

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2021/may/13/culture-beats-construction-in-covid-economic-recovery-report-finds>

Culture beats construction in Covid economic recovery, report finds

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Twice as many jobs could have been created during the Covid crisis if the federal government had invested in culture rather than construction



Coalition's 'women friendly' budget overlooked the arts, which creates 10 times more jobs for women than the home building sector, analysts say. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

If the federal government had invested the equivalent amount of money into the arts and entertainment sectors as part of its Covid response as it did in a construction recovery scheme, twice as many jobs would have been created over the past 12 months, a report has found.

The analysis, conducted by the Canberra-based thinktank the Australia Institute and based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data, suggests the country's cultural sector was vastly underestimated when it came to the national economy, the report's senior researcher, Bill Browne, said.

"There's a wide recognition that the arts and entertainment sector has an important cultural impact but the contribution the sector makes economically is still largely neglected," he told Guardian Australia.

Australia's culture of ideas suffers when we starve our creative institutions of funding

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"There's a very natural focus on [the cultural sector's] importance in how we think and feel and how we interact with the world and how we make sense of ourselves. But in this focus, some of the attention to its economic impact is being lost."

According to ABS data, the arts and entertainment sector employs four times as many Australians as coalmining, and the same number of Australians as the entire finance sector. For every additional \$1bn in turnover in the mining industry, an additional 472 jobs are created. For every additional \$1bn in turnover in the building industry, 1,242 new jobs are created.

In the arts and entertainment sector, however, 4,297 new jobs are created with each \$1bn in additional turnover.

In its analysis, the Australia Institute compared the federal government's Covid-19 response for the cultural and home building sectors.

In the 2020 budget, the federal government announced a Covid-19 package to deliver one-off grants of \$25,000 to Australians wanting to build a new home or undertake renovations costing more than \$150,000.

By December 2020, more than 75,000 Australians had applied for the homebuilder grant, [taking the estimated cost of the scheme](#) to almost \$2bn.

Using ABS data that estimates that for every \$1m spent in the home building sector, 1.2 new jobs are created, the homebuilder scheme has so far generated an additional 2,483 jobs.



Australian artists face a 'black hole of doomed hope': Katharine Brisbane on the country's creative bind

But if that same \$2bn had been spent in the arts and entertainment sector, 8,593 jobs would have been created, because for each dollar invested, the arts and entertainment sector employs twice as many men and 10 times as many women as the building construction industry.

More than half the almost 9,000 jobs created would have gone to women.

In Tuesday's "[women friendly](#)" [2021 budget](#), the government announced a total package for the arts and entertainment sector of \$441.2m.

But only \$222.9m of this was related specifically to Covid-19 economic recovery measures. That figure was also significantly less than the \$288m the Victorian government flagged on Tuesday would be allocated to the state's creative industries in its 2021 state budget.

"This week's budget was a timely opportunity for the government to support the [Australian economy](#), create jobs for women and recognise the importance of the arts and entertainment
"Unfortunately, the male-dominated and jobs-poor sectors of construction and mining continue to receive the majority of government attention and support."