

EXTRACT



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Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS

Australia's creative and cultural industries and institutions

FRIDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2020

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS

Friday, 13 November 2020

Members in attendance: Dr Allen, Dr Gillespie, Mr Gorman, Mr Husic, Mr Zimmerman.

Terms of Reference for the Inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The Committee will inquire into Australia's creative and cultural industries and institutions including, but not limited to, Indigenous, regional, rural and community based organisations.

The Committee will consider:

- The direct and indirect economic benefits and employment opportunities of creative and cultural industries and how to recognise, measure and grow them
- The non-economic benefits that enhance community, social wellbeing and promoting Australia's national identity, and how to recognise, measure and grow them
- The best mechanism for ensuring cooperation and delivery of policy between layers of government
- The impact of COVID-19 on the creative and cultural industries; and
- Avenues for increasing access and opportunities for Australia's creative and cultural industries through innovation and the digital environment.

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FIELDING, Ms Kate, Program Director, A New Approach**MYER, Mr Rupert, Chair, Reference Group, A New Approach****Committee met at 09:05**

CHAIR (Dr Gillespie): Good morning, everyone. I declare open this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts for the inquiry into Australia's creative and cultural industries and institutions. I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and pay respect to their elders, past and present, and of all Australia's Indigenous people. I also acknowledge the cultures of any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people present with us today.

In accordance with the committee's resolution of 24 July 2019, this hearing will be broadcast on the parliament's website and a proof and official transcripts of proceedings will be published on the parliament's website. Those present here today are advised that filming and recording are permitted during the hearing. I remind members of the media who may be present or listening on the web of the need to fairly and accurately report proceedings of the committee.

For the purpose of this meeting, we will elect an acting chair for when the chair or deputy chair are not present. I'll seek nominations.

Dr ALLEN: I'm happy to nominate Trent Zimmerman.

CHAIR: Thank you. I now welcome representatives of A New Approach. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that this hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings of the respective houses. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The evidence given today will be recorded by Hansard and attracts parliamentary privilege. I now invite you to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to discussion.

Mr Myer: Thank you, Chair, for the invitation to address the members of this committee. In my previous roles in chairing the Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry, the National Gallery of Australia and the Australia Council for the Arts and a range of other arts and cultural sector roles, I've read and written more than one or two inquiry submissions. I begin then by noting that there have been some really outstanding submissions to this inquiry from the full breadth of cultural and creative industries, institutions and individuals, and I congratulate this standing committee for stimulating such a wide response. It augurs well that the terms of reference have provoked responses reflecting the vastness of this sector and its heartland role for both our nation and economy. There's a depth and a wealth of expertise, national, regional and local and individual, from a range of commercial and not-for-profit organisations and everything from art-form specific submissions through to accounting firms with expertise in philanthropic support for the cultural sector and economy.

Through the submission from A New Approach, we have attempted to give this committee an uninterrupted view and clear sight to all this expertise. By that, I believe that we have established a useful framework that can help unlock these insights and lead to definitive action. We suggest it would be helpful to start out by recognising the following things, to start by knowing them rather than building to the understanding: knowing the powerful economic contribution; the Middle Australia enthusiasm and support; the urgent need for the three tiers of government to work more coherently to deliver a rich cultural life for all Australians; and knowing the truth that Australia is missing cohesive cultural policy settings that would help to make dynamic linkages between public and private investment, the commercial and subsidised sectors, between levels of government and between different portfolios.

There's an opportunity that this inquiry has to lead a process of change and how we can truly thrive as a nation, cultivate our cultural power, exercise our cultural confidence and elevate our current public policy settings to develop an even greater economic and social force across our creative sectors from which we can all benefit. Chair, that's my opening statement. Kate Fielding and I are ready to respond to questions and observations on our submission.

CHAIR: Thanks very much, Mr Myer, and thank you for the very extensive submission that you made. You can appreciate all levels of government have a lot of activity in the creative and cultural space, and we appreciate the depth and benefit of the creative and cultural industries to the Australian polity and wellbeing. One of your terms I highlighted was 'scale-up digitally-rich, "antifragile" business models'. Could you elaborate what you meant by 'antifragile'?

