

2020 State of the Sector Address

Picnic



Theatre Network NSW would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional custodians of the lands on which we work, live and create.

In particular, TNN would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the Dharawal, Dharug, Wangal and Gadigal peoples of the Eora Nation; the Arakwal and Widjabul peoples of the Bundjalung Nation; and the Gumbainggir, Wiradjuri and Yaegl Nations, on whose land the State of the Sector Address and ITEM events were produced and presented.

We pay respects to all First Peoples Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

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This publication brings together the keynote speeches presented as part of the 2020 **State of the Sector** Address and a summary of the International Performing Arts Network, 2020 Multi-location Meeting – Sydney Gathering.

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2020 State of the Sector Address

Picnic

Theatre Network NSW in partnership Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre and NORPA presented the Annual **State of the Sector Address** on Thursday 28 January 2021.

The State of the Sector is an important gathering that speaks to the critical challenges and opportunities facing our sector. The 2020 Address was scheduled for mid-December and our aim was to move off zoom and reconnect with friends and peers. When health restrictions were introduced in Sydney due to the pandemic, we postponed the 2020 Address so we could meet face-to-face at three simultaneous gatherings in Bathurst, Lismore and Sydney at 5pm to 7pm on Thursday 28 January 2021.

At each gathering local artists offered unique and insightful responses to the provocation:

There Is No 'New Normal': You are the NSW Arts Minister, what is your vision for the Arts, and the role it can play in the wider community in a post pandemic, climate impact world.

The 10 incredible artists who shared their vision for the future are Jade Dewi Tyas Tunggal, Jenevieve Chang, Emefa Ezou, Tim Hansen, Kate McDowell, Patrick McIntyre, Catherine McNamara, Kate Smith, Mark Swivel and The House That Dan Built.

STATE OF THE SECTOR ADDRESS

TNN's State of the Sector Address is an annual convening of the live performance sector to gather and begin to work through critical challenges and opportunities. The State of the Sector Address is an independent, non-partisan, non-practicing gathering ground for leaders from across the spectrum to speak to critical issues facing theatre and performance in NSW and across the country.



Jade Dewi Tyas Tunggal

No 'New Normal'



When artists embody cultural knowledge
The Arts can heal, cleanse and astonish
Live performance is contemporary ceremony
Audience can witness and avoid feeling lonely

Place artists first – let them practise their art
Permanent employment is a good start
More Arts funding and reallocation of priorities
Artists are essential, their decisions producing quality

Catastrophic climate crisis is terrifying and real
Building immunity with cultural understanding is ideal

The Arts have ethical and spiritual applications
Sensitive courage towards Divine aspirations

Interdependency of life has power and potency
Grounding ideas of social and political equality
Combating over consumption with reclaimed
Non-violence
Campaigning for racial and ecological justice

Let Nature be the teacher of humans
Partnerships with forms of wildlife blooming
Wisdom traditions guiding clearly
Reality of bio-physical scientific theory

***Interconnectedness, Remediation,
Cooperative Work and Detoxification***

***Small-scale solutions impact the whole system
Value process and outcome as regenerative rhythm***

***Collective Leadership, Partnership, Adaptability
Resilience, Resistance and Decentralised Agility***

Jade Dewi Tyas Tunggal is an award-winning contemporary dance artist, performance maker, producer and educator.

Born on Darkinjung country, she is descended from Kangjeng Hamengku Buwana (Yogyakarta's first Sultan 1755), together with Australian Scottish and Viking heritage.

Achievements including Dux of NHSPA, Honours Bachelor Dance (NWSA Florida University USA), Darmasiswa Indonesia Scholarship and High Distinction Masters Choreography (VCA University Melbourne) support 25 years of performing arts knowledge and experience. International performance achievements reach across diverse live-art disciplines with Movement Research NYC, Miami Dance Umbrella, Australian Choreographic Centre, Mirramu Dance Company, Victorian Opera, Chunky Move, Indonesia Contemporary Art Network and The Bodycartography Project.

Presently she freelances with NORPA, Outback Theatre for Young People, Rekindling the Spirit, Beyond Empathy and Sprung!! Jade's performance works in theatres, galleries, universities, museums, video, public and wild spaces including Opal Vapour, Enfold, and 6/7 Empty have toured extensively. She is currently developing Flow and Smoke.





Artists can grow by connecting with country
 Making in Nature is complementary
 Learning cultural practices and sustainable ethics,
 Evolving social structures and mystical aesthetics

Producing art that re-connects humans with environment
 Expands relationships with Earthly enlightenment
 Unique voices and skills, crafting inspiring work habit
 As we discover more in this miraculous Planet

Well before the pandemic artists suffered a deficit
 Income and job security were basically negligent
 Inconsistent employment affecting belonging and love needs
 Achievements celebrated, but sold as commodities

Arts entertainment workers share mental health laments
 Anxiety, depression and suicide attempts
 Unpredictable work causes helpless despairing
 Feeling unvalued, low self-esteem and no caring

Artists need cultural safety, physical and mental strength
 To feel the fragility of life with breath and respect
 Being vulnerable with stories, reflections and dreams
 Remembering their death from subtle to extreme

Tune internal compasses with outward looking empathy
 Offer challenges, confidence and hopeful remedies
 Provoke speculation, laughter and sensible discourse
 Stimulate arguments about destiny, fate and existence

Art using Indigenous and alternative systems has gravity
 Creating artistic bonds with human rights and environmental longevity
 Decolonising human contact, bringing us together
 Growing us into community whilst braving brutal weather

*Establishing socio-cultural spaces for everybody
 Despite gender, wealth status, disability or ancestry
 Power of the arts to nourish souls with calmness
 Navigate the way with stories from the unconscious*

From patient quietude, acknowledge past with tender dreaming
 Artists create live experiences, open curiosity and seeing
 Imagine placing arts and culture centre to life and living
 Socially we will flourish with spiritual, cognitive and emotional giving

*Listening deeply, listen listen listen
 Sitting sitting stillness, awareness opens vision*

*Humble mind bowing head below heart
 Hear every dimension, wait until inert*

*Ancestral chants rise in circulating blood
 Lava heart mountain releasing sternum through cloud*

*Lobes of lungs incense, a smoke particle violence
 Unguarded immunity, high risk to strange virus*

*Fathomless grief, intergenerational wounded feeling
 Personal trauma recovery, repatterning for healing*

Slipping into cultural skin, container of consciousness

Inner transmission, outer health a vital consequence

*All fluid children, a new purpose returning to share
 Powerful kinship, future friendly protection and care*

**Listening deeply, listen
 listen listen**

**Sitting sitting stillness,
 awareness opens vision**

Jenevieve Chang

A Day In My Life... In The Not-Too-Distant Future



It's just past 6am, and there's a discernible breeze coming in from my open window. My day starts like any other day. I pull on my sneakers and make my way along the track leading to the Cooks River. Greeting my friends Clare, Donna, Dan and several other neighbours, we begin to trace-with our bodies- the passage of waterway through Wangal, Gadigal and Gamaygal Country as choreographer Aunty Vicky leads us through a meditative ritual of reflection and remembrance. This has been the bedrock of my morning routine for years...it must've been not long after Prime Minister Stan Grant adopted the Uluru Statement, when local councils formally restored custodianship of the waterways to their traditional owners.

After a shower, strong hit of coffee and a quick morning news scroll on Tik Tok (which has been going from strength to strength since its Murdoch takeover and network dump during the Great K-Pop Revolution), I head over to pick up my e-bike from Reverse Garbage. As a proud inner westie, I cannot be more chuffed about this local artist driven superstore which has become an engine of Australia's economic renaissance since the indefinite cessation of our trade relationship with China.

Half an hour later, I'm cycling through Hyde Park and stop off to check out the new work-in-progress statues being erected along Distinction Drive. I make some minor notes to take back to the sculpting team: Anh's paintbrush needs a tad more texture, Deng's gavel needs more weight. But Yassmin...Yassmin is perfect.

Arriving at the office I'm greeted by my stressed out EA, Robert. Apparently, there's been a technical glitch over at the theatre in the old David Jones site. And it's only 3 hours before showtime. Robert used to be CEO of one of the country's biggest banks, before the great Creative Occupation of Martin Place, so he's not always the sharpest tool in the Arts Cabinet. But he did come to us as part of the Artsmaker program for Corporate Layoffs, and what he lacks in experience, he makes up for in enthusiasm.

Jenevieve Chang is a multi-hyphenate creative with 20 years of experience working across disciplines. As an actor, dramaturg and director, she has worked with The National Theatre, Young Vic and Yellow Earth Theatre in the UK; and Bell Shakespeare, Griffin and Monkey Baa in Australia. As a dancer, she has toured and performed in Berlin, Montreal, Cardiff, London, Ljubljana, Vienna, Beijing and Shanghai.

Jenevieve's memoir, *The Good Girl of Chinatown*, was published by Penguin Random House in 2017. She's currently working as a story developer for film and television, and working on a new play with Monkey Baa Theatre about a young Chinese boy's journey to the Australian goldfields.

Anh's paintbrush needs a tad more texture, Deng's gavel needs more weight. But Yassmin...Yassmin is perfect.





After all, if it wasn't for the opportunities generated by what our detractors have described as a "glorified rehabilitation program," who knows where those pesky tax fraud charges would've led him? So, armed with a plan of the venue's lighting rig and a screwdriver, I send Robert on his way and hope for the best.

