



MEDIA RELEASE: Friday, March 20, 2020

Keep calm and keep employing is MEAA's message to the arts industry

The second COVID-19 stimulus package now being finalised must include targeted aid for the arts and entertainment industries to prevent widespread job losses, says the union for performers, crew and venue workers.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance says the stimulus should aim to help employers in the arts continue to keep people on their payroll, and must also provide special relief for freelancers and self-employed contractors who make up a large proportion of the industry's workforce.

The union is also calling on producers, theatrical companies and other employers in the sector to think before leaping into standing workers down while work and support can be maintained. They certainly should wait until the new package is announced.

MEAA is backing Live Performance Australia's call for an urgent injection of \$850 million into the sector, which has been devastated by the ban on non-essential gatherings of more than 100 people.

The federal and state governments could bring forward \$160 million in funding allocated this year to in funding for major, medium and small scale arts organisations as a down payment on this amount.

Along with Screen Producers Australia, the Australian Directors' Guild and Australian Writers' Guild, MEAA is also calling for government support for sole traders and business investment to enable retention of core staff and ensure content development continues during the downturn.

"Tens of thousands of jobs are at risk in live performance and screen," said MEAA chief executive Paul Murphy.

"The backbone of these industries are casual and self-employed workers, who do not have paid leave entitlements to fall back on. It is an industry where many workers are already on the economic margins and will be pushed into poverty without government assistance.

"The arts industry is totally united in calling for special relief. We expect that the representations that have been to the federal governments this week have been heard and that there will be a stimulus to the sector.

"It is upsetting that at a time when we rely on each other most, some employers have moved with great haste to stand down their permanent and casual workforces at the first instance, rather than as a last resort. These organisations will be remembered by us all for their zeal to shut down their companies long after the threat of this virus has passed.

"We understand that times are becoming increasingly tough, but urge that any drastic action be held off until we are better informed about what the government is proposing to support the industry."

Media contact: Mark Phillips – ph: 0422 009 011; mark.phillips@meaa.org

📍 PO Box 723 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012 📞 1300 656 513

BUILT ON INTEGRITY. POWERED BY CREATIVITY. MEAA.ORG

ABN 84 054 775 598