

18 August 2014

Ms Nicole Beyer and Ms Veronica Pardo
Co Convenors
Arts Industry Council Victoria
c/ 222 Bank Street
SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC 3205.

Dear Ms Beyer and Ms Pardo,

Thank you for your letter of 27 June 2014.

Victorian Labor recognises the Arts Industry Council (Vic) as a leader of the Victorian arts, cultural and creative sectors. We appreciate the role your organisation has taken in promoting the interests of cultural and creative communities – especially amongst the small, medium and independent organisations.

The importance of this leadership has never been more crucial than in dealing with the assaults to the arts, cultural and creative sectors over the past four years under the Liberal – National Coalition.

When added to the attacks from the Abbott Federal Liberal Government, the position of the arts and cultural sectors in Victoria is under great challenge.

Victorian Labor looks forward to the opportunity of partnering with AICV to build a climate of growth, support and creativity for our cultural and artistic organisations and communities.

1: Victorian Labor's Support for Arts, Culture and Creativity:

Victorian Labor believes that our *Creative Victoria* Plan will deliver an opportunity to build a new approach.

Victorian Labor will do this by delivering a modern Cultural and Arts Policy for the State. For four years Victoria's investment in and support for arts and culture has drifted directionless in a policy free zone. This must end. Establishing a Cultural and Arts policy is the most obvious first step to shape the role of government and its investment leadership.

In addition, Victorian Labor commits to a Creative Industries strategy. This will broaden the role of the arts, cultural and creative sectors to a wider economic value argument. It will ensure greater engagement with all Victorians to build a new appreciation of the value and role of the arts and creativity in our future.

Creative Victoria as a new agency will be the vehicle responsible for building these policies, ideas and programs to accompany these approaches.

It will come about by bringing together the role of Arts Victoria, Film Victoria and Multimedia Victoria. In doing so Victorian Labor will recognise both the complexities of the arts, cultural and creative sectors whilst looking to opportunities for collaboration to draw on wider strengths and commonalities.

We will ensure the new agency *Creative Victoria* recognises the distinctive characteristics of different sectors whilst encouraging cross-sector collaboration. Through this approach we will seek to recognise and drive the **cultural and the economic** value of the sector.

The development of the detailed policy formulation required for such a major move cannot be developed in isolation within government. It will require engagement with the arts, cultural and creative communities and through them the wider Victorian community. We see a leadership role for the sector– through organisations like AICV – as central to the success of such a policy.

Such an engagement will have to be properly resourced and lead to ensure it is meaningful.

Victorian Labor recognises that the investment from Government is the cornerstone of the arts, cultural and creative sectors development. Without this investment *Creative Victoria* will not be successful. Such investment will need to be an increase when measured against the real cuts that the sector has been subjected to by the Liberal – National Coalition over recent years.

Victorian Labor will have more to say about this investment closer to the election.

2: The Liberal - Nationals Record:

The Arts and Cultural sectors cannot endure another four years like the last four.

First the budget cuts, then the removal of indexation of funding and the lack of clarity around how or why funding decisions have been made, through to the shameful refusal to provide direction, leadership or a vision for the sector. This means we have seen a loss of support and momentum over the past four years.

The sector is beset by a sense of drift and growing crisis.

This position has been made worse by the deliberate breaking of a number of promises by the Coalition.

The broken promises include:

- that funding wouldn't be cut.
- that there would a policy process to shape the role of government and the sector.
- that there would be an export and economic recognition of the sector in Government policy.
- that there would be a modernisation of the Arts Victoria Act and its charter.

There are many other examples of broken commitments.

The end result of this dysfunction is that the sector has gone backwards not only in funding, but also in its ability to enlarge our States cultural life and to drive the wider social and economic benefit the sector can play in the States future.

With it comes the risk that the hard built reputation of Victoria as the leading cultural and creative State and Melbourne as an international creative hub is under threat.