I'm priming myself for a big day of meetings. First up's a decision meeting on our latest assessment round. My team are ready and waiting by the time I get to the boardroom, except – I notice – for my chief of staff. I'm informed Maya's been called into last minute rehearsals for the revival of that much loved Australian classic, *The Coconut Children*. I'm disappointed as I rely on Maya's empathetic eye for detail in these decisions but it's our policy that everyone employed in the ministry maintains an active arts practice, so we are more than equipped to handle the absence. I make a mental note to review Maya's e-log on *Braintalker* and we get started. Apart from my team, we've got Ash from *Platypus Shoes*, Hattie from the soup kitchen and Jelil from the building site next door joining us on the panel. The recent reform of our funding criteria enables us to work at a brisk pace: Does it make you laugh? Yes. Does it make you cry? Yes. Does it make you feel? Yes. Approved.

Then the conversation pivots to our Cultural Equity Policy, which is in final drafting stages. There's division about the continued use of the word 'diversity.' It ghettoises the 'white experience', one staffer argues. And implicitly frames white people in the margins of the new Indigenous and BPOC centre, even whilst purporting to talk about "inclusivity." It's a salient point. However, others are still in favour of the word, citing a range of reasons from its usefulness as a shorthand to the fact that it's the term our parents' generation had to weather, so why not this generation? I already know which side of the argument I fall on, but I decide to adjourn the discussion to buy some time to come up with a unifying strategy around a contentious issue.

I grab lunch at my desk, deftly juggling a call from the Chairperson of what was once known as 'one of the Majors'. It's a charged conversation. 'In the end,' I find myself repeating, 'it's a matter of audience. I'm sorry Jane. But you and I both know that the Eurocentric model of 'excellence' just wasn't getting bums on seats...'

I put the phone down and heave a heavy sigh, staring out at the galleries, studios and theatres of Macquarie St. Even now, after all this time, I find it baffling that a small but vocal minority would object so vehemently to the dismantling of funding hierarchies and the democratisation of cultural value.

Then again, once upon a time I never have imagined I'd be Arts Minister. My great grandparents died of starvation. Literally dropped from lack of food. My grandmother's best dreams for me – even though she felt the sun shone out of my baby bottom-barely extended to me staying alive and maybe one day becoming a bank teller. And when I think about the travails of my own career: the early years of invisibility; the constant pushing against invisible ceilings; the growing interest in my "marginal" identity and requests to "speak to it" as if it was a "high-worth asset" in the arts exchange of my cultural capital; the waves of performative white allyship each one more toxic than the last until finally – all the talking and waffling and arguing was brought to a sudden halt with the Darian vaccine. Besides succeeding where Pfizer and Moderna hadn't, its unintended side effect of neutralising the genetics of fear conditioning – attributed to a glitch in its mRNA code – slowly but surely set the path for a new agenda. Yesterday's ceilings reconfigured, and became stairways for change. As if by magic.

"Minister?"

Maya's back. I shake myself out of my reverie. We have our usual three o'clock, going through reports, budgets, upcoming events and the travel diary. Scheduled for the following week are one on one sessions with all 50 Hothouse Residency artists in Mudgee, before Festival Opening night, which is expected to attract record foot numbers, as well as those streaming in. I make a note to check in with the Department of Broadband about bandwidth requirements for the event.

Then it's off to the Opera House creche to pick up the grandkids, before treating them to an evening of parkour at The Rocks. After all is said and done, perhaps the piece de resistance of my legacy is building a night-time economy for under 12s – successfully mitigating the melatonin deficiencies of the COVID generation.

Then it's off to the Opera House creche to pick up the grandkids ...

Mark Swivel Madame Speaker...



Madame Speaker
Honourable Members
Today
... illness stalks our wounded earth
... and truth leans into the ditch
... but chin up and let these mere words be your balm

For today
I am your minister
With the means and budget to
... run amok

In short ... my er hem ... executive summary ...
Our land needs to sing
The story of this earth ...
Our work of beauty as artists
Counts and must be counted
That's it
But let me continue briefly so ...

What we need is a campaign
From instagram to bumper stickers
To get across my big idea, folks, that ...
The Arts are not a thing
A sector
A commodity
An industry
No!
The arts are a fact of our hearts.
You and me and all of us
From the Kimberley to Kiama
The invisible
Incorrigible
Indestructible, fragile
Magnificent fact of our hearts
... That's the arts

Mark Swivel is a lawyer, writer and performer. He is the MC of Dustyesky, Australia's leading genuine fake Russian choir, has toured widely as a comedian and wrote *Water Falling Down*, a play about dementia, love of language and becoming our parent's parents (QTC 2010).

Mark runs the community law firm Barefoot Law in Byron Bay and is the treasurer of Spaghetti Circus. He often pops up on ABC radio and Phillip Adams once gave Mark a coveted koala stamp on Late Night Live.

For today

I am your minister

*With the means and
budget to*

... run amok





All of you children and elders in the arts
 Burdened with fame or obscurity
 (Or blessed)
 Rise up all of you
 You big hearted wonders and
 Give the country what it needs and wants
 The fact of our hearts
 Split the chambers of our life's pump
 Scale each and every ventricle
 Like the stomachs of a cow
 That's the arts now

 In a time of illness and fear
 In our sorry empty shops
 A child doing its COVID sums at home
 An uncle budgeting his Centrelink supplements
 An auntie painting the quiet in her town
 All of us trying not to get too down
 The arts are the rising blood of this time
 As we breathe and retreat and imagine how we
 can live
 Again

 Yes
 The arts do not exist
 They cannot be bought
 Or sold
 The work of beauty
 Is no work at all
 And I want to put all that on a bumper sticker
 With your help.

 Yet Madame Speaker
 Let's be blunt
 In simple contradiction
 To my first point
 Here is my second ...

 Get your abacus out
 Show us yer spreadsheet
 And tightly managed tiny budgets
 Mate!
 Helloooo!!!
 Damned artists of our country
 Tell me
 What's your hourly rate?
 What does your unpaid overtime look like?

Now
 Is it off the charts? Off the chain?
 Tell me how much, tell me your riches again!
 As illness stalks our wounded world ...

 Let us send out a bill together
 ... for every moment you've ever given for your
 craft and love
 Let's make a tapestry invoice
 Let us present old receipts made from magnetic
 tape and glitter
 For all the work of your long committed life that
 you have given to the arts
 To the fact of your heart

 Look now at all the empty halls
 The seats not sat in
 The bums staying at home
 Listen to the silence of the venues
 The paintings unregarded
 The comics not killing
 And let us
 Count the cost of it all

 We offer buttons
 To keep the already poor barely alive
 Politicians always expect applause
 And miss the point

 Every cent earned in the arts
 Is a cent like any other
 That spins gold and good in our community
 That's the economic fact of our hearts

The workers in the arts
... those among us who
take the artist's vow of
poverty ...

*We account for every
penny in the arts like a
mum waiting for their
child to come home*

The workers in the arts
... those among us who take the artist's vow of
poverty

The ticket seller

The rigger

The lighting gal

wardrobe guy

cellist and actor

The sculptor and clown

Our money sloshes around

Raises families

Employs tradies

Shops in shops

Makes cities more like cities

And all of us more like all of us

We'd do a lot of it for free

And do

But we will bite you hand off

Then your head

If we do not get paid

Because it's not the money

You know

But respect

That's a fact of the heart

So as illness stalks our wounded world

Let us do the sums of our dreaming

The inking to create

The daring to fail

The turning up to do it

To be skilful and serious

And do it again

Without a habitat

For the fact of our hearts

There is

No Blanchett

No Moffitt

No Hannah G

No Bangarra

No MCA

No Tash Sultana

No Hunters

No Collectors.

I hereby commission a grand report

An honest one

To follow the dollars spent on the arts

Around our community

Like a contact tracer

From the budget to the studio

To the dance school or cutting room floor

Every dollar goes to someone else

Every dollar is watched lest tomorrow brings no
more

We account for every penny in the arts like a
mum waiting for their child to come home

The great pause sent us into retreat

Which is where art grows

Now our wounded planet heals a little

Thirsting for us to relent

Our social contract is scorched by untruths

But here's where we find

Common ground

For our bare feet

Ground on which to meet

Roll up sit down

And share

The fact of the heart

In our town

Your village

In a mask

In a bubble

At 1 point 5 metres

To hug the fact of our hearts

The blood of our body

The healing of the world

And now is the time to work

For there is always work to do

On the fact of the heart

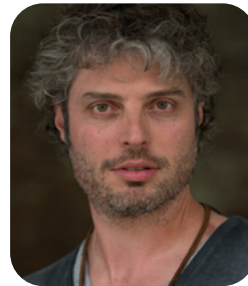
In fact

In here

Let's start!

Tim Hansen

I Wish I Could Do That



When I was little, it would be a very unusual day if my mum, who was a primary school teacher, didn't break out into show-tunes apropos of nothing at least once. Per hour. And I don't mean she'd quietly hum the chorus under her breath, I mean she'd be in the kitchen, making us kids toast or something, and then suddenly start high kicking and doing jazz hands and belting out "Broadway Baby" as though it was 1926 and she was auditioning for Ziegfeld Follies.

I knew it wasn't common to have a mum who did this, but in our house it was normal.

Not that me and my siblings were ecstatic about these impromptu performances. We'd all be like "Mum stop it, I'm trying to watch Voltron", but this would usually just make her grin harder and go longer.

Sometimes though, she would stop. And she'd sit down and explain, a little sadly, that when she was a little girl, all she wanted to do was dance. But her mum, my grandmother, wouldn't let her. It was silly, frivolous, and a waste of time. You'd never make a living doing that, my grandmother would say to my mum. So that was that.

