

2020-21 Pre-Budget Submission

**Arts and culture can play
their part in the bushfire
recovery.**

A New Approach

A New Approach (ANA) is an independent think tank championing effective investment and return in Australian arts and culture.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We recognise the 2019-20 bushfires will rightly form a major focus of the 2020-21 Federal Budget. This submission outlines on the role arts and culture can play in the bushfire recovery and rebuilding effort.

A New Approach welcomes the opportunity to make a Pre-Budget Submission for the 2020-21 Federal Budget. A New Approach (ANA) is an independent think tank championing effective investment and return in Australian arts and culture, established in 2018 by The Myer Foundation, the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation and the Keir Foundation. The Australian Academy of the Humanities is the lead delivery partner for this initiative. ANA aims to foster a more robust discussion about cultural policies, underpinned by good data, informed by shared understandings, and through a non-partisan and independent approach.

Our nation is still reeling from devastating and widespread bushfire attacks on our communities and natural environment. The devastation of life, property, livelihood, and cultural heritage has already been monumental.

The evidence gathered from Australian and international disaster zones show arts and cultural activities have great success in reconnecting affected communities, reducing feelings of isolation, strengthening people's connection to place, providing an opportunity for reflection and commemoration, and creating a shared sense of hope and optimism.

We are pleased the Australian Government's newly announced financial allocations to Local Governments affected by the bushfires includes 'public activities and events to bring communities together and attract visitors back to affected regions' as essential for the recovery and renewal of their communities.¹

Arts and culture-led programs should complement broader recovery strategies. Just as the head of the newly-created National Bushfire Recovery Agency, Andrew Colvin, is seeking a locally-focused recovery process with community at its heart,² cultural initiatives should be designed by, or in close consultation with affected communities, and should respond to local issues, needs and priorities.

ANA acknowledges the broader and diverse benefits culture and creativity provide our nation. We support appropriate resourcing, funding, incentives, and regulation to ensure all Australians have opportunities to contribute to and participate in arts and culture activities which are proven to:

¹ Joint media release *Immediate financial support for bushfire affected communities*, 9 January 2020, Prime Minister; Deputy Prime Minister; Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development; Minister for Water Resources Drought Rural Finance Natural Disaster and Emergency Management (<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/immediate-financial-support-bushfire-affected-communities>)

² Statement from National Bushfire Recovery Coordinator, Andrew Colvin APM OAM, 6 January 2020, <https://pmc.gov.au/news-centre/domestic-policy/statement-national-bushfire-recovery-coordinator-andrew-colvin-apm-oam>

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1. Help individuals and communities create meaning from disaster.
 2. Help rebuild communities, enhance social cohesion, and reduce social isolation.
 3. Provide a range of physical and mental health benefits.
 4. Make places more liveable and increase rural and regional tourist attraction and economic retention.
 5. Assist with reclaiming personal, communities and cultural heritage.

This is not the first time our country has succumbed to bushfires, and it won't be the last. We need to draw on Indigenous peoples' deep knowledges of managing this land, as well as the insights developed by humanities, arts and cultural researchers and practitioners. This should include supporting efforts to carefully document and evaluate the social and cultural impacts of the 2019-20 fire season and recovery process.

We are urging all local, state, and national disaster recovery agencies to embed cultural and creative activities into their community recovery strategies. Furthermore, once the urgent priority needs of health, food and shelter are met, to use the healing effects of cultural events and activities to help give people a sense of normality, at a time when things around them seem out of control.

The Federal Government could consider the following options, underpinned by an investment of \$11.8M over three years, for implementation in the 2020-21 budget:

1. Allocate \$10.5 million over three years towards culture-led programs as part of the recovery process.
2. Ensure bushfire and/or other natural disaster recovery grant programs include eligibility of arts and culture-based initiatives.

And, more specifically, considerations for the Minister of the Arts to:

3. Allocate \$400,000 over two years to support pathways for greater strategic collaboration between all tiers of government on the clear and direct role of arts and culture in disaster recovery efforts.
4. Allocate \$900,000 over three years to establish a taskforce to draw on arts and cultural expertise in developing holistic disaster recovery, resilience, and readiness programs.

