



**SUBMISSION BY ARTSOUND FM
TO
2026-27 A.C.T. BUDGET**

16 February 2026

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to make a submission by ArtSound FM radio station (ArtSound) into the 2026-27 ACT Budget process. It is presented in the following three sections.

1. The work of ArtSound, as a locally focused community arts and music station.
2. The impact of ArtSound's work on the ACT community.
3. Suggested priorities for the 2026-27 ACT Budget that would support the work of ArtSound.

This submission does not seek funding directly for ArtSound, and is not a Budget bid for funding.

1. THE WORK OF ARTSOUND

ArtSound is an independent, locally focused, non-profit community arts and music station that has served the ACT community for 43 years, since 1983. Our patron is the Governor-General of Australia, Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC - we are the first community radio station to receive patronage from Her Excellency.

ArtSound creates and supports art with sound

ArtSound's mission, vision and aims

ArtSound's **mission** is excellence in broadcasting with a community arts focus.

Our **vision** is to support a strong and vibrant music and arts scene in the ACT through broadcasting and related services, reflecting the whole range of artistic practice in the ACT and beyond.

ArtSound **aims** to:

- inform and foster the arts in the Canberra region;
- reflect and promote the extensive range and diversity of creativity and artistic practice;
- collaborate with and support individuals and organisations that are similarly motivated; and
- participate, support, and celebrate the cultural life of the ACT region.

ArtSound's commitment to the creation of a dynamic, inclusive arts community and its mission to champion local culture through accessible, community-centred broadcasting, aligns closely with the principles that underpin both creative aging practices and Canberra's broader arts ecosystem.

Dr Cathy Hope
Chair, ACT Ministerial Council for Ageing

ArtSound's operations

We address the above mission, vision and aims through a range of locally-inspired arts news and information and music programming, covering the full spectrum of the region's performing and visual arts, including literature, theatre, film, exhibitions, and concerts.

We also broadcast a wide range of music, much of it recorded locally, covering genres as diverse as jazz and blues, folk, world, and classical music.

Unlike most arts organisations, ArtSound is not discipline specific. We have the capacity to bring artists from all genres together to collaborate in creating unique work.

We are on the air 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, as a result of the time, energy, and passion of our volunteers, supported by a small part-time staff, who all provide their services in an honorary capacity, and the generous support of the ACT Government, sponsors, donors, and community partners. At a conservative estimate, our volunteers provide around 200 hours of service each week to ArtSound and thus to the wider community.

A typical day's programming might include :

- music programs covering jazz, folk, world, classical and other genres;
 - poetry;
 - *Senior Memories*, providing nostalgia for senior citizens;
 - *ArtSound Radio Theatre*, featuring plays by local Canberra playwrights;
 - *Poetry on the Radio*, featuring work and discussion by local poets;
- and*

- *Arts Café*, providing interviews with Canberra artists and arts personalities, as well as arts stories.

While cost precludes us commissioning market research specifically about audiences to ArtSound, we estimate that we receive a large proportion of the 71000 listeners to community radio each week in the ACT that have been identified in the CBAA Community Radio Listener Survey.

Services we offer include :

- studio hire e.g. for local artists to achieve professional-standard recordings;
- studio recording e.g. for the production of audio books;
- podcasting;
- audio transfer e.g. from cassettes to CDs or digital formats;
- broadcasting training; and
- *Radio Rookies* – a school holiday program that teaches children how to make their own podcast.

Building on the diverse range of our arts development and promotion activities, we recently established *ArtSound Press*, an occasional publisher, which will publish some of the best literary works written for, and broadcast on ArtSound. Two books have been published, including a book of monologues by Canberra playwrights, with two more due in 2026. The books are distributed for sale nationally and internationally (using print on demand) and emphasise Canberra as an “arts capital.”

ArtSound is incorporated under the *Incorporated Associations Act 1991* and is also registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

We are licensed to broadcast by the Australian Communications and Media Authority and are a member of the Australian Fine Music Network and the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia

I have collaborated closely with ArtSound FM over recent years to highlight the work of Canberra and region poets through the “Poetry on the Radio” series. The outcomes of this program have been remarkable with the opportunity provided by the program of significant importance to the local poetry community.

Shane Strange
Recent Work Press

ArtSound’s facilities

Since 2005, ArtSound has occupied premises, free of charge, at Manuka Arts Centre that are owned by the ACT Government. In setting up these premises, the ACT Government undertook studio establishment works valued at \$0.5m, which was matched by \$0.5m of ArtSound donor funds.

ArtSound is extremely grateful to the ACT Government, the ACT Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries, and artsACT, the ACT Government’s arts agency, for the provision of these facilities, which are the essential backbone for the services we provide to the community.

We have two broadcast presentation studios, a small-talks/music-group studio, a production studio, a professional standard recording studio, and a sound preservation/archiving studio. We broadcast to the ACT and surrounding region on FM (from Black Mountain Tower and Mt Taylor) through commercial agreements with Broadcast Australia International, on DAB+, and via online streaming.

These excellent facilities allow us to achieve professional standards in community radio broadcasting and ensure that artists have their work presented to a very high quality to local audiences and beyond.