Even though I was a kid I remember being sad for my mum, and feeling this vague sense of injustice, that my grandma wouldn't let my mum do something as harmless as dance. Especially considering that I lived in a household where that clearly wasn't a problem. In fact, the first "thing" I did when I was a kid, was ballet. I started in kindergarten, and my first time on stage in my life was when I was five, dancing in an all-boy ensemble to "One" from "A Chorus Line". I had a top hat, and a little cane, and tails, and I freaking loved it. I felt so special. I was very proud of myself.

Tim Hansen is a performer, composer, theatre-maker and teaching artist living in Carcoar in NSW's Central West. Tim works in both theatre and music as a performer, creator, producer and teacher, in varied mediums from classical music composition through to dirty late-night cabaret. He is a strong advocate for the vital role the Arts has in Australian society, and its importance in maintaining community cohesion and good mental health.

In 2019 he ran in the NSW state election on a platform championing the Arts as deserving greater respect and recognition from governments of all levels, and he intends to run again. He currently is composer in residence at Santa Sabina College, Strathfield and an artist in residence with Musica Viva's Musician in the Classroom at Ashcroft Primary School in Liverpool.

But, this was 1983, in Orange, in regional Australia. And it wasn't "normal" for boys to do ballet. I'm sure my parents discussed it a lot, but they were probably a tad too progressive for Orange society in the 80's, and so one day in Year 2, ballet abruptly stopped. And was replaced with soccer. And cricket. "Normal" boy things. And I hated it. I can't fault my parents. They were and are loving and kind and gave me everything I ever needed. I can imagine though they wanted me to have my best chance at life, and back then, in the country, that simply meant being normal, so no more ballet.

Luckily though, that wasn't the end of my story, because one day, when I was 8, I came home from school and there was a piano in the house. That was probably one of the most important days of my life. I fell in love with that piano the moment I laid eyes on it. It just felt right to me. It felt normal. And here I am, thirty-something years later, a professional artist. I write music, I sing songs, I make theatre, and I teach kids to do those things too. (But if you want to see me dance you're going to have to get me drunk. Tequila works best).

This is my life. It's just a job. And like any job worth doing it's about 70% awesome, 20% tedious, and 10% "why the hell did I ever decide to do this for a living". And I know I'm probably banging on about this a little too strongly, but it's **just** normal for me to do this. It's just a job, but it's a job I dearly love. I'm very proud that years of hard work have paid off and I make a living doing what I love and, importantly, what I'm naturally good at.

However one aspect of my job consistently bums me out: I can't tell you the amount of times after a show, or at a dinner party or on a date or whatever, when a stranger has learned what I do for my job, and they say: "I wish I could do that".

If I had a buck for every time I heard that, let's just say I probably wouldn't be quite so strung out about the paucity of arts funding in Australia.

"I wish I could do that."

Then usually what'll happen is they'll tell me a story similar to the story my mum used to tell me, of wanting desperately to do something creative, but an important adult in their life told them it was a waste of time or refused point blank to even consider it, or (and I sometimes feel this is even worse) they did start learning an instrument or dancing or whatever but they hit high school and were told enough was enough, it's time to get serious about life, and that was that. These kinds of stories, unfortunately, are far too normal.

But, as we all know, now there is no normal. 2020 right? What a year. In the past 12 months, I have heard the word "unprecedented" an unprecedented amount of times.

I've also heard the phrase "we want things to get back to normal" from our governments almost daily since March, by which of course they mean getting people back into steady employment, reopening industries devastated by the pandemic, including the arts, and getting families back together separated by closed borders. This unfortunately is our new normal, and it's not very much fun.

But the aspect of this strange, new normal that I want to focus on is the prevalence of mental health issues, of anxiety, of depression, of crippling loneliness. "Prevalence" is probably the wrong word. These issues have always been there. They have, alas, been quite normal. But what is new is that we as a society have finally acknowledged that we need to do something about this.

Now our state and federal governments have admirably stepped up to the mark and pledged significant financial support to address this secondary pandemic of mental health issues. And that is fantastic. But that is the cure. A person who has yet to develop mental health issues doesn't seek help. They seek help once the damage is done. There are two sides to this coin, and the other side is prevention. And I know from personal experience, from professional experience, from literal academic studies, that one of the best means to prevent the circumstances which can lead a person to develop mental health issues is engagement with the Arts.

I don't mind people thinking I'm weird for pursuing a career in the Arts. (In fact, I like it. It helps me sell tickets).





I know from personal experience because, for me, being a musician has helped me through some of the darkest periods of my life, when my mental health issues overwhelmed me. Playing and writing music didn't fix the problem, but it made it more tolerable. I can also say I know from personal experience because when the lockdown first hit, I was inundated by friends and strangers writing to me asking if I could teach them piano or how to write a song, because why not? They had to do to something with their time.

I know from my professional experience of twenty years of working with young people across the entire socio-economic spectrum within Australia, that no kid will ever be worse off, or more unhappy, or less interested in school, or less respectfully engaged in their community, having spent a semester hanging out with a bunch of kids their own age to make a piece of theatre.

And when I speak of academic studies, you can take your pick of the proven benefits that exercising one's creativity offers a person, but the study that always sticks out for me is that a leading reason a person develops a drug addiction is not because they're weak of character or degenerate, it's because they're lonely. Isolated. Who doesn't know what that's like, thanks to this new normal?^{1 2 3}

The arts, by their very nature, both encourage community engagement whilst also giving a person something active, gentle and introspective to do while they are by themselves. They are one of the best tonics to addiction I've discovered.

Of all the things from the old normal that I believe we must divest ourselves of in this new normal, it's the idea that an interest in the Arts is not normal. I don't mind people thinking I'm weird for pursuing a career in the Arts. (In fact, I like it. It helps me sell tickets). But what I will not abide any more is that I'm a fool for pursuing a career in the Arts.

If there is anything to take away from stories like my mum's and folks I meet, who lament being denied the chance to pursue their creative impulse, it's that the old normal is destructive. It doesn't enrich society having vast swathes of the population constantly feeling vaguely regretful they never learned to tap dance or to sing. It leaves us a little bit sad, a little bit empty, and sometimes simply at a loss to know what to do with ourselves.

If the old normal is the message that the only value you have to society is your ability to generate personal wealth, then I am very happy to leave that normal behind. I hope that the new normal from our government is the message: "we are so glad and grateful that you devote so much of your life working to support wealth-building in our state, that we will make it as easy as possible for you to pursue whatever creative activity your heart desires.

"We'll reopen all the old Schools of Art that are dotted across the state, that have been underused for decades, and support professional artists to come to your town or village, no matter how remote, and teach you how to play the piano, or how to use a spinning wheel, or how to throw a pot. Or to help you put on an art show, or a concert.

"We will make sure that every kid in every school has the opportunity to learn an instrument or to sing, and we'll make it so prevalent that it will be as normal to learn the guitar, as it is to learn your times tables.

"If you're unemployed, we'll make it perfectly normal for you to have access to workshops to nurture your creativity, if nothing else, to give you something to do, because as we all now know, when you're unemployed, it's very normal to get very sad very quickly, which makes getting a job even harder.

"And yes, on top of all these other things, we will make it as easy as possible for everyone to simply go and experience art and music and theatre and all the things in life that make life worth living, because now it's normal to be allowed to enjoy yourself and the company of your neighbours".

Honestly, it is my fondest wish for "normal" in our society to mean that, after a show, or when I'm at a dinner party, or on a date (yes I'm single by the way), I tell someone what I do for a job, and instead of them saying "I wish I could do that", they say "Oh! I can do that too".

That sounds like a pretty good normal to me.

-
- 1 <https://recoverycentersofamerica.com/blogs/how-loneliness-fuels-addiction>
 - 2 https://www.ted.com/talks/johann_hari_everything_you_think_you_know_about_addiction_is_wrong?language=en
 - 3 <https://vertavahealth.com/blog/addiction-isolation-and-the-cycle-of-loneliness>

Kate McDowell

Not Normal



Credit: Kate Holmes

The cupid's bow lips I part to speak to you
are not normal
if
your lips are thick and plump top and bottom,
so juicy they're forced to part involuntarily
And if yours are a thin straight line, perfect for
applying red lipstick,
the colour you choose which is slightly bluish to
match your fair skin which is not normal
And if your lips are bright berry like electrolyte
flavoured drinks,
And yours are pink glass wedges of grapefruit flesh
And your lips have deep brown edges like melted
chocolate biscuits either side of toasted marsh-
mallow pillows
I chew on mine and tear at the thin skin that holds
them together and that is not normal
It's a habit I've got in,
Normal is the coffee order you place each morning,
'What'll it be today?'
'The normal'
It's handy for your barista to remember your name
and to perform the ritual with knowledge and skill,
an exchange that is pleasing and mutual
But a normal order is not you, or me, or the person
sitting next to you.
Box jellyfish are making their way south
And the fish are disappearing
And if my lips are made in little mountains like this
And if yours turn down at the edges like a sad clown
each tiny part of life
and each of your three kids
can be made a bit different
Normal is
A thing
Made with the carpenters square,
clean geometry, set right
a metaphor taken from Latin language

Kate McDowell is a Writer & Performer based in Lennox Head and holds an MFA from the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) in Writing for Performance. Her Masters research study focussed on collaborations with neuro-diverse artists and accessible training in physical comedy. Kate is Program Director for Sprung! Integrated Dance Theatre and is currently an Artist in Residence with Back to Back Theatre (Geelong, VIC), undertaking a mentorship with AD Bruce Gladwin.

Kate is commissioned writer and performer for a new work with NORPA and the Catholic Schools Office in collaboration with local disabled artist Alice Boscheinen to be premiered in 2021.

In 2018 Kate's full-length site-based solo work *Wonderbabes* premiered with NORPA and the Lismore Quadrangle, and in 2016 Kate was Assistant Director and Stage Manager for NORPA's *Dreamland*.





to describe the English idea of average,
reliable, same, the healthy ordinary majority
The word normal comes with inherent judgement
preference and perspective of what is regular
and most close to perfect.