Mr Myer: I might ask Kate if she'd start out on that.

Ms Fielding: I'll highlight there that we're using antifragile in a very particular way—that is, as defined by Nassim Nicholas Taleb. You may be familiar with his work on 'black swans', which is fairly well-known. He says that antifragile are those things that are designed to benefit from disruption and volatility, so this is not just about resilience or robustness. The resilient resist shocks and stays the same, whereas antifragile gets better. So, when we talk about antifragile, we're talking about those things which benefit from disruption—that is, they thrive in disruption. They are nimble and responsive and able to adapt to a situation. Of course, there's a common word that we hear, and particularly this year we've heard a lot, but what's really clear is that the impact on the cultural and creative industries and institutions is unique in terms of its scope and depth. We know from a range of the ABS statistics that the impact on this part of our economy and society is disproportionately large and that the transformation that's been required, particularly for those activities that rely on gathering, is a transformation that's much bigger than any one business or one community organisation or one event.

CHAIR: Thanks very much. We have online with us Ed Husic, who's the deputy chair, and I understand he has a few questions for you. Then we might throw to other members who would like to ask some questions.

Mr HUSIC: Thanks, Chair, and thanks also to Rupert. I have four questions. Firstly, I see from the submission that you've undertaken some research on how Australians value the arts. Are you able to inform the committee on the key elements that stood out to you with respect to the way that the general public views the arts and its importance to community?

Ms Fielding: Absolutely. This is a really fantastic piece of work, and I'll talk to it briefly. It looks at perceptions amongst middle Australians towards arts, culture and creativity. Those middle Australians are defined as middle-aged, middle income swing voters in predominantly marginal federal electorates in predominantly regional and suburban communities. This piece of work was commissioned. We worked with an external provider, and I want to be really clear that we briefed them to ask the questions in a neutral way. So the responses that we got are not, to put it politely, were not fishing for good news. We actually briefed them and asked them to tell us: what are the perception's here? What are the genuine views around arts, culture and creativity amongst this cohort? Does it matter? If it does, why? If not, why?

In that research, there were some really clear themes, and I'll talk briefly about those. One is that this cohort, the middle Australia cohort, absolutely think that arts, culture and creativity is an essential part of being Australian; in fact, an essential part of being human. There were two very clear themes in the way that they spoke about that. One was around belonging, community, being part of something, being connected to their community; and the second was in terms of inspiration, creativity and ideas. Those really strong themes in terms of why this mattered in their lives were reflected also in the way that they saw that opportunities in this space were important for their children but also important for lifelong learning amongst all Australians. Particularly when we talked there about its impact on people's ability to change and learn in the 21st century, that Australia is changing and we need to keep learning, opportunities to participate in art, culture and creativity were seen as developing the skills that helped people do that.

There was also a really strong theme in terms of, I guess I'd say, national identity and national pride and how we represent Australia to the world. People were really clear and proud about the cultural and creative expression in Australia. I'll be very clear: this is a broad definition of what this is. So this was everything from museums, the War Memorial through to design, gaming, films and going to the theatre and community festivals. There was a really broad and inclusive definition of arts and culture that people were comfortable with there.

Mr Myer: I might just add to the comments that have been made that, to some in the sector, that would seem fairly self-evident. But, until now, we've really lacked that independent assessment as to how important arts and culture are in the lives of Australians. I think the significant element of that report, the third report in the series of reports that A New Approach has undertaken, was really to give clear visibility to just how important arts and culture are in the lives of particularly middle Australians, because that's where we focus the research.

Mr HUSIC: Out of interest, why did you focus just on middle Australia? Having said that, it represents a broader range of people in my part of western Sydney.

Ms Fielding: There are representative studies that have been done in terms of participation and attitude towards arts culture in Australia, and we didn't want to double up on that. We didn't want to duplicate that work. We wanted to do a deeper dive into the motivations and the meaning that this has in the lives of that particular cohort.

