Arts
Workforce Planning Update 2026

SaCSA
Service and Creative Skills Australia





About SaCSA

Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) is an industry-owned, industry-led Jobs and Skills Council funded by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. We offer workforce planning, guidance and advocacy for the arts, personal services, retail, tourism and hospitality industries.

Working within a tripartite approach, SaCSA is the critical link between industry stakeholders, government and unions to strengthen Australia's vocational education and training sector and deliver stronger outcomes for employers, workers, learners, trainers and educators.

As the leader in workforce development initiatives for our industries, SaCSA collaborates with industry to identify and articulate current and future employment trends and develops solutions that best serve those needs.

Acknowledgements

SaCSA extends its gratitude to the industry, union and government representatives who provided their help in formulating our Arts Workforce Planning Update 2026.

We also acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Country, including lands and waters, where we work and live.

We acknowledge the valued partnership of the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, whose funding supports SaCSA's role as a Jobs and Skills Council.

Disclaimer

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CEO foreword

It is with great pride that I present SaCSA's Arts Workforce Planning Update, 2026 (Workforce Plan). This report builds on our previous workforce planning and reflects a maturing evidence base about the opportunities and challenges shaping the sector.

Our work is shaped by the knowledge and experience of the people who make Australia's arts sector possible. This Workforce Plan represents the voices of our stakeholders, the expertise of our Strategic Workforce Advisory Group and the vision of an empowered and future-ready arts workforce.

This year, SaCSA has continued to work alongside industry, unions, government, educators and training providers to progress work that enables workforce growth in the arts. The evidence and insights shared with SaCSA have enabled us to develop practical responses to workforce challenges, including research projects, pilot programs and training product updates that reflect the realities of working and learning in the arts.

This Workforce Plan brings that work together. It combines labour market and vocational education and training (VET) data with the experience and insights of stakeholders. This allows us to look beyond individual indicators and better understand how workforce supply, skills, participation, technology, working conditions and economic pressures interact.

SaCSA's Workforce Plan highlights a workforce experiencing significant growth and change. Many roles continue to face shortages, industry is reporting important skill gaps, and the rapid expansion of generative AI is shifting how art is produced and consumed. SaCSA's work responds to sector developments by strengthening career pathways, aligning VET with industry needs and analysing the implication of AI proliferation in the arts.

SaCSA has taken an active role in strengthening industry stewardship by contributing to national data reviews and reform initiatives. Our submissions to the Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) Occupation Shortage List, the Core Skills Occupations List, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Occupation Standard Classification for Australia and the consultation on the next National Cultural Policy to follow Revive have guided government on how to best recognise and support careers in the arts. We will continue working closely with government to ensure the arts sector's needs are front and centre.

Our interactive Data Dashboard released in February this year brings together data from the ABS, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, JSA and industry reports to summarise key insights about the industries, occupations and qualifications covered in SaCSA's remit. It provides an accessible source of information for stakeholders, helping to inform decision-making by educators, industry bodies, policymakers and researchers.

I thank the employers, workers, unions, industry associations, education and training providers, government representatives and other stakeholders who continue to share their expertise and experience with us. Their contribution ensures our work remains grounded in the realities of these diverse sectors.

Through workforce planning, stakeholder engagement, training product development and industry stewardship, SaCSA will continue working to strengthen career pathways, improve workforce capability and support a diverse, sustainable and resilient arts workforce.

Natalie Turmine
CEO

About the Workforce Planning Update

Workforce planning is a central part of SaCSA's role in understanding and responding to the workforce and skills needs of the sectors SaCSA serves. It brings together industry experience, stakeholder insights and data to build a clear picture of what is happening now, what is changing and where action can make the most difference.

This Workforce Plan builds on SaCSA's previous workforce planning work and reflects what we have learned through ongoing engagement with employers, workers, unions, industry associations, education and training providers, government and other stakeholders. Their perspectives help us and our industry leaders understand workforce challenges in context and identify opportunities that are practical and grounded in the realities of the sector.

SaCSA combines these insights with economic, labour market and vocational education and training (VET) data to identify current and emerging trends, test what we are hearing from industry and highlight areas where further research, collaboration or action may be needed. The Workforce Plan considers both immediate workforce pressures and the longer-term forces shaping the sector, including changing skills needs, technology, workforce participation and broader economic and policy settings.

SaCSA's engagement across Australia

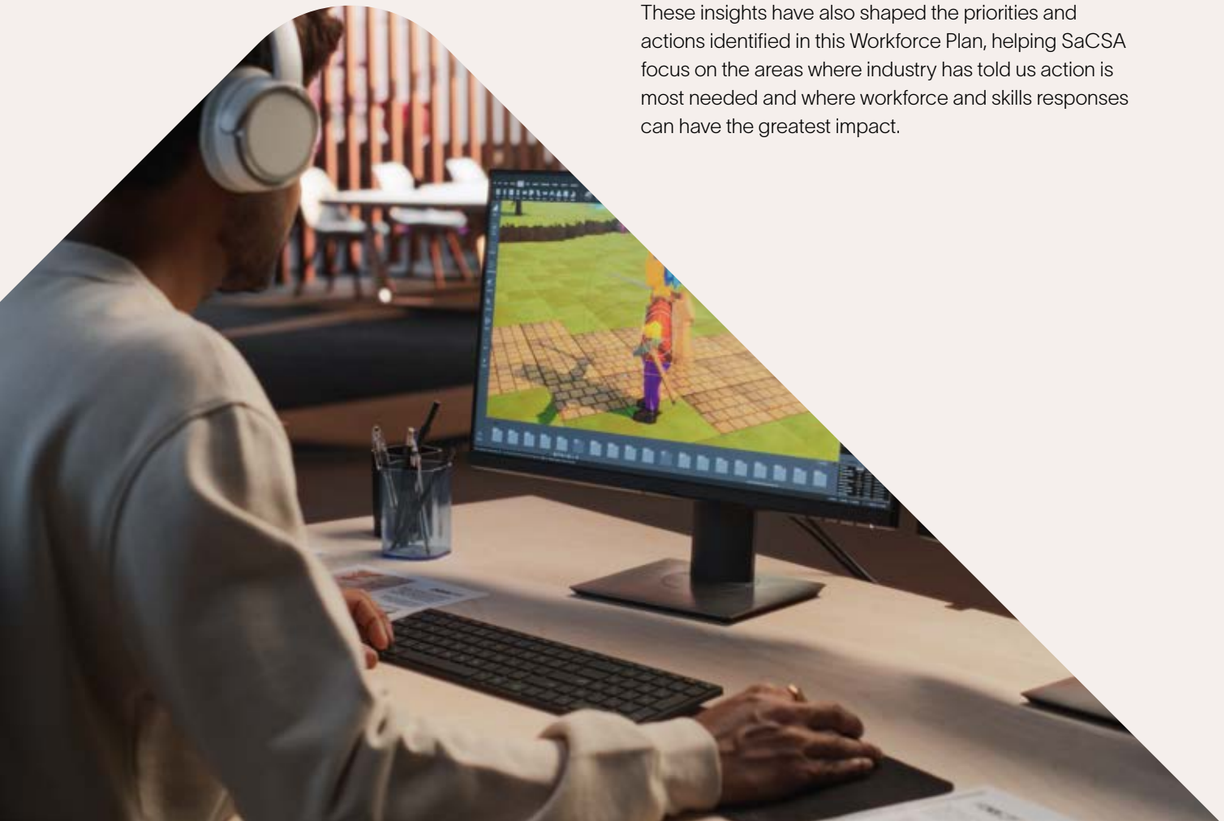
SaCSA's workforce planning is grounded in extensive and ongoing engagement with stakeholders across Australia. Over the past year, SaCSA engaged with more than 4,100 stakeholders across every state and territory, bringing together a broad range of voices, experiences and perspectives from across the industries we represent.

Our engagement reaches metropolitan, regional and remote communities and includes large, medium and small employers, workers, unions, industry associations and peak bodies, education and training providers, learners, government representatives and other Jobs and Skills Councils. SaCSA also seeks to ensure that perspectives that may be underrepresented in traditional consultation processes are heard, including First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability, people in regional and remote Australia, and other priority cohorts relevant to our industries.

Engagement takes place throughout the year and through multiple channels, including industry events, roundtables, workshops, webinars, surveys and conferences, as well as SaCSA's Strategic Workforce Advisory Groups, technical committees and project reference groups. This combination of broad engagement and more focused consultation enables SaCSA to hear directly from industry, explore issues in depth and understand how workforce experiences and challenges differ across occupations, locations, business types and workforce cohorts.

Stakeholder voices, insights and perspectives are embedded throughout SaCSA's work and have directly shaped the development of this Workforce Plan. Workforce data and research have been tested against the experiences of industry, and the workforce challenges identified in this plan have been discussed and validated through stakeholder engagement. This process helps ensure that the issues presented are not considered through data alone, but reflect the experiences, priorities and concerns of the people and organisations working across the industry.

These insights have also shaped the priorities and actions identified in this Workforce Plan, helping SaCSA focus on the areas where industry has told us action is most needed and where workforce and skills responses can have the greatest impact.



Defining the arts workforce

Australian arts workers contribute across the economy. They work within arts industries that produce creative and cultural activities, services and products, as well as in non-arts industries where they apply their specialist arts skills and expertise. The Australian arts workforce therefore includes people working in arts industries, as well as those applying arts expertise in other industries.[1]

The arts industries within SaCSA's remit include:

- creative arts, including visual arts and museums, First Nations arts and culture, music, performing arts and writing
- screen and digital games
- broadcasting across television, radio and the internet
- private and community arts education.

Industries in Australia are classified using the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification. Appendix A details the industry codes used in the analyses presented in this Workforce Plan.

More than 60 occupations have been identified as involving specialist arts sector skills and expertise. Common occupations include graphic designers, private music and dance teachers, photographers, screen producers, musicians, and entertainment venue attendants.

Occupations are classified using the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia, which recently replaced the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations. Appendix A details the occupation codes used in the analyses presented in this Workforce Plan.

Importantly, the arts industries form part of the broader creative and cultural sector. Further context on this broader sector and its relationship to the arts workforce is provided in the section Conceptual framework for measuring the arts workforce and Appendix A.

Important data notes

Data currency

Unless otherwise stated, the data presented in this Workforce Plan reflects the latest available information as at September 2026.

2021 Census data

The 2021 Census was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when employment across the arts sector was significantly disrupted.. As a result, Census-based figures may not reflect typical workforce conditions and should be interpreted with caution, particularly when analysing workforce trends or informing decisions.

1 This is the established government approach to defining the arts workforce and is described in more detail in the section Conceptual framework for measuring the arts workforce.

Executive summary

A thriving arts sector is crucial to cultural, social and economic prosperity throughout Australia. Australians' engagement with the arts has never been greater: 74% of Australians attended at least one live arts event or festival in the past year, the highest level recorded.[2] Cultural and creative activity contributes $70.3 billion to Australia's GDP annually.[3]

Employment across arts occupations continues to grow. There are an estimated 219,000 individuals working in arts occupations within SaCSA's scope in 2025,[4] and this is expected to increase by 13.9% over the next decade.[5] Added to this are people employed in the arts industry in non-arts occupations (such as accountants for a film company), bringing estimated total employment in the arts to around 297,000 people.[6] The arts sit within a broader creative and cultural sector which is estimated to employ between 591,000 and 715,000 people.[7]

Recruitment pressures vary considerably across the arts sector. Many technical and production roles are in ongoing shortage, and employers continue to report gaps in business, finance, management and leadership skills. Addressing marginalised groups' historical and structural barriers to entering the arts workforce will be central to responding to these shortages.

Arts education is facing growing pressures that risk constraining the pipeline of new talent into the sector and exacerbating existing workforce shortages. Secondary school enrolments in arts subjects are declining.[8] The university sector is experiencing rising costs of delivering and undertaking creative arts qualifications and a dip in enrolments.[9] In the vocational education and training sector, enrolments in CUA – Creative Arts and Culture Training Package qualifications plateaued in 2025 following rises in 2023 and 2024, suggesting a need to sustain student demand.[10] Ensuring that qualifications meet industry needs, provide meaningful pathways into arts careers and support strong graduate outcomes will be critical to attracting new entrants and maintaining the sector's future workforce supply.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping how creative work is produced, distributed and experienced. While AI offers opportunities to augment creative practice, it also raises significant concerns about intellectual property and copyright, consent, transparency, compensation and the protection of human creativity. With the potential to reduce entry-level work, arts organisations and training providers will need to adapt to changing skill requirements and ensure learners continue to have opportunities to develop the practical skills.

These trends point to 3 interconnected workforce priorities for the arts sector:

- the connection between occupational shortages and student training decisions
- addressing education and training system challenges
- ensuring sustainable career and skills pathways.

SaCSA will continue to work with industry, government, unions and the education and training sector to respond to these priorities. Through workforce planning projects and research, stakeholder engagement, training product development and pilots and industry stewardship, SaCSA will focus on practical, evidence-informed solutions that strengthen career pathways, improve workforce capability and support a diverse, sustainable and resilient arts workforce.