Perhaps

Art that is designed by minds

who cannot draw themselves as perpendicular
lines

who see their world as always realigning to
accommodate changes to their environment

These artists might in their expression

bend us too, their audience

tilt us to momentarily capture a different view

and understand

that normal

is a truth on which living things can't settle and
be still,

and the peaches we ate in summer ripened
slightly earlier this year

Fraser Island burned in what was meant to be a
wet La Nina year

right angles can be tilted and interconnected
to make hills and valleys and diamonds and
triangles,

tiny shifts that turn us all from uniform bricks
into dynamic shapes

we turn to tessellate with all the other figures
that make up the community we live in

Artists might reveal to us by their impressions

That human life arrives at all degrees,

Right angles can spin out in all directions out
from squared edges

Common standards

Established order

Regular

Usual

Are all ideas that are useful when we try to
understand phenomena

Like the changing of the seasons or our size of
shoe

so we can order some new ones online from our
bedroom

We can learn about the way things are in nature
and in human made systems

Normal is information we collect order in order
to understand when things are off kilter

Standards make life and work and caring for the
environment easier

and

Normal school prepares a standard set of things
for learning

that support a normal child to fit into the normal
way of life

if the child has been normalised right, it will
win her a normal job at the supermarket or the
supreme court, she'll nab a normal partner and
be set square for a normal life thereafter

when things don't turn out the way her
normalness predicted

Art reveals that

Normality as a principle

a wish,

a dream to aspire to

is problematic

and makes life for someone who doesn't pass the
normal test

a little harder

A book she reads skews the frame she looks
through

gives her permission to throw everything she
ever thought she knew out the window

Which makes her feel better

standards and order

are made to serve specific people, their point of
view, their aesthetic pleasure, and perceptions of
value,

Plants and animals oceans and rivers,

wind and fire and organisms in the soil that
grows our vegetables

are readable

their normality predictable

but knowledge about living things is not fixed

it's a principle from which to notice certain and
constant shifts

the normal we ascribe today will change when
the climate is no longer suitable to grow tomatoes
where we used to

Artists reveal to us that the things we assumed
we knew, are unstable,

Art can melt us into awe for the impossibility of
order or knowing it all

which

might prepare us to enter change

with grace

not

desperation to establish a new set of standards
that will keep us safe

The new normal

Is to reconfigure order

eliminate confusion
 Disillusion compounds when the earth shifts
 again and we measure up and find things have
 bounced out
 Two lines not quite set right
 I listen to the rhythm of waves, a normal pattern,
 that is ever changing
 one generation of us will give birth to the last
 the repetitive lap of the ocean tells me
 that one generation will give birth to the last
 Salt water contained in cupped sand sucks,
 taking back nutrients from its own ancient
 deposits
 Long after we are gone
 And when the ice is all melted
 The waves will lick the doorsteps
 of concrete and glass structures built along the
 shore
 slowly worn down
 like cliff faces were carved before
 where ancestors once sat at desks
 And documented ancient thoughts on keyboards
 and screens
 new organic forms, hollows, caves, circles and
 lines, made over time,
 Inside what they left behind
 Sun and waves burnish
 concrete sands
 glass
 steel sands
 Grinding
 For centuries
 Long after we have gone.
 A new normal is a compromise,
 change came and it was uncomfortable
 this idea
 will leave us ill equipped to manage when the
 floods rip though our town more frequently
 When the face of Australia is no longer white of
 features from the British isles or,
 somewhere nearby in Europe,
 But rather a face that is Aboriginal and
 Sri-Lankan and Chinese and Sudanese and
 Russian and Indonesian and Moroccan and
 Israeli and Thai and Maori and Vietnamese and
 American Indian
 And the person who teaches you standards in
 normal school might be living with a disability
 And your Dad might love another man, and your
 best friend of 20 years might tell you she's queer

and you might be heterosexual but be missing an
 ear,
 And I might live in a house, on a street with a dog
 and three kids and my dream kitchen but I might
 also have had it modified to accommodate for my
 youngest child who lives in a wheelchair.
 Driving home from work
 a song comes on commercial radio, it describes
 the way you love me so precisely that I weep out
 loud with no one to hear me
 besides all the tiffs about how you do laundry
 and the way we behave like children, chuck
 tantrums
 it's embarrassing
 surely our friends' love for one another is
 mature, more sexy, more ordinary
 But hearing our story sung as a ballad
 I see our collaboration and efforts to care for each
 other,
 The way we figure it out,
 a piece of duration performance art we're
 making,
 and something of value we can be proud of
 The next song sings of bling and bitches in string
 bikinis and the next song is love made stupid
 by long distance and another sells anti-love,
 self-love, love for the mother or an ode to the
 father who never was or a lullaby to the baby
 who sucks at her breast or love to breasts
 themselves or love for freedom or love for the
 rivers or the hills or the sprig of flowers that
 showed up on your door step one morning when
 you felt like you had no love left, or love to the
 old man who begs for coins on your street or love
 to the dog who knows you best or love to God
 who made you or love to drugs who made you –
 love is not simple or normal or same, and neither
 is anything or anyone or any time or any place or
 any way we engage.

*tiny shifts that turn us
 all from uniform bricks
 into dynamic shapes*

Patrick McIntyre

Real Value



Thanks to TNN for inviting me to speak. And it is our pleasure to welcome you all here to The Wharf as one of our first public events.

It is a stunning place; and we acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation as its traditional custodians.

The topic for our speeches today is a good one because it directly addresses the value of the arts.

The real value.

The value that no one ever seems to be able to nail down.

The arts provide experiences which are personal and qualitative and therefore cannot be objectively measured.

In the neo-liberal world, if you can't put a number on something, it doesn't exist. It's valueless.

And yet the arts have been a fundamental part of human culture for millennia. You'd think by now we would have earned our keep.

I see the arts as being an important part of the humanities in general. And the humanities are also, if not under attack, then being deliberately, or maybe just negligently, sidelined just when we need them the most. Look at the dwindling resources available to the humanities in the education system, and the perception created that an arts degree is a waste of time and money. An indulgence.

We are human animals and our problems are human.

The humanities is an area of study that focuses on humanity and the human experience.

So it's pretty important.

Patrick McIntyre has over twenty years' experience in arts management and is currently Executive Director of Sydney Theatre Company. Prior to that, his roles include Associate Executive Director of The Australian Ballet, General Manager of Sydney Film Festival, and Marketing Manager of Sydney Dance Company and Sydney Opera House Trust.

Patrick is a member of the Executive Council of industry body Live Performance Australia, was on the advisory boards of SCOPE for Artists, ArtsReady and the Deakin University arts management program, and was Chair of Streetwise Communications, a non-profit community publishing enterprise. He was a member of the New South Wales State Creative Industries Task Force. Holding a BA (Communications) from UTS, Patrick has also worked extensively as a freelance music and entertainment writer, and has presented on arts management, audience development and cultural value at conferences and events in Australia, the US and Hong Kong.

The humanities encompass things like language, history, philosophy and religion, and the social sciences like politics and economics. As well as the arts in all its forms. They're about understanding human behaviours and impulses. In one way or another, they're all about storytelling to make sense of the world. Even economics, which recently people seem to believe is an exact, unchallengeable, numerical science, is just a bunch of theories about human behaviour filled with such fanciful notions as "perfect knowledge" and outlandish characters like "the invisible hand."

The humanities are inherently and unashamedly qualitative – sensory, open for discussion, changing, obscure, ambiguous. Irrational. Human.

All the branches of the humanities have utility and value insofar as they help us understand ourselves and each other. Some, like language, politics and history, are generally understood as being useful because they represent knowledge and communication. The arts, of course, can hold and convey knowledge, and very persuasively, but they also connect to the senses, and beyond that, to feelings. A different set of aesthetic frameworks – red or blue, comedy or tragedy – can create different meanings in the minds of different humans using the same source material. The arts lead us away from the straight and narrow path of quote unquote "facts" and into the grey and murky hinterland of subjectivity, taste, life experience, mood. The very territory in which decisions are truly made.

The arts deal in emotion, which is key to their transformative power. We can learn information about, say, World War 2, or contemporary Indigenous experience, or the AIDS crisis from history books and the news media, but it is novels like *Alone in Berlin* and plays like *Black is the New White* and *Angels in America* that reinforce this learning with emotional truth and recognition. That build the empathy and connection necessary for commitment and action. To understand something, not just know it.

Most public conversations around the pandemic recovery are also centring on economics: jobs, trade, GDP. And these are important, but we also have to deal with the human impact. Depression. Disconnection. Anxiety. Again, understanding and responding to these conditions is the role of the humanities. In the theatre, we know that shared projects can give us purpose; gathering as an audience brings us back into public life and renews our need for society; the stories we tell can provide cheer or catharsis.

I see the arts as being an important part of the humanities in general. And the humanities are also, if not under attack, then being deliberately, or maybe just negligently, sidelined just when we need them the most.

The arts also deal in the speculative and the abstract. The science of climate change is settled. The narrative of climate change remains highly contested. On the one side, we have the near-term fear of a ruined economy and mass unemployment. On the other, the fear of a dead planet which is too vast an idea to process, let alone communicate. This is a failure of story: to imagine the lived experience on Earth in ten years, twenty years, thirty years and then to tell that story in a way that humans can grasp and feel. (Interestingly, I was at a dinner once at which Paul Fletcher was guest of honour, and the other guests represented his overall portfolio in communications, cybersecurity and the arts. And it was someone from the telecommunications industry who suggested that the government consult with science fiction writers as they seem to have a better grasp than anybody on the way the future's going.)

