



**PLATFORM ARTS
2022—2024 STRATEGIC PLAN**

Platform acknowledges the Wadawurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, learn and work.

The lands of Djilang have been home to the very first makers, storytellers and inventors for thousands of years and the Wadawurrung people are at the heart of our creative culture today.

We pay our respects to First Peoples past and present, and we recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture.

Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	01
<hr/>	
VISION, PURPOSE, VALUES	02
<hr/>	
GOALS	03
<hr/>	
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	05
<hr/>	
ARTISTIC PROGRAM	07
<hr/>	
MARKETING	09
<hr/>	
FINANCE	11
<hr/>	
MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE	12
<hr/>	
RISK MANAGEMENT	13
<hr/>	

Platform Arts, based on Wadawurrung Country in Djilang/Geelong, works with artists and creative practitioners across all disciplines to develop and sustain rigorous and critical artistic practice, and to test and present new experimental and contemporary works to regional and national audiences.

Our artistic program is underpinned by a unique artist development framework that incorporates arts laboratories, residencies, mentorship, professional development and artist-led training. We are committed to developing artistic practice that will sustain practitioners throughout the lifetime of their career, and fostering a local arts ecology that connects and contributes to global artistic discourse. We partner with leading national and international arts organisations, programs and festivals to provide additional presentation opportunities for our artists and to strengthen the global impact of our artist development and advocacy work.

In 2019, under new executive leadership and strong board governance, the organisation underwent significant strategic and operational restructures, resulting in an artistic program that champions experimental and contemporary works; the development of a nationally-recognised artist development program; and partnerships with independent artists and arts organisations across Australia and internationally.

Platform Arts delivered on the goals and key measures outlined in our 2019-2021 strategic plan, with financial sustainability, strategic partnerships, audience growth and artist engagement growing exponentially across the three-year period. This has been evidenced by our increase in financial reserves, up 111% from 2019, and an increase in annual turnover, up 34% from 2018 and projected to further increase in 2022. Our programs and partnerships increased in number and quality, with the development and presentation of new contemporary works and an increase in national and international partnerships recognised as organisational key goals.

Founded in 1996 as a youth arts organisation, Platform Arts has recently expanded its remit to include artists at all stages of practice and career. Our expansion opens eligibility for artists of all ages and stages of career to engage with Platform Arts through artist development and presentation outcomes, which we believe will result in significant improvements to audience-building, presentation calibre, community reach, partnerships, and long-term impacts on the cultural sector in Geelong.

We go into 2022 from a strong fiscal and organisational position: with confirmed multi-year operational funding through the City of Greater Geelong; two-years of program funding through the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) fund to deliver the Platform LAB and develop a First Nations led program; and a major festival commission for our Ensemble group infinity to present at RISING festival in 2022. This trajectory of growth and development, supported by healthy financial reserves and a three-year budget surplus from 2018-2020 puts us in a strong position to extend our reach and artist engagement by removing our youth designation, and making our programs available to artists of all ages, and across all stages of practice.

VISION

To be a nationally-recognised and leading arts organisation that supports the development of contemporary arts practice and the presentation of new and experimental works.

PURPOSE

To provide a rigorous artist development framework that underpins sustainable creative and professional practice, supporting artists through residencies, intensives, mentorships, workshops and skills development to challenge and extend their arts methodologies. This framework supports the devising of new and ambitious works to be presented at Platform Arts and partner organisations, programs and festivals, while also fostering audience development outside of major metropolitan regions.

VALUES

Leadership

Platform promotes leadership through capable, connected and visionary arts workers. We include, and amplify, diverse voices and create pathways that recognise and nurture the talent and abilities of artists in the Geelong region.

Creative Risk & Experimentation

We support artists to take creative risks and challenge conventions. We champion the development of bold and experimental work that delivers exceptional audience experiences.

Inclusivity & Diversity

Platform is a space of respect, tolerance and inclusion. We actively seek to work with all members of our community, and we provide an inclusive environment for people to feel supported and safe, both personally and through their creative output. We make space and create opportunities for diverse voices, and actively engage and support groups and individuals in our community that might otherwise not have access to broad creative opportunities.

Community

We seek to always expand our community and strengthen our cultural city by connecting people and organisations, providing opportunities and looking for new collaborations. We establish and nourish a strong collective of creative voices that inform our programs and outcomes.

Advocacy

We advocate for, and with, artists, arts workers and creatives within our community. We empower all people at Platform to participate in our programs and develop their own practice and work. We champion these people out in the wider community, and give them a platform from which they can grow professionally and continue to contribute to our region's arts and culture.