In this submission we provide an evidence-base on the role of arts and culture in disaster recovery, outline data on recent federal government public funding trends in arts and culture, and present four recommendations for the 2020-21 Federal Budget.

SUBMISSION

1. The impact of an arts and culture response to disaster recovery

The bushfires have ripped at the very fabric of our regional and rural communities. Solutions to rebuild, repair and re-establish must be designed and delivered with community at their heart.

Andrew Colvin APM OAM,
National Bushfire Recovery
Coordinator³

In responding to the fires, we have already seen leadership from people in the creative sector. From individual creators fundraising, to the incredible charity effort led by comedian Celeste Barber, to concerts and donations by some of our global stars, the early creative response has been stellar.

But that's just the start of how culture and creativity can help us get through this unprecedented crisis.

There is clear evidence across Australia and the world of the benefits of culture and creativity to personal and community wellbeing, especially after a time of massive upheaval. After hurricanes, floods, tsunamis and other natural disasters – including bushfires – cultural workers are often at the forefront of the human recovery effort, creating ways for people to gather and rebound from the shock, trauma and sadness associated with the crisis.

In our recent report, *Transformative: Impacts of Culture and Creativity* (2019), ANA outlined how people who engaged in cultural or creative activities benefited in many ways: educationally, economically, through better health outcomes, and also in their recovery from catastrophe and natural disasters.

Drawing on that report, and additional evaluations of culture-led disaster recovery efforts in Australia, we have identified five ways culture has been proven to make a substantive contribution to disaster recovery and build the resilience and readiness for prepare for future disasters:

1. Arts and cultural activities help individuals and communities create meaning from the disaster.

Following the Black Saturday fires in Victoria in 2009, and Cyclone Yasi in Queensland in 2011, evaluations demonstrated that arts-based community programs provided a way for people (regardless of age or circumstance) to reflect on and commemorate how their community has changed and how it may be redefined. Outcomes included helping people within communities reconnect and break down barriers of social isolation; encouraging people to share stories and capture important moments in history for generations to come; and helping people express their feelings of loss, grief and hope.⁴ These all contributed to give people a sense of normality and hope when things around them seem out of their control.

³ Statement from National Bushfire Recovery Coordinator, Andrew Colvin APM OAM, 6 January 2020, <https://pmc.gov.au/news-centre/domestic-policy/statement-national-bushfire-recovery-coordinator-andrew-colvin-apm-oam>

⁴ See Natalie Fisher's comments based on her work with NSF Consulting evaluating the impact of creative recovery efforts in Victoria and Queensland, <http://nsfconsulting.com.au/arts-disaster-recovery-myth/>

For example, participation in 'Creative Recovery' activities organised by the Creative Recovery Network following the 2011 Queensland's natural disasters assisted with children re-engaging with learning and reduced difficult classroom behaviours; Aboriginal elders coming to terms with their own healing from the disasters; individuals who found themselves isolated following the disasters finding networks and connecting with communities; and giving participants new skills they felt were transferable outside the arts sector.⁵

2. Arts and cultural activities help rebuild communities, enhance social cohesion, and reduce social isolation.

Cultural activities give people a reason to come together following major disasters, like bushfires. International studies have demonstrated arts and culture are particularly effective in creating social networks among people who would not otherwise have come together, therefore providing opportunities to enhance unity and cohesion across divergent demographic groups. Research has shown that people who participate in arts and cultural activities are also more likely to have stronger engagement in the political and civic domains of their communities than people who don't.

For example, during the recovery process from the Black Saturday fires, people involved in the creation of memorials helped communities to come together to heal, and provided survivors with "a space where people can go and reflect and just find peace."⁷

3. Participation in arts and cultural activities leads to a range of physical and mental health benefits.

The well-established link between good health and participation in arts and cultural activities is particularly relevant to the recovery process.

Participating in arts and cultural activities helps people to develop a sense of mastery and control over their circumstances and surroundings.⁸ Feelings of agency and autonomy, often obtained through engagement with practical artistic expression, have been found to have a profound, central influence on the social determinants of health and improved health outcomes.⁹ Participants in arts activities often report significant impacts on the social determinants of health

"Sport takes you away for a period of time but art creates a mindset of creativity that can be taken back to everyday situations."

