

IMPACT REPORT

BUSINESS CONNECT

A CREATIVE INDUSTRIES SPECIALIST SMALL BUSINESS
PROGRAM OFFERING ADVICE, EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

2017 - 2025



creative
+ PLUS BUSINESS



**Service
NSW**

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SUMMARY: ONE OF A KIND SUPPORT FOR THE NSW CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Creative Plus Business proudly served as a specialist creative industry provider for the NSW Business Connect program for eight years, from 2017 to 2025. We were one of ten providers delivering small business support services across NSW, and the only industry specialists. The program was funded by the NSW Small Business portfolio and delivered through Service NSW. The purpose of the program was to foster small business, creative entrepreneurialism, innovation and job creation.

Our services included confidential, independent business advice and mentoring, skills training online and in-person, special partnership events, and sector collaborations specifically designed for the creative industries. We worked with the entire creative and cultural ecosystem of NSW to support professionals as they started, ran and grew sustainable creative businesses. We worked with every sector, and with people at every stage of their professional development.

The program was the only whole-of-sector business support program for the creative industries in Australia.

In 2025, NSW Treasury decided to cut the program in its entirety after 30 September. There will be no replacement.



The Creative Plus Business Team

“As a RADO and service organisation, we want to acknowledge the outstanding work you and your team have done through this program. The quality, depth, and relevance of the support provided has been a real asset to creative businesses in our region, and your commitment has made a tangible difference to so many. It is deeply disappointing to see this program come to an end, as we can clearly see the gaps it will leave.”

Jane Fuller | Executive Director, Arts Northern Rivers

\$3.8M

FUNDING OVER 8 YEARS

3,818

CLIENTS THAT RECEIVED
ONGOING MENTORING

13,300

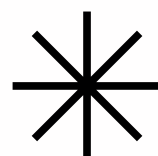
WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

17,818

SUPPORTED PRACTITIONERS

98%

LIKELY TO RECOMMEND
THE PROGRAM TO PEERS



MEETING INDUSTRY DEMAND

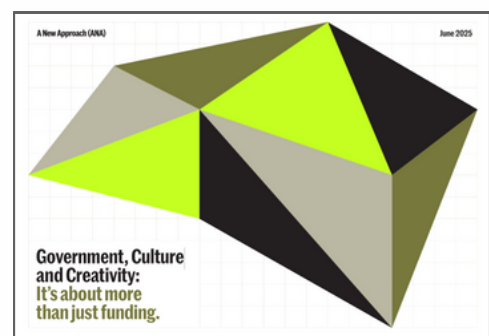
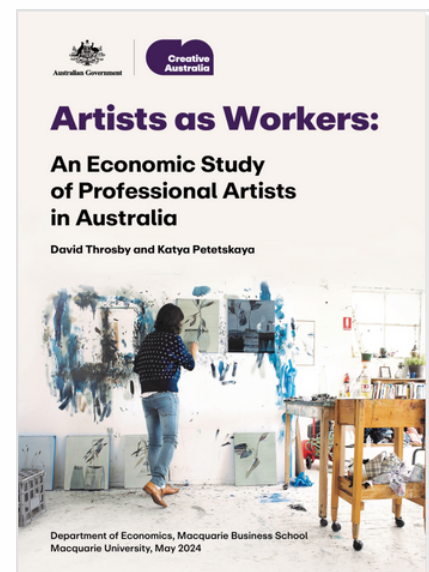
The NSW creative industries employ 380,000 people. We're home to 51% of Australia's screen production businesses, and live music employs 14,180 workers. The creative industries intersect across the whole of government, including small business and the 24 Hour Economy. As stated in the current Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Policy, "NSW is a production powerhouse, particularly in screen, literature and music."

According to the report 'Artists as Workers' (2024), as many as 78% of creatives will work across multiple types of employment, a portfolio career in the creative gig economy peppered with short-term contracts, freelancing and self-devised projects. However, most report that they don't have the ability to safely and effectively navigate this life – 41% reported that their business skills are 'non-existent'.

In NSW, Business Connect filled that profound gap between what creative professionals need, and what they have. It was the only state-wide program that comprehensively addressed the business challenges faced by freelance and self-employed creative professionals as a result of this inevitable 'gig economy'. It was also the only program that brought together creatives from every corner of the cultural ecosystem for peer support and learning.

The ANA Report 'Government, Culture and Creativity' showcased the importance of actions that governments can take to strengthen cultural access and foster robust cultural industries in addition to direct funding. Creative Plus Business and the NSW Business Connect program were specifically cited in the report as an example of 'pro-culture' enablers that are 'cheaper, easier and more effective' than direct funding.