The notion that humans are rational and make fact-based decisions has been long debunked. Decisions are informed by beliefs, fears and hopes that exist before we even look at page one of an economic impact study. Understanding those beliefs, fears and hopes is the crucial thing particularly as the challenges facing humanity are getting more complex and more urgent.





The false belief in rationality has left us clutching onto data like driftwood in a storm. It has been the pressure to measure and reduce that has led to phenomena such as political hyperpartisanship. Our inability to talk with each other with trust and openness, and to speak across geographic, linguistic and cultural barriers, is driving us towards disaster. Success lies not in simplicity but complexity; not in rules but in reason; not in opposition but collaboration.

So what would I actually do?

I would push for the humanities to assume greater prominence in the educational system, and for humanities-based disciplines to be better used in imagining a better world and the steps required to get there.

I would push against this notion that the arts are elite. We will be stronger when the community feels the generalized warmth towards theatre as they do to, say, cricket. In the popular imagination, cricket is a seamless arc from a game in the backyard on boxing day with your nephews and nieces through to school teams, community competitions and up to the Ashes on TV.

Theatre follows this same arc: kids making a play under the dining table with a blanket for a curtain; school plays and eisteddfods; amateur community companies; the wide range of professional companies; The Lion King; even television is still mainly comprised of drama often made by the same writers, directors and actors that work on our stages. Yet there are schisms between amateur and professional, subsidized and not subsidized, commercial and nonprofit, art and entertainment, institutional and individual, that weaken us by breaking us into small pieces rather than uniting us under the long-standing tradition of theatre. As minister, I would try and join all these dots and try to eradicate this counter-productive charge of sinister elitism: elitism as exclusion and not as aspiration.

I would ask the industry for advice. How can the arts help with social equity and inclusion, with climate change, with healing the emotional harms of a global pandemic? And I would convey these ideas to my peers in other ministerial portfolios.

I would frame investment in the arts not as a cost that needs to be justified, but as the price to pay to generate value for the community. I would work with the industry to understand how much more value could be created and at what price as a way to push for greater investment.

Musician Brian Eno once said, "We have to move, but we don't have to do the rhumba. We have to eat, but we don't need to create the bombe Alaska."

We need to have more faith in the fact that the arts bring us joy and connection, and we need these not only for our well-being and resilience as individuals, but as the basis for us to come together to imagine a better future.

This value is immeasurable.

We need to have more faith in the fact that the arts bring us joy and connection, and we need these not only for our well-being and resilience as individuals, but as the basis for us to come together to imagine a better future.

This value is immeasurable.

Cath McNamara NSW Minister For The Arts



Good evening everyone.

I am Catherine McNamara, but you can call me Cath Mc. I am your new NSW minister for the Arts. I must say how fabulous it is that my portfolio is solely dedicated to the Arts again. What a great decision, when you consider that the Arts have pulled so many of us through the isolation, fear and uncertainty of this pandemic. In recent years, the Arts have been regarded as an add-on, an afterthought. Our Federal Arts Minister is in fact Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts. Before I became Minister, my predecessor was Minister for the Public Service, Employee Relations, Aboriginal Affairs and the Arts. You know they tried to ask me if I would be Minister for Infrastructure, Communications, Space Invaders, Holiday Houses, Casual Fridays, Beef Lasagnes and the Arts and you can only imagine where I told them to stick it. Art deserves its own portfolio.

“There is no new normal” and thank heavens for that. The old normal was broken. It was terrible. The old normal would, as I’ve said, often shove the Arts in with Communications or the Public Service, but never properly acknowledge the public service it provides. I’ve been left thinking a lot the past year about the link between art and societal health. I recall there’s a Gertrude Stein quote saying art is like taking the pulse of a nation and I think this is very apt right now. Works of art are sometimes a bitter pill for society or governments to swallow, but this pandemic has presented an opportunity for us to be much more assured of our social function as artists. Art has always gathered us, started conversations, found commonalities and tried to figure out how we move forward – together. Our public service is that we don’t always play by the rules and we often question how things are being done. Perhaps an almost-direct correlation with why most politicians appear to dislike artists.

Cath McNamara is an independent theatre performer and maker. She lives near Bathurst, on Wiradjuri country, and works in disability support and as a freelance performing arts facilitator for people with disabilities.

She co-wrote the immersive children’s theatre show Erth’s Prehistoric Aquarium with Drew Fairley and Scott Wright in 2015 and has spent five years touring the work throughout regional Australia (2017), Auckland (2018), USA (2018-19), and Abu Dhabi (2020).

Cath collaborated and performed in interdisciplinary dance theatre works Tangi Wai: the cry of water, by Victoria Hunt (Performance Space, 2015), and Throne of Thorns, by Malaysian theatre director Norzizi Zulkifli (UOW, 2015 & ASWARA Kuala Lumpur, 2017). She is also the very lovable Central West drag king Clint Taurus.





And art is influenced by world challenges; sometimes art is a welcome escape from a scary reality, like a pandemic. Or sometimes art helps us break free of stale, outdated ways of thinking that are currently causing us harm, in the case of Australian climate change policy. Art absorbs what is happening in our culture at any given moment and it compels us to explore the ideas, emotions and alternatives that present themselves.

So let's do a quick survey:

- Raise your hand if you binge-watched a series (or five) during the pandemic?
- Who listened to an album on repeat? Or had music playing when you were feeling lonely?
- Who decided to learn a new instrument – maybe guided by online teachers?
- Who read a new book (or five)?
- Who visited the virtual art galleries that were opened to us?
- Who zoomed or tuned in to comedy, theatre, or live music gigs?
- And come on, own up... who watched Hamilton?

The Arts was one of the hardest-hit sectors during this pandemic, and yet it provided a massive public service in helping people to endure it. Art enables us to express, connect, belong, and identify but we couldn't connect in-person so we did what artists do... we improvised. Live music gigs, theatres, galleries all racked their brains, their imaginations and their digital skills to deliver relief, empathy and delight to the nation.

And what was the thanks? The doubling of university fees for people wanting to study the Arts? The arts workforce was already decimated by us not being able to gather; many artswomen were precluded from JobKeeper due to the nature of their contract work, and this government (many of whom are Arts graduates) decided that the values, skills and competencies of the Arts were no longer relevant to the future of this country.

Now let's unpack this a bit as I think this false either/or between the Arts and other sectors has leaked out into Australian society at large.

I want to debunk the idea that the Arts somehow don't make you 'job ready'. I'm a proud graduate of both an Arts degree AND a Creative Arts degree (I'm the government's nightmare) and I have always had a job. I work in the Disability sector as well and utilise my arts skills every single day. My partner who is a production manager took her skills to the production lines of a local factory during COVID shutdowns. Our stories are common. Artists enhance society even in unexpected ways. Right now, you can bet people who've trained in the Arts are present across every sector. Utilising their creative problem-solving, their human-centred practice and their critical analysis. My vision as Arts Minister is for RECOGNITION. For all Australians to recognise the function of the arts. For people to realise how the arts are integrated into everyday life. For arts workers not to feel like receiving training, receiving respect, receiving pay is a hard-fought slog. During 2020 the arts improved mental health, restored connections and enhanced education all around this country.

If I was being really cheeky, my vision would be that the Australian community value art 1/8th of the amount we value sport. I'd be happy with that. A 10,000 person-limit on arts events? Yeah I could deal with that. I mean it'd be tough but I reckon we'd cope somehow...

My vision as Arts Minister is for RECOGNITION. For all Australians to recognise the function of the arts. For people to realise how the arts are integrated into everyday life.

I call for the arts to be recognised as GENERATIVE work. Art is productive, innovative, nation-building work that is essential to our progress as a society. I call for my ministerial colleagues to recognise the value of artists to our economy. I can talk the government talk and quote the numbers if you want. Arts and entertainment alone generated just under \$15 billion for the Australian economy in 2019, and created around 195,000 jobs (around four times the jobs that coal mining created, just quietly). And an ABC fact check last November found that arts graduates have similar if not better employability when leaving university than graduates of STEM, but I'd also like to bloody well stop feeling like I have to explain myself. As I truly believe we need art to ground us, to round us into more-informed, more complete people. As Australian historian Tom Griffiths says the arts "underpin the very fabric of our social being and our collective lives... and light the spark in people's souls, giving them a reason to fight for survival, to fight for reform".

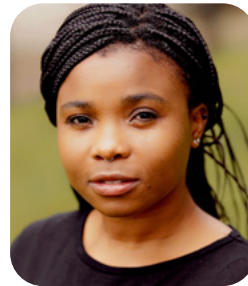
Now the issues of 2020 are far from solved – the climate catastrophes, the viruses, the white supremacy – are always adapting and mutating as quickly as we must adapt and mutate to combat them. 'Normal' aka 'apathy', 'complacency' was a privilege for so many of us before last year. There are more opportunities for us to be motivated towards debate and change now.

And just remember we have been here before: plague, drought, famine, disaster. Above adversity, art rises and endures. From the earliest artworks etched in sacred places, to our digitally connected world, art is essential to help us record, understand and eventually overcome that which endangers our existence. Don't let people tell us we're not relevant.

I call for the arts to be recognised as GENERATIVE work. Art is productive, innovative, nation-building work that is essential to our progress as a society. I call for my ministerial colleagues to recognise the value of artists to our economy.

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- 4 RMIT ABC Fact Check, 2020, 'Fact Check: Do Humanities Graduates have the Same Job Prospects as Science Graduates?' RMIT & ABC, accessed via abc.net.au/news/2020-11-19/fact-check-humanities-science-graduates-uni-fee-changes/12822186
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Emefa Sebastine Ezou Do I Come Here Today To Bury The Arts?