Professionalism & Accountability

Platform implements sound governance to ensure our ongoing viability. The organisation values core ethical responsibilities including loyalty, transparency, diligence and impartiality.

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

Build the capacity of artists and arts workers through professional development, industry connections, critical theory, mentorship and career pathways.

Platform Arts will continue to curate and facilitate a strong artistic and capacity-building framework that allows for creativity, cultural relevance, adaptation and growth. This model identifies new and relevant artistic ideas and voices, and through creative and professional development, it supports artists to elevate and execute their vision. The end goal is not just to increase presentation outcomes, but to enable each presentation process to become a testing ground where artists have access to critical industry scarcities: time, space, and resources to evolve artistic methodology and business practice. We support artists to experiment, collaborate, and grow their expertise in ways that impact their subsequent works, career sustainability, partnerships, and scope of future opportunities available to them.

INCLUSIVITY & DIVERSITY

Ensure that our programs, staffing and governance engage and represent all members of our community.

Embedded in our 2022-2024 strategic plan is a clear and continual focus on designating leadership and trainee roles within our organisation and board for diverse staff and governance. In consultation with First Nations practitioners and underpinned by our Cultural Safety Plan, we will establish a strong framework that supports First Nations artists, curators, producers and arts managers to develop works and initiatives at Platform. Over 2019-2021, Platform Arts evolved its vision to champion artists in becoming powerful voices in global contemporary ideas and actions, which often speaks to those from underrepresented groups within regional arts contexts who have much at stake culturally and politically. Our ongoing development of an inclusive best-practice framework symbiotically works with our inherent values to ensure a safe, inclusive space for diverse voices, narratives, and artistic expression.

CHAMPIONING EXPERIMENTAL & CONTEMPORARY

Leverage our artistic program to help raise the profile of Geelong as a thriving experimental and contemporary arts destination.

Platform Arts is responding to Geelong's critical need for accessible spaces that support the development, devising and presentation of non-traditional and experimental arts; a diverse hub for our growing contemporary arts community; and access to smaller, fully functioning venues for presenting riskier experimental works.

We will continue to develop a creatively critical and ambitious artistic program bringing regional, national, and international contemporary arts to the Geelong region. We hold artists at the heart of the organisation and recognise and advocate their profound role in shaping Geelong's arts and culture ecology as well as its national and international profile.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Build a local audience that supports experimental and contemporary arts and bring new audiences to Geelong.

The rate of Melbourne residents moving to Geelong is substantially increasing, and with this, they bring their ideals and expectations of a vibrant arts and cultural scene. Expanding our audience will be crucial in supporting a curated performance program at Platform Arts—allowing us to program bold, experimental and contemporary works involving local and international artists, collectives, and producing agencies that tour internationally and in festival programs. Similarly with our visual arts program, the ability to curate established artists working across contemporary arts disciplines will lift the cultural capital of our city and increase visitors from outside of Geelong, increasing art revenue sales and diversifying our audience demographics.

ORGANISATION SUSTAINABILITY

Continue to expand our organisation while remaining financially resilient.

Platform Arts continually seeks creative and strategic partnerships in Geelong, Victoria and beyond that will provide opportunities for financial, artistic and industry growth for Platform and the artists we represent. As our program has increased in calibre and outcomes, we have increased our success rate of receiving higher funded presentation and development partnerships on a per-project basis as well as receiving significant multi-year backing for our artist development streams. The raising of our organisational profile is also contributing to relationships with corporate and private funders looking to give meaningfully to our region's arts initiatives.

We are maximising the investments from a substantial period of growth in 2020-2021 to increase operational efficiency - expanding our FTE equivalent to provide more employment opportunities for creative and regionally based practitioners, and further resourcing our organisational output.

IMPACT & LEADERSHIP

Platform Arts staff, board and artists represented in national and international programs, symposia and conferences.

Through our decades of operation as a youth arts organisation, Platform Arts maintains a strong commitment to the professional and artistic development of our artists and staff, emboldening individuals to take creative risks, explode boundaries and be a powerful voice in global contemporary discourse. We recognise and nurture the talent and abilities of regionally-based artists, and cultivate a creative ecology of practitioners who are supported financially and operationally to devise and lead their own projects. Our own staff and board are supported to represent the organisation at state and national events, symposia and conferences, contributing to a global narrative of best practice in the arts.