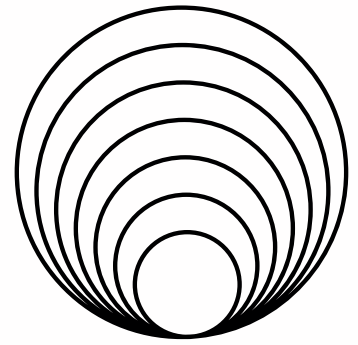
Without Business Connect, the NSW creative industries have lost a significant form of infrastructure that has profoundly impacted as many as 5% of our creative workers.



THE DATA - PEOPLE

The NSW Business Connect program made an astonishing contribution to the state's creative economy. In total, Creative Plus Business provided services to **over 17,000** NSW-based creative practitioners and arts businesses, with total funding of **\$3,849,227.00** across the program.

This equates to a micro-grant for business advice, support and training equivalent to \$224 per participant.



17,118 Participants in both workshop/webinars and business mentoring services.

12,068 Hours of business advice delivered to 3,818 clients.

446 Workshops and webinars delivered across NSW in person and online.

98% Participants stated that the program was 'very good' or 'excellent' and would refer a friend or peer to the program.

These figures equate to a NSW government investment of...

\$537 SPEND PER BUSINESS
ADVISORY CLIENT

\$57 SPEND PER WORKSHOP
ATTENDEE

BEYOND METRO

By identifying creative communities and regions in need of the program, Creative Plus Business extended in-person delivery of workshops beyond city borders to 49 locations across NSW.

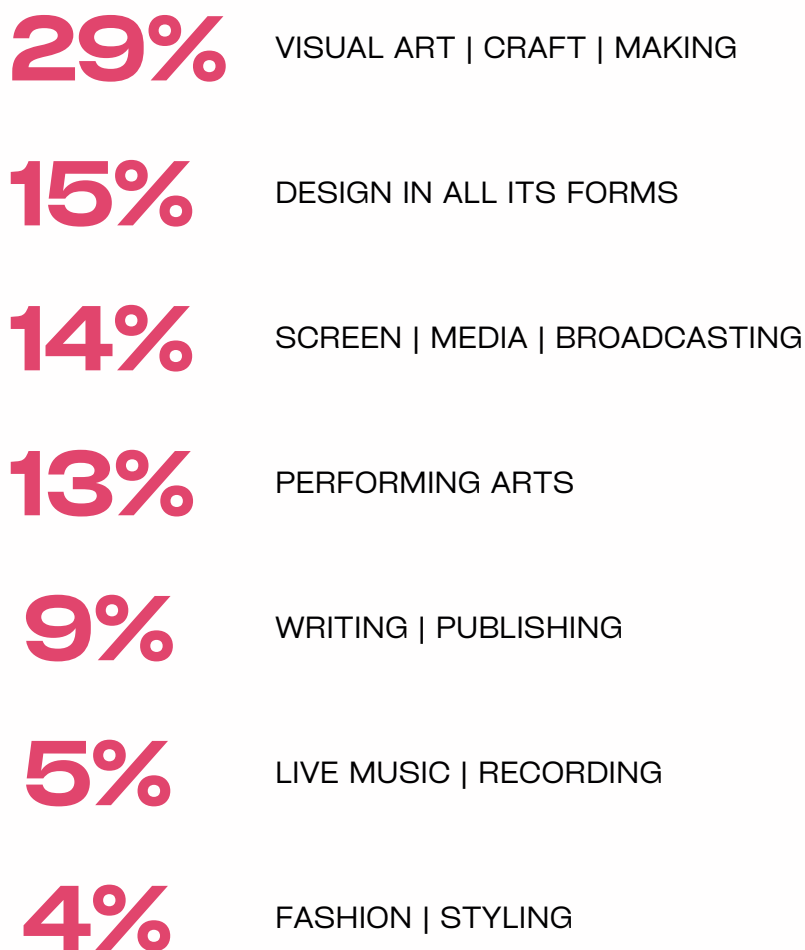
Contrary to assumptions about creative businesses being concentrated in Sydney, almost 68% of participants were from outside the metropolitan area. 23% of participants were under 30 years of age, demonstrating a high demand for business skills development and guidance from younger creatives.



THE DATA: SECTORS

The NSW Business Connect creative industries program was the only cross-sector state-funded program in Australia designed to provide professional development and support for practitioners from all areas of creative industry.

Of our clients and participants...



“I became a business advisory client shortly after encountering the program in 2019 and have experienced first hand the life-changing impact the organisation has on creative practitioners since then. The resources, networking events, guidance and mentorship I received have enabled me to successfully grow a sustainable career as a professional visual artist.”

Michael Simms | Visual Artist, Archibald Prize Finalist



THE PROGRAM & IMPACT

The NSW Business Connect program provided free, independent, and tailored business advice and professional skills development to the whole of industry. Our work also indirectly supported complementary small businesses in other sectors, entertainment venues, museums, galleries, regional businesses and the 24 Hour Economy.