Explore more workforce data and detailed industry, occupation and qualification insights online.

SaCSA's interactive Data Dashboard brings together data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Jobs and Skills Australia and industry reports. Explore workforce trends, occupations, qualifications and skills data across SaCSA's sectors to support evidence-based workforce planning and decision-making.

Scan the QR code to explore the SaCSA Data Dashboard.

2 Creative Australia, *Creative Transformations: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey* (2026).

3 Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (BCARR), *Visual Summary: Cultural and Creative Activity in Australia, 2015–16 to 2024–25* (2026), 6.

4 SaCSA estimate using the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Labour Force Survey 2006 to 2026* (2026), November quarter 2025, four-quarter average; and ABS, *2021 Census of Population and Housing* (2022). Note this figure is likely to undercount the full scale of professional artistic activity because it only counts people whose 'main job' is in the arts. See Appendix C for estimation method and other data considerations.

5 Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), *Employment Projections – May 2025 to May 2035* (2026).

6 SaCSA estimate using the ABS, *Labour Force Survey 2006 to 2026* (2026), November quarter 2025, 4-quarter average; and ABS, *2021 Census of Population and Housing* (2022). See Appendix C for estimation method.

7 See Appendix C for detail on measuring of the scope of the creative and cultural industries sector. The lower figure comes from: BCARR, *Measuring Australia's Cultural and Creative Workforce, 2008–09 to 2023–24 – Interim Report* (2025). The upper figure comes from: M. McCutcheon and S. Cunningham, *The Creative Economy in Australia – What Census 2021 Tells Us* (2022).

8 S. Gattenhof and J. N. Saunders, "The Polycrisis for Arts and Creative Education in Australia", *Australian Journal of Education* 70, no. 1 (2026).

9 Gattenhof and Saunders, "The Polycrisis".

10 National Centre for Vocational Research (NCVER), *VOCSTATS Total VET Students and Courses* (2026), TVA program enrolments and TVA program completions, 2015–2025.

The forces shaping workforce change

Conceptual framework for measuring the arts workforce

This Workforce Plan uses the established government approach to measuring the arts workforce, combining employment in arts occupations with employment in arts industries to estimate total arts employment.[11]

The conceptual framework for this approach is illustrated in Figure 1 and identifies 3 employment categories:

- specialist workers: people employed in an arts occupation within an arts industry. For example, a film and video editor employed in the television industry
- embedded workers: people employed in an arts occupation outside the arts industry. For example, a graphic designer employed in the retail industry
- support workers: people employed in another occupation within an arts industry. For example, an accountant employed in the museum industry.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for measuring total arts employment

	Art industries	**Other industries**	
Art occupations	Specialist	Embedded	Total arts occupations = specialist + embedded
Other occupations	Support	(Rest of workforce)	
	Total arts industries = specialist +support		Total arts employment = specialist + embedded + support

Source: based on S. Cunningham and P. Higgs, What's your other job? A census analysis of arts employment in Australia (2010), 3.

There is no universally agreed definition of which occupations and industries should be classified as 'arts' or 'other'.[12] This Workforce Plan focuses on SaCSA's arts industry remit and arts occupation scope, which includes screen and digital games; broadcasting across television, radio and the internet; First Nations arts and culture; creative arts, including visual arts and museums, music, performing arts and writing; and private and community arts education.[13]

Two related Australian frameworks are designed to cover broader definitions of creative and cultural activity. The government's Cultural and Creative Account adds industries such as architecture and advertising, while the Creative Trident framework also includes industries such as computer system design, and libraries and archives.[14]

11 BCARR, *Measuring Australia's Cultural and Creative Workforce.*

12 BCARR, *Measuring Australia's Cultural and Creative Workforce*, 8.

13 See Appendix A for the specific industry and occupation classification codes used in this Workforce Plan.

14 See Appendix A for detail. BCARR, *Measuring Australia's Cultural and Creative Workforce*; and McCutcheon and Cunningham, *The Creative Economy in Australia.*



Estimating the arts workforce

SaCSA estimates that approximately 297,000 people were employed in the arts in 2025.[15] This included an estimated 219,000 people employed in arts occupations (specialist and embedded workers), alongside people employed in other occupations within arts industries (support workers).[16]

The arts sit within a broader creative and cultural sector, which is estimated to employ between 591,000 and 715,000 people.[17]

All measures of the size of the arts workforce and the broader creative and cultural sector workforce have some data limitations (see Appendix C for further detail).

Estimates for individual occupations are generally several years old because the 5-yearly Census is the only source of data at this level. Notably, the most recent Census was run in 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic when restrictions disrupted employment and activity across much of the arts sector.[18] As a result, the 2021 Census may not fully reflect the size and composition of the arts workforce under more typical operating conditions.

In addition, most measures only capture people whose main job is in the arts and therefore do not reflect the full scale of professional artistic activity.

15 SaCSA estimate using ABS, *Labour Force Survey 2006 to 2026* (2025), November quarter 2025, 4-quarter average; and ABS, *2021 Census of Population and Housing* (2022). See Appendix C for estimation method.

16 SaCSA estimate using ABS, *Labour Force Survey 2006 to 2026* (2025), November quarter 2025, 4-quarter average; and ABS, *2021 Census of Population and Housing* (2022). See Appendix C for estimation method.

17 These figures come from 2 related Australian measurement frameworks: the lower figure from BCARR, *Measuring Australia's Cultural and Creative Workforce*; and the upper figure from McCutcheon and Cunningham, *The Creative Economy in Australia*. See Appendix A for details on these.

18 BCARR, *Analysis of the Cultural and Creative Sector*, 7–9. See also: Australia Council for the Arts, Impacts of COVID-19 on the Cultural and Creative Industries (2022); J. Borland, *Decline to Boom to Slowdown: Australia's Labour Market in the COVID-19 Era* (2025).

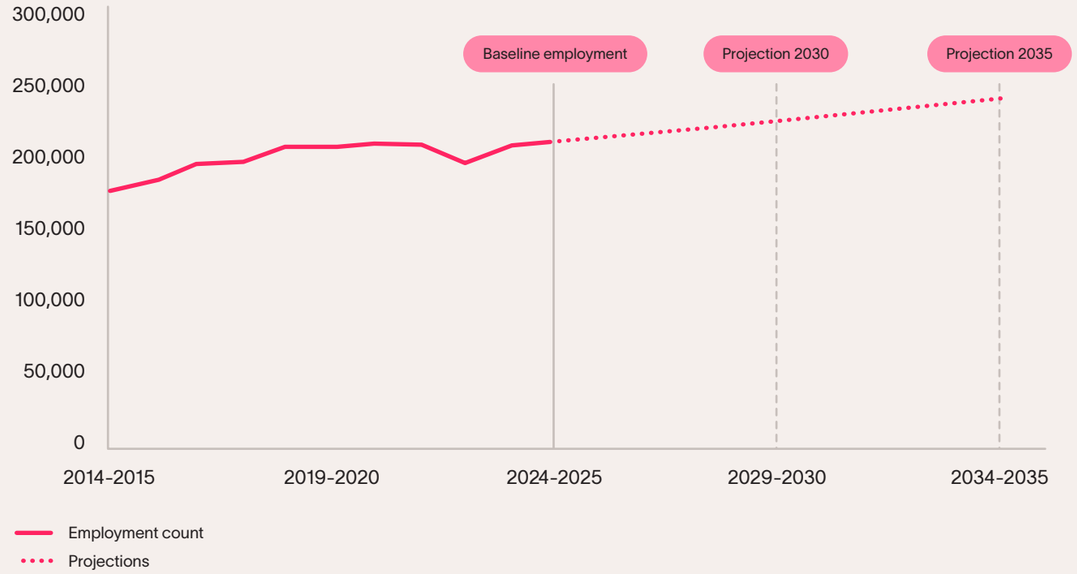
Labour market and occupational shortages

Employment growth

Employment in arts occupations grew by 10.9% in 2023–24, reversing the decline in employment linked to COVID-19 restrictions.[19] Growth moderated to 1.7% in 2024–25.[20]

According to Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) estimates, employment in arts occupations is projected to grow by 13.9% between 2025 and 2035 (Figure 2).[21] This is slightly higher than the 13.3% employment growth projected across the Australian workforce.

Figure 2: Employment growth, 2014–2015 to 2034–2035, arts occupations



Source: ABS, Labour Force Survey 2006 to 2026 (2026), May quarter 2026, 4-quarter average. JSA, Employment Projections – May 2025 to May 2035 (2026). Based on SaCSA's arts occupation scope. See Appendix C for estimation method.

Occupational shortages

Recruitment pressures remain uneven across the sector, with shortages persisting in several arts occupations across Australia in 2026, as shown in Table 1. Shortages are primarily concentrated in technical and production roles, with national shortages of film and video editors, production managers (screen or live performance), technical directors, lighting technicians and production coordinators (audio, screen or live performance).

19 SaCSA estimate using ABS, *Labour Force Survey 2006 to 2026* (2026), November quarter 2025, 4-quarter average; and ABS, *2021 Census of Population and Housing* (2022). See Appendix C for estimation method.

20 SaCSA estimate using ABS, *Labour Force Survey 2006 to 2026* (2026), November quarter 2025, 4-quarter average; and ABS, *2021 Census of Population and Housing* (2022). See Appendix C for estimation method.

21 JSA, *Employment Projections – May 2025 to May 2035* (2026).

Table 1: Occupation shortage list (OSL) 2026, arts occupations

OSCA Code	Description	2026
231434	Film and video editor	National Shortage
231435	Production manager (screen or live performance)	National Shortage
231438	Technical director	National Shortage
391234	Lighting technician	National Shortage
599935	Production coordinator (audio, screen or live performance)	National Shortage

Source: JSA, Occupation Shortage List 2026 (2026), Occupations (6 digit). Based on SaCSA's arts occupation scope. Occupations that are not in shortage or are not in scope of the OSL, such as ticket collector or usher, are not displayed.

The Occupation Shortage List (OSL) does not always reflect the workforce shortages reported by the arts sector. The Creative Workforce Scoping Study surveyed arts sector employers directly in 2024 and identified shortages across more than 90 occupations in 6 artform areas, considerably more than identified in the OSL.[22] Stakeholder feedback continues to indicate shortages in roles including visual effects artists and digital games developers in the screen industries, as well as arts administrators and managers in regional areas.

Some of this difference reflects limitations in the OSL methodology. Two limitations are particularly relevant to the arts sector: occupations with too few workers to warrant a distinct classification within OSCA, and occupations where shortages occur in only one of the several industries in which they are employed.

The OSL also relies primarily on data from publicly advertised jobs and may therefore not capture recruitment through other channels, such as networks used to engage freelancers on fixed-term contracts. These characteristics of the arts workforce mean that some reported shortages may not be fully represented in the OSL.

Equity and inclusion

Australia's cultural and creative industries draw on diverse communities, experiences and forms of cultural expression, yet significant barriers to participation and progression remain.[23] Improving workforce participation among First Nations peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability and other underrepresented groups presents an opportunity to expand the available workforce while strengthening innovation and organisational capability.

Within arts occupations under SaCSA's remit, First Nations peoples remain underrepresented, comprising 1.8% of the workforce compared with 2.2% across the overall employed workforce.[24] Representation varies considerably across occupations. It is higher among community arts workers (11.9%), painters (9.6%), dancers and choreographers (7.1%), radio presenters (5.3%) and curators (5.1%), but remains low across many other roles.

Underrepresentation is particularly evident in technical production and decision-making positions across many subsectors. Stakeholders identify a range of barriers, including limited access to culturally appropriate training, recruitment practices that can undervalue cultural knowledge and connection to Country, limited career pathways, a lack of cultural safety and the disproportionate cultural load carried by First Nations workers within organisations.[25, 26, 27]

Gender imbalance is also relevant to understanding and addressing occupational shortages. The JSA's Gender Economic Equality Study (2026) found that occupational shortages typically worsen as gender imbalance increases, particularly in occupations that are almost completely male dominated.[28] Using the Gender Segregation Intensity Scale (GSIS),[29] 27% of individuals employed in SaCSA's arts sector remit work in moderately to almost completely female-dominated occupations, while 31% work in moderately to almost completely male-dominated occupations.

Three arts occupations in national shortage are male dominated. Lighting technicians are highly male dominated; 17% of the occupation identifies as female. Technical directors are highly male dominated; 18% identify as female, while film and video editors are moderately male dominated; 28% identify as female (Table 2).

Table 2: Gender segregation intensity scale (GSIS), arts occupations

GSIS score	Number of occupations	Proportion of occupations	Number employed	Proportion of employed
Almost completely female dominated	1	2%	7,200	5%
Highly female dominated	4	7%	3,860	2%
Moderately female dominated	14	23%	30,640	20%
Gender balanced	20	33%	65,260	42%
Moderately male dominated	13	21%	22,590	15%
Highly male dominated	6	10%	20,930	13%
Almost completely male dominated	3	5%	4,570	3%

Source: JSA, Gender Economic Equality Study (2026). Based on SaCSA's arts occupation scope.