		2022	2023	2024
Artist Development				
Establish career pathways for artists and arts workers	Percentage of Platform alumni that continue to receive: commissions, funding, work and creative opportunities in the years following their engagement with Platform	80%	80%	80%
Increase skills and capability of artists across all stages of practice	Number of mentors, facilitators and provocateurs brought in to lead programs and engage with artists	60	70	80
Participation and accessible programs	Number of artists and local community engaging in Platform Arts programs each year	3000	3000	3000
Inclusion and Diversity				
Increase regional artist representation	% of regional artists represented in Platform programming	60%	60%	60%
First Nations led	Number of First Nations artists, curators, producers and creatives engaged through Platform programs and initiatives	15	20	25
Diverse representation in organisational leadership positions	Increase FTE equivalent of diverse representation in leadership and creative programming roles	4	5	6
Championing Experimental & Contemporary				
Artistic program	Number of new works presented at Platform Arts by external artists and organisations	6	6	6
Increase local creative output	Number of new works developed at Platform through artist development programs	10	10	10
Develop strategic partnerships that contribute to, or support our program	Increase number of organisations delivering work in partnership with Platform Arts	15	17	20

		2022	2023	2024
Audience Development				
Increased digital engagement	% increase in number of online followers and level of engagement via aggregated digital platforms	20%	20%	20%
Regional audience representation	% of audience members that are based regionally	60%	60%	60%
Strengthen the Platform Arts brand	% increase of media coverage through marketing partnerships and targeted media campaigns	20%	30%	40%
Organisation Sustainability				
Continue to diversify income base	% of non-government investment in relation to annual turnover	40%	40%	40%
Increased income generated through artistic program	% increase in box office and exhibition sales each year	20%	20%	20%
Investment in new work	Number of local and international organisations making a financial contribution to the development of new work	4	5	6
Impact and Leadership				
Develop strategic presenting partnerships that support our program	Increase number of independent artists and arts orgs delivering work in partnership with Platform	5	7	9
Providing pathways and training to artists and arts workers	Number of artists and creatives engaged by Platform	300	300	300
Be active in the community through representation in regional networks and professional development	Number of annual sector and network events, training and professional development opportunities for Board, staff and artists	5	5	5

Placing an emphasis on collaborative and discursive methodologies, Platform Arts supports artists to develop and present works that question, disrupt and challenge. Platform Arts maintains a strong commitment to artist development and to contemporary, experimental programming and practice.

This artist-led and development-focused approach is evidenced by:

- Our flagship Platform LAB program
- Expanded exhibition program, with the creation of two new gallery spaces and a growing curatorial cohort
- An extensive public program that includes residencies, symposia, artist talks, lectures and workshops
- Performance program and season of commissioned works
- Our ongoing research-based project Energetical, which contributes to national discourse through centering regional contemporary voices
- An in-house performance collective *infinity*, who devise live and digital works for local and international audiences
- PEx - an artist-led international exchange program

These programs and new initiatives foster rigorous, internationally connected artistic practice for Geelong, supporting contemporary arts practice and programs, and connecting a new cohort of artists to our region.

Each program is designed to incubate audience development, connecting with new demographics that aren't currently exposed to local experimental and conceptual arts programming, as well as bringing in new audiences from Melbourne and other regional centres. Crucially, these programs connect local artists with statewide, national and international mentors, facilitators and collaborators, to expand our artistic connections, create more opportunities for artists to exhibit and develop new works, and connect Geelong's creative ecology to a wider global arts scene.

A key initiative that supports this push towards an expanded and rigorous arts practice is our major program: Platform LAB, which in 2020 and 2021 provided monetary support, six-month studio residencies, professional development, industry mentorship and presentation opportunities to early-career artists. This program is underpinned by a Creative Development program that supports artists with money, in-kind venue, and industry showings that expose artists to local and statewide commissioning bodies. The pilot program of Platform LAB was funded in 2020-2021 through Creative Victoria's Strategic Investment Fund, and in 2022-2023 will be funded through RISE.

PLATFORM LAB

Platform LAB supports the development and commissioning of new and experimental works by early to mid-career artists, curators and producers. LAB challenges participants to extend their practice, test ideas, devise new works and build their industry capacity. Participants are supported through residencies, intensives, mentorships and industry development, which includes the delivery of critical theory and professional development programs: Fundamentals and Debrief.

FIRST NATIONS PROGRAM

In 2022, Platform Arts will establish a First Nations Program which supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, curators and producers to devise and lead artistic programs that explore contemporary First Nations narratives.

GALLERY PROGRAM

Our Gallery program presents ambitious and experimental projects by artists across emerging to mid-career stages of practice. It emphasises critically engaged works with a strong contemporary currency, curating regional, national and international artists.