ELEMENT	DETAILS	IMPACT
Creative Business Advisory	Business Connect clients were able to access up to 8 hours per year of one-to-one confidential and personalised business advice, mentoring and coaching from one of our sector specialist advisors.	Clients received long-term ongoing confidential support and tailored professional development with their chosen expert mentor. 94% of clients reported an improvement to their main business issue as a result.
Professional Development Workshops	We offered over 30 in-person and online skills development workshops for free, across four pillars of entrepreneurial education: small business skills, financial literacy, marketing and wellbeing.	Participants reported gaining confidence, new skills, and practical tools to manage various aspects of their creative businesses. 98% of participants rated the workshops as 'very good' or 'excellent'.
Sector Partnerships	Business Connect funding allowed us to partner and collaborate across the sector, including with the Regional Arts Development organisations, Museums and Galleries NSW, and peak bodies such as Screenworks.	Our partners were able to offer high-quality professional development programs for their creative cohorts at no cost. This was the equivalent of up to \$15,000+ Value In Kind support per year, per organisation.
Value-In-Kind Support	Applicants for NSW government funding were able to add Business Connect advisory services and skills training to their project and multi-year applications as a form of Value In Kind support for both individuals and orgs.	Creatives that received funding through Sound NSW, Screen NSW and Create NSW were provided with the equivalent of \$2,000 p.a Value In Kind mentoring support through the Business Connect program.
Special Events	Through Business Connect funding, Creative Plus Business was able to provide free professional development events in collaboration with significant partners across NSW.	Special events include four collaborations with Vivid Ideas, the Northern Rivers Creative Industries Recovery Forum in 2022, and Small Business Month activities each year.
Access to Resources	Participants in all our workshops and mentoring services were also given access to additional free webinars, referrals, links, templates and other resources via bespoke digital folders.	Ongoing access to resources provided participants with self-guided ways to improve and enhance their professional development in conjunction with our advisory and skills development workshops.

WITH THE PROGRAM NOW DEFUNDED, THESE SUPPORTS WILL NO LONGER BE AVAILABLE

ADVISORS & FACILITATORS

The NSW Business Connect advisors for Creative Plus Business were the absolute best that our creative industries have to offer. To qualify as a creative industries business advisor, our consultants all had the following:

- At least five years of professional experience in the creative and cultural industries.
- Tertiary qualifications in their professional creative field.
- A business, financial, or marketing qualification.
- A minimum of five years experience running a creative business or arts organisation.

Over the eight years of the program, we recruited twenty advisors and facilitators from the worlds of music, screen media, visual arts, design, performing arts, photography, community arts, writing, and publishing.

Each advisor also underwent rigorous in-house training through out proprietary training program to ready them for their role as a NSW Business Connect advisor. Our advisors are leaders in their own creative fields and successful business operators in their own right. The team was prepared to deliver meaningful, practical, and impactful support and guidance to creatives across NSW.

PROGRAM DESIGNER



MONICA DAVIDSON

Creative Plus Business Founder and Doyenne
Film Producer, Director, Speaker and Business Advisor

Monica Davidson is an award-winning expert on the creative industries. She started as a freelance writer, performer, and filmmaker, and after launching her production company, she began sharing her entrepreneurial learnings by mentoring and teaching other creatives. In 2013 she consolidated her knowledge with a Master's degree in Screen Arts and Business from AFTRS, and shortly after was appointed as Australia's first Creative Industries Business Advisor by the NSW Small Business Commissioner, where she was responsible for programs that developed the entrepreneurial capacity of creative practitioners and arts professionals. In 2016 Monica founded the social enterprise Creative Plus Business, a national organisation dedicated to supporting creative professionals as they develop their business skills, financial literacy, marketing strategies and wellbeing systems. Monica is a renowned panellist, teacher and speaker about creative business, arts entrepreneurialism, and cultural wellbeing. She also continues her own work, releasing her feature documentary/musical *Handbag* on SBS in 2023, screened again in 2025.

MEET THE ADVISORS



ANDREW GRAY
Museums & Heritage
Regional Arts Development
Cultural Tourism



FELICITY BLAKE
Film, Television & Theatre
Major Events & Festivals
Social Impact Strategy