Dear friends of the Arts community—and isn't that every one of us, whether we work in the Arts or whether we are simply the audience, the appreciators of creative work and talent: on the stage, at concerts, operas, recitals, art exhibitions, and literary festivals—I do not have to tell you that these have been difficult times. I do not have to tell you that we are all feeling battered by the storms and isolation of COVID-19, of devastating bushfires, of unprecedented weather events, and by the economic results of all those elements.

So, do I come here today to bury the Arts? Am I here to tell you that the NSW Government has no more money for the Arts, and no option but to drive a last nail into its coffin, that there is no **New Normal** on the horizon?

This government takes your faith in us seriously. Your vote for us was on the basis that we would protect you, that we would provide each person with the opportunity to realise a livelihood, and that you could have the means for recreation after your toil. The challenge remains for this government to maintain that focus while meeting the demands placed upon it by extraordinary and difficult times.

When considering the future of the Arts, we have particularly considered our young people in the Arts community, for the future truly and rightfully is theirs. In saying that, we do not discount the enormity of the skill and dedication those older Arts professionals have given us, but the future is not their time.

As the Arts Minister, I have directly interviewed very many people who work and study in the Arts sector. These are passionate people with big aspirations. I cannot tell you all their stories in this place and time, but I will tell you one story of a final year acting student who was looking forward to finishing her degree program and to beginning her career as a stage and screen actor. She transformed a small corner of her living room into a multipurpose television, drama studio and theatrical stage, where she spent many hours rehearsing a play that she may never get to perform, and she transitioned her studies to an online environment.

Emefa Ezou is a stage and screen actor, a storyteller and an aspiring entrepreneur. She currently lives in Wagga Wagga and has just completed her bachelor's degree in Stage and Screen (Acting).

She appeared in several university productions including William Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* and *Macbeth* where she played the roles of the Nurse and one of *The Three Witches*. She wrote and directed a short film titled *Sorry* and for the 2020 Bloom Festival she completed her most daring project by performing a one woman show which she wrote and self-directed.

In 2018, she was awarded a grant by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to produce her short animated film *No Place for an Alien*.

'there are people who know more about the Arts than those elected to government, who wear suits and sit in a big office'.

Now, if you stop and think about it, you might consider it incomprehensible that one could convert the practical and people-centric craft of learning acting to an online, solo pursuit. This young woman admitted to me that she felt discouraged and devastated, not only by the ravages to her craft, and fear that her university studies could be dissolved, but with her worry for others: for her Arts community, for her wider geographic community as it went into lockdown and quarantine, for her family and friends. We too have shared these fears: that we or our loved ones would succumb to the pandemic; that new economic realities would create an insecure future for the work and play of our old lives; that perhaps indeed, the joys of the old world might be unable to be resurrected. We all have wondered: Will we ever return to normal, or will there be a **new normal**, and if so, what will a new normal look like for me?

Collectively, the people I interviewed expressed similar concerns about the current situation and their fears for their futures. You might, therefore, be wondering why I choose to reflect on this one person's response to the pandemic and the potentially uncertain future of the Arts? It is because that one particular student of the Arts has touched a nerve, with an idea that this government has listened to very closely, an idea that we have weighed and considered from every angle and have decided to adopt. It is an idea about the future.

While I have focussed here today on how this one acting student looked fear in the face and carried on, I know that it has been the same for every one of you. Each has had his or her challenges to confront and to negotiate. I say, take a bow, because this is the behaviour of winners.

So, am I here to bury the Arts? Absolutely not!

I am here to tell you that the NSW Government has listened. I am here to tell you that the NSW Government recognises, as the Arts student I have referred to so aptly said it: **'there are people who know more about the Arts than those elected to government, who wear suits and sit in a big office'**.

We will be establishing a committee of representatives from the Arts. They will be from theatre companies, and they will be artists, actors, performers, writers, musicians, and students from all areas of the creative arts. Together, we will devise a strategy to not only keep the Arts alive in a post-pandemic and climate-changing world, but we will consider and implement a reimagining of the Arts in a new and different future.

Consider this: prior to the pandemic, Arts students were primarily catered for on-campus with face-to-face teaching and hands-on technology. During COVID, it became necessary to rethink the Arts, and a quick transitioning to online learning took place, with online performance to online audiences. As our young acting student has pointed out, if we can do it in a pandemic, why not offer learning modules and performance opportunities in the digital space as part of the new normal, providing outreach to those who live remotely and overseas, who would not normally be able to benefit from the excellence that we can offer. This idea opens up new markets and new opportunities.

The Arts community cannot do this alone. We will need you, every one of you who desires a job within entertainment, and a future enjoying entertainments. We will need entrepreneurs, researchers, sponsors, donors, benefactors and legacies.

Today, I announce that we have established **EMEFA**, the Enduring Multi-Economic Foundation for the Arts.

When you visit emeфа.nsw.org you will find a two-part EMEFA communications hub. One component of the hub – called CARE – is where we will welcome submissions from all participants in the Arts, including those who make up our Arts audiences. This government wants all stakeholders to participate in the decision-making for this inspiring new project. The second component of the communications hub – called GIVE – will welcome communications from individuals and corporations who are keen to financially support this exciting new Arts endeavour.

It's time to rethink the arts, to be bold and innovative. Governments tend to follow and support traditional expressions of art but this government wants more innovation, to encourage research into new learning and new entertainments. Give us immersive experiences, give us an art revolution. Let us start something new. It's time to think outside the square, to be bold—no idea is off the table. We want history to look back and say: New Arts started in Australia.

Send us your submissions and support for **EMEFA** and together we will start an arts revolution, and create an exciting new normal.

The House That Dan Built A Voice For Young Women



Introduction:

Hello my name is Grace and we are members of 'The House That Dan Built' ensemble for 2021, a cross age ensemble of girls and young women that create vocal works. The fundamental purpose of our ensemble is strengthening our capacity as performers both physically and vocally, and inhabiting a space in which we can develop artistic endeavours, create and perform. When asked to speak at the sector address we considered and discussed what is important to us as young and emerging artists, and what that means now in a COVID world. We found 5 areas of discussion kept coming into focus – opportunity, diversity, accessibility, identity, process and the artist's relationship to the world around them.

We would have loved to sing this address, but as we all know in a COVID world, singing is bad. No singing.

The Emerging Artist's relationship with the world around them (Grace)

As young people, our upbringing among social media, activism and fake news is unique to us. The ideas we have, and stories we tell come from our individual and shared experiences which is unlike any other generations. I have been an active aspiring artists since my first workshop with ATYP in 2013. Having the ability to inhabit a space that encourages me to act upon my experience is liberating. Having that work witnessed by peers and people I respect is exhilarating. It has allowed me to acknowledge the relationship that exists between emerging artists today and the world around us. Following the uncertainty of COVID 19 and its impact upon the arts sector as a whole, I realised the importance of young voices and energy within creative spaces and in all social discourse.

The House is a collaborative force that creates unique vocal experiences. We aim to activate women and girls across the world to feel empowered to speak, to feel like they belong: like they are part of an army.

Established in 2014 with 12 creatively distinct young women, The House is gaining recognition as an extraordinary multidisciplinary performance collective. Most recently the ensemble performed with Sydney Chamber Opera in Tokyo at the World Festival with the acclaimed production *The Howling Girls*, and in 2019 the ensemble are to be featured at the Venice Biennale in renowned Australian video artist Angelica Mesiti's work *Assembly*. Working right across Australia to share stories and give songs platforms. The House travels each year to regional and remote communities to connect with rural women and girls seeing local stories for the first time in their hometowns.

The Pandemic made us realise once again that the core of what we do is creating this chorus, a sense of belonging to a unified voice.

Our experiences and position within the world is unique, and influences the production and processes of our art. Such experiences demand platforms that allow for the creative development of the young artist's ideas, in spaces that treat them seriously. Being given a space to articulate my ideas and experiences through art as a human being has been incredibly important to my identity as both a young person and more specifically as a young woman. In shifting our perception in wider society towards young people, it is possible that we will all acknowledge that there is real power here.

Opportunity (Sylvie)

As a young person, it's not always easy to navigate new or difficult emotions, and for me and many other young people I know, the performing arts provides a way to process and explore our emotions in a healthy way. The world is constantly changing and by participating in creative opportunities we have a therapeutic way to reflect on ourselves and not get lost in anxious thoughts. It is empowering to create something from nothing. I'm Sylvie O'Keefe and I have been lucky enough to have had access to classes and workshops for 8 years. Access to older artists and a network of established professionals has given me countless opportunities to create and grow as an emerging artist myself. I have also been able to learn how to teach younger and new girls just starting out. This has boosted my confidence and self esteem. I acknowledge my privilege and I would like to see all young people being given this opportunity too.

Providing opportunities for young people to engage in the performing arts is so often overlooked, which is crazy. It helps us communicate through tough times, boosts our confidence, encourages us to be considered, empathetic and articulate. My involvement with the performing arts has helped shape how I see the world. It has exposed me to different ideas, concepts and viewpoints on big issues that ask me to really consider what I think. These opportunities create pathways to explore difficult concepts and can provide a way of dealing with what COVID has presented. Us young people all need opportunities to express ourselves, advocate for what we believe in and to enhance our human connections. This can ONLY benefit the larger society! Art is like a little kaleidoscope through which we open up to the world with more colour, light and diversity.

Identity (Tallulah):

My name is Tallulah Simpson and I have been part of The House since 2016, beginning in Toy Choir. This experience has been instrumental in the development of my own self expression which has helped me to grow as both an artist and person. Entering The House I was pleasantly surprised, not only at the kind hearted greeting but the open and non judgmental approach to the creative process and the incredibly unique places each girl went to because of this. This environment helped me to both gain the confidence to explore my identity and determine what I am passionate about, and what I had to say which had previously been frustratingly inexplicable.