ENSEMBLE

Comprising young people from regional and urban centers, our Ensemble group 'infinity' works in collaboration with artist and director Jackson Castiglione with the aim of disrupting how young people are represented in art-making, social media and popular culture.

EXCHANGE

Platform Exchange (PEX) fosters a global dialogic interaction between Platform and affiliated international arts organisations. Through virtual collaboration and methodological cross-pollination, the PEX will contribute to international contemporary art discussions, by providing a Geelong artist with the opportunity to link into a global audiences and networks.

ENERGETICAL

Energetical is a symposium focusing on the knowledge, value, labour and experience of regional artists and arts workers. The third iteration of this hybrid symposium, exhibition and workshop program invites esteemed regional arts leaders to initiate conversations around diverse and inclusive programming, legacy art projects, and navigating contemporary arts practice in regional areas.

MARKETING MISSION

Platform Arts provides positive, thoughtful communications that enrich, inform, and connect our audience with opportunities and events they seek. Through this, we contribute to our region's profile as a vibrant, artistically rigorous, accessible contemporary arts hub.

MARKETING GOALS & STRATEGIES

Platform Arts enters 2022 as a strengthened and consolidated brand that cultivates and speaks to a growing contemporary arts community. In 2021, we prepared a detailed feasibility study to assess the community appetite for contemporary arts experiences in Geelong, and we ascertained public interest in Platform Arts responding to this need through the removal of our 'youth' branding, and the expansion of our remit to deliver contemporary arts programs with artists of all stages of age and practice. A survey was shared with over 1000 stakeholders, and the data and feedback from regional artists and arts workers enabled us to evaluate the community's expectations of a contemporary art space before developing our 2022-2024 Strategic Plan.

By shifting away from a designated 'youth' label, we promote age-inclusivity while continuing to align with the ideals of young people through the language and aesthetic of our brand. Strategically, this will maximise our potential to build an intergenerational, contemporary arts audience and cease to alienate older age groups who make up a large proportion of our region's arts audiences.

To support this major organisational and programming shift, our 2022 Marketing Strategy will respond to the following key goals:

1. Reposition and strengthen the platform arts brand

- Remove our 'youth' label while continuing to speak to (through our branding), the same cohort of young people we already engage
- Dismantle community misconceptions that Platform Arts invites an exclusively youth audience
- Strengthen our branding aesthetic but simplify our voice, allowing space to amplify the significant, diverse voices of others

2. Develop new partnerships and stakeholder relationships

- Active communication with partners and stakeholders throughout the life-cycle of projects
- Collaboration to develop and implement shared marketing plans for mutually beneficial promotions
- Foster opportunities for stakeholders to authentically engage the arts and further develop their connection, advocacy, and impact
- Grow awareness of Platform Arts in the corporate and tourism sectors and advocate the capacity of arts, cultural and public events on community health and wellbeing
- Engage new Media relationships and strengthen existing partnerships through responsive, valuable media offerings that strongly serve their audiences

3. Strengthen engagement with our national and regional arts sector

- Contribute to artistic discourse and seek ways to foster meaningful exchanges state-wide
- Develop local awareness of Platform Arts as an inclusive, thriving, contemporary arts hub
- Continue to develop partnerships with established national and international arts organisations and festivals
- Foster conversations and cross-promotions benefiting the Victorian arts network
- Advocate our region's creative capacity to national and international stakeholders

4. Growing our audience

- Reach and engage an intergenerational contemporary arts audience
- Respond to our region's changing demographics and the evolving expectations for cultural experiences
- Acknowledge our region's arts community osmosis, where arts practitioners and audience members are often interchangeable
- Connect early-career artists with new audiences via partnerships with established artists and organisations
- Become content contributors and advocates for our region's contemporary arts scene through media partnerships in editorial and radio

As of 15 September 2021, Platform Arts will hold reserves of \$115,243, and a healthy working capital ratio of 4:6. These results reflect the strong financial management systems from both Board and Executive Director that combine detailed budgeting with careful expenditure control. Increasing the Platform Arts' reserves has been a priority identified in our 2019-2021 Strategic Plan, with the organisation more than doubling its reserves over the three-year period. This continues as a priority for 2022-2024, to continue to ensure the financial resilience of the organisation. Platform Arts wrote off all its assets in 2020 to take advantage of the tax benefit from the instant asset write-off scheme. This saw a \$37,819 loss on disposal of fixed assets (2019: \$0) and a \$15,822 increase in depreciation expense.