Mr HUSIC: Looking at your website, it says you were founded in a couple of years ago 'to address a shortfall in up-to-date, independent and accurate data and research' into investment trends in the arts. Obviously, this inquiry is about focussing on how to support the creative community because of COVID. But, clearly, we need to

take into account how investment was tracking in this space to support the arts beforehand and how it's likely to recover. Do you think that there is still a shortfall? Has it been exacerbated? How long do you think it might be before it returns to pre-COVID levels? Is there anything that can help support that private investment?

Ms Fielding: I'll take a couple of steps there. One of the studies that we released last year found two really important things in terms of cultural funding by government. This works with a single data set. It's the most comprehensive data set we have in Australia of cultural funding by all three levels of government across all portfolios. It, of course, doesn't capture everything, but it gets very close. There are some really important findings in that report. A key one was that, essentially, our investment into this space at a public level—and I should be clear that work with middle Australia really highlighted that that cohort does see a role for government in making arts, culture and creativity accessible to a range of different people—to make sure that we have a strong cultural landscape for all Australians has dropped over the last 11 years by just under five per cent at a per capita level. So our investment into this space is not keeping up with our population growth.

There are two really important parts there. Obviously, there are some issues in terms of accessibility, of people having access to these opportunities. But also—and I think this is really clear through the excellent submissions that you've received—the expectations of what cultural and creative institutions and industries are going to deliver for the Australian people are becoming increasingly complex. More importantly, we've got evidence—and it's a really great opportunity—that those industries and institutions can help us with some of the broad public policy issues as well as having an intrinsic value. So, while that investment is falling, the demands are increasing and the complexity of those demands are increasing. That's the backdrop for COVID—and, as I stated earlier, we know that there's been a disproportionate impact on this part of our economy.

The second important thing that I'd like to highlight out of that work are the international comparisons. We did some comparative work using a different data set with the OECD. Out of the 33 member countries in the OECD in the study, we're 26 in terms of our average expenditure on culture, recreation and religion as a share of GDP. So where we're significantly below average internationally.

The third point that I would make out of that study is that there was a key change that happened over that period, which is that three levels of government moved to a much more even relationship in the way that they're investing in arts and culture. Local government increased their per capita commitment to that by 11 per cent in that time. So the level of government which is getting bailed up in the supermarket is hearing that arts, culture, creativity and things happening in those communities are really important, and they're increasing their commitment there. That matches with what middle Australia is saying, which is that 'the opportunity to participate in my place with my community is incredibly important'. I think there are some really great leads there in terms of what a with-COVID rich cultural and creative life could look like over the next few years.

Mr Myer: I think that's a fairly full response. I've got nothing to add at this stage.

Mr HUSIC: I have one more question. I'll hold the other one back so that others can ask questions. In your submission, you mention the need for a targeted industry package in the 2021 budget. What do you think needs to be included in the package? What do you think will be the long-term impact if the package isn't included?

Ms Fielding: In our submission, we've made three recommendations. I'm going to emphasise that the targeted industry package is a short-term measure and that there are two medium-term measures that form part of the set. It's really important to see those as part of a set. The industry package is about the recovery process and the transformation process that many businesses and community organisations are undergoing at the moment. We can see that there are some models that are working. We can see that there is some of the dreaded word, 'pivoting'. There are some new models emerging that are working. I think that an industry package should be piloting and scaling up some of the early successful models. This is an opportunity where Australia can lead globally. We know that the pandemic is causing devastating impacts right across the globe and that Australia is in an enviable position to start imagining and investing and developing what a with-COVID life can be. This is a space where we can lead globally with models. That's dealing with the current circumstance. As we've described, there were issues that preceded this, and that's why we're emphasising that we need some medium-term actions so that the fragility that was in the sector, the difficulty that was in the sector, pre COVID can be addressed in a strategic way.

CHAIR: Thanks very much. The member for Higgins has some questions now.

Dr ALLEN: Thank you, Chair. I have three questions. Firstly, I'd like to put on the record my gratefulness for the excellent work A New Approach has been doing. The five reports are excellent. They've opened new information and new ways of thinking that I think are very helpful. My first question goes to your comment, Kate, that investment per capita in Australia in the arts has dropped over the last five years by five per cent and your

comment that our investment is not keeping up with our population growth. To what degree is that due to the changes in our population demographics, as we have a very large immigrant population and that's been fuelling our population growth, and we also have an ageing population? And to what degree is it due to the changing behaviours, such as people having less time in their lives to consume the arts?