Bruce Esplin AM, Victorian Emergency Services Commissioner, regarding the Black Saturday fires recovery.⁶

⁵ Fielding Kate, Glisic Iva and Trembath Jodie-Lee. 2019. *Transformative: Impacts of Culture and Creativity*, Produced by A New Approach (ANA) think tank with lead delivery partner the Australian Academy of the Humanities, p24; Fisher, Natalie. 2012. "Evaluation of Creative Recovery Pilot Project: Final Report." Evaluation. Queensland: Arts Queensland Department of Science, Technology, Innovation and the Arts (<http://nsfconsulting.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Creative-Recovery-Evaluation-FINAL-Report.pdf>); Creative Recovery Network. 2017. "About." Creative Recovery Network. 2017. (<https://creativerecovery.net.au/about/>)

⁶ Fisher, Natalie and Talvé, Annie. 2011. *The role of the arts in rebuilding community: An evaluation of Arts Victoria's and Regional Art Victoria's bushfire initiatives* Evaluation report prepared for Arts Victoria (<https://creative.vic.gov.au/research/reports/archived-reports/the-role-of-the-arts-in-rebuilding-community>)

⁷ (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-29/black-saturday-memorial-tree-blacksmiths-whittlesea/5123636>)

⁸ *Transformative: Impacts of Culture and Creativity* p.50

⁹ *Transformative: Impacts of Culture and Creativity* p.50



including enhancing their sense of self, giving their life more meaning, expanding their social network, providing intellectual stimulation, and enhancing their problem solving and communication skills.¹⁰

For example, such impacts were observed by participants involved in arts and creative activities following the Victorian bushfires in 2009 which provided a constructive outlet for expression of emotions. Programs such as creating memorials and using various forms of creative activity to share stories and experiences of bushfire helped individuals and communities create order from the chaos and rebuild strong communities. Art activities also provided an avenue for people to give something tangible back to the community, whether that was through their creation practices, or by donating to the projects underway.¹¹

4. Arts and cultural activities make places more liveable and increase rural and regional attraction and retention, which is key to both social and economic recovery.

Research indicates that Australia's important creative industry are taking on a leadership role to improved greater liveability in cities and towns. Cultural participation, and the presence and accessibility of cultural assets such as arts organisations, creative community groups and resident artists, significantly predict better neighbourhood social wellbeing.¹² Such initiatives are therefore a critical strategy for attracting people to (and maintaining the population of) rural and regional areas of Australia.¹³

5. The collections and expertise of cultural institutions, can provide important resources for individuals and communities who have lost personal and community collections and sites, including Indigenous cultural sites, related to histories and cultures.

Cultural institutions – our museums, galleries, libraries and archives – play an important role in safeguarding our heritage as well as curating new stories to tell. In a disaster recovery situation, their role can be twofold: collecting new material, including oral histories, to assist with understanding and communicating about the disaster; and open access collections being available to help affected people (and the nation) recover, rebuild and reconnect.

For example, when the magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami rocked north-eastern Japan in 2011, claiming more than 10,000 lives, museums were part of the response and recovery effort. Sudo Ken'ichi, Director-General of Minpaku, the National Museum of Ethnology, describes how they deployed expertise and resources to assist with salvage of cultural material and help rural and fishing communities re-establish an important cultural festival.¹⁴

¹⁰ *Transformative: Impacts of Culture and Creativity* p.50

¹¹ *Transformative: Impacts of Culture and Creativity* p.50 and *The role of the arts in rebuilding community: An evaluation of Arts Victoria's and Regional Art Victoria's bushfire initiatives*

¹² *Transformative: Impacts of Culture and Creativity* p.20

¹³ *Transformative: Impacts of Culture and Creativity* p.20

¹⁴ Ken'ichi, Sudo. 2014. "The role of museums in recovery from disaster: The great East Japan earthquake and tsunami". *Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage*, Vol. 14, No. 2. p. 151-154.