SATS KRAMER
Live Music
Festival Development
Photography & Videography



ROSIE LOURDE
Screen Investment,
Development, & Production
Sector Leadership

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ADVISORS & FACILITATORS

MEET THE ADVISORS



NICK BOLTON

Streaming & Content
Screen Industry Development
Commercial Advertising



PAULINE CLAGUE

First Nations Screen
Film & Television
Cultural Consultation



CARL SCIBERRAS

Performing Arts (Dance)
Cultural Leadership
Community Arts Strategy



CAT DIBLEY

Performing Arts (Theatre)
Grants & Partnerships
Tour Development



ANNE NIDDRIE

Visual Arts & Crafts
Festivals & Experiences
Community Development



KB HEYLEN

Visual Arts & Galleries
Media & Communications
Community Development



KYLIE BURKE

Screen Sector
Governance & Policy
Cultural Leadership



BROOKE SCOBIE

First Nations Arts
Writing & Literature
Publishing



IRENE LEMON

Funding & Philanthropy
Performing Arts
Strategic Cultural Impact



WENDI LANHAM

Performing Arts
Diversity & Inclusion
C-Suite Skills Development



EMMIE MURPHY

Craft & Design
Arts Education
Project Management



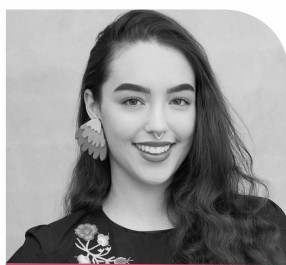
RHIANNON HOPLEY

Photography
Visual Arts Curation
NFP Development



ROBYN SAURINE

Visual & Performing Arts
Community Engagement
Information Systems



LILLIE BROWN

Fashion Design
Marketing & Engagement
Arts Administration

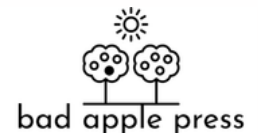
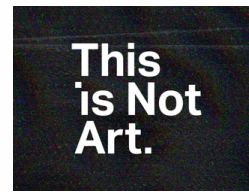
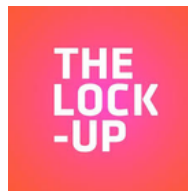


JESS MILNE

Screen Sector
Graphic & Games Design
Creator Economy

Every advisor in our network was not only a specialist in their field but equipped to advise businesses and creatives at all stages of their careers or business development.

SIGNIFICANT CLIENTS



CLIENT SNAPSHOT

16albermarle Gallery
1800 Ram Studios
Alex Kess
All Things All Creatures
Always Collective
Amanda Wyeth
Aracourt
Arcanary Architecture
Armidale Piper
Art House Studios
Austinmere Dance Theatre
Bad Apple Press
Bettina Kaiser
BTB Architecture Studio
Byron School of Art
Chicken and Chips
Chrissie Hall
Circus Akimbo
Clare Watson
Cockatoo Comics
Creative Ark
Dana Trijbetz
Dead House Films
Dingoo Streaming Platform
Diva Works
Dumped & Ditched
Ecosphy Arts
Elliott Magen
Emma Wright
Felicity O'Conner
Fernando Borazza Projects

Frida Las Vegas
Folkal
Frame Chasers
Fruitbox Theatre
Geraldine Simmons
Greg Poppleton
Guy Vears
Harrie Fasher
Hype Republic
In The Folds
In The Loupe
Jackson Davies Art
Jason King
Jeff McCann
Jessica Fitzgibbon
Jewelz Hoopz
Jocelyn Moen
Julie Peadon Art
Junkyard Beats
Kara Coen
Kate McNeill
Dr Kate Smith
Kaz Therese
Kenso Productions
Kylie Johnson Art
Lantern Studio
Lauren Eisinger
Lilly Pilly Films
Lion & Cub Photography
Lisa Reidy
Long Story Short Design

Love and Stuff Photography
Maeve Marsden
Matriark Theatre
Megan Riakos
Michael Simms
Michela Carattini
Milk Crate Theatre
Minerva Productions
Mirabel Gallery
Mosquera
Naidu Performing Arts
Naomi Cooper
New England Regional Art Museum
Next Line Films
Noisy Creations
Ocampo
PACT Centre for Emerging Artists
Peter Klostos
Pilar Basa
Ponderance Collective
Prospector Studio
Pump House School
Pupperos
Queenie van de Zandt
Renee Brack
Rochelle Summerfield
Rogue Projects
Sam Wade Comedian
Sarah Kwok
Sarah Temporal
Sarah Vyne Vassallo

Scoops Design
Screenwave Film Festival
Screen Broken Hill
Script Central
Smartfone Flick Fest
Space Jump Theatre
Spacelab Design
Starts With A
Steps and Holes Theatre
Story Squad
Stuart and Sons
Studio Fable
Sublime Studios
Sydney Comedy School
T Directions
The Big Kids
The Olive Tree Market
The Westies
The Yard Creative
Torchlight Media
Trigger Design
Tyger Gallery
Velinda Wardell
Verve Entertainment
Vetty Creations
Weber Design Studios
Werewolf Theatre
Wildcard Sue
Wired Lab
Working Group
Young Regional Conservatorium

PARTNERSHIPS

Creative Plus Business developed strategic partnerships with trusted arts organisations, producers, theatre companies, and local venues and galleries to effectively deliver the Business Connect program. Rather than operating in isolation, we collaborated with partners who possessed established networks and deep roots within their communities.

