

The Childers Group 2026-2027 Budget Submission

For thirteen years the Childers Group has been contributing to the development of the ACT budget through ACT Treasury's budget consultation process.

The Childers Group welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the 2026-2027 ACT Government Budget development process.

The Childers Group is an independent arts forum established in 2011. Our advocacy is based on the principles of:

- independence;
- objectivity;
- valuing the arts; and
- pride in Australia's national capital city and the surrounding region.

The Group has delivered yearly forums and advocates for the arts through MLA meetings with the three main political parties and in 2025 with the Independents.

We continue to hold a variety of meetings with stakeholders such as the Cultural Facilities Corporation, the Federal Government, A New Approach and Creative Australia.

Consequently, what follows is informed, considered, and situated in a national policy context.

Opening Statement:

The Childers Group would like to acknowledge the ongoing support from the Government in relation to the arts and creative industries in the ACT and Region. The commitments to the Kingston Arts Space, the new Lyric Theatre and the ongoing public works to the Arts Centres are welcomed.

However as mentioned in our recent submissions, the sector is still in a very difficult situation and as a result a greater response in terms of funding from government is needed to consolidate and grow the sector.

Arts Minister Michael Pettersson needs to meet these challenges across the sector by increasing funding in this Budget and budgets in the outgoing years.

The Childers Group supports the submission from the Belconnen Arts Centre on behalf of 24 arts organisations in the ACT.

- **A brief summary of our submission.**

The Childers Group acknowledges the Government's ongoing support for the arts and creative industries.

Childers supports the Budget Request from the Belconnen Arts Centre submission.

A summary of their request :

- A 25% real and ongoing increase to Arts Organisation and Centre funding from 2026–27, including indexation.
- Arts Centre funding increases to commence on 1 January 2027, rather than 2028, to prevent further workforce decline.
- Adoption of the Community Sector indexation formula for arts funding: $(WPI/Award \times 0.8) + (CPI \times 0.2)$.

The Funding challenges facing the sector are covered by the Belconnen submission and are supported by a detailed survey of the sector carried out in 2025.

- ACT arts worker salaries are 19% below the ACT median wage, with 79% earning below the median full-time wage (91% excluding Artistic/Executive Directors).
- Smaller and medium organisations have limited full-time roles, with staff often overworked and carrying broad responsibilities.
- Only 12% of organisations offer superannuation or salary packaging incentives, and half lack formal salary review processes.
- Over the past decade, artsACT funding indexation (28.6%) has lagged behind Award Wage and Superannuation increases (46.7%), creating a 14% real shortfall.

The ACT Government needs to move with urgency on its election promise of increasing the funding to arts organisations and arts centre by 25%.

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What more can the ACT Government do to improve community well-being in Canberra?

The Wellbeing Framework : Once again Where are the Arts???

We note that in relation to Arts and Culture, as of February 2026 there is still no data or comments in relation to the impact of arts and culture in the Framework. This must be addressed as a matter of priority.

Across the 12 Domains of the Framework the arts can play a significant role. We note that

Research done by the Canberra based arts, creativity and culture research think tank A New Approach (ANA) (www.newapproach.org.au) clearly shows :

“...when a considered effort is made to direct cultural and creative activities towards improving social cohesion , the impacts are significant including :

- building feelings of community belonging and trust, enhancing empathy and inclusion
- help in combating the growing issues of loneliness and isolation.
- increasing civic participation and making cities, suburbs and regions more liveable
- help individuals and communities recover from disasters and trauma”.

In relation to building a healthier Australia, ANA research has shown that :

- “engagement with arts and cultural activities reduces health risks particularly for mental health
- arts and cultural tools have also been successfully used to improve outcomes in terms of both prevention and treatment of physical illnesses and diseases.
- the arts can improve in-patient outcomes, can improve recovery from long term conditions, can reduce dementia risk and can improve elderly quality of life.”

Our priority for the 2026-2027 Budget

Every Canberran should have access to the key arts organisations to inspire and engage them. Every Canberran artist should have a Centre and an arts organisation that will support them to grow and develop.

And every visitor to Canberra should be able to find the key Canberra arts organisation that invites them to share in the wonderful cultural life of our city. **“Sure come for our National Institutions but stay a day or two longer to see the rich Canberra Arts Experience : galleries, theatre, dance, music, visual arts, writing and our wonderful Indigenous Story.”**

PRIORITY : FUND THE ELECTION PROMISES

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- Adoption of the Community Sector indexation formula for arts funding: $(WPI/Award \times 0.8) + (CPI \times 0.2)$.

The Childers Group looks forward to engaging with government over our Budget Submission in the next few months.

Yours Sincerely

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