Ms Fielding: Great question. The figures from the same year show that the biggest investors in cultural and creative goods and services are the Australian public. In the 2015-16 year, Australians spent about \$25 billion, about \$50 a week, on creative and cultural goods. There's a real appetite in this space. I need to emphasise that it is the broad definition of cultural and creative goods. That's everything from participation in particular events to goods, subscriptions, films—all of those things. It's a really broad definition. That said, the Australian people are demonstrating, both through their participation and their household expenditure, that this is an important part of their lives. In terms of changes in per capita spend, some of it is to do with the growing population, but there is a decline over that period as well. It's not a simple answer. What we can say with confidence is that we're not keeping up with our population growth and that has an effect on being able to service the sheer numbers, but there's also complexity in that.

I'm going to briefly pick up on an extension to an earlier question, which was: 'What can we do to incentivise private investment?' I've spoken a bit about the Australian public and their private investment. One of the things that we are hearing is frustration at a national level over the lack of a contemporary approach, with updated policies and a connected set of investments across government. That would create confidence in philanthropic investment into this space.

Dr ALLEN: Thank you. That's very helpful.

Mr Myer: I might hop in and make a note. Migrant communities have traditionally brought their rich cultural experiences to the whole of Australia's cultural life, and exactly the same trends are continuing today with the most recent migration as well. That's a very significant element of the way in which policy responses must develop. A whole-of-nation approach has to be taken into consideration, in addition to maintaining the cultural experiences of those who are already here and have been part of both the commercial sector and the subsidised sector for many decades. There is a larger pool of cultural considerations and a very keen desire to lead culturally rich lives.

Ms Fielding: I should add that the Middle Australia work had a significant multicultural sample within it, including people who had moved here from other places.

Dr ALLEN: Excellent. I did note that. Thank you. My second question is about the push-and-pull issue. We're hopefully close to a post-COVID period. Many people have pivoted in their consumption of the arts and there's the push and pull of three layers of government investing in the arts, which provides the product, but there's also the pull of the consumption of those using the arts. And there's the push and pull of government investment in the pool of commercial desires of the general public, I should say. I note your comments about local government investment increasing by 11 per cent, but also that there's definitely a push from Middle Australia to participate in local community. I think that's a comment that would reverberate with many MPs who are sitting on this phone call. My question goes to the ANA's submission being very vocal about job opportunities for the arts. How do trends in jobs for the future creative economy have an impact on creating jobs for tomorrow? I want to look to the future, keeping in mind that there's some innovation and a more contemporary approach through COVID. How do you think that sets us up going forward?

Ms Fielding: I'll start with a couple of stats to help frame the comments. Pre COVID—and, again, I'm going to emphasise that this goes to the broad definition of cultural and creative industries—our best estimate of the workforce size is that about 5.9 per cent of the Australian population were working within the combined cultural and creative industries space. Jobs in the creative economy, as a per cent of the total Australian workforce, was 3.7 per cent in 1986 and 5.5 per cent in 2016. This is the growing portion of our workforce and it suggests that jobs in creative occupations and industries are growing at nearly twice the rate of the Australian workforce. It's really important to emphasise that those are pre-COVID figures and they're using the broad definition of cultural and creative industries that we specified in our submission. What we're seeing globally is that this is a 21st century industry and the nations which are taking a deliberate approach to this part of their economy and their workforce are benefiting from those opportunities, that job growth. That's from South Korea to Singapore to the UK. Indonesia has a creative industry strategy. Right across the globe, there are countries that are taking this as a serious part of their economic and job growth opportunity. That's why we think there's an opportunity for this inquiry to not only look at important and urgent responses now but think strategically, as we say, about what opportunities there are for Australia in the recovery process. It's clear from the data that this is a growing area in terms of our employment and our economy. It's important that we strategically harness it.