What this means for the arts workforce

Following declines in employment during the COVID-19 period, growth in the arts workforce is broadly back in line with longer-term employment trends. Continued employment growth, persistent demand for experienced workers and shortages in key skilled occupations point to an ongoing need to strengthen the domestic skills pipeline, improve attraction and retention, and maintain access to skilled migration.

22 Creative Australia and SaCSA, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report – Full Report* (2025), 21.
23 Creative Australia, *Towards Equity 2* (2026).
24 ABS, 2021 *Census of Population and Housing* (2022), based on SaCSA's arts occupation scope.
25 Productivity Commission, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Visual Arts and Crafts – Study Report* (2022).
26 Arnhem Northern and Kimberley Artists Aboriginal Corporation (ANKA), Djalkiri – *Sector Strengthening Summit for Remote Indigenous Community-Controlled Arts and Culture Sector – Report April 2025* (2025).
27 Creative Australia, *Bringing it Forward – the Journey Towards a National Body for First Nations Arts and Culture* (2021).
28 JSA, *Gender Economic Equality Study* (2026).
29 Occupations with less than 60% gender representation are defined as 'gender balanced', between 60% and 75% are 'moderately dominated', between 75% and 90% are 'highly dominated' and 90% and above are 'almost completely dominated'.

CUA – Creative Arts and Culture Training Package VET update 2025

Total VET activity

Arts enrolments plateaued following 2 years of growth

2025 enrolment profile

54% Female

46% Male

83% aged under 25

6% First Nations

2025 enrolments snapshot

54% were enrolled in private training providers, followed by 27% in TAFE institutes and 13% in schools.

24% were enrolled in regional and remote areas, while 66% were in major cities.

22% were enrolled in Certificate II in Creative Industries, which was the most enrolled qualification.

Source: NCVER, VOCSTATS, Total VET Students and Courses (TVA) (2026), TVA program enrolments and TVA program completions 2015–2025; NCVER, Databuilder, VET Qualification Completion Rates 2025 (2026), Observed completion rates, 4-year rates. Figures are rounded to nearest 100.

Changes in VET activity, 2024 to 2025

Total enrolments

71,100

71,100 in 2024 | **0%**

Domestic	69,200	**+0.2%**
International	1,900	**-6.2%**

97% Domestic

3% International

Total completions

21,900

23,300 in 2024 | **-6%**

Domestic	21,000	**-6.3%**
International	900	**+5.8%**

96% Domestic

4% International

Qualifications driving the change

Qualification	Enrolments (total increase) 2024–2025	Enrolments (percentage increase) 2024–2025	Completions (total increase) 2024–2025	Completions (percentage increase) 2024–2025
Certificate II in Creative Industries	+2,600	20%	+100	5%
Certificate III in Music	+400	5%	+200	23%
Diploma of Screen and Media	-600	-16%	-600	-31%
Certificate III in Design Fundamentals	-700	-19%	-200	-14%

What drove the change?

Total enrolments are buoyed by increased uptake of Certificate II in Creative Industries.

Enrolments remained at 2024 levels due to a significant increase in uptake of the Certificate II in Creative Industries qualification. International enrolments are down more than 6% from 2024 but they comprise a small amount of CUA enrolments.

CUA completions decreased by 1,400 in 2025. Across the 2016–2020 commencing cohorts the four-year completion rates averaged 51%, higher than VET average of 47%.

VET in schools (VETiS)

VETiS activity increased

20,400
school-based VET commencements
+14% from 2024

7,000
school-based VET completions
+3% from 2024

VETiS student profile

52% Female

48% Male

5% First Nations

27% Regional and Remote

VETiS qualification profile

Leading VETiS qualifications		
Qualification	**Share of commencements**	**Share of completions**
Certificate II in Creative Industries	33%	10%
Certificate III in Live Production and Technical Services	14%	11%

Together, these 2 qualifications accounted for **almost half** of commencements but only **21%** of completions.

What stands out?

Enrolments in school-based VET continue to grow

School-based VET is an important part of the education system. Exposure to vocational learning and workplaces while at school provides students with opportunities to understand occupations, industries and the skills employers require before making major education and career decisions.

VETiS commencements in Creative Arts and Culture qualifications increased by 14% in 2025 and by 30% since 2023. This growth was driven largely by increasing enrolments in the Certificate II in Creative Industries.

Source: NCVER, Databuilder, VET in Schools 2025 (2026), Program enrolments and completions; NCVER, Databuilder, Student Outcomes 2025 (2025), VET student outcomes. Figures are rounded to nearest 100.

Student outcomes for CUA Training Package completers

Student outcomes remained positive

80%

Achieved main reason for doing training

-1% from 2024

77%

Employed or in further studies after training

-2% from 2024

89%

Satisfied with the training overall

+1% from 2024

Main reason for undertaking training

Reason	Creative Arts	VET average
Employment related	47%	73%
Personal development	27%	15%
Study related (progress to further study)	26%	12%

Students undertake training in the creative arts for personal development or study related reasons at much higher rates (**53%**) than VET average (**27%**).

What this means

Student outcomes remain positive

Students completing CUA qualifications report high levels of satisfaction with their training and progress to employment or further education at high rates. These positive outcomes demonstrate how VET is translating into benefits for learners and provide encouraging signs for the attractiveness of VET to new and continuing students.

Source: NCVER, Databuilder, VET in Schools 2025 (2026), Program enrolments and completions; NCVER, Databuilder, Student Outcomes 2025 (2025), VET student outcomes. Figures are rounded to nearest 100.



Workforce impacts of artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a workforce issue that extends across industries and the Jobs and Skills Council (JSC) network. SaCSA is working with the Future Skills Organisation (FSO) and other JSCs to contribute industry insights to national work on AI skills and workforce capability. This collaboration recognises that many of the capabilities required to work effectively with AI are transferable across sectors, while its workforce impacts will differ by industry and occupation.

AI uptake is comparatively high among businesses in creative industries.[30] AI, particularly Generative AI (GenAI), is accelerating change across the arts sector. It is reshaping how creative work is produced, distributed and experienced, while raising significant questions about the value and protection of human creativity.

While there is considerable potential for AI to augment creative practice, there is also concern about artists' work being used to train AI systems without consent, transparency or appropriate compensation. Arts organisations have consequently called for greater transparency about the material used to train AI models and the mechanisms that protect creators' intellectual property, recognition and income.

Some arts organisations have moved to self-regulate the use of AI. For example, the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) has announced that wholly AI-generated tracks will not be eligible for the ARIA Charts or Awards.[31]

These issues are particularly significant for First Nations artists and communities. Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) encompasses cultural knowledge and expression that may not be adequately protected through conventional copyright frameworks. The risks posed by AI include reproducing culturally significant imagery, stories, styles and knowledge without appropriate authority or attribution.

The Australian Government is progressing new laws to protect ICIP, including to address the harm caused by fake art, merchandise and souvenirs.[32]

A related workforce concern is what happens to entry-level opportunities when AI can perform some of the routine creative and administrative tasks through which people develop their skills. JSA's Our Gen AI Transition study finds that GenAI is generally more likely to augment workers than replace them, but automation potential is concentrated in routine tasks.[33] As part of this research, JSA assigns individual work task scores from zero to one based on exposure to augmentation and automation, then averages them to assess an occupation's exposure to GenAI.[34] Table 3 shows the exposure scores for 6 key occupation groups in SaCSA's arts sector remit.[35]

Table 3: AI exposure across key arts occupation groups

Occupation (4-digit ANZSCO)	Augmentation exposure	Automation exposure
Private tutors and teachers[36]	0.73 **High**	0.51 **Medium**
Journalists and other writers	0.7 **High**	0.61 **Medium**
Film, television, radio and stage directors	0.69 **Medium**	0.36 **Low**
Authors, and book and script editors	0.69 **Medium**	0.54 **Medium**
Performing arts technicians	0.63 **Medium**	0.21 **Low**
Visual arts and crafts professionals	0.57 **Medium**	0.16 **Low**

Source: SaCSA analysis of JSA, Gen AI Capacity Study Bespoke Tables (2025), Tables 3 and 4. Exposure scores of 0.7 or above are labelled 'high', scores between 0.5 and 0.7 are labelled 'medium' and scores below 0.5 are labelled 'low'. Exposure measures the potential for tasks to be augmented or automated and does not represent the proportion of jobs expected to disappear. Augmentation and automation exposure scores are JSA estimates; occupation-specific interpretations are SaCSA analysis.

As GenAI shifts the composition of skills required to enter and maintain a career in the arts, training will need to change. JSA's analysis of VET graduates' exposure to GenAI when entering the workforce indicates that CUA graduates, on average, are moderately exposed to augmentation and have low exposure to automation.[37] Two occupational groups have a medium level of exposure to automation: professional writers (including authors, editors and journalists) and private tutors and teachers. SaCSA will continue working with industry to ensure qualifications meet the evolving requirements of work in the sector.

If AI takes over routine production tasks, employers may need to redesign junior roles so that emerging workers still gain supervised practice, mentoring, creative judgement, technical capability and exposure to increasingly complex work.

There is an opportunity to shape technological adoption around sustainable creative careers. Employers can consider which tasks should be automated, which should be augmented and which remain fundamentally human, while maintaining viable entry points into occupations.

SaCSA is undertaking research into how AI, automation and robotics are reshaping jobs, skills and workforce pathways across the service and creative sectors. The findings are expected to be released in late 2026. SaCSA will continue to work with industry, government and the education system to support equitable outcomes for individuals working in the arts.

30 The most recent ABS data that can be disaggregated by creative industries is over a year old, for the year ending June 2025. It found 12% of all businesses reported using AI. The rate was higher for arts and recreation services businesses (17%) and much higher for information, media and telecommunications businesses (38%). ABS, *Characteristics of Australian Business, 2024–25 Financial Year* (2026), Table 2. More recent data shows 38% of Australian small and medium enterprises had adopted AI by October 2026 but does not provide breakdowns by ANZSIC industry. "AI Adoption Tracker", National AI Centre, accessed 19 October 2026, AI adoption tracker | National AI Centre.

31 "ARIA Charts set eligibility rules for recordings made with AI", ARIA, 25 August 2026. https://www.aria.com.au/charts/news/aria-charts-set-eligibility-rules-for-recordings-made-with-ai.

32 "Protecting First Nations Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions", Office for the Arts, accessed 1 September 2026. https://www.arts.gov.au/what-we-do/indigenous-arts-and-languages/protecting-first-nations-traditional-knowledge-and-traditional-cultural-expressions.

33 JSA, *Our Gen AI Transition – Final Release* (2025).

34 JSA, *Gen AI Capacity Study Interactive Tables* (2025). JSA cautions that these scores measure technological potential rather than predicting actual job losses.

35 The full list of occupation groups and scores is in Appendix B.

36 SaCSA's arts occupations of art, dance, drama and music teachers (private tuition) cover 61% of this occupation group.

37 JSA, *Our Gen AI Transition – Implications for Work and Skills* (2025), 125. The full list of CUA Training Package qualifications and scores is in Appendix B.

Policy and regulatory landscape

Australia's arts sector is operating within an evolving policy and regulatory environment. Developments in cultural policy, workplace regulation and the night-time economy and taxation have implications for workforce attraction and retention, employment conditions and the sustainability of creative careers.

At the national level, the Australian Government is developing the next National Cultural Policy to follow Revive.[38] Consultation closed in May 2026 and the Government is reviewing submissions.

SaCSA's submission to the consultation emphasised the importance of education and workforce development in sustaining a vibrant cultural sector. The submission advocated for better integration of arts education across the learning lifecycle, improved support for traineeships and flexible skills pathways to address sector skills shortages, the importance of place-based and self-determined workforce development initiatives and improvements to workforce data collection.

In New South Wales, the Vibrancy Reforms continue to support the night-time economy and live music sector through streamlined sound regulation, Special Entertainment Precincts and incentives for live music and performance venues.[39] Eligible venues can access reduced liquor licence fees and additional trading hours, while further planning reforms for entertainment and cultural uses are being considered. Queensland has also recently released the Nightlife Economy Action Plan 2026–2032 with initiatives to modernise entertainment sound regulation, encourage major touring artists to showcase Queensland talent, and support councils to deliver nightlife precinct activation improvements.[40] These measures could increase opportunities for musicians, performers, technicians and production workers, but may also increase demand for occupations where workforce shortages have already been identified.

