



MEDIA RELEASE: Wednesday, March 18, 2020

Performing arts, screen and media need to keep workers on payroll

A stimulus package to support the live performance, screen and media industries through COVID-19 must focus on keeping people in work rather than pushing them into the social security system, says the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance.

MEAA strongly supports the Prime Minister Scott Morrison's call today for employers to keep people employed.

Beside the terrible physical and mental health consequences of COVID-19, MEAA implores employers in the live performance, screen and media industries to embrace the need to keep paying their workers.

Government financial assistance should be targeted so that companies in these sectors can continue to pay their workforce during coronavirus enforced shutdowns.

"We are seeing an escalation of well-deserved uncertainty and anxiety moving through the sectors we represent," said MEAA chief executive Paul Murphy. "The union is confronting exponential growth in contact from members who are being stood-down or will soon face this prospect.

"MEAA does not expect that keeping workers (employees and regular contractors) is the responsibility of entertainment and media companies alone. As the weeks pass, some organisations may simply run out of funds to keep doing the right thing.

"That is why we reiterate our call for urgent assistance from state and federal government to sustain payments to workers and companies incapacitated by COVID-19. Federal and state governments should, in the first instance, bring forward about \$160 million in funding for major, medium and small scale arts organisations. Well over 10,000 people are employed or engaged by these organisations.

"Our governments should take the easy, concrete step of assuring arts organisations supported by government funding that they will receive business as usual funding irrespective of whether the virus causes cancellations.

"Ireland's Arts Council is now in the record as promising that: 'There will be no financial penalties for organisations/individuals that are unable to deliver key activities/key services arising from the impact of the COVID-19 virus'. Australia must follow-suit.

"MEAA also calls for direct financial support of sole traders and the screen industry, who are hurtling towards a precipice with no sense of how they will make ends meet for their families for the duration of this health emergency."

"The performing arts and screen sectors are being smashed by this virus. As the infection rate grows, the performers and sole traders who keep the sector alive are being cast as the forgotten workers of the government's stimulus efforts.

"MEAA members and all those in the creative and media industries seek urgent commitments about income support measures that will tide them over and keep them tied to these industries during and after COVID-19 has run its course," Mr Murphy said.

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