Mr Myer: I wonder if I might add something there. This is a really significant point, and it's something that's quite central to the terms of reference of the inquiry. These industries are sunrise industries. There's no doubt about that. They're not just sunrise industries in Australia; they're sunrise industries amongst other OECD countries in the world and certainly amongst a number of our trading partners. They are aspirational jobs. They are the future jobs of the nation. A number of young people are looking to future careers in the creative and cultural industries. That's why it is so significant. Even at 5.9 per cent, employment already dramatically exceeds employment in mining and agriculture, forestry and farming and in even financial and insurance services. At 5.9 per cent, it is a very significant part of the nation's workforce.

We often don't self-identify that way. We talk a lot about the significance of the other industries. Doubtless they are incredibly important, but so too are the employment prospects within this sector, which is why the COVID issues have hit so hard but why there's such an optimistic future. We're feeling optimistic about what these industries can bring to the nation in the years ahead.

Dr ALLEN: I would love to ask a follow-up question on sunrise industries, but I've run out of time. If we have time, I will come back to that. My third question—because I think it's an incredibly important concept—goes to your very interesting suggestion about a national arts, culture and creativity plan. I note that you model it on the national sports plan, Sport 2030. I'm a medical doctor and I know that sometimes the framework of service provision across federal and state governments and local councils makes it somewhat easier for people to understand how investments are made. I was wondering if you could speak to the plan that you're suggesting and what you mean by it. I note that there are a lot of parallels with sport with regard to big institutions and aspirational Olympics versus institutions of excellence versus grassroots sporting and grassroots community events. Could you provide some insights as to what you mean by a national arts, creative and cultural plan.

Ms Fielding: I'll say at the outset why I think this is urgent and important. At this point, initiating this type of plan would give hope and confidence to the cultural and creative industries. I'm going to talk about drawing on the example of Sport 2030, which I think is a really good existing model that we could look at. That plan states the principles for action, states the role that sport plays in the lives of Australians, sets participation targets, identifies challenges and drivers, describes the ecosystems and states who is responsible for what. It recognises that opportunities are delivered through public and private partnerships and that, therefore, it's very important to have clarity about those responsibilities. That model delivers some particular benefits—the increased clarity and the ability for better partnerships and the opportunity for more effective investment.

You referred to it really well. The clarity around how investments are made and why and who does what is incredibly helpful in reducing frustration and building confidence. It helps people within the industry understand where they're meant to be going and what their role within a broader ecology is, which builds confidence and pride in our culture. It enables better opportunities for participation for all Australians. Importantly this kind of action will help us take advantage of that broader cultural and creative economy. There are some very practical things—a very practical model—that exist in Sport 2030 that could be used as a model for this type of plan.

One of the really important things in that plan is that it spoke to consumers as well as producers. It spoke to industry; it spoke to government—it spoke to the full range of participants, contributors and stakeholders—to try and develop a shared vision that's quite practical and pragmatic and informed by the role that it plays across all those different stakeholders.

Mr Myer: I wonder if I might add to that. We, and by that I mean all living Australians, are the inheritors of quite a remarkable arts and cultural architecture. In that I include the small-to-medium sector, which so often animates the architecture itself. The museums, the galleries, the libraries, the concert halls, the theatres all around the country, the arts organisations that exist to perform in those places as well our artists and education facilities—they are the architecture. What we're talking about here is having a clear, agreed set of public policy settings to make the most of that architecture, of which we are the inheritors. In other words, how are we going to pass that inheritance onto the next generations of Australians?

What we've identified in the work of A New Approach is that, because we're lacking the clarity around those public policy settings, it's not at all clear that we're going to be able to maximise the benefit of what we've already got for all Australians, who we now know from the other work of A New Approach are desperately keen to engage in arts and culture as a critical and central part of their lives. So getting those public policies right is going to be really important. Hence, the example of Sport 2030 is a really good framework for us to consider for a similar exercise for Australia. I like Kate's words: hope and confidence. Building hope and confidence through creating that leadership position is an important opportunity that exists right now as an outcome of this particular inquiry.

Dr ALLEN: Thank you. I'll leave my questions there, because I know we're running out of time, but I would like to say thank you very much for providing inspiring and aspiring concepts in a very pragmatic framework. It's been very helpful as the first witness. I'd also ask, Chair, that we might consider asking A New Approach to potentially come back as a witness towards the end, because I suspect that we're going to get a lot of interesting information and they might be able to help us rethink and reframe things after we've heard from other witnesses at the end of this inquiry.