This approach allowed the program to reach creative professionals in-person and in community. These partnerships ensured that the Business Connect program was not only delivered widely, but also to those who needed it most, amplifying the benefits to businesses and local economies in which they operate.

The model provided opportunity for Business Connect to extend its impact to the development of more robust and sustainable creative business ecologies across NSW.



Examples of the 'Creative Business Day' events held with partners.

MERRIGONGX
ARTISTS' PROGRAM
Innovative • Independent • In-development



Arts &
Cultural
Exchange

LAKE
MACQUARIE
CITY
ARTS

OLD
FITZ
THEATRE

HAYES
THEATRE CO

The
Pavilion

the Joan



NSW RADO NETWORK

Since 2023 eleven of the fifteen Regional Arts Development Organisations in NSW have utilised the Business Connect program through Creative Plus Business to produce targeted professional development opportunities to creatives in their region, often coupled with networking opportunities that extended business skills development to foster deeper connection and creative ecology development.

"At Arts OutWest, we have been fortunate to work with Creative Plus Business over the past couple of years coordinating the delivery of about 20 workshops to communities within the Central West including at venues in Kandos, Portland, Lithgow, Bathurst, Orange, Molong and Forbes.

Artists travel significantly within the Central West to access these Creative Plus Business workshops e.g. 150km between Kandos and Orange. We have had artists travelling from outside the Arts OutWest region including from Katoomba, Wellington and Crookwell to access Creative Plus Business workshops. Return artist's travelling widely are a testament to the excellence of these workshops."

Nicola Mason

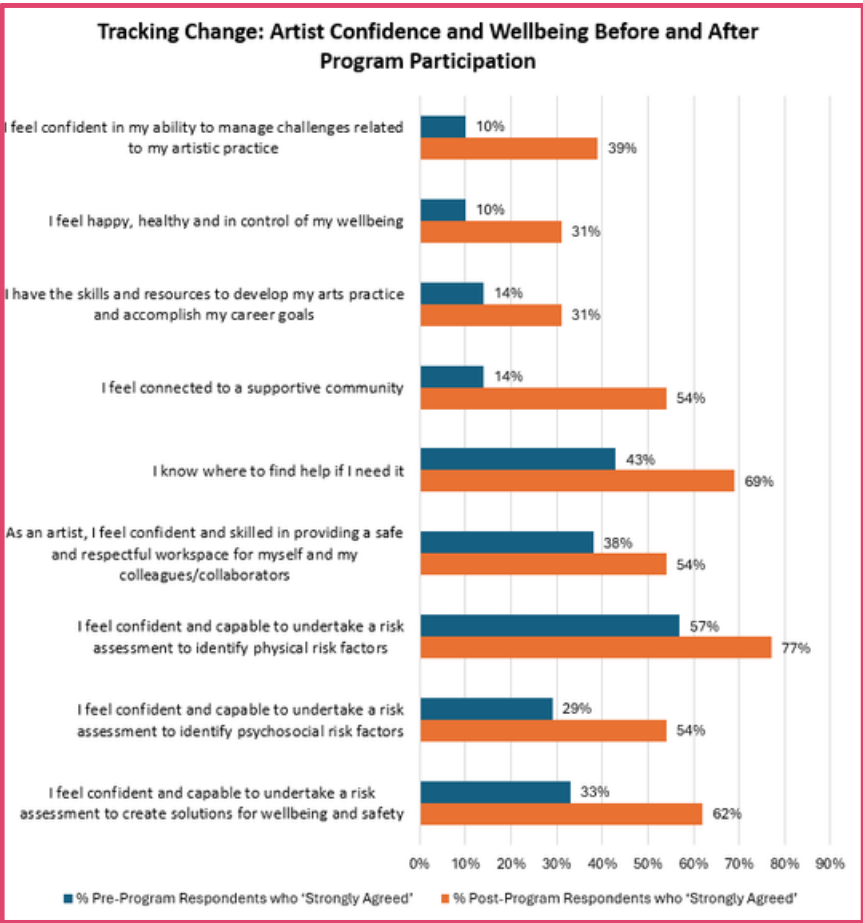
Projects Administration, Arts Out West

MERRIGONGX

The 2024 MERRIGONGX Artist Wellbeing Program Pilot aimed to implement practical and evidence-based strategies to enhance the wellbeing and professional development of participating artists. Part of the program was centred on enhancing the skills, networks, social connections, and opportunities for MERRIGONGX artists and the wider Illawarra artistic community.

Creative Plus Business delivered three workshops, funded by the Business Connect program, on the topics of Funding Guidelines, Marketing for Creatives and Networking for Creatives. A total of 42 artists attended, and the activities served to foster both skill-building and relational development, aligning with the program’s focus on wellbeing and professional growth.

Participants reported an overall improvement in their confidence and wellbeing as a result of participating in the program. One reported “I have such a better idea of what I need to do to continue in my career without having to wander around in the dark hoping I do it right.”