For young people, finding and exploring one's identity is an inevitable part of growing up and arts programs are so vital to this process in order for young people to not only find their voice, but incline people to listen. This is especially applicable to young girls finding their unique voice in the arts which is a contributor to why I enjoy being part of The House so much.

Speaking personally, my identity has been something that I have struggled pinning down and expressing my feelings, arts programs, have helped me be able to explore and express these feelings. Creating in The House has halted my tendency to be overly critical and enjoy what I had created. This excitement in creating something so personal has led me to harbour passions other facets of the arts such as drawing, painting and singing, opening new forms of experimentation and expression of my identity through my passions. Expressing myself through the arts and seeing others, especially young people, do the same excites and inspires me in a way nothing but creativity can.

Diversity/Accessibility (Sandra):

Hello my name is Sandra. We all know accessibility in the arts is key to democratising opportunity for all people, from all backgrounds and facets of our society. We all come from somewhere and have a story to share, it is through being exposed (usually at a young age) to art and arts programs that they find their forte and are able to have their talents discovered and nurtured. Australia does not have equal opportunities for our young people. There are pockets of our society with privilege, but there are vast areas which lack the opportunity for young people to learn about the marvels and joys of the creative process. The lack of exposure to opportunities from technical ideas to artistic collaboration across demographics and regions hinders us as a society at large.



Cultivating a society of people who are empathetic and encouraging of diversity would change the face of our country. Of course in this room we are all artists, who know and live this. How do we push this truth outside of our bubble. We need to make learning about art as important as watching, listening and appreciating its elements. But more so, making learning about art accessible across the Australian demographic, and addressing the suburbs and regions that have a lack of programs and funding. Why has Youth and Emerging Arts been so overlooked in our National Funding? Greater accessibility leads to greater diversity in our rehearsal rooms and on our stages.

Diversity and inclusion requires a long term commitment plan that requires strategy and funding. It is not an easy undertaking, and there is no point dangling a one off arts experience in front of young people. Real access means having opportunities and avenues open all the time.

By investing in diversity of young people we will hear multiple perspectives and as agency grows the creation of new and diverse narratives will contribute national and cultural identity that is reflective of who we really are. Investment in young people allows for the talents of those in marginalised areas of our society to be given power through their art; the platform to communicate their human experience. We can encourage racial, ethnic, socio-economic and age diversity through structural and systemic alterations to acknowledge, include and shine a light onto those who are still silent.

Process (Scarlett):

The Artistic Process

Hello I am Scarlett and I am here to talk to you about “the pivot”. As my ensemble members will agree with me, it may be a new year but if we are still pivoting like it is 2020. The arts and our way of collaborating is great training for the inevitable pivots that will be happening for us – possibly forever. I used to find changing plans hard before I started performing. Now, pivoting is something that I use as motivation to explore my creativity, right now it is out of necessity, but I think it might serve me well in the future.

Although we are “pivoting” there is a security in relying on our process and a team. Pivoting is possible with a team, as there is someone to step in when you have been banished for a running nose. With a cross-age ensemble we are able to find innovative ways of using technology to create connections and share stories. Our process of getting work on floor means we are getting used to working without a net.

I now know that not everything is going to be perfect straight away, you may have to workshop things to get them where you want to be, and before getting there things may change again. Throughout COVID the arts have suffered, but we are now in 2021, and although it is not always pleasant or fun, we are finding new ways to do things everyday and this will strengthen our future.

Diversity and inclusion requires a long term commitment plan that requires strategy and funding. It is not an easy undertaking, and there is no point dangling a one off arts experience in front of young people. Real access means having opportunities and avenues open all the time.

Kate Smith NSW Arts Minister



It is an honour and a serious undertaking to be the NSW Arts Minister.

I acknowledge that I write this response from my home on Wiradjuri land. It is a great privilege to live, work and create on this beautiful Country. I pay my respect to elders past, present and emerging and I recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.

What and who do we turn to, to make sense of loss, pain, sorrow, and fear?

During lock down millions of Australians turned to the arts, to artists for succour, for respite and release. Across the world our appetite for stories – in whatever form – took on new dimensions in response to the isolation and challenges we collectively experienced as we bore witness to the worst pandemic in history.

An incredible outpouring of creativity occurred online in response to the pandemic. Artists played, composed, danced, taught, wrote, rehearsed and read in forums online- cobbling together cabarets, choirs, mini-desk concerts, musicals, play readings, life-drawing classes, virtual exhibitions and so much more.

The artists instinctive response to lockdown was to connect and to share, to unite the wider community in whatever way they could.

The thing is this is normal behaviour for an artist. It is not new. This is what they do. Risk, resilience and imagination is their territory. The artists were made for these times.

They adapt, they respond, they transmute, translate and transform our understandings of complex events emotions and nurture us through the very act of living and being.

The arts give us context, reflect our stories, and crucially, help us make sense of who and what we are.

A comedic writer, cabaret artist and actor **Kate Smith's** works have toured extensively throughout Australia, the U.K, Hong Kong and the U.S.A.

Theatre highlights: One-woman show, Wanderlust, Bangers and Mash, The No Chance In Hell Hotel, The Unspeakable Itch, Oh My God I Have Been Kidnapped and I Hate What I Am Wearing (co-written with Drew Fairley), Beatches, (WITS Festival), Horrible Harriet (CDP), Mighty, (Lingua Franca).

Television: All Saints, Blackjack, Spirited, 30 Seconds, Totally Full Frontal, Beauty & The Beast and Kate and Julia, with Julia Zemiro.

The 2019 recipient of Create NSW's Creative Development Fellowship, Kate also holds a PhD in performance studies. The fellowship extends her practice, which over twenty years has evolved from stand-up to playwriting, academia, to cross-sector interdisciplinary arts practice, creative mentoring and profile raising for regional arts.





2020 was a year in which we were forced to face new and greater responsibilities while also letting go of others, define new contributions, and – if we had the courage to – recognise our own culpability in the face of the collective crises we faced and continue to face globally with the COVID 19 pandemic and the escalating climate crisis.

Our values around effective leadership have been challenged and juxtaposed under the most extreme of circumstances.

We began 2020 in the grip of searing drought and watching our country burn, knowing the hotter drier Summers, the wildfires, the devastation and destruction lived through by so many Australians is caused by a lack of action on climate.

We learned there was more money after all when our federal government managed to act on socialist or at least collective community principles and create a sizable welfare state during COVID.

If, as we all experienced, in collective crisis we turn to the artists to entertain, educate, nurture and interpret, then it is vital we provide a solid framework to support this deep nurturance for a cultured society to not just recover but to thrive.

For if the foundations are denuded then what kind of society will we be left with?

Our vision is underpinned by the question ***What role do the arts play in a post pandemic, Climate impacted world?***

I have turned to the experts for advice to ensure this vision is robust and timely. Our intergenerational, culturally diverse, group is representative of the complex, multi-layered arts ecology. The team includes bi-partisan peers from the small to medium and community arts sectors, major arts organisations, the education, health and business sectors. I am guided by their expertise, their insights and experience.

Our vision aims to support the cultural and creative sectors in the following ways – drawing on cultural policy developed by the 2013 Gilliard Government and research undertaken by the 2020 ***Australia Councils National Arts Participation*** survey that asked Australians to respond to questions about the role the arts play in a post pandemic world.

Themes that emerged from this research are varied and inform the way in which we will reframe arts in our culture.

In many ways the survey feedback echoes highly successful events, programmes and projects already occurring or in planning- street activations in the form of laneway and music festivals, curation of forums and performances by First Nation responses to climate change, training and skill-sharing initiatives for professional creatives, support for emerging artists and innovative capacity building arts projects designed to engage the wider community.

Our vision is to significantly expand this support in recognition of the exponential growth of the 11-billion-dollar contribution the creative sector makes to the federal economy annually.

Our central purpose is to highlight the vital role the arts and artists play in facilitating healing and connection in these times. Artists are experts at risk management, they always have been, it is intrinsic to the creative endeavour. To know how to pivot, reimagine and respond with innovation often with limited resources.

Our vision is to empower artists to nurture individuals and society through healing and connection in new, unexpected and as yet unimagined ways. We believe that artists are the front-line workers tasked with healing our emotional wounds, our trauma, to help us process this so-called 'new normal'.

As such we will provide the platform needed for our artists to channel and engage their communities like never before.

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This response is key to for us to stay competitive as a globally engaged economy. This vision is risky and radical. For this I am unapologetic. You have asked for it be so.

Gillard's **Creative Australia Cultural Policy** did not come to fruition post 2013 but its principles hit the mark. We have adapted and expanded these five guiding principles responding to the current moment

- Recognise, respect and celebrate the centrality of First Nation cultures to Australian identity
- Collaborate to ensure diverse cultural expressions from Australians from all walks of life are prioritised.
- Encourage imagination and risk as pathways for artists to create Australian stories across all disciplines across multiple platforms
- Centralise and strengthen support for the professional creative and cultural sectors as vital indicators of a thriving society-economically and in terms of health and wellbeing.
- Prioritise education and training as central to cultivating an economically powerful creative and cultural economy.

Education & Training

- Support the recovery of Indigenous languages at primary, high school and tertiary level education across the state with dedicated lessons and Indigenous-led training and delivery.
- All primary schools will employ dedicated creative arts educators as a core part of curriculum delivery.
- Provide training for young people considering careers in Creative Industries – reinstating TAFE funding for creative pathways and providing subsidised trainee-ships at major arts organisations.
- Lobby Federal government and Senate players to re-instate low fees for arts-based courses at university

Health and Wellbeing

- Cross-sector collaboration between arts and health organisations will receive increased support to deliver programmes that use professional arts practice and research in long-term community-based forums, and programmes that support health, well-being and crisis recovery.

