

A New Approach (ANA)

Media Release

2 May 2024

Amidst declining social cohesion, help communities connect through culture.

With Australia facing our worst social cohesion results on record and ongoing cost of living pressures, support for communities is critical. Research has shown repeatedly that cultural events and creative experiences are essential to community healing and reconnection.

A New Approach (ANA) has been tracking the long-term trends in arts and cultural investment by all three levels of government in Australia, shining a light on how governments are supporting the creators, activities and institutions that connect communities.

The latest analysis, [The Big Picture 4: Public Expenditure on Artistic, Cultural and Creative Activity by Governments in Australia in 2007-08 to 2021-22](#), is the fourth in a series with 15 years of data now available. The [online interactive The Big Picture portal](#) has also been updated with the latest data.

ANA CEO, Kate Fielding, said the analysis revealed a four per cent increase in total investment in arts and culture by governments in 2021-2022, providing a welcome boost with flow-on benefits. More recent data is yet to be released.

“Australian and international evidence shows that participating in arts and cultural experiences builds feelings of belonging, reduces social exclusion and isolation and acts as a catalyst for understanding,” said Ms Fielding.

“Targeted arts and cultural investment strengthens our communities and supports people. ANA’s research with everyday Australians confirms this, and also highlights that Australians expect governments at all levels to deliver investment which facilitates access to events and experiences in every town, suburb and city.”

Ms Fielding said while there are positive signs, some stubborn trends persist.

“Australia still lags behind other OECD countries when it comes to government investment in arts and culture. In the most recent figures, we are stuck in the back of the pack, at 26th out of 33 countries reporting relevant data,” said Ms Fielding.

“The long-term analysis demonstrates cultural investment is still not keeping pace with population growth. Since 2007-08, Australia’s population has increased by 22 per cent, but government investment in arts and culture increased by only 14 per cent.

Contact

hello@newapproach.org.au

Find

1.04, 221 London Cct
Canberra ACT 2601

A New Approach (ANA)

“These latest figures also show state and territory governments’ are now neck and neck with the federal government when it comes to investing in arts and culture, making effective collaboration between all three levels of government more important than ever.”

“Australia is changing, and we know there are both domestic and international pressures impacting social cohesion and cost of living. *The Big Picture 4* makes practical recommendations which can be pursued by all three levels of government to support better collaboration, coordination and reporting of investment.”

Ms Fielding said ANA welcomed ‘Creative and Cultural Engagement’ being recognised as a key indicator under the ‘Cohesion’ theme of Australia’s new national wellbeing framework, ‘Measuring What Matters,’.

Ms Fielding also welcomed the new national cultural policy, the active policy development and delivery occurring in many states and territories, and local governments all across the country playing their part but suggested more can be done to ensure these efforts are working in harmony with each other.

“This includes the establishment of a Ministerial Council reporting to National Cabinet that focuses on arts and culture. This is necessary to ensure all Australians, no matter where they live, can access the enduring positive impacts of arts and culture. Your postcode should not determine whether you can contribute to, and participate in, the cultural life of our nation,” said Ms Fielding.

“Australian artists and cultural organisations continue to excel at home and abroad, reminding us that Australia has compelling contributions to make. We can secure Australia’s place as a cultural powerhouse but there is still work to be done.”

To find out more about A New Approach (ANA) [visit the website](#).

For media enquiries please contact Alexandra Nichols 0431 468 665 or alexandra.nichols@newapproach.org.au.

Please note, details of the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute’s Australian Cohesion Index 2023 are available at <https://aci.scanloninstitute.org.au/>.