“The overall outcomes for the program were exceptionally positive and would not have been so strong without the business lens your company provided to the professional development sessions.”

Rachel Francis
General Manager
Merrigong Theatre Company

CLIENT EXPERIENCES

"I have personally been the recipient of mentoring by Monica and the Creative Plus Business team through the Business Connect program, which has significantly affected my practice and equipped me with skills to grow my small business to the point of not only surviving - but thriving."

Stavroula Adameitis

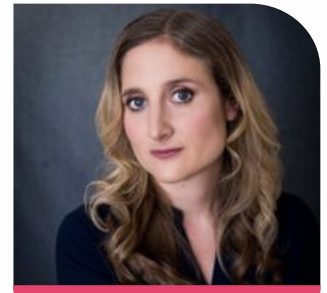
Frida Las Vegas | Artist and Designer



"I have greatly benefitted from the mentoring that Creative Plus Business has been able to provide under the NSW Business Connect program. This has provided me with regular check-ins to ensure I stay on track and have the advice and support I need. As someone running with a very tight budget, it was incredible to have access to this free program that I otherwise would not have been able to afford."

Megan Riakos

Filmmaker and Writer | Co-Founder of WIFT Australia



"Working with Creative Plus Business has been absolutely invaluable to my success. Running a small, creative business can be quite isolating and it's just not possible for me to be an expert in everything, so it's been brilliant to be able to work with a team of such trusted advisors to mentor me through the challenges and possibilities of sustaining and growing a business. Can't recommend them and their services highly enough!"

Morwenna Collett

Musician | Disability Advocate & Consultant



"When we first met with Monica through the Business Connect program in 2020, we were running Made in the West purely as a volunteer-run community festival event. With her guidance, we've launched and developed a social enterprise with a clear business structure, paying clients, and part-time staff. This transformation simply wouldn't have been possible without the expert, creative-focused advice we received through the program — advice we could never have afforded otherwise."

Misty McPhail

Director - Made in the West Creative



"Creative Plus Business and the whole team are amazing and have been such a fun and crucial part of my career for soooooo long - since Business Connect started. I feel very lucky to have been able to get advice and support for so long under all your programs."

Jeff McCann

Artist, Illustrator, Maker, Educator



SPECIAL EVENTS

The Northern Rivers Creative Industries Recovery Forum 2022

In July 2022, following the devastating flood disaster, Arts Northern Rivers spearheaded the Creative Industries Recovery Forum, a two-day event hosted in Lismore and designed to lay the foundation for a sector-led recovery. With the pivotal question of “where to now?” for the region's creative community, the forum's main objective was to provide a safe, supportive space for artists and organisations to come together, rebuild networks, and develop a long-term roadmap for recovery.

Creative Plus Business, as the specialist creative provider for the NSW Business Connect program, was a key partner in this broader recovery effort. Our work focused on providing confidential, independent business advice and skills training, which complemented the forum's mission by strengthening individual creative businesses and equipping them with the tools needed to withstand future challenges. This synergy between top-down, sector-wide planning and bottom-up, individual business support was crucial.

The forum was deliberately accessible and trauma-informed, integrating mental health and community services to create a safe environment for participants. Using an ‘Open Space’ methodology, the event focussed on real-time collaboration, allowing the creative community to directly shape a recovery map. The ‘Open Space’ process was facilitated by C+B Director Monica Davidson, and complemented by research from agency Patternmakers, which identified five key areas of need for the region's creative industries: Repair, Prepare, Influence, Work, and Thrive.

A key outcome was the identification of three priority project streams for long-term recovery: First Nations Arts, Public Art, and Dance/Physical Theatre. The forum's success demonstrated a powerful model for community-led recovery, highlighting the creative sector's resilience and its vital role in revitalising the entire Northern Rivers region. Access to the Business Connect program was a crucial part of that ongoing support.



Participants at the Forum



Monica, Robyn & Pauline from CPB



Local musician & producer Mitch King

“I have benefited greatly from the mentoring and insights provided by Creative Plus Business. I strongly encourage other creatives, particularly Indigenous practitioners, to seize this valuable opportunity. Creative Plus Business is a vital force in fostering professional development and innovation within the creative sector... driving growth and success across the industry.”

Travis De Vries (Gamilaroi/Dharug) | CEO & Founder, Awesome Black



SPECIAL EVENTS

VIVID IDEAS SYDNEY 2017 - 2021

Over four years Creative Plus Business utilised Business Connect support to run four special events at the Vivid Ideas festival. Each event highlighted specific topics of interest to professional creatives.

INDUSTRIAL EVOLUTION (2017)

Convention and creativity are starting to work together to develop dazzling and resilient new models, but what's the difference between types of creative practice that thrive, and those that die — and how can artists exploit the best of both worlds?