Mr Myer: We'd be honoured if the invitation came through, but of course it's a big process.

CHAIR: We'll take note of that. We will probably have one of the most interesting inquiries, but we'll live in the here and now, and I'll throw to the member for North Sydney, Trent Zimmerman, for lots of probing questions!

Mr ZIMMERMAN: Because of the time that's left, I'm just going to ask two questions. You talked about the trends in public funding across all three levels of government for the creative sectors. I'm wondering whether there is any metric that allows you to track non-government revenue for the creative sectors and, as a subset of that, what I would broadly describe as philanthropy or sponsorship.

Ms Fielding: That's an excellent question. Some figures are available. I might take that question on notice and provide that material in a written form, because it is slightly more complicated. Is that okay with you?

Mr ZIMMERMAN: Yes, that's fine.

Ms Fielding: There is some very succinct data that we can supply to you.

Mr ZIMMERMAN: My second question is a broader one. You highlighted the three roles of government involved in supporting the creative industries. It's fair to say that while there are some boundaries between the three levels of government there's also considerable blurring and overlap. I'm wondering whether you think it would be desirable and, perhaps more importantly, feasible for there to be a rationalisation and a clearer demarcation of the roles of the three levels of government.

Ms Fielding: I think the question there is—sorry, could you restate the question? I didn't quite follow.

Ms Fielding: Sorry—could you restate the question? I didn't quite follow.

Mr ZIMMERMAN: Whether there is a case, maybe as part of a national creative plan, for looking at rationalising the support provided by the three levels of government—whether it would be desirable and, in fact, realistic to do that. Essentially, you try to demarcate what each level of government is going to do in relation to supporting the creative industries.

Ms Fielding: Thank you. The short answer is yes. I think it's possible and desirable. We have examples in other spaces where that has happened. One of your colleagues referred earlier to health as being one of the complex spaces where that has been done successfully, although, of course, there are always frustrations. There are currently some clear roles that the levels of government are addressing through their expenditure. Part of the issue is that it's not broadly understood or easily accessible, and certainly part of our work has been trying to unearth some of those clear things. I'll go to one example. In the culture expenditure space, the big player in film, television and screen is the federal government, whereas both state and territory governments have a very small focus on that. While that might be obvious to many in government, it's not obvious to many in the cultural and creative institutions or industries. Even that simple visibility can help create clarity—describing what is there, but also working on the points where there is a lack of clarity. It's the low-hanging fruit. There's a big win here for leadership and clarity and building confidence.

Mr ZIMMERMAN: Thank you.

Mr Myer: I might come in on the first of those questions, around the philanthropic support. Creative Partnerships Australia obviously tracks different levels of philanthropic giving, but very often one of the drivers for philanthropic support is to understand what the core public funding is for institutions. Increasingly, philanthropy doesn't see itself as the sole provider of funding but to be working within a coalition of public funding providers as well as other forms of sponsorship and various brands of philanthropy. That modern approach to philanthropy is something that's really well understood by Creative Partnerships Australia.

Mr ZIMMERMAN: Kate, I don't expect you to answer now, and maybe you won't know this, but are there any early signs of a retreat of philanthropy as the economic impacts of COVID impact the traditional philanthropists, if I can put it that way?

Mr Myer: I will hop in there because I sit at a couple of those tables. This year, a number of philanthropics will have income down as a consequence of the reduction in dividends and so forth. Having said that, there are also a number of new philanthropists that have entered the realm and have made very significant contributions,

often in their own initiatives rather than supporting existing public cultural infrastructure, although some of the philanthropy also heads in that direction. It's probably a little too soon to tell what the consequences of the current circumstances have been for present philanthropy, but I am conscious that a number are budgeting for income to be down in the 12-month period.

Ms Fielding: I would add to that by saying that the response has generally been leaning in—'Let's go, let's help, let's be courageous.' It's important to recognise that, broadly across philanthropy, there is an appetite for constructive change in this space and they're leaning into that.

Mr ZIMMERMAN: Great news.