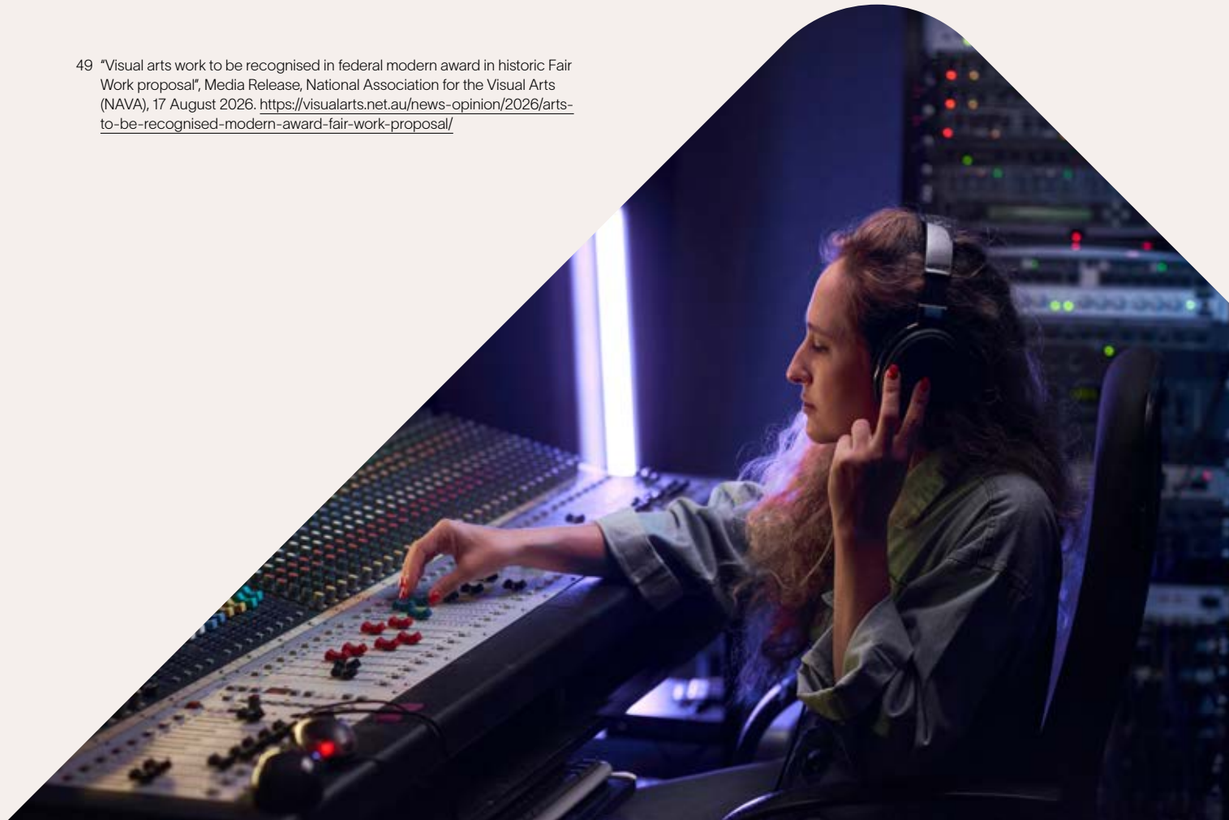
New South Wales is also progressing cultural tax reform policy.[41] The Art of Tax Reform consultation and summit examined how taxation reform could better support artists, creative organisations, investment and philanthropy. Options raised included the tax treatment of grants and prizes, GST, deductions for artists, production incentives and incentives for creative spaces. These proposals are not currently implemented tax changes. The NSW Government has subsequently identified targeted cultural tax reform as a priority in its submission to the consultation on the next National Cultural Policy.[42]

SaCSA also contributed to the NSW Government's Art of Tax Reform consultation, highlighting the relationship between the economic sustainability of creative careers and workforce attraction, participation and retention. The submission drew attention to the distinctive employment and income patterns of creative workers and the importance of considering workforce implications in broader policy discussions.[43]

Other jurisdictions have updated their arts, culture and creative industry strategies over the last 12 months, including: Queensland's Time to Shine 2025–2035,[44] Victoria's Creative State 2028,[45] South Australia's A Place to Create Delivery Plan 2025–2027,[46] Western Australia's Screen Industry Workforce Development Strategy 2026–2034[47] and New South Wales's Heartland Regional Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Plan.[48] Common across each of these strategies is a commitment to developing career pathways in the creative industries, including by strengthening training pathways for the creative industries.

In August 2026, the Fair Work Commission issued a provisional decision proposing to change the name of the Amusement, Events and Recreation Award 2020 to the Amusement, Recreation, Events and Arts Award 2020 (AREA Award) and to more explicitly recognise arts work within its classifications.[49] The proposal could provide greater clarity around minimum wages and conditions for employees in areas including visual arts and galleries. However, the decision remains provisional and should not yet be treated as a final change to Award coverage or entitlements.

These developments present opportunities to improve recognition of artists' work, employment conditions and the operating environment for creative businesses. They may assist in addressing the persistent challenges around insecure work, low incomes, technical and production workforce shortages and limited career pathways within the arts sector. Ensuring that workforce and skill development considerations are reflected in the implementation of these policies and strategies will be important to building a sustainable and resilient arts workforce.



38 "A new National Cultural Policy", Office for the Arts, accessed 1 September 2026. https://www.arts.gov.au/what-we-do/new-national-cultural-policy.

39 "Vibrancy Reforms", NSW Government, accessed 1 September 2026. https://www.nsw.gov.au/business-and-economy/office-of-24-hour-economy-commissioner/vibrancy-reforms.

40 Queensland Government, *Queensland Nightlife Economy Action Plan 2026–3032* (2026).

41 "The Art of Tax Reform", NSW Government, accessed 1 September 2026. https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/dciths/art-of-tax-reform-summit.

42 NSW Government, *Towards a New National Cultural Policy – NSW Government Submission – June 2026* (2026).

43 SaCSA, *NSW Cultural Tax Reform* (2025).

44 Queensland Government, *Queensland's Time to Shine: A 10-year strategy for Arts and Culture* (2025).

45 Victorian Government, *Creative State 2028* (2025).

46 South Australian Government, *A Place to Create Delivery Plan 2025–2027* (2025).

47 Western Australian Government, *WA Screen Industry Workforce Development Strategy 2026–2034* (2026).

48 New South Wales Government, *Heartland – A Plan for Regional NSW Arts, Culture and Creative Industries* (2026).

49 "Visual arts work to be recognised in federal modern award in historic Fair Work proposal", Media Release, National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA), 17 August 2026. https://visualarts.net.au/news-opinion/2026/arts-to-be-recognised-modern-award-fair-work-proposal/

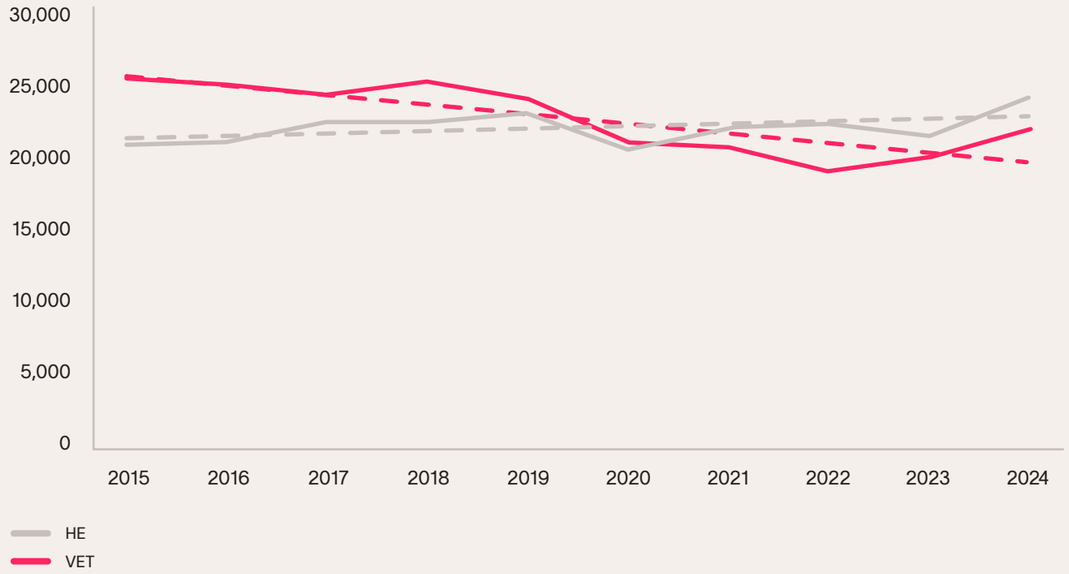
Current workforce issues and priorities

Job shortages and student training decisions in the arts

JSA's OSL 2026 and stakeholder engagement indicate occupation-level shortages in specialist technician occupations. This pattern is in line with national trends. Half of all national persistent job shortages occur among technicians and trades worker occupations.[50, 51]

When considering student choices for post-compulsory education, the 2025 Jobs and Skills Report noted that there has been a strong increase in higher education (HE) qualifications in recent years and a stagnation in the number of people with VET qualifications as their highest qualification.[52] This pattern is visible in creative arts qualifications, where HE qualification completions have risen over the past decade while completions of VET qualifications have declined.

Figure 3: Creative arts qualification completions, 2015 to 2024



Source: NCVER, VOCSTATS, Total VET Students and Courses (TVA) (2026), TVA program enrolments and TVA program completions 2015–2025; Department of Education, Selected Higher Education Statistics – 2024 Student data (2025), Section 14. VET completions are for qualifications in the CUA – Creative Arts and Culture Training Package; HE completions are for courses in the 'Creative Arts' as defined in the Field of Education classification.

50 JSA, *Connecting for Impact – The Jobs and Skills Report 2025* (2025), 53. Persistent shortages are those that occur over multiple years from 2021 to 2025.

51 This is also in line with findings of the Creative Workforce Scoping Study, which surveyed arts employers in 2024. It identified more than 90 occupations in acute or severe shortage across 6 different artform areas; technical roles made up the majority of the acute shortages. Creative Australia and SaCSA, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report*, 21.

52 JSA, *Connecting for Impact*, 78.



JSA analysis shows that a small relative increase in students doing VET qualifications rather than HE qualifications would better meet forecast employer demand, reducing many current shortages in technician and trades worker roles.[53] In the arts, there is a range of VET qualifications in the Creative Arts and Culture (CUA) Training Package designed to prepare students for the technician roles in shortage.

With arts shortages evident in technical and production roles, and the trend in post-secondary education towards higher education qualifications, there is a clear mismatch between industry needs and student training decisions. The vocational education system is a key player in giving learners access to training with a technical focus, as well as increasing awareness of the wide variety of career options in the arts. The role of VET begins in schools, with around a third of enrolments and completions in the CUA package taking place through the VETiS program.[54]

SaCSA's projects and activities

The following SaCSA projects and activities are designed to investigate and respond to this workforce and skills issue:

- Drivers of Shortage for Creative Producers in the Arts
- Pilot Program: Supporting Completion of CUA30425 Certificate III in Live Production and Technical Services.

Strategic opportunities for the arts sector

The following strategic opportunities highlight areas where further consideration or action could help address the workforce and skills issues identified in this Workforce Plan:

- SaCSA will work with the arts sector on actions to address drivers identified in our Drivers of Shortage for Creative Producers in the Arts project.
- Schools and VET providers can help address job shortages in the arts by actively growing public and learner awareness of the range of arts careers and variety of training options available, and by continuing to build strong pathways between school and vocational education.

53 JSA, *Connecting for Impact*, 78–80, 136. Their model suggests the shift would be relatively small, increasing the proportion of 2035 forecast workers at skill levels 2–4 by 1.1% (or about 93,500 people), while dropping the proportion at skill level 1 by 1.7% (or about 106,900 people).

54 37% of enrolments and 32% of completions. NCVER, *VOCSTATS VET* in Schools (2026), ViS program enrolments 2006–2025; ViS program completions 2006–2025; TVA program enrolments 2015–2025; TVA program completions 2015–2025.

Education and training system challenges in the arts

Across the education system, there is a need to grow awareness of the full spectrum of study and career options in the arts and to maintain inclusive access to creative education.[55]

A recent paper by Sandra Gattenhof and John Saunders points to multiple crises in arts education in Australia, noting declining enrolments in senior secondary creative arts subjects between 2015 and 2023 and reductions in tertiary creative course offerings.[56] Added to this is the introduction of the Job-Ready Graduate Scheme, which significantly increased the costs of Arts degrees because they were not seen as directly contributing to employment outcomes of national priority. Gattenhof and Saunders argue that this negatively impacted the perception of arts careers and led to a drop in student enrolments.[57]

Within the VET system, SaCSA is ultimately responsible for ensuring national training products are high quality and meet sector needs. Several projects are underway to update training products and guidance based on sector feedback. The arts sector can also take a direct role in developing VET courses to meet specific needs and seeking national accreditation for those courses. One example is the industry-based Registered Training Organisation at Arts Centre Melbourne, which partners with regional performing arts organisations across Victoria and Queensland to deliver Tech Connect and support training and employment pathways for regional technicians. Another example is NAISDA Dance College, which develops new courses to meet the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance workforce. There is an ongoing need for all stakeholders to work together to ensure the VET landscape continues to support the arts sector and its workforce.