Our panel featured well-known practitioners from the five creative pillars of screen, publishing, performance, music and design:

- Victoria Baldock, film producer & distributor
- Laura Bloom, author.
- Melanie Horsnell, singer/songwriter & artist.
- Gregory Anderson, experiential designer.
- Rosie Lourde, actor & producer.

THE LONG HAUL (2018)

What does it take to survive and thrive in the creative industries for more than 25 years? Our panel of amazing and accomplished professionals discussed how they have juggled career highs and lows, maintained their personal lives while working in the arts, and evolved and adapted their professions to the changing times over three decades.

We featured professional champions:

- Penny Cook, actor since 1979.
- Bridget Ikin, producer since 1990.
- Sarah Carroll, musician since 1992.
- John Birmingham, author since 1994.

GRAD SHOW (2019)

Grad Show was a personal and practical interactive seminar looking at the next steps for graduates of any creative arts course, including screen, performing arts, writing, visual art, music and design. We addressed the elephant in the economic room – while creative industry is booming, and creativity plays a vital role in driving economic development, arts graduates are very unlikely to find a full-time job.

Our panellists told the story of their own graduate journey:

- Amrita Hepi, dancer & choreographer.
- Ally McLean, game designer & advocate.
- Joel Jackson, performer & musician.
- Genevieve Clay-Smith, writer & director
- Michael Slimms, visual artist.

SLASHIES (2021)

A 'portfolio career' is nothing new for creative freelancers, but this panel lifted the lid on the realities of a 'slashie' life. Is this juggle a passionate journey towards multi-skilled creative and financial fulfilment? Is it a life of business bewilderment, financial exploitation, and burnout? Or both? [Watch the video of Slashies here.](#)

Our panel of experts included:

- Chika Ikoigwe, performer & producer
- Dr Kate Smith, producer & performer
- Travis De Vries, founder of Awesome Back
- Jeff McCann, visual artist & maker.

Across the four years, the Vivid events were attended by an average of 65 participants per year, and 250 in total.



The Grad Show panellists



The 'Slashies' panel and MCs



The Long Haul panellists & Monica

SPECIAL EVENTS

THE 50 PLAN PROJECT 2023

In mid-2023, Creative Plus Business delivered a targeted initiative called the '50 Plan Project' to support creative businesses in NSW affected by recent disasters such as floods, bushfires, and the COVID pandemic.

The project aimed to provide intensive, four-hour business planning sessions to help these identified businesses with recovery measures, resilience building and strategic planning.

The initiative exceeded its target, with 76 clients completing "Mini-Plan" sessions, a 50% increase over the original goal of 50 clients. These sessions focused on key business issues including business planning, financial literacy, marketing, and confidence building. A significant portion of the participants came from disaster-affected areas like the Northern Rivers, Wollongong, and Bega Valley.

100% of surveyed participants reported that the Mini-Plans were "useful and relevant" and motivated them to take action in their businesses.

Facilitators noted that the longer session format was particularly effective for helping clients develop a practical action plan and build confidence. The sessions helped clients sharpen their focus, create actionable plans, and navigate challenges like financial concerns and a loss of business direction.

One participant wrote "working with Creative Plus Business has completely reshaped my outlook as a creative business. I now have a concise plan and manageable targets that I can work towards achieving, without overcomplicating things."



Carl Scibberas and his 50 Plan regional clients

I WILL SURVIVE - COVID-19 RESPONSE INITIATIVE 2020

On 25th March 2020, just one week after the first lockdown, Monica Davison hosted a comprehensive webinar called 'I Will Survive', supported by Business Connect. In the webinar Monica outlined the ten steps people could take to manage the crisis as best they could. It included downloadable resources and a permanent online recording afterwards.

The 'I Will Survive' webinar was watched live by almost 2000 people via Crowdcast and Facebook Live. It was the first Covid-19 survival guide created specifically for the creative industries anywhere in Australia.

In response to the success of 'I Will Survive', we also created subsequent webinars on similar topics including:



- 'Survival in the Early Days' with Jeff McCann & Joel Jackson - 24th April 2020, had 740 viewers.
- 'Crisis Marketing' - 1st May 2020, had 572 viewers.
- 'Creative Resilience: Staying Inspired' with Benjamin Law & Frida Las Vegas - 27th August 2020 had 1600 viewers.

CLIENT CASE STUDIES

MACARIO DE SOUZA

Award winning productions with global experience

The Journey: Before and After Business Connect

Macario de Souza (aka rapper Kid Mac) is an award-winning filmmaker and artist. He is the acclaimed director of Australia's highest grossing doco 'Bra Boys' (narrated by Russell Crowe), and the founder of two businesses, Hype Republic and CoHouse Studios. He first sought advice from Creative Plus Business through the NSW Business Connect program in 2018 as he needed help creating better systems and processes to manage both a filmmaking company and a coworking space simultaneously, as well as support for his creative filmmaking and music careers. As his team and business ventures grew, he also needed guidance on a new partnership venture.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, both of Macario's businesses were severely impacted, and his new feature film went into indefinite hiatus. He needed to shift his focus to survival and weathering the economic storm.

