

Hello,

My name is St John Cowcher. I'm an actor, theatre maker, puppeteer, writer and musician based in Perth. I've been working in the creative industries for 16 years and throughout that time have seen the positive impact that cultural industries have had on our city and the many other places that I've been fortunate enough to perform.

The creative and cultural industries give employment opportunities to many people, not only directly, but also through adjacent industries such as hospitality and tourism. The positive economic knock on effect of a robust and engaged creative sector cannot be understated. The importance of our cultural landscape not just locally but also as an export internationally means that we can promote and highlight Australia as a cultural hub with a lot to offer.

The non-economic benefits of our sector are also massive. We have a positive impact on education, health, community and national identity. I personally work for an organisation that uses positive creative engagement in hospital and can attest to the exceptionally positive impact that creative interactions have had on the lives of sick children, their families and the front line health workers I work alongside most weeks. That to me feels like a snapshot of the interwoven importance that the creative sector can and does have in Australia every day.

COVID-19 has been a massive blow to our sector however. 2020 has seen many companies and individuals in our sector absolutely decimated. The loss of income, the loss of opportunity and the lack of support (particularly at a Federal level) for our sector specifically was heartbreaking. It really threw into stark relief the way that the sector as a whole is viewed by many of those in the political strata. But I also feel that it served to highlight an ongoing erosion of our cultural landscape over the last few decades.

Diminishing funding, a lack of support for local production and content and viewing everything through an economic lens has meant that we've been fighting a losing battle for years. Continuing to create, innovate and try our best to thrive while we are being asked to do more with less and fight over what minimal support is available. So while COVID was and is a brutal punch in the guts, we had already taken a whole mess of body blows before the pandemic hit.

I don't have the answers, I wish that I did. But I feel that in a developed nation such as ours we should have at least some road map as to where we want to be heading culturally as a nation. Sure, mining and the resource sector have given our country a lot but for myself, and future generations wouldn't it be nice if we were known global cultural hub? A country that aspires to more and inspires everyone around us? Those are leaders I'd support. That's an Australia I'd like to see.