Cuts to other related sectors – such as TAFE, education, cultural tourism, health programs and multicultural engagement – all feed through to compound the marginalisation of arts, culture and creativity across Government and the community.

3: Questions Answered:

I seek to answer questions you have provided.

I begin by referring to our election Platform released in May 2014 and to a number of announcements we have made to date regarding our *Creative Victoria* policy.

Our Platform begins in this area by saying:

“Labor believes in the cultural value and contribution all Victorians can make for their communities. The opportunity to enjoy and experience creativity in local communities’ right across Victoria is needed to make us more innovative, creative and successful State.”

Defining the many cultural values - social, creative, artistic and economic - in isolation from one another is to miss the interconnectedness and responsibility each plays to the other. The global, connected nature of culture extends well beyond our traditional ideas of what constitutes “value”.

In this regard it is right to acknowledge that Arts Victoria has at least tried to recognise the different values of its programs in asking organisations seeking support to measure their cultural, financial and social outcomes. Their efforts, however, have been undermined by a lack of investment and policy support from Government to act on these measures.

In this regard Victorian Labor sees *Creative Victoria* and its twin policy development priorities as being central to recognising the many varied values of art, culture and creativity in our society. Its programs would reflect this wide recognition of value.

Besides the establishment of *Creative Victoria*, the priorities of an Andrews Victorian Labor will be to address the funding and organisational damage of the past four years. We will be focusing attention on the importance of a collaborative approach with the small, medium and independent sectors as the area of greatest need. These organisations are the drivers of the creativity that the Victoria prides its reputation of creativity being based on. Their neglect over the past four years needs to end.

We need to also recognise the importance and value that the major cultural institutions and organisations play in the arts and cultural sectors. Each requires the other and all have been damaged in the last 4 years.

To be effective in building resources across government, throughout the community and in partnership with philanthropy and business, the arts, cultural and creative sectors need to have leadership demonstrated by government. That is why *Creative Victoria* in addition to its own activities will take a leadership role across all of government by establishing a “cultural solutions” partnership.

All departments of government will be required to identify their contributions to arts, culture and creativity efforts. These will then be required to align with the policy framework of *Creative Victoria*.

Creative Victoria will then build a “whole of government” approach to extend a “cultural solutions” approach to all efforts of governments dealings with civic and community activity where arts, culture and creativity intersect.

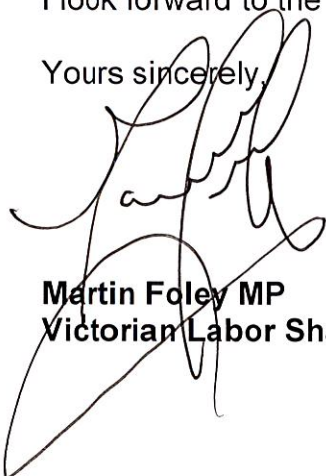
When it comes to building audiences, workforce participation, experimentation and the support for artists, Victorian Labor views these issues as going to the heart of any arts and cultural policy. Victorian Labor recognises that these necessarily are the foundations of an arts, cultural and creativity policy for Government. We will ensure they are central to both *Creative Victoria*'s Arts and Cultural Policy and Creative Industries Policy. Our commitment is that the policy underpinnings to *Creative Victoria* must address these as both strategic outcomes and as practical programs.

Whilst you correctly identify a tight fiscal environment in which States operate, a position made worse by the attacks of the Abbott government on States budgets, it is our commitment that *Creative Victoria* will be an opportunity to increase the opportunities of government support. By broadening out our message as the possibilities of the role of creativity as central to our arts, cultural and economic success we will build the argument for appropriate support from Government. We need to end the current miserable funding environment by breaking into new areas of support whilst looking to government to extend its contributions.

Victorian Labor will have more to say in detail on these matters.

I look forward to the opportunity of working with you to deliver a *Creative Victoria*.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Foley', written over a large, stylized scribble.

Martin Foley MP
Victorian Labor Shadow Minister for the Arts