CHAIR: Could I interrupt there. We might have time for one last question from a member of the committee from WA or the Central Coast. Do we have other members online who want to ask A New Approach a question?

Mr GORMAN: I have two and I might even sweep in a third.

CHAIR: It will have to be quick because we're a bit behind.

Mr GORMAN: Everyone else has had their turn. I have a few things—

CHAIR: Fire away.

Mr GORMAN: for witnesses on the line who are next. You talk about the issues around data gathering, in terms of evidence based policy, in your submission. There's your suggestion which I quite like—data from the ABS regularly. What do you see as the biggest gaps in the data availability from the ABS, in terms of making good policy for the cultural and creative industries?

Ms Fielding: I'm going to take that question on notice and give you a list. There are a couple of top-line items. The employment category data makes it very difficult. You have to do special studies of that to get the kind of data that other industries would get as a matter of course. Of course, tourism is not one of those. The ABS does produce, as a standard part of their work, some satellite accounts. I'll get you a more detailed list of that, which I think is a better way to present that information.

Mr GORMAN: Thank you. I just read your comments around children experiencing the arts and culture. What's been advocated is very much around in-school services. I have organisations in my electorate, such as Barking Gecko, that have a lot of students coming to theatre as a very important part of the education experience. I'd be interested in where you see the easiest wins in terms of giving children more opportunity to experience arts and culture and what sorts of programs you've seen that are really successful in doing that.

Ms Fielding: I'm going to pick a couple of points. As to the participation rate amongst young people, the ABS does produce a particular dataset. The participation rate for young people aged five to 14 is 95.6 per cent. That's participation in creating or performing outside of school. This is an area where young people love participating. Those school programs are absolutely essential to create shared experiences amongst student bodies to develop the skills and connections that we know, from the evidence, have an incredible impact on their learning across a whole range of different ways. School based programs are fantastic. I would also emphasise, and I say this as someone who has spent most of the last 10 years living in regional and remote Western Australia, it's really important that we don't forget the young people who are not engaged in the school system. There are a number of fantastic examples in WA of arts and culture based programs that work on the edge of the school system to re-engage the disengaged young people. I think that's a really important focus for this space, as well as the more standard in-school opportunities.

Mr GORMAN: Thank you for highlighting that. That's really useful. You made a note about Infrastructure Australia's shift towards, amongst other things, looking at cultural infrastructure, which is a welcome shift. Where do you see the biggest gaps in terms of cultural infrastructure in Australia today? What should we be building or, in your view or based on your research and knowledge, what should Infrastructure Australia be looking at funding and building in the cultural and creative space?

Ms Fielding: This is one of the really important points. We know that cultural and creative consumption, production and distribution are changing dramatically. This is why we are saying that a 21st century approach needs to account for those concerns. Obviously, and I would highlight it again, as someone who has spent a lot of time in regional and remote Australia, internet access is one of the key cultural opportunities for contribution, production, participation, engagement and distribution. I think it's one of the most important pieces of cultural infrastructure we have. That said, we have an inheritance of a range of built infrastructure. Of course Infrastructure Australia works predominantly with built infrastructure, although I know that it also extends to some of the digital infrastructure. We have the opportunity there to think about what this means in the 21st century, what the opportunities are and whether the infrastructure that was built in the last century for that model

of production, consumption and distribution is the right model for the 21st century: what would investment for the future look like?

Mr Myer: I might add to that too. The key issue here is: how do we engage in new ways with the cultural infrastructure that we already have? I know that a number of institutions are very keen to explore that question and for there to be greater interaction between the existing places of cultural infrastructure—the Commonwealth national cultural institutions as well as the state based institutions and those run by local government. Animating that infrastructure is obviously one of the key features when a lot of that interaction is online or done through more contemporary ways.

CHAIR: We could go on and take up the whole hearing—there are so many things to talk about—but we do have a big dance card today. I'd like to thank you for a very thorough presentation with a lot of good data. It'll trigger a lot more consideration. But we'd better move on to our next witnesses, so thanks very much.

Mr Myer: Thank you very much.

Ms Fielding: Thank you for having us.

CHAIR: It was our pleasure.