Since 2018, the organisation has recorded a surplus each year, and has grown our annual turnover from \$494,530 as at December 31, 2018 to \$663,916 as at December 31, 2020. Our current financial position has been accomplished with a renewal in multi-year funding from local government (confirmed to 2024), plus an increase in state government funding and significant success in obtaining project-based funding that has allowed us to substantially increase our artistic and program expenditure in 2021 and into 2022-2023 periods. Platform Arts has made a considered effort to diversify its income base, with income generated over the last three-years through box office and exhibition art sales, venue hire and venue-related costs, and via commissioning and performance fees from external organisations and festivals.

Priorities for the organisation over the next three years include a further diversification of income, and an increase in project funding to further expand and grow our creative program and allow for further commissioning of new artistic works. This strong trajectory of organisational and artistic growth for Platform Arts will see us well-placed to once again apply for 2025-2028 multi-year funding through the Australia Council for the Arts, which the organisation lost in 2015. With careful financial management and continued development of our diverse revenue streams, Platform Arts is well positioned to continue to deliver high-quality contemporary arts programs in the Geelong Region.

FINANCIAL PRIORITIES 2022-2024

- Continue to build our organisations reserves
- Retain and seek to increase operational core funding commitments through local, state and federal government
- Continue to increase project funding through government and philanthropic streams
- Maintain and further grow strategic partnerships with external arts organisations to support the commissioning of new work and programs
- Maintain and further grow local partnerships that will allow us to increase our venue hire income
- Build local and regional audience capacity to further increase box office and art sales revenue

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Reporting to the Board, the Executive Director oversees the organisational operations, creative development and strategic direction of Platform Arts. The artistic, marketing and development and operation teams support and drive projects, campaigns and implement organisational policy and procedures. In addition to this core staff, Platform engages and supports a diverse community of artists, facilitators, mentors, educators and provocateurs to deliver programs and initiatives, building long-term relationships and fostering a regional creative ecology of practitioners and arts managers.

GOVERNANCE

Platform Arts is a not-for-profit incorporated association with charitable status. The company is overseen by a dedicated, skilled and experienced Board whose key responsibilities are to drive and support Platform Arts' strategic direction, long-term planning and steward significant changes; oversee the financial and legal operations of the company and establish policy frameworks; and take an active role in high level key stakeholder relationships. The Board is made up of arts industry leaders, legal, HR and financial professionals, and First Nations representation.

The Board meets every eight weeks commencing from January annually. A Finance Sub-Committee meets every month to ensure the organisation maintains a sound fiscal position, and other Sub-Committees include People & Risk and Marketing, both of which meet on an ad hoc basis.

Our Board Charter outlines governance responsibilities, management ethos and protocols for conflict of interest. Board members are recruited for two-year terms, with recruitment taking into consideration identified gaps of expertise and leadership. The Board maintains a minuted-record of all general and annual meetings, including participation in Sub-Committees and extraordinary meetings.

Through sound governance and executive leadership over the last three years, Platform Arts is in a strong fiscal and organisational position to increase our capacity for risk in programming, audience development, stakeholder and geographical reach. Through the development of this strategic plan, and projected future operational and program-related funding streams, we are investing in the long-term sustainability of our organisation, which will enable us to increase our capacity for calculated and strategic risk.

Our expansion from our youth designation to open our programs to artists of all ages and stages of practice exposes our organisation to new risks that we are taking preemptive steps to mitigate against. Significant stakeholder engagement and feasibility studies have been undertaken to support our case for change, ensuring there is demonstrated local and stakeholder appetite for us to undertake this creative risk.

Considering this expansion of our organisation, our highest identified risks during 2022-2024, and ensuing mitigating strategies are:

1. Reputation

- Reposition and strengthen the Platform Arts brand
- Develop new partnerships and stakeholder relationships
- Strengthen engagement with our national and regional arts sector
- Growing our audience

2. Finance

- Continue to diversify and increase our funding revenue through government, local, philanthropic and corporate giving
- Maintain and further grow strategic partnerships with external artistic organisations to support the commissioning of new work and programs
- Build local and regional audience capacity to increase box office and gallery revenue
- Maintain and further grow local partnerships that will allow us to increase our venue hire income

3. Program

- Continue to deliver a rigorous artist development program that responds to the needs of participating artists
- Execute and continue to develop our Cultural Safety Plan to ensure culturally safe and respectful engagement with First Nations artists
- Curate, commission and co-present ambitious, experimental works by national and international artists
- Increase staffing FTE to support artists in development and presentations of new works and program initiatives



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