Professional Support- Imagination and Risk

- Increased support for major arts companies to tour or exhibit regionally in NSW
- Increased support for small to medium sector companies to develop new works.
- Significant professional development opportunities for independent artists across all sectors to re-enter the workforce after maternity/paternity leave.
- Increased funding for transition to digital platforms with access to high-speed broadband.

We are living through unprecedented times, and we are not going to return to 'normal'.

Why would we want to?

This moment is opportunity for us to act. To recognise that the arts are central, if not critical to the evolution of a globally competitive economy, a deeply connected society, a society that can heal in new ways. A society that may just survive if we have the courage to act. Now.

In her opinion piece 'The Pandemic is a Portal', author Arundhati Roy writes,

Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.

Ms Roy is right, and our vision places the arts and the artists, the educators and the visionaries as the conduits to lead the charge.



IETM – International network for contemporary performing arts is a network of over 500 performing arts organisations and individual members working in the contemporary performing arts worldwide: theatre, dance, circus, performance, interdisciplinary live art forms, new media.

IETM members include festivals, companies, producers, theatres, research and resource centres, universities and institutional bodies.

The IETM hold two plenary meetings a year in different European cities, and smaller meetings all over the world. IETM commission publications and research projects, facilitate communication and distribution of information, and advocate for the value of performing arts.

On 1-2 October 2020, IETM invited the global performing arts sector to the very first Multi-location Plenary Meeting, which combined participation in both online and physical activities in more than twenty different locations in the world.

The local Plenary meeting in Sydney (Wangal Land, Eora Nation), Australia was hosted in collaboration with **Theatre Network NSW** and with the support of **Legs on the Wall**.



Pippa Bailey ...in Summary



This week I had the great fortune to sit in theatres on four separate occasions. Yes, I know, it's an exciting development for us in Australia and almost unthinkable for anyone in the UK or Europe right now. I was attending Australian made live Performance at Sydney Festival. It felt so good, a well-earned concentration of cultural highlights after a year of staying in.

In January 2021, Theatre Network NSW hosted its annual State of the Sector Address happening concurrently on Gadigal Land at the newly refurbished Sydney Theatre Company Wharf Bay in Sydney, on Wiradjuri Country with the Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre (BMEC) and on Bundjalung Country in Lismore with Northern Rivers Performing Arts (NORPA).

TNN couldn't host a State of the Sector Address in 2020 due to a reprisal of restrictions due to an outbreak of COVID-19. However, we did partner with IETM to host a local/ international event at the beginning of October, as part of an urge to 'pivot' and experiment to the spirit of the times. Back then, a mere four months ago, venues were still closed, fear of infection was strong, and few people were venturing out to any social occasions.

The International Performing Arts Network (IETM) based in Brussels has been on the front foot in responding to the constraints of 2020. They accelerated a collaborative process they were already undertaking to rewire their network, responding to Climate Emergency and ongoing systemic challenges to the predominantly European Performing Arts Sector membership. During 2020, and unable to meet in person, IETM also embarked on an ambitious experiment to host a multi-location event with events in more than twenty sites across the world.

If we look on the bright side, 2020 allowed us to reinvent activities and explore new ways to network, communicate and connect across our membership and beyond.

Pippa Bailey has spent over twenty years in the Arts as a producer and director, including work with independent artists, Performing Lines and Sydney Festival. She is currently Co-Director and Producer of ChangeFest, passionate about taking Climate Action, on the boards of TNN & PYT Fairfield, and an advisor to IETM.

'If we look on the bright side, 2020 allowed us to reinvent activities and explore new ways to network, communicate and connect across our membership and beyond.'





As a longstanding IETM member and on their Advisory group, this felt like an opportunity to focus on the local in the context of the international, something I have long wanted to explore. With so much cultural cringe still influencing our creative systems and with international travel off the agenda for the foreseeable, it seemed a good moment to explore how to locate our own questions of cultural expression and identity in a global conversation.

Legs on the Wall generously partnered so the event could take place in the spacious Red Box in Lilyfield on Wangal Land where social distancing was possible for 40 people. It was a wet night at the beginning of October with a full moon, an auspicious moment for three speakers to respond to the question: **What Matters Now?**

Vicki Van Hout started with a provocation about the current trend of truth telling amongst the culturally marginalised. Vicki Van Hout is an Indigenous independent choreographer with Wiradjuri, Dutch, Scottish, and Afghan heritage

‘Truth telling in an Indigenous context encompasses ownership of one’s identity, including a right to a self-determined reckoning of history. In this current climate it is sometimes meant to mean that one must only tell a story or base a narrative around the utilisation of an author’s own background. It stands to reason that a white person can’t hijack a black narrative, but does this mean that a white person shouldn’t author narratives that include characters that reflect the full gamut of society?’

She references a question posed on the diversity initiative led by the Sydney Opera House website: ‘Is it your story to tell?’ and critiques the premise. ‘I think this approach breeds divisiveness and exclusivity, as strategies well used in colonial practice. So, if we are going to decolonise, then I do not think this is the way. We (Indigenous artists) do need to be well represented and not exploited but...is it imperative that narratives are first-hand personal accounts, are the subjects closest to these narratives always the best people to tell these stories and is one sole perspective ever the best method to engage in history or the bigger picture?’

Vicki is clear that her body is her language and wants to be more nuanced about who she speaks to, when and how? ‘Maybe we need to reconsider the audience as a proper artistic component in every artwork, whether the artist has solicited their participation or not.’

So much of this conversation is very particular to Australia now at a moment when First Nations people are calling for a Voice to Parliament and to be recognised in the constitution after generations of subjugation. First Nations people’s connection to place defies the generations of settlers who have imported and imposed other cultures on this land.

Tasnim Hossain is a playwright, dramaturg, director and screenwriter. She grew up on Ngunnawal land in Canberra and started developing her practice with the Australian Theatre for Young people. She is now on their board.

Tasnim believes that making theatre is ‘less about an individual view of self-expression and more about a community view. One thing I really struggle with is artists who don’t care about their audiences. My work is about connection and addressing dislocation.’

Tasnim works in Mental Health communications and proudly states; ‘I have always worked in another job outside of the arts, because it’s good to pay the rent.’

Her parallel career paths enable her to be connected to most of the people she grew up with because art making didn’t seem possible when there has been a serious lack of diverse representation in the Australian Arts sector.

As it was also Mental Health Week and Tasnim reflected on her other work in mental health: ‘One in four Australians feel lonely one day a week, others feel it more frequently, and in the last six months we have seen this so many more people experiencing loneliness...When we are distanced from each other it has an impact on us. People who experience loneliness mean they find it harder to connect because they are in a constant state of fight or flight and misconstrue social interactions.’

Tasnim’s overall answer to the question of What Matters Now? is about connection and importantly how theatre can connect us. Yet, she also reflects on how theatre is also a place where people do not feel welcome. As a woman in a hijab, she has felt alienated when people stare, choose not to sit next to her or laugh at racist content on stage.

Tasnim concludes: ‘Making Art should be an act of service, creating moments of shared transcendence to help make people feel a little less lonely.’

Finally, Paschal Daantos Berry, a performance maker, writer, dramaturg and curator, addresses the question. His practice is focused on interdisciplinary, cross cultural and collaborative processes and he has just started at the Arts Gallery of NSW, directing the visitor experience.

Paschal talked about making space and after so many years of being defined as a young artist. Now nearing fifty, he feels a responsibility to create space. That sometimes means making space for shitty conversations with the public, who do not see racism or privilege. It's also making spaces and demonstrating leadership, in terms of creating pathways and catching those people who are falling through the cracks.

'How do we create much more elastic ways of collaboration across different parts of our industry and even beyond the arts to cross-sector thinking. The amount of space we make for ourselves to advocate for ourselves is a very laborious task.'

Ultimately Paschal challenges us all to take responsibility; 'Asking what matters now, is to get very serious about the fact that we are still talking about the same things, repeating these conversations. They are occupying space.'

'In a post COVID reality we need to critically look at these systems and not repeat them so that we don't have to have these exhausting conversations twenty years down the track when we are talking about our connection to our European colleagues.'

These are Australian artists speaking about specifically Australian challenges. They are not exclusive to this country, but our cultural context is unique. In the midst of a global pandemic that has shut down the performing arts sector across the world, it's a great moment to stop rushing about and focus locally.

2021, is another step into the new decade. It's becoming increasingly clear that we cannot go back and need to shed destructive values of the 20th and early 21st century. We need to move on.

In a changing world we need to keep asking: What Happens Now? Last October three generous artists gave of themselves to answer this question at a time of crisis. To insist on robust 'truth telling' led by our Indigenous colleagues, see art as a service to connect increasingly lonely people and embrace the idea of creating space for others could steer our changing systems towards a fairer more authentically diverse new Australian reality.

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Thank you

The **State of the Sector** Address was proudly supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW, APM Graphics, NORPA, Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre and Sydney Theatre Company.

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Theatre Networks NSW

Theatre Network NSW (TNN) is the peak body for theatre and performance in NSW. Its purpose is to connect, empower and advocate for the NSW sector. TNN does this by working with the small-to-medium and independent sectors as well as major performing arts companies.

We are a membership based organisation, driven by demand to deliver outcomes for the sector as determined by the sector. Our long term vision is a stronger and more united theatre and performance community. TNN is proudly supported by the NSW Government via Create NSW.

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