically, socio-economically and culturally)."

"Creative Health is unsustainable without funding and REAL support. There is a huge unfunded industry in Sydney that has needed the support of an organisation like TNN for the past 5-10 years."

4. Personal Health & Wellbeing

"The mental health and wellbeing of workers tends to be put last. Smaller organizations often employ on short-term contracts, practice sham contracting, and fail to ensure workplaces are safe for employees. The preservation of organisations, be it financial or legally motivated, often seems to come at the sacrifice of staff wellbeing. Raise a bullying complaint? You can bet your contract won't be renewed."

"There are plenty of wellbeing issues that need attention. The top of the list would be mental health of artists on tour and in long-running shows, drug and alcohol abuse and the treatment of women in the arts."

"Burn out is, and has for years been, a major issue but nothing ever gets done about. We are just all expected to continuing pushing ourselves above and beyond for the 'love of it'."

"Job security is an ongoing problem. Unless artists are paid their worth and compensated for the time between jobs then job stress will never dissipate."

5. The Main Challenges Facing the Arts in 2019

The challenges outlined in the survey include:

- A revitalisation of our artistic culture that ... takes the focus off big organisations and top down Government initiatives.
- Artist mental health particularly linked to financial insecurity.
- The lack of funding is indicative of a general lack of interest, respect for all arts at a Government level
- Finding affordable space for rehearsals, affordable theatres for self-funded works and independent start up type nights where creatives can share first draft type works, experimental performance.
- Access to ready language translation/translators subsidised to support
- a risk averse production climate, particularly when touring to regional venues and when programming non-commercial work

SUPPORTERS

2019 Theatre Network NSW's Health of the Sector Survey

Theatre Network NSW and the 2019 Health of the Sector Survey is proudly supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.