Arts sector feedback shows a cross-sector call for more multifaceted learning experiences that would bridge gaps between formal education and industry needs.[58] Industry has called for work-integrated learning programs that combine formal learning with practical experience through flexible, accessible training models, including entry-level traineeships. However, only 24 CUA qualifications currently offer the option of being undertaken as a traineeship, and less than 0.5% of their enrolments take this option.[59] It is unclear why there is low take-up of CUA traineeships. Stakeholder engagement to date suggests that there are some potential barriers due to the design of traineeships and their fit with sector working patterns, as well as limits in organisations' capacity to support trainees. Other factors may be low sector awareness or low sector demand for this specific type of on-the-job training.

The wider skills reform agenda across Australian, state and territory governments, together with tertiary education harmonisation reforms, present opportunities to improve the VET system. One immediate opportunity is the introduction of a new type of qualification, the Vocational Degree. SaCSA is currently exploring the potential of this qualification to better prepare learners for producer roles across the arts sector in response to ongoing workforce shortages and a recognised gap between VET and HE pathways.

A second opportunity is planned reforms to facilitate better study pathways between the vocational and HE sectors.[60] The arts have a high proportion of CUA students who go on to study HE qualifications, and reforms have the potential to improve their learner journeys.[61]

A third opportunity is the growing focus on micro-credentials and skill sets.[62] These can offer more flexible and responsive learning options that respond to the needs of industry and individuals. They are discussed further in the next section, Career and skills pathways in the arts.

SaCSA's projects and activities

The following SaCSA projects and activities are designed to investigate and respond to this workforce and skills issue:

- Creative Arts and Culture: Delivering Connected Guidance Across Creative Disciplines
- Qualification Review of CUA30320: Certificate III in Assistant Dance Teaching
- Shaping Creative Futures: Designing a Vocational Degree Framework for Creative Producers.

Strategic opportunities for the arts sector

The following strategic opportunities highlight areas where further consideration or action could help address the workforce and skills issues identified in this Workforce Plan:

- SaCSA will continue to seek sector feedback on training requirements to ensure VET products remain high quality and meet evolving sector needs.
- SaCSA will support the implementation, promotion and monitoring of updated qualifications and new skill sets, including helping learners and employers understand new progression pathways and how these products can support upskilling, reskilling and workforce retention.
- SaCSA will explore opportunities for increasing work-integrated learning across the CUA Training Package, including scoping the potential to increase the level of traineeships.[63]
- The arts sector can continue to take an active role in leading the development of accredited vocational education opportunities to meet specific sector needs.
- Inclusive access to creative education at all levels should be a focus of attention for all stakeholders, including government, the arts sector and education and training providers in the school and tertiary systems.[64]

55 Creative Australia and SaCSA, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report*, 29, 30, 38. The Push, *A National Plan for Young Australians and Music 2026–2036* (2026), 21-23.

56 Gattenhof and Saunders, "The Polycrisis".

57 Gattenhof and Saunders, "The Polycris", 97–98.

58 Creative Australia and SaCSA, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report*, 20, 23.

59 Across all CUA qualifications, this accounts for less than 0.2% of all enrolments. Note that In Australia's vocational education system, both 'traineeships' and 'apprenticeships' are nationally recognised pathways where students earn a wage, combining on-the-job learning with formal study through a Registered Training Organisation. The label 'apprenticeships' is used for the traditional trades (e.g. electrical, plumbing), and they are typically 3 to 4 years long. The label 'traineeship' is used in other subject areas, including the arts, and they are typically one to 2 years.

60 Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC), *A More Joined-Up Tertiary System: Discussion Paper* (2026).

61 ATEC, *A More Joined-Up Tertiary System* (2026), 31–33.

62 ATEC, *A More Joined-Up Tertiary System* (2026), 19; see also SaCSA's submission to the consultation on the new National Cultural Policy, SaCSA, *Service and Creative Skills Australia's Response,* 5–6.

63 This is also further discussed in SaCSA's submission to the consultation on the new National Cultural Policy, SaCSA, *Service and Creative Skills Australia's Response to Towards a New National Cultural Policy Public Consultation Paper* (2026), 3–5.

64 This is further discussed in SaCSA's submission to the consultation on the new National Cultural Policy, SaCSA, *Service and Creative Skills Australia's Response*, 2–3.

Career and skills pathways in the arts

Many roles in the arts sector have characteristics that can lead to challenges for workers, employers and the long-term health of the sector. Employment in cultural and creative industries has historically been more volatile than total employment in Australia.[65] There are relatively high rates of potentially insecure working conditions, particularly self-employment of various types:

31%

of all employed people in the arts industry are independent contractors and/or other types of business operators, not employees.[66]

20%

of all employed people in the arts industry are casual employees.[67]

9%

of all employed people in the arts industry have a second job.[68]

65 Volatility refers to the size of the annual percentage change in indicative employment – these industries show larger shifts year-to-year than total employment does. BCARR, *Analysis of the Cultural and Creative Sector – Revive: Sectoral Analysis* (2024) 7–8.

66 This compares to a national average of 15% of all employed people. ABS, *Characteristics of Employment, August 2025* (2025). Arts industries defined by the SaCSA remit. Census 2021 data was used to apportion ANZSIC groups to ANZSIC classes to match with this remit.

67 The ABS defines casual employees as employees without paid leave entitlement. This compares to a national average of 18% of all workers. ABS, *Characteristics of Employment, August 2025* (2025). Arts industries defined by the SaCSA remit. Census 2021 data was used to apportion ANZSIC groups to ANZSIC classes to match with this remit.

68 This compares to a national average of 5% of all workers. Note, this generally does not include self-employed people (even if their work involves contracts with multiple clients), unless they also have a separate employee job. ABS, *Characteristics of Employment, August 2024* (2024). Arts industries defined by the SaCSA remit. Census 2021 data was used to apportion ANZSIC groups to ANZSIC classes to match with this remit.

Most figures are based on a point-in-time snapshot. We can also look at the 'flow' of jobs, tracking all the jobs that exist over a year. On this basis, across all arts industry jobs that existed during the financial year 2022–23, 53% were held as a secondary job (i.e. the person who held the job also had a separate main job).[69]

While these arrangements can provide flexibility, they can also contribute to financial insecurity, inconsistent workloads and limited access to employment benefits and structured career development.[70] These conditions influence both the reality and perception of arts careers. SaCSA's workforce research identifies financial insecurity, job instability and limited career progression as major factors contributing to reluctance to enter the sector and to workers leaving for careers in other industries.[71]

Low pay, unpaid work and periods of excessive working hours are characteristic of parts of the arts sector. This is most notably the case for artists and museums, galleries and arts organisations that rely heavily on volunteers and interns for day-to-day operation.[72] Entities' reliance on unpaid workers can restrict entry and retention to people who have the financial security and time to participate without pay, reinforcing existing inequalities in access to arts careers. Among those whose main paid job is an arts occupation, average annual earnings are 24% lower than the national average ($58,522 compared to $76,686 in 2023–24).[73] ABS data shows that workers in several arts occupations are significantly more likely to report regularly working additional paid or unpaid hours.[74] This includes 84% of music professionals and 79% of performing arts technicians, compared with the national average of 31%.

Younger workers face challenges establishing sustainable arts careers. For those who complete a CUA qualification, 62% are in paid employment in the year after training, below the VET average of 77%.[75] HE shows the same pattern: creative arts degree students have the second lowest post-study employment rate of all study areas.[76]

New research by SaCSA uses longitudinal data to look at the outcomes of training over the following 4 years.[77] VET CUA graduates show high levels of mobility in those first 4 years: only 42% are in the same occupation after 3 years,[78] and movements into other occupations are generally lateral moves between adjacent creative professions, rather than following clearly defined progression pathways. Some occupations have high proportions with no employment after 3 years, meaning graduates were either unemployed, in further study or had left the labour market for other reasons. This includes many artistic occupations, such as painters, actors, musicians, singers, photographers and dancers or choreographers.

Even for those who are able to obtain work following graduation, sustaining an arts career beyond the early years can also be challenging. The Creative Workforce Scoping Study identified limited career progression as a significant barrier to retention. Stakeholders reported insufficient opportunities and training to support progression into more experienced roles, contributing to shortages of mid-career workers.

69 Note that in this way of counting, a single worker might hold several jobs in a year, either concurrently or consecutively, and so be counted multiple times. ABS, *Jobs in Australia, 2022–23* (2025). Arts industries defined by the SaCSA remit.

70 B. Eltham, X. Gu and M. Badham, "Artists as workers? Re-imagining Cultural Policy for Insecure and Precarious Artists and Cultural Workers," *Journal of Sociology* 61, 3 (2025).

71 Creative Australia and SaCSA, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report*, 30.

72 D. Throsby and K. Petetskaya, *Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia* (2024); AMaGA (Australian Museums and Galleries Association) Victoria, *AmaGA Victoria Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation – May 2026* (2026).

73 Australian Taxation Office, *Individual Statistics, 2022–23* (2025). Extracted from SaCSA, *SaCSA Data Dashboard* (2026).

74 ABS, *Characteristics of Employment, August 202*5 (2026). Other arts occupation groups with higher rates than the national average are authors and book and script editors (63%), artistic directors and media producers and presenters (47%), journalists and other writers (46%), visual arts and crafts professionals (43%) and gallery, library and museum technicians (42%).

75 NCVER, *Databuilder Student Outcomes 2025* (2026).

76 Data covers domestic undergraduates only and is collected 4–6 months after study completion. Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT), *Data Visualisation GOS Graduate Outcomes Survey Domestic Results 2025* (2026), Graduate outcomes by 21 study areas.

77 This is planned for publication later in 2026, as the Early Career Mobility Analysis and Dashboard.

78 Among those whose first occupation could be identified within the Early Career Mobility Analysis.

Participation in work-related training is lower in the arts than the national average. In 2024–25, 19% of arts industry workers participated in work-related training, compared with 25% of workers across all industries.[79] This may partly reflect to high levels of self-employment in the arts, as self-employed workers are less likely to participate in training.[80]

More broadly, Australia has low and declining levels of workplace training compared with other countries.[81] The Productivity Commission has identified low participation in work-related training as a constraint on skills development and productivity.[82]

Arts-related industries also make less use of accredited training and greater use of informal training provided by employers (see Table 4). The Creative Workforce Scoping Study identified demand for shorter, targeted training that supports ongoing workforce development in the arts.[83] Flexible training options can help workers develop new skills throughout their careers, while supporting sector development and productivity.

Table 4: Employer provision of training in the arts sector, % used in past 12 months

Workplace training activity	Arts and recreation services	Information media and telecommunications	National average
Use formal training: accredited	23%	20%	32%
Use formal training: unaccredited	43%	66%	51%
Use informal training	85%	75%	79%
Satisfaction with accredited training, if used	95%	61%	76%

Source: NCVER, Employers' Use and Views of the VET System (2025), spreadsheet Tables 2, 3.

Note: Accredited training is training that leads to a nationally recognized qualification (recognized in the Australian Qualifications Framework). Unaccredited training is structured training, such as short courses, that does not lead to a nationally recognized qualification. Informal training is training without a structured learning plan or timeframe, such as on-the-job learning.

79 ABS, *Work-Related Training and Adult Learning, 2024–25* (2025).

80 Self-employed workers have much lower work-related training rates than employees, 15% vs 26%. ABS, *Work-Related Training and Adult Learning, 2024–25* (2025).

81 Work-related training in the workforce fell from 31% to 22%, 2013 to 2024–25. ABS, *Work-Related Training and Adult Learning, 2024–25* (2025).

82 Productivity Commission, *Building a Skilled and Adaptable Workforce – Inquiry Report* (2025).

83 Creative Australia and SaCSA, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report*, 29.

There is an opportunity to expand accredited short-form training in the VET system through skill sets and micro-credentials. Skill sets comprise one or more units of competency from a VET Training Package, designed to meet specific industry needs. Completion leads to a Statement of Attainment. Micro-credentials are more broadly defined and can include short-form training in higher education or VET that provides certification of assessed learning or competency.[84] Greater use of these training options could help the education and training system respond more effectively to industry needs by providing shorter, more accessible training that meets demand in the arts.

Improving career pathways needs to be considered as part of workforce planning rather than as a separate workplace issue. Safe and inclusive workplace cultures, appropriate remuneration, sustainable workloads, mentoring and professional development can all contribute to stronger attraction and retention. This is particularly important for groups that experience additional barriers, including First Nations workers, people with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse workers, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and workers in regional and remote communities. Strengthening job quality alongside skills development will be critical to ensuring that creative careers remain accessible, sustainable and attractive to the future workforce.

SaCSA's projects and activities

The following SaCSA projects and activities are designed to investigate and respond to this workforce and skills issue:

- Early Career Mobility Analysis and Dashboard
- Scoping Creative Futures: Career Journey Mapping.

