

<https://www.smh.com.au/culture/art-and-design/a-real-shock-alarm-as-nsw-arts-agency-slashed-by-25-per-cent-20250623-p5m9if.html>

June 25, 2025

Sydney Morning Herald

‘A real shock’: Alarm as NSW arts agency slashed by 25 per cent



By [Linda Morris](#)

June 25, 2025 — 4.03pm

The state’s arts agency is facing the loss of one quarter of its workforce under a major restructure that signals the end to a decade-long government-led building boom of new museums, galleries and theatres in NSW and a renewed focus on audiences.

The cutbacks to Create NSW were announced to staff on Monday with the Minns government promising to reinvest million-dollar savings into new frontline programs to fill auditoriums and halls already built.



Arts Minister John Graham said savings from cuts to the arts funding agency will be invested in filling venues. *CREDIT:GETTY*

The axe is to fall on 25 per cent of the agency's 91 staff, affecting managers and executive directors of the agency's infrastructure division responsible for planning and delivering major projects under the previous Coalition government including the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct, Sydney Opera House Concert Hall and Sydney Modern. The agency's executive is expected to be cut by at least two-thirds, under a spill of positions.

The NSW Coalition, the Greens, and the peak body representing visual artists have criticised the cutbacks, and its impact on the delivery of grants sustaining the sector.

But Arts Minister John Graham said the arts and culture sector was grappling with "extraordinary pressures post COVID" and "enormously increased costs, pressures from shifting audience trends and changing media market".

"We're refocusing Create NSW. It will be focused on supporting the people in the arts, culture and creative industries – the people creating great work and working with the sector to develop new audiences," he said in a statement.

"The former government made some great investments in infrastructure. Our focus is now filling those great buildings - that is why our investment focuses on people – the artists and audiences – to make the most of the great infrastructure. Any money saved in the restructure will be put directly back into the sector."

Penelope Benton, executive director of the National Association of Visual Arts, said the restructure, and the departure of many experienced staff – which she believed included a significant reduction in First Nations-identified roles – had come as a "real shock".

"These roles have been central to delivering on policy commitments, building trust, and ensuring meaningful support for artists and organisations across NSW. There is particular concern about the future of the Arts and Cultural Funding Program, and how it will be supported within the new structure. At this stage, it is unclear where responsibility for arts funding will sit, and whether there will be sufficient staff or expertise to deliver it effectively."

Advertisement

The NSW Coalition has instigated a call to papers to reveal the decision-making process behind the axing of "some of Australia's best and brightest arts administrators".

"With the announcement of the 25 per cent staff cut we are probably losing over a century of combined institutional knowledge and expertise and our

state's creative arts sector will be poorer for it," the opposition's assistant arts spokesperson Jacqui Munro said.

Overall budgeted spending on arts and culture will rise to \$1.37 billion in the next financial year inclusive of the first tranche of a \$100 million investment in Sydney's second film studio, Labor said.



New Create NSW executive director Kerri Glasscock will lead staff consultations. *CREDIT: JAMES BRICKWOOD*

The biggest item in the NSW arts budget is delivery of \$915 million Parramatta Powerhouse in 2026 and \$256 million over the next four years for the Ultimo Powerhouse redevelopment. Powerhouse's total expenses are predicted to soar 54 per cent to \$190 million ahead of its Parramatta opening including \$10 million more for staff. Department appropriations to cover Art Gallery of NSW's expenses went backwards after last year's one-off \$12 million emergency grant, as did the Australian Museum's.

Labor also committed to spend \$380 million on the screen and digital games sector, \$3 million to Australian Museum's First Nations' gallery, and \$14 million towards upgrades of the Museums of History.

The downsizing of Create NSW comes a year after the government launched its ten-year *Creative Communities* arts and culture policy to better support and fund artists and creatives.

Greens MP Cate Faehrmann said the lack of transparency around the Create NSW cutbacks was concerning.

“Creativity and the arts are a public good and provide enormous benefits to society. It’s vital that big decisions that impact funding for the arts, and hence people’s jobs and livelihoods, are undertaken in consultation with those impacted. This government isn’t doing that. That’s a sure way for the public to lose faith in the arts minister.

“The arts community needs a minister who champions the whole sector, not one who makes cuts to almost everything for the benefit of a few pet projects.”

RELATED ARTICLE



[Film](#)

[These vacant railway yards at Redfern could be our next film mega-studios](#)

Create NSW had already been downsized under Labor, with Sound NSW and Screen NSW forming a separate division alongside the Office of the 24-Hour Economy under the umbrella of the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport.

Former Sydney Fringe director Kerri Glasscock has been appointed to head the smaller bureaucracy, and will lead four weeks of consultations with affected staff.