3. Trends in federal government public funding investment in arts and culture

ANA's report – *The Big Picture: Public Expenditure on Artistic, Cultural and Creative Activity in Australia* (2019) – established a baseline understanding of the quantum and trends in public expenditure on arts and culture by all levels of government from 2007-08 to 2017-18. It presents findings and opportunities based on comparisons between different years, levels of government and areas of expenditure, adjusted to allow meaningful comparison.

Relevant to arts and culture playing their part in the bushfire recovery the report found:

- * The federal government is committing 18.9 per cent less expenditure per capita to arts and culture than it did a decade ago. Local governments have increased per capita expenditure by 11.0 per cent while state and territory governments have increased per capita expenditure by 3.9 per cent.¹⁵
- * Cultural expenditure is not matching population growth, dropping by 4.9 per cent over the decade and expenditure as a percentage of GDP remains below the OECD average.¹⁶

¹⁵ *The Big Picture: public expenditure on artistic, cultural and creative activity in Australia* Produced by A New Approach (ANA) think tank with lead delivery partner the Australian Academy of the Humanities, p.12.

¹⁶ *The Big Picture: public expenditure on artistic, cultural and creative activity in Australia*, p.12.

4. Recommendations

To ensure arts and culture can play their part in the bushfire recovery, resilience and readiness we recommend the following for the 2020-21 Federal Budget:

1. Allocate \$10.5 million over three years towards a dedicated fund for culture-led programs as part of the recovery process.

Managed by the National Bushfire Recovery Agency or alternate appropriate administrator (with oversight from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications) a \$10.5 million allocation (or \$3.5 million per annum) could be supported by a scheme that prioritises locally-led culture programs that are not currently directly addressed within an existing federally-funded arts or cultural program. This would facilitate both rebuilding existing and establishing new capacity in the creative industries in the affected regional communities.

We invite the Australian Government to consider this in the context of the findings and opportunities outlined in *The Big Picture: Public Expenditure on Artistic, Cultural and Creative Activity in Australia* (2019) report, such as considering incentives needed to boost expenditure to average OECD country levels within the next decade and to maintain a commitment to meeting the long-term per capita average of the last decade as a minimum.

2. Ensure bushfire and/or other natural disaster recovery grant programs include eligibility of arts and culture-based initiatives

At no additional cost to the Government, this recommendation suggests the implementation of engagement mechanisms lead by the National Bushfire Recovery Agency utilise arts and cultural activities and draw on appropriate and relevant expertise to inform funding guidelines and decisions.

And, more specifically, considerations for the Minister of the Arts to:

3. Allocate \$400,000 over two years to support pathways for greater strategic collaboration between all tiers of government on the clear and direct role of arts and culture in recovery efforts.

One of the major findings from our first report – *The Big Picture: Public Expenditure on Artistic, Cultural and Creative Activity in Australia* (2019) – discovered the growing major public funding contribution of local and state governments on arts and culture. Led by the Minister for the Arts and administered by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, \$400,000 over two years could be allocated to support the implementation of immediate mechanisms and/or increase leverage of current forums that bring together local, state and federal government arts and culture expertise.

4. Allocate \$900,000 over three years to establish a taskforce to draw on arts and cultural expertise in developing disaster recovery, resilience, and readiness programs.

Establish a mechanism to coordinate and support strategic effort bringing together government, philanthropic and business activities together with creators, producers, and consumers. Led by the Minister for the Arts and administered by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, \$900,000 over three years could be allocated to support this initiative.

Costing summary

This submission recommends a \$11.8 million commitment in total over three consecutive years to integrate the evidence-based impact of arts and culture into boosting disaster recovery and preparedness.

Recommendation	Responsibility	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Million				
1: Dedicated Fund	National Bushfire Recovery Agency	\$3.5M	\$3.5M	\$3.5M
2: Eligibility	Not applicable.	NA	NA	NA
3: Inter-governmental collaboration	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications	\$0.2M	\$0.2M	
4: Taskforce	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications	\$0.3M	\$0.3M	\$0.3M
Total		\$4.0M	\$4.0M	\$3.8M

5. How we can help

A New Approach would welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss these recommendations and explore ways in which we can assist in implementing the recommendations. In our role as a philanthropically funded, independent thinktank we are able to provide disinterested advice about options for the recommendations outlined in this submission.