Strategic opportunities for the arts sector

The following strategic opportunities highlight areas where further consideration or action could help address the workforce and skills issues identified in this Workforce Plan:

- SaCSA will continue to engage with government on approaches to addressing low pay, as referenced in our submission to the NSW Cultural Tax Reform consultation.[85]
- SaCSA will continue to engage with government on approaches to increase participation in work-related training for the self-employed, as outlined in our submission to the NSW Cultural Tax Reform consultation.[86]
- SaCSA will explore opportunities to increase the availability of flexible and accessible workplace training solutions through the VET system, such as skill sets and micro-credentials, to support career progression in the arts sector.[87]
- Arts industry employers can improve levels of work-based training, particularly training which supports progression into more experienced roles.
- All stakeholders should continue to focus on supporting fair workplaces.
- The arts sector should continue to prioritise self-determined, First Nations–led approaches to workforce planning and development for First Nations employees working across all arts sectors, as exemplified by the First Nations Performing Arts Workforce Development Framework 2025–2030.[88]

84 The tertiary harmonisation reforms include a measure to develop guidelines in the Australian Qualifications Framework Pathways Policy to facilitate the recognition of shorter form credentials, including microcredentials, for credit. ATEC, *A More Joined-Up Tertiary System* (2026), 19.

85 SaCSA, *NSW Cultural Tax Reform* (2026).

86 SaCSA, *NSW Cultural Tax Reform.*

87 This is further discussed in SaCSA's submission to the consultation on the new National Cultural Policy, SaCSA, *Service and Creative Skills Australia's Response*, 5–6.

88 First Nations Performing Arts Companies, *First Nations Performing Arts Workforce Development Framework 2025–2030* (2025).

From evidence to action

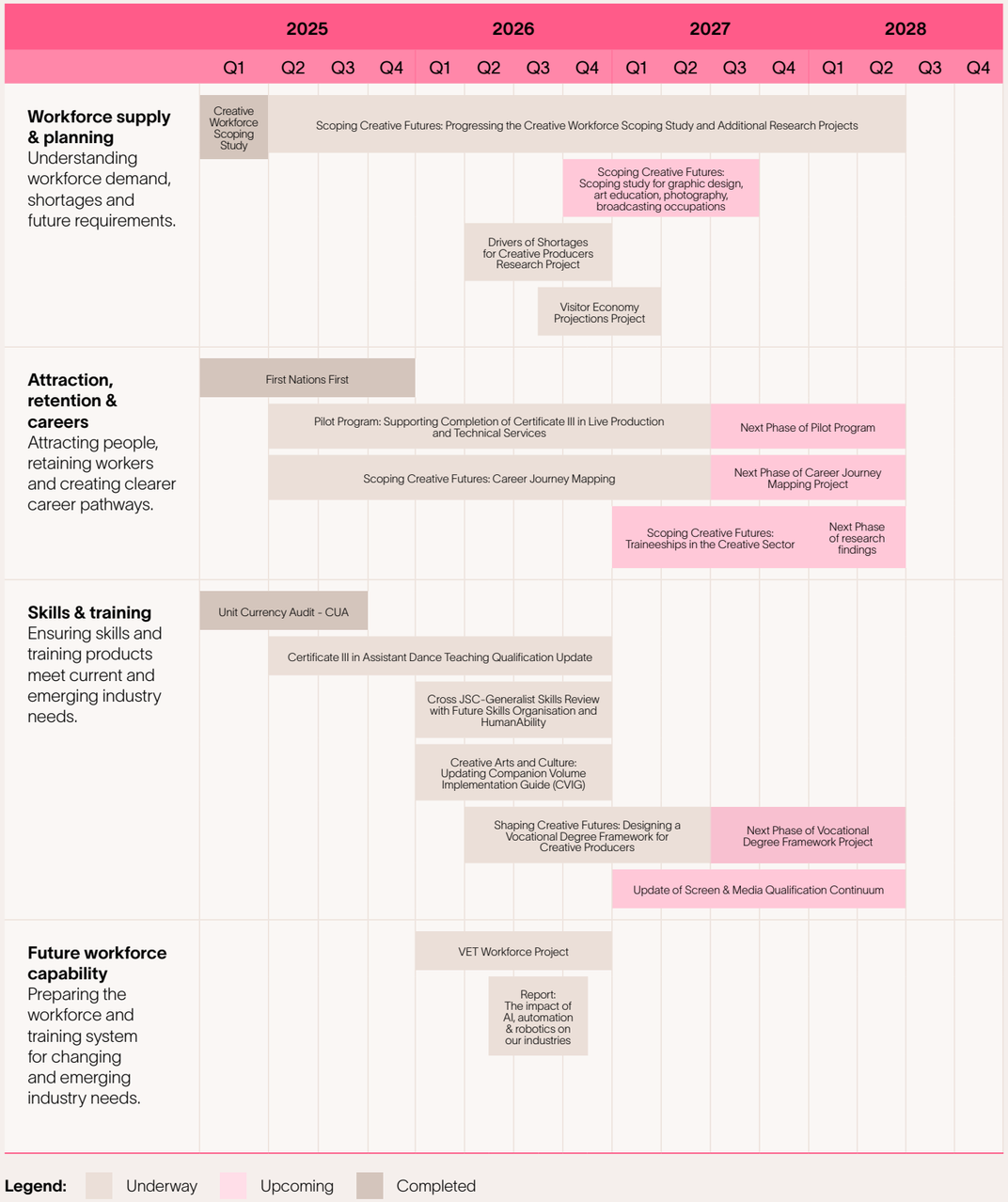
SaCSA's Arts Work Plan (Figure 4) sets out how we are responding to the workforce challenges, priorities and opportunities identified through our research, data analysis and industry engagement.

It brings together the key projects and activities that are underway and planned over the life of this Workforce Plan, showing how our work will contribute to addressing current workforce needs while preparing for emerging and longer-term challenges.

The Arts Work Plan is organised around 4 areas of focus: workforce supply and planning; attraction, retention and careers; skills and training; and future workforce capability. Together, these activities demonstrate how the evidence and stakeholder insights presented throughout this Workforce Plan translate into practical action.

The Arts Work Plan will evolve as industry needs change, new evidence emerges and projects progress. It will be reviewed regularly to ensure SaCSA's work remains responsive to industry priorities and continues to address the workforce challenges identified in this Workforce Plan.

Figure 4: Arts work plan



SaCSA's projects and activities

This section provides further detail about the projects and activities SaCSA is undertaking in response to the workforce priorities and challenges identified in this Workforce Plan. They reflect our ongoing work with industry to build the evidence base, address workforce and skills needs and support longer-term workforce development.

Projects are grouped as active, planned or completed. They provide a snapshot of SaCSA's current and recent work and a short overview of the purpose and focus of each project. SaCSA's program of work will continue to evolve as projects progress, new evidence emerges and industry priorities change.

Active

Project title	Project description	Project details
Creative Arts and Culture: Delivering Connected Guidance Across Creative Disciplines	This project is refreshing the Companion Volume Implementation Guide (CVIG) for the Creative Arts and Culture (CUA) Training Package. The refreshed guidance will better reflect current industry practice and support training providers to confidently navigate recent and future changes to CUA training products.	Click to view project details
Drivers of Shortage for Creative Producers in the Arts	This research project will provide an evidence-based assessment of the economic, structural, educational and workplace factors impacting the supply and demand of producers across the arts sector. It seeks to explain the root causes of labour and skill shortages for producers and why they persist. It aims to identify opportunities and potential solutions to address the causes of shortages.	
Early Career Mobility Analysis and Dashboard	This research project uses linked ABS data to track how people move from education and training into employment and progress through their early careers. The findings address evidence gaps around career pathways, progression and retention. They underpin SaCSA's Early Career Mobility Dashboard, an interactive dashboard that will be available for industry to explore the findings and support career guidance, workforce planning and training initiatives.	Click to view project details
Pilot Program: Supporting Completion of CUA30425 Certificate III in Live Production and Technical Services	This project is a targeted pilot program in partnership with TAFE NSW which aims to strengthen the pipeline of skilled workers in live production and technical services. It supports learners who completed the Statement of Attainment at high school to complete the remaining units of competency and gain work experience opportunities with industry partners, and to improve avenues to employment.SaCSA's initial findings highlighted learner awareness issues. While two-thirds of students engaged in this pilot program understood the Entertainment Industry HSC VET course was part of the VET system, none were aware that an additional specialisation unit was required to achieve the full qualification. Of the surveyed students, 67% indicated they wished their school had offered this full qualification pathway. SaCSA and TAFE NSW are now undertaking a second phase of the pilot over 2026–2027.	Click to view project details
Qualification Review and Update of CUA30320: Certificate III in Assistant Dance Teaching	The Review and Update of CUA30320 Certificate III in Assistant Dance Teaching project was initiated following the audit findings of the CUA Unit Currency Audit Activity Project, which identified that a number of imported units of competency were no longer aligned with the intended purpose or occupational outcome of an assistant dance teacher who works under the supervision of experienced teachers. The project has also been driven by significant developments in child safety legislation, safeguarding expectations and contemporary industry practice since the qualification was first endorsed in 2020. The revised qualification better reflects the contemporary role of assistant dance teachers working under supervision in dance studios, schools, community organisations and other performing arts learning environments. It provides learners with the knowledge and skills to support dance teachers, contribute to safe and inclusive learning environments, and assist children, young people and adults participating in dance activities. The revised qualification will be progressed to the Training Package Assurance Body for consideration and the Skills Ministers for endorsement in late 2026.	Click to view project details

Project title	Project description	Project details
Report: The Impact of AI, Automation and Robotics on our Industries	This project explores the current and potential future impacts of AI, automation and robotics on SaCSA's industries. It will provide an understanding of the challenges and opportunities posed by technological advancements.	
Scoping Creative Futures: Career Journey Mapping	Building on the Creative Workforce Scoping Study, this project seeks to uncover gaps, challenges and opportunities within career pathways across performing arts, visual arts/craft/ design, writing and publishing, digital games, screen and music. The project will deliver 30 Career Maps exploring the key drivers of career success, factors contributing to workforce retention challenges, the role of education and training, the impact of systemic issues, and critical differences across the various arts subsectors. The Maps will cover a range of creative, technical and administratively focused work areas. The insights from this project will help SaCSA identify strategic interventions, opportunities to improve alignment between training delivery and industry needs, and support long-term improvements for the arts workforce.	Click to view project details
Shaping Creative Futures: Designing a Vocational Degree Framework for Creative Producers	This project explores and tests the concept of an Australian Qualifications Framework Level 7 Vocational Degree designed to prepare learners for advanced creative producer careers across the arts sector. The initiative responds to ongoing workforce shortages and a recognised gap between VET and HE pathways.	Click to view project details
VET Workforce Project: Strengthening the VET Workforce across Sectors	This project is part of a national program aligned with the Australian Government's VET Workforce Blueprint, which focuses on understanding and addressing key challenges affecting the VET workforce. The broader aim is to build a strong, sustainable workforce of VET teachers, trainers and assessors who can meet industry skills and training needs.	Click to view project details

Planned

Scoping Creative Futures: Scoping Study for Graphic Design, Art Education, Photography and Broadcasting Occupations. This project would build on the Creative Workforce Scoping Study, identifying the scale, challenges and opportunities of the subsectors within SaCSA's scope that were not covered in detail. The purpose of this research would be to explore any unique workforce challenges or training needs that require further attention within the private and community art education, graphic design, commercial photography and broadcasting subsectors.

Scoping Creative Futures: Traineeships in the Creative Sector. This project would explore the reasons for the low use of traineeships in the CUA training package and options for increasing student and employer uptake of traineeships. This project would research which occupations and qualifications in the creative industries are best suited to traineeship pathways in order to inform a potential future pilot project designed to help creative industry employers adopt and engage with the traineeship model.

Update of Screen and Media Qualification Continuum. This training product development activity would review the national screen and media qualification continuum from Certificate III to Advanced Diploma level. It would seek to modernise training products, enhance industry relevance, support improved learner pathways and deliver stronger employment outcomes.

Completed

Unit Currency Audit. This audit reviewed qualifications across SaCSA's arts industries to identify and address superseded or deleted units of competency that remained in current qualifications. Following analysis and industry consultation, SaCSA identified suitable replacement units and updated affected qualifications to ensure training products remain current and fit for purpose.



Looking ahead

There is a range of opportunities for progress and innovation in Australia's arts sector, but significant workforce challenges remain. Arts employment is projected to experience significant growth, increasing demand for skilled creative, technical, production and supporting roles. Shortages in key occupations, insecure employment, limited career progression, low pay and difficulties attracting and retaining experienced workers continue to affect workforce capacity.

Technological advances in AI are creating both opportunities and challenges for the arts sector. There are implications for how creative work is produced, distributed and experienced and how human creativity is valued and protected. As GenAI changes the mix of skills required in the arts and increases the potential to automate some routine tasks, the sector will need to consider the implications for training, entry-level opportunities and sustainable creative careers. SaCSA will continue to work with industry, government and the education system to support equitable outcomes for individuals working in the arts.