“ArtSound FM has been my go-to Canberra radio station for many years. Their ongoing support and promotion of Canberra’s live music scene has been crucial to the continuing viability and health of this important cultural sector. Local and visiting artists agree that ArtSound FM is an indispensable source to both promote their gigs and keep the broader public informed about Canberra’s night life.”

Mike Nock, ONZM
Pianist/composer/educator/recording artist
Inducted to Australian Jazz Hall of Fame

2. THE IMPACT OF ARTSOUND

Impact on the ACT community

ArtSound’s impact on the ACT community covers the following main areas:

- providing the ACT community with high-quality arts radio programming, including news about arts and cultural events in the ACT, and broadcasting the works of ACT artists;
- providing the ACT community with other activities and events, such as the forthcoming *Autumn Days* live theatre event that will take place in the gardens of Manuka Arts Centre in March 2026 as part of *Upstaging Canberra*, a festival that celebrates the diverse creative expression of older Canberrans;
- supporting practising ACT musicians, actors, directors, playwrights, writers, and visual artists by showcasing their work and bringing this to wider ACT audiences;
- involving community members in a range of activities including volunteering, training in radio presentation, and internships;
- acting as a conduit for information about the arts and cultural activity – our physical location and social reach enable us to function as a cultural ‘hub,’ enabling productive relationships between artists, organisations and audiences;
- collaborating with other organisations such as Tuggeranong Arts Centre, Canberra Multicultural Radio, and numerous music venues; and
- providing professional quality audio services including podcasts, audio book and CD production, and sound preservation.

“ArtSound are true champions of the local music scene, a great support to emerging composers and musicians in reaching a wider audience.”

Luke Sweeting
Jazz pianist & composer

How ArtSound’s activities respond to the ACT Wellbeing Framework

Through the services and activities identified above, ArtSound responds to a number of the domains identified in the ACT Wellbeing Framework, especially the following.

Education and life long learning : ArtSound provides members of the ACT community with access to learning opportunities through all ages and stages of life, including through the training courses in broadcasting we provide at regular intervals throughout the year. The training provides skills development in spoken-word delivery, programming, production, interviewing techniques, and technical production. These courses are accessed by a wide range of participants, from young people to older Canberrans, while *Radio Rookies* trains children in making podcasts.

Health : ArtSound supports good mental health in ACT community members through high quality community broadcasting and by providing volunteers with engagement and meaning in their lives.

Identity and belonging : ArtSound contributes to Canberrans feeling a sense of belonging, by focusing on the artistic expression of the ACT community and bringing ACT creative experiences into people’s homes. This contribution is particularly important in view of the documented value of providing the community with opportunities to be creative, either through directly creating material or working within a creative organisation, thus addressing the growing loneliness and sense of isolation in society.

Social connection : ArtSound is ideally positioned to support cross-community as well as inter-generational arts initiatives. We support social connectedness between Canberrans, particularly regarding the arts, through our broadcasting activities, our strong focus on volunteering, and through the training and mentoring activities we provide that offer social connection as well as skills development. These have become a particularly valued option for young persons and senior citizens interested

in contributing to the community, as well as offering social contact and emotional benefits. It should be noted that ArtSound maintained links between the arts community and the broader Canberra community during the COVID period, where we continued to create and broadcast work, by modifying our operations to meet the requirements of lock down.

In a world grappling with a loneliness epidemic that affects every age group, ArtSound FM provides an inclusive alternative to commercial, often toxic digital space. It fosters real human connection, celebrates local voices and strengthens our shared identify

Rebecca Vassarotti
Former Member for Kurrajong and Former Minister for Heritage

Opportunities to extend ArtSound’s impact on wellbeing

While ArtSound currently attracts modest grant support, this is oriented towards one-off projects and rebates for some core operational costs, but is challenging to secure. This places pressure on a resource base which is disproportionately small in relation to ArtSound’s potential for growth. Additional income would increase the contribution that ArtSound could make, in large part through the arts, to developing more creative and engaged communities.

ArtSound’s considerable expertise could also be further leveraged to allow greater transfer of skills and knowhow to the arts sector. As an independent medium, our affordability and accessibility for emerging musicians, artists and writers provide great opportunities for supporting innovation and experimentation within the arts.

3. SUGGESTED PRIORITIES FOR THE 2026-27 ACT BUDGET

ArtSound suggests that, in support of its activities, the following priorities be addressed in the 2026-27 ACT Budget :

- **lifelong learning;**

- **volunteering** e.g. additional funding support for volunteer training programs;
- **artistic and creative endeavour** e.g. additional funding support for community arts organisations (including to pay for organisations to coordinate artists collaboration and volunteer facilities), and for community arts facilities; and
- **community outreach** e.g. additional funding support for arts outreach into underrepresented communities.

For example, if greater support were available for artistic and creative endeavours and community outreach, this would support ArtSound in its endeavours to reach out to sectors of the community that are currently under-represented in its audience and volunteer profile, and realise its full potential.

This would greatly reinforce the organisation's effectiveness and allow people in these sectors to benefit more from the opportunities that ArtSound offers. Furthermore, this would help position Canberra as a genuine national centre for arts development.

CONCLUSION

ArtSound is happy to provide any further information that would be helpful with regard to this submission and would welcome an opportunity to speak to it, for example as part of the Budget Estimates hearings.

We are happy for this submission to be published as part of the ACT Budget consultation process.



Bart Meehan
President
ArtSound FM

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