SaCSA's current and planned projects are building the evidence and practical foundations needed to address the challenges of working and learning in the arts. This includes reviewing and updating Creative Arts and Culture training products, supporting pathways to qualification completion, improving visibility of creative career journeys and investigating workforce needs across arts subsectors. Future work will explore workforce challenges, improve understanding of VET participation and support the workforce to adapt to technological change.

No single organisation or initiative can address the sector's workforce challenges alone, and coordinated action is required. Building a sustainable arts workforce will require a coordinated focus across industry, government and education and training providers. Key areas of attention include:

- improving awareness of creative careers
- strengthening pathways into the sector
- encouraging lifelong learning
- maintaining a strong flow of skilled labour into the sector.

Training must remain relevant and responsive to industry needs, while supporting equitable and inclusive workforce outcomes.

Strengthening career pathways, developing the capabilities of existing workers, improving access to relevant training and creating conditions that support people to build sustainable careers will be central to a resilient, diverse and future-ready Australian arts workforce.



Appendix A

SaCSA's arts sector occupations and industries

SaCSA's arts industry remit is defined in its funding agreement with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and is listed in Table 5. These industries are defined using the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC). The majority of SaCSA's industries sit within 2 Industry Divisions:

- Arts and recreation services: SaCSA's industries account for 24.8% of employment in this Division, or 46,687 workers (as at Census 2021)
- Information media and telecommunications: SaCSA's industries account for 31.9% of employment in this Division, or 53,237 workers (as at Census 2021).

SaCSA's arts occupation scope is based on a list produced by JSA. It maps which JSC has primary responsibility for each individual occupation. These occupations are defined using ANZSCO, the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations, and its replacement, OSCA, the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia. The occupations are listed in Table 6 and Table 7, covering both the ANZSCO and OSCA classification frameworks.

This report uses SaCSA's industry remit and occupational scope for statistical analysis unless noted otherwise. SaCSA also considers industries and occupations outside this scope where relevant to provide a more complete picture of arts workforce issues.

For example, newspaper, periodical, book and directory publishing (ANZSIC 514) falls within the remit of Future Skills Organisation, the JSC responsible for qualifications in the ICT – Information and Communications Technology Training Package. However, publishing is also important to arts occupations such as authors and editors. SaCSA therefore includes the publishing industry in relevant research and analysis, including the Creative Workforce Scoping Study.

Table 5: SaCSA's arts industries remit (ANZSIC)

1-digit ANZSIC division	2-digit ANZSIC subdivision	3-digit ANZSIC group	4-digit ANZSIC class	No. of workers, Census 2021
I – Information media and telecommunications	55 Motion picture and sound recording activities		5500 Motion picture and sound recording, nfd	230
		551 Motion picture and video activities	5510 Motion picture and video activities, nfd	25,630
			5511 Motion picture and video production	
			5512 Motion picture and video distribution	
			5513 Motion picture exhibition	
			5514 Post production services and other motion picture and video activities	
		552 Sound recording and music publishing	5520 Sound recording and music publishing, nfd	1,560
			5521 Music publishing	
			5522 Music and other sound recording activities	
	56 Broadcasting (except Internet)		5600 Broadcasting (except internet), nfd	840
		561 Radio broadcasting	5610 Radio broadcasting	5,460
		562 Television broadcasting	5620 Television broadcasting, nfd	16,680
			5621 Free-to-air television broadcasting	
			5622 Cable and other subscription broadcasting	
	57 Internet publishing and broadcasting	570 Internet publishing and broadcasting	5700 Internet publishing and broadcasting	2,840

Table 5 (continued)

1-digit ANZSIC division	2-digit ANZSIC subdivision	3-digit ANZSIC group	4-digit ANZSIC class	No. of workers, Census 2021
M – Professional, scientific and technical services	69 Professional, scientific and technical services (except computer system design and related services)	699 Other professional, scientific and technical services	6991 Professional photographic services	11,830
P –Education and training	82 Adult, community and other education	821 Adult, community and other education	8212 Arts education	22,180
R – Arts and recreation services	89 Heritage activities	891 Museum operation	8910 Museum operation	9,890
R – Arts and recreation services	90 Creative and performing arts activities	900 Creative and performing arts activities	9000 Creative and performing arts activities, nfd	36,800
			9001 Performing arts operation	
			9002 Creative artists, musicians, writers and performers	
			9003 Performing arts venue operation	
S – Other services	95 Personal and other services	953 Other personal services	9532 Photographic film processing	930
Total arts industry employment (ANZSIC)				134,870

Notes:

Totals may not add exactly as Census figures in the table are rounded to the nearest 10.

nfd (not further defined) – Refers to industry categories used when the ABS cannot precisely classify an industry at the 4-digit level. Instead, they are put into this category.

nec (not elsewhere classified) – Refers to industry categories used by the ABS for industries that can be identified but are too small or uncommon to have their own dedicated classification. These smaller industries are combined into a single category.

Table 6: SaCSA's arts occupations scope (ANZSCO)

6-digit ANZSCO code	Title	No. of workers, Census 2021
139911	Arts administrator or manager	2,170
149912	Cinema or theatre manager	1,510
211100	Actors, dancers and other entertainers nfd	120
211111	Actor	1,510
211112	Dancer or choreographer	980
211113	Entertainer or variety artist	1,250
211199	Actors, dancers and other entertainers nec	2,650
211200	Music professionals nfd	250
211211	Composer	410
211212	Music director	480
211213	Musician (instrumental)	4,880
211214	Singer	590
211299	Music professional nec	60
211311	Photographer	11,740
211400	Visual arts and crafts professionals nfd	420
211411	Painter (visual arts)	2,850
211412	Potter or ceramic artist	890
211413	Sculptor	630
211499	Visual arts and crafts professionals nec	2,000
212111	Artistic director	360
212112	Media producer (excluding video)	7,800

Table 6 (continued)

6-digit ANZSCO code	Title	No. of workers, Census 2021
212113	Radio presenter	1,550
212114	Television presenter	430
212200	Authors, and book and script editors nfd	130
212211	Author	3,700
212212	Book or script editor	1,140
212311	Art director (film, television or stage)	220
212312	Director (film, television, radio or stage)	2,390
212313	Director of photography	540
212314	Film and video editor	3,310
212315	Program director (television or radio)	1,270
212316	Stage manager	310
212317	Technical director	480
212318	Video producer	1,940
212399	Film, television, radio and stage directors nec	820
212400	Journalists and other writers nfd	2,970
212414	Radio journalist	490
212416	Television journalist	980
212499	Journalists and other writers nec	1,680
224212	Gallery or museum curator	1,340

Table 6 (continued)

6-digit ANZSCO code	Title	No. of workers, Census 2021
232411	Graphic designer	27,530
232412	Illustrator	3,380
234911	Conservator	530
249211	Arts teacher (private tuition)	1,730
249212	Dance teacher (private tuition)	7,200
249213	Drama teacher (private tuition)	450
249214	Music teacher (private tuition)	11,800
261211	Multimedia specialist*	1,110
272611	Community arts worker	580
272612	Recreation officer	1,680
392211	Graphic pre-press trades worker	1,470
399300	Gallery, library and museum technician nfd	10
399311	Gallery or museum technician	270
399500	Performing arts technicians nfd	290
399511	Broadcast transmitter operator	430
399512	Camera operator (film, television or radio)	2,900
399513	Light technician	920
399515	Musical instrument maker or repairer	830
399516	Sound technician	3,180
399517	Television equipment operator	90

Table 6 (continued)

6-digit ANZSCO code	Title	No. of workers, Census 2021
399599	Performing arts technicians nec	1,570
399915	Photographer's assistant	800
451400	Gallery, museum and tour guides nfd	40
451411	Gallery or museum guide	1,320
599912	Production assistant (film, television, radio or stage)	1,420
639111	Model	610
711411	Photographic developer and printer	1,160
711912	Motion picture projectionist	100
899921	Ticket collector or usher	1,730
899999	Labourers nec**	16,110
Total arts occupations employment (ANZSCO)		160,050

Notes: Totals may not add exactly as Census figures in the table are rounded to the nearest 10.

nfd (not further defined) – Refers to occupation categories used when the ABS cannot precisely classify an occupation at the 6-digit level. Instead, they are put into this category.

nec (not elsewhere classified) – Refers to occupation categories used by the ABS for occupations that can be identified but are too small or uncommon to have their own dedicated classification. These smaller occupations are combined into a single category.

* JSA maps multimedia specialists to a different JSC (Future Skills Organisation). It is listed in this table because SaCSA shares an interest in this occupation due to its importance in the screen and digital games sectors. However, it is not included in the total arts employment figures.

** Labourers nec is primarily mapped to SaCSA because some of the range of roles included in this group are relevant to the arts (e.g. grip, stagehand, studio hand). However, it should be noted that many of the roles mapped to this group are not relevant to the arts (e.g. clothes sorter, swimming pool serviceperson, bowling alley attendant).

Table 7: SaCSA's arts occupations scope (OSCA)

OSCA 6-digit code	OSCA 6-digit description	No. of workers, Census 2021
149131	Arts administrator or manager	2,000
149199	Arts, culture and sports administrators nec	350
161333	Cinema or theatre manager	1,500
231131	Actor	1,600
231132	Circus performer or trainer	810
231133	Content creator (social media)	950
231134	Dancer or choreographer	980
231135	Entertainer or variety performer	560
231199	Actors, dancers and other entertainers nec	1,200
231231	Author	4,200
231232	Book or script editor	1,300
231332	Journalist	7,400
231431	Artistic director	370
231432	Audio or live performance director	230
231433	Cinematographer	560
231434	Film and video editor	3,500
231435	Production manager (screen or live performance)	890
231436	Screen director	1,700
231437	Screen or live performance designer	370
231438	Technical director	1,700
231499	Media directors and designers nec	590

Table 7 (continued)

OSCA 6-digit code	OSCA 6-digit description	No. of workers, Census 2021
231531	Audio producer	2,300
231532	Live performance producer	170
231533	Screen producer	5,900
231631	Composer	430
231632	Music director	460
231633	Musician (instrumental)	5,400
231634	Singer	730
231699	Music professionals nec	330
231731	Painter (visual arts)	4,200
231732	Potter or ceramic artist	890
231733	Sculptor	630
231799	Visual arts and crafts professionals nec	2,900
231931	Community arts worker	620
231932	Media presenter	1,900
232334	Gallery or museum curator	1,500
242331	Animator or visual effects artist	2,500
242332	Graphic designer	27,000
242333	Illustrator	1,400
244931	Conservator	490
259231	Art teacher (private tuition)	2,100
259232	Dance teacher (private tuition)	7,500

Table 7 (continued)

OSCA 6-digit code	OSCA 6-digit description	No. of workers, Census 2021
259233	Speech and drama teacher (private tuition)	500
259431	Music teacher (private tuition)	13,200
391131	Gallery or museum technician	270
391231	Audio engineer	3,200
391232	Broadcast technician	540
391233	Camera operator (film, television or video)	3,000
391234	Lighting technician	970
391299	Performing arts technicians nec	1,700
391331	Photographer	11,900
391933	Musical instrument maker or repairer	820
411931	Recreation officer	1,500
461631	Gallery or museum guide	1,400
461936	Photographer's assistant	720
599934	Production assistant (audio, screen or live performance)	760
599935	Production coordinator (audio, screen or live performance)	1,100
619132	Model	610
619931	Entertainment venue attendant	5,300
731936	Photographic print processor	650
899999	Labourer nec	16,100
Total arts occupations employment (OSCA)		165,700

Notes: Totals may not add exactly as Census figures in the table are rounded to the nearest 10.

nec (not elsewhere classified) – Refers to occupation categories used by the ABS for occupations that can be identified but are too small or uncommon to have their own dedicated classification. These smaller occupations are combined into a single category.



Defining the arts sector and the wider creative and cultural sector

The arts sector is part of the wider creative and cultural sector. There are 2 main frameworks for measuring the full scope of the creative and cultural sector: the government's official Cultural and Creative Account and the Creative Trident approach.[89] Figure 5 compares SaCSA's arts industry remit with these wider measures.[90]

As noted in the previous section, SaCSA considers industries and occupations outside its direct arts industry remit where relevant to better understand arts workforce issues. For example, the Creative Workforce Scoping Study included publishing within the 'writing and publishing' artform area when examining workforce challenges and skills needs.

Figure 5: Industries included in the main measurement frameworks for the arts, creative and cultural sectors

SaCSA arts industry remit

- Museum operation
- Creative and performing arts
- Motion picture and video
- Sound recording and music publishing
- Radio broadcasting
- TV broadcasting
- Internet publishing and broadcasting
- Professional photographic services
- Photographic film processing
- Arts education (adult, community and other)

+

Cultural and Creative Account adds these industries:

- Publishing (newspaper, book, software and magazine)
- Architectural services and specialised engineering and technical design
- Advertising

+

Creative Trident adds these industries:

- Computer system design and related services
- Libraries and archives
- Printing support services
- Jewellery and silverware manufacture

−

... and excludes:

- Arts education (adult, community and other)
- Professional photographic services
- Photographic film processing
- Music publishing
- Motion picture and video: distribution and exhibition

89 The Cultural and Creative Account was developed in 2014 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as the 'Creative and Cultural Activity Satellite Account'. It is now managed by the government's Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (BCARR). BCARR refreshed the methodology in 2024 (BCARR, *Cultural and Creative Activity in Australia 2008–09 to 2022–23 (Methodology Refresh)* (2024)). BCARR's suite of materials is available here: https://www.bitre.gov.au/resource/arts/cultural-and-creative-activity. The Creative Trident approach was developed in 2013 by a Queensland University of Technology team led by Professor Stuart Cunningham, together with researchers from Nesta, a British 'innovation charity' established by government. The most recent Australian reporting on this basis is McCutcheon and Cunningham, *The Creative Economy in Australia.*

90 For more detail see: SaCSA, *Arts Workforce Plan Update, 2025* (2025), 9, 51–57.

Appendix B

Arts sector occupations Gen AI exposure

Table 8: SaCSA's arts occupations (4-digit ANZSCO) AI exposure, sorted by augmentation exposure

4-digit ANZSCO code	Occupation (4-digit ANZCO)	Augmentation exposure	Automation exposure
2349	Other natural and physical science professionals	0.75	0.33
5999	Other miscellaneous clerical and administrative workers	0.75	0.68
2492	Private tutors and teachers	0.73	0.51
3922	Graphic pre-press trades workers	0.73	0.31
1399	Other specialist managers	0.7	0.36
1499	Other hospitality, retail and service managers	0.7	0.38
2124	Journalists and other writers	0.7	0.61
2242	Archivists, curators and records managers	0.7	0.5
2122	Authors, and book and script editors	0.69	0.54
2123	Film, television, radio and stage directors	0.69	0.36
2121	Artistic directors, and media producers and presenters	0.68	0.41
3993	Gallery, library and museum technicians	0.68	0.47
2726	Welfare, recreation and community arts workers	0.67	0.39
2324	Graphic and web designers, and illustrators	0.64	0.49
7114	Photographic developers and printers	0.64	0.39
3995	Performing arts technicians	0.63	0.21
2112	Music professionals	0.62	0.23
4514	Gallery, museum and tour guides	0.62	0.48
6391	Models and sales demonstrators	0.62	0.36
2113	Photographers	0.61	0.24
3999	Other miscellaneous technicians and trades workers	0.61	0.3
7119	Other machine operators	0.6	0.25
2111	Actors, dancers and other entertainers	0.58	0.24
2114	Visual arts and crafts professionals	0.57	0.16
8999	Other miscellaneous labourers	0.41	0.2

Source: JSA, Gen AI Capacity Study Bespoke Tables (2025), Tables 3 and 4. Exposure measures the potential for tasks to be augmented or automated and does not represent the proportion of jobs expected to disappear. Exposure scores of 0.7 or above are labelled 'high', scores between 0.5 and 0.7 are labelled 'medium' and scores below 0.5 are labelled 'low'. Augmentation and automation exposure scores are JSA estimates; occupation-specific interpretations are SaCSA analysis.

CUA – Creative Arts and Culture Training Package qualifications Gen AI exposure

Table 9: CUA – Creative Arts and Culture Training Package qualifications Gen AI exposure

Program ID	Program title	Augmentation exposure	Automation exposure
CUA10120	Certificate I in Dance	0.59	0.37
CUA10320	Certificate I in Visual Arts	0.57	0.34
CUA20120	Certificate II in Dance	0.6	0.39
CUA20220	Certificate II in Creative Industries	0.58	0.34
CUA20620	Certificate II in Music	0.57	0.35
CUA20720	Certificate II in Visual Arts	0.58	0.33
CUA30120	Certificate III in Dance	0.6	0.4
CUA30220	Certificate III in Community Dance, Theatre and Events	0.63	0.42
CUA30320	Certificate III in Assistant Dance Teaching	0.62	0.39
CUA30420	Certificate III in Live Production and Technical Services	0.59	0.36
CUA30720	Certificate III in Design Fundamentals	0.59	0.38
CUA30920	Certificate III in Music	0.57	0.34
CUA31020	Certificate III in Screen and Media	0.58	0.35
CUA31120	Certificate III in Visual Arts	0.59	0.37
CUA40120	Certificate IV in Dance	0.62	0.41
CUA40320	Certificate IV in Dance Teaching and Management	0.68	0.45
CUA40420	Certificate IV in Live Production and Technical Services	0.63	0.39
CUA40520	Certificate IV in Musical Theatre	0.62	0.39
CUA40720	Certificate IV in Design	0.62	0.42
CUA40920	Certificate IV in Music	0.58	0.34
CUA41120	Certificate IV in Photography and Digital Imaging	0.6	0.37
CUA41220	Certificate IV in Screen and Media	0.58	0.35
CUA41320	Certificate IV in Visual Arts	0.56	0.33
CUA50118	Diploma of Professional Writing and Editing	0.66	0.54
CUA50220	Diploma of Musical Theatre	0.6	0.37
CUA50320	Diploma of Dance Teaching and Management	0.73	0.51
CUA50420	Diploma of Live Production and Technical Services	0.6	0.31
CUA50720	Diploma of Graphic Design	0.61	0.43
CUA50820	Diploma of Music	0.59	0.36
CUA50920	Diploma of Photography and Digital Imaging	0.58	0.31
CUA51020	Diploma of Screen and Media	0.6	0.37
CUA51120	Diploma of Visual Arts	0.56	0.33
CUA51220	Diploma of Ceramics	0.57	0.16
CUA51520	Diploma of Professional Dance (Elite Performance)	0.63	0.41
CUA60120	Advanced Diploma of Professional Dance (Elite Performance)	0.6	0.35

Table 7 (continued)

Program ID	Program title	Augmentation exposure	Automation exposure
CUA60220	Advanced Diploma of Live Production and Management Services	0.64	0.32
CUA60320	Advanced Diploma of Graphic Design	0.62	0.45
CUA60520	Advanced Diploma of Music	0.59	0.33
CUA60620	Advanced Diploma of Screen and Media	0.6	0.37
CUA60720	Advanced Diploma of Visual Arts	0.59	0.39

Source: JSA, Gen AI Capacity Study Interactive Tables (2025), VET table. Exposure measures the potential for tasks to be augmented or automated and does not represent the proportion of jobs expected to disappear. Exposure scores of 0.7 or above are labelled 'high', scores between 0.5 and 0.7 are labelled 'medium' and scores below 0.5 are labelled 'low'. Augmentation and automation exposure scores are JSA estimates; occupation-specific interpretations are SaCSA analysis.



Appendix C

Limitations in arts workforce data

All measurements of the scale of both the arts workforce and the wider creative sector workforce have data limitations.

Most labour market data sources are not detailed enough to allow all relevant industries and individual occupations to be identified. For example, adult and community arts education (e.g. local dance studios) is grouped with other types of adult and community education. Most data sources only provide data at the level of the wider group, rather than for arts education as a subset of the broader data.

Only the Census has sufficiently detailed data to allow all relevant industries and individual occupations to be examined. The most recent Census data is now 5 years old, as it was run in August 2021. Between Censuses, changes in the specific industries and occupations of interest can be estimated based on trends in the wider groups they are part of, but these estimates could prove to be incorrect when the next Census provides up to date numbers. The estimation methodology used in this Workforce Plan is outlined below.

Notably, the most recent Census took place during the COVID-19 pandemic when restrictions disrupted employment and activity across much of the arts sector.[91] As a result, the 2021 Census may not fully reflect the size and composition of the arts workforce under more typical operating conditions.

The Census only collects data on people's 'main job', defined as the job in which they spend most of their time. This results in an undercount of the scale of professional artistic activity because many artists and arts workers undertake their arts work as a secondary job.[92] While these artists and arts workers may consider their artistic work their main vocation, it will only be counted in the Census if it is where they spend the largest proportion of their working time.[93]

A final challenge is that the industry often uses nomenclature for individual occupations that is not recognised in the standardised national framework for classifying occupations, the OSCA. For example, career resources for the screen industry list around 500 specific industry roles, whereas OSCA lists around 60 individual arts occupations.[94]

91 BCARR, *Analysis of the Cultural and Creative Sector*, 7–9. See also: Australia Council for the Arts, *Impacts of COVID-19*; Borland, *Decline to Boom to Slowdown*.

92 Throsby and Petetskaya, *Artists as Workers*.

93 Creative Australia and SaCSA, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report*, 552–553. The report reviews how Census data compares to the findings from Throsby and Petetskaya, *Artists as Workers* for each artform – see pages 99, 155, 198, 227, 259, 296.

94 Ausfilm, *Australian Screen Industry Roles – VFX, Animation & Virtual Production* (2023) and Ausfilm, *Australian Screen Industry Roles – Physical & Post Production* (2023).

Methodology for estimating the SaCSA arts workforce

An estimation approach is required because SaCSA's arts occupation scope is defined using individual occupations at the 6-digit level of the ANZSCO and OSCA occupation frameworks.[95] The most recent data at this level is from the 2021 Census and is therefore 5 years out of date.

This Workforce Plan therefore estimates up-to-date employment figures. This type of estimation approach is used in government satellite accounts, including the Creative and Cultural Account.[96]

The first step is to estimate current employment in SaCSA's arts occupations. Referring to Table 10, this is specialist plus embedded employment. The methodology used:

- Start with current employment data for arts occupations from the Labour Force Survey (LFS).[97] This is only available at the ANZSCO 4-digit occupation 'unit group' level.
- Estimate the proportion of individuals in each ANZSCO 4-digit grouping who are included in SaCSA's ANZSCO 6-digit occupation scope (listed in Appendix A). This is done using employment data from Census 2021. The resulting proportions are listed in Table 11.
- Apply these proportions to the LFS ANZSCO 4-digit data to estimate the number of individuals working in SaCSA's ANZSCO 6-digit arts occupation scope.
- This gives us an estimate of 219,000 arts occupation workers (specialist and embedded).

The second step is to estimate the number of support workers (non-arts workers in arts industries). SaCSA used the historical proportion of support workers to specialist and embedded workers derived from Census 2021, as shown in Table 10. This indicates that support worker employment is 36% of combined specialist and embedded worker employment. Applying this proportion to the current estimate of 219,000 specialist and embedded workers gives an estimated 78,000 support workers, bringing total sector employment to an estimated 297,000.

Table 10: Total arts employment, 2021, arts industries and occupations

	Art industries	Other industries	Total (arts occupations)
Art occupations	Specialist: 77,880	Embedded: 82,170	160,050
Other occupations	Support: 57,000	Rest of workforce	
Total (arts industries)	134,870		Total arts employment = specialist + embedded + support 217,040

Source: ABS, 2021 Census of Population and Housing (2022). Based on SaCSA's arts occupations scope and arts industries remit. Totals may not add exactly as Census figures in the table are rounded to the nearest 10.

95 See Appendix A for the full list.

96 BCARR, *Measuring Australia's Cultural and Creative Workforce*, 10.

97 This Workforce Plan uses 'Occupation of main job' data from the Labour Force Survey 2006 to 2026 timeseries.

Table 11: Proportions used for estimating SaCSA's arts occupations employment

4-digit ANZSCO code	4-digit ANZSCO occupation group	Proportion of 4-digit code accounted for by SaCSA's 6-digit arts occupations remit
1399	Other specialist managers	3.5%
1499	Other hospitality, retail and service managers	2.6%
2111	Actors, dancers and other entertainers	100%
2112	Music professionals	100%
2113	Photographers	100%
2114	Visual arts and crafts professionals	100%
2121	Artistic directors, and media producers and presenters	100%
2122	Authors, and book and script editors	100%
2123	Film, television, radio and stage directors	100%
2124	Journalists and other writers	30.6%
2242	Archivists, curators and records managers	20.7%
2324	Graphic and web designers, and illustrators	74.1%
2349	Other natural and physical science professionals	5.4%
2492	Private tutors and teachers	60.5%
2726	Welfare, recreation and community arts workers	6.2%
3922	Graphic pre-press trades workers	100%
3993	Gallery, library and museum technicians	4.4%
3995	Performing arts technicians	83.5%
3999	Other miscellaneous technicians and trade workers	4.3%
4514	Gallery, museum and tour guides	31.7%

Table 11 (continued)

4-digit ANZSCO code	Title	Proportion of 4-digit code accounted for by SaCSA's 6-digit arts occupations remit
5999	Other miscellaneous clerical and administrative workers	7.3%
6391	Models and sales demonstrators	6.9%
7114	Photographic developers and printers	100%
7119	Other machine operators	0.7%
8999	Other miscellaneous labourers	30.5%

Source: ABS, 2021 Census of Population and Housing (2022). Based on SaCSA's arts occupations scope and arts industries remit.

Appendix D

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