The Support Received

Macario worked with his creative business specialist advisor, Monica Davidson, to create a strategic plan that would help him manage his various business ventures and competing priorities. Monica advised him to adopt a more process-driven approach to his work and the management of his team. For the new partnership, they focused on crucial elements like risk analysis and cost-benefit analysis. During the pandemic, Monica and Macario worked together to address the financial and wellbeing issues that arose from the negative impacts of 2020 and 2021.

The Impact: Measuring Success

Thanks to this guidance, both CoHouse Studios and Hype Republic not only survived the pandemic but thrived. Macario's production company, Hype Republic, successfully diversified its outputs to include social media content, music videos, and documentaries.

In a major success story, Macario's first feature film as a director was revived. 'Six Festivals' was an audience hit at the Sydney Film Festival and released in 2022 in cinemas and streaming on Paramount Plus. This achievement is a testament to the resilience and strategic planning that resulted from his work with Creative Plus Business.



Macario De Souza and Hype manager Allan Hardy

LEARN MORE

Visit the Hype Republic website to find out more.

www.hyperepublic.com

CLIENT CASE STUDIES

FERNANDO BARRAZA CREATIVE

A full service creative entertainment agency

The Journey: Before and After Business Connect

Fernando Barraza is a highly celebrated and in-demand entertainment creative director, stylist, and photographer with over 20 years of experience. He works with some of the biggest names and brands in the industry.

As his business, Fernando Barraza Creative, began to grow and diversify, he recognised the need for strategic support to ensure this expansion was both sustainable and mindful. He sought advice from Creative Plus Business through the NSW Business Connect program in 2021 to help him protect his brand's integrity and maintain the exceptionally high standards his clients had come to expect.

The Support Received

Fernando partnered with creative business specialist advisor, Felicity Blake. Their initial conversations focused on foundational business elements like retaining and onboarding new clients. From there, they moved into critical financial discussions, including cost-benefit analysis and strategic package pricing.

The advice extended to more complex business structures, exploring the transition from a sole trader to a company. They also covered how to restructure roles, manage a team of staff and freelancers to increase capacity, and build a positive work culture to retain top talent.

The Impact: Measuring Success

By working with Creative Plus Business, Fernando Barraza Creative is now thriving and growing sustainably. The advice has provided Fernando with an informed "second opinion" on the best ways to grow his business while maintaining a positive and enriching work environment for his crew and collaborators. The outcome is a business that continues to work with a diverse array of global brands and celebrity clients, all while upholding the high production values and delivery standards that define the Fernando Barraza Creative brand.

Visit Fernando's website to find out more.
www.fernandobarraza.com



Fernando and Friends

CLIENT CASE STUDIES

GIANNA CHEUNG

Musician and Founder of G Major Studios

The Journey: Before and After Business Connect

Gianna Cheung is a freelance artist deeply embedded in the musical theatre industry as a musical director, music copyist, and performer. She also runs a successful private music teaching school. However, Gianna was on the brink of burnout, struggling to balance the demands of her thriving school with her own creative aspirations. She was teaching almost daily while also working on a constant stream of independent theatre productions, many of which were unpaid. This relentless schedule left her with little to no downtime, impacting her wellbeing.

Gianna's primary goal in seeking advice was to find a way to alleviate this pressure and prevent total collapse.

The Support Received

Gianna commenced working with our creative business specialist advisor, Rosie Lourde in 2023, through Creative Plus Business and the NSW Business Connect program. The initial focus was on her cash flow to determine if she could afford to hire a second teacher to free up her time. Concurrently, Rosie and Gianni re-evaluated her lineup of theatre productions to identify which ones she could step away from and what the core benefits were for the remainder.

Through these sessions, Gianna was able to develop strategies to balance her commitments, protect her wellbeing, and make more informed professional decisions.

The Impact: Measuring Success

The support from Creative Plus Business has been transformative for Gianna. Within 12 months of first seeking advice, she has successfully hired and trained two teachers, allowing her to step back from the day-to-day teaching schedule. She remains a backup teacher and is now developing school holiday programs, which will help her stay connected with her long-term students while increasing company revenue.

Gianna now has a clearer process for assessing which creative opportunities are most valuable. This has allowed her to strategise more effectively and pursue higher-paying, more professional opportunities within the musical theatre industry. The support has not only been invaluable to her business's success but has also had a significant positive impact on her overall life situation. As a young business owner, she credits the program with providing her with the affordable and tailored support she needed to succeed without the worry of cost.



Gianni Cheung, founder of G Major Studios

Visit Gianna's website to find out more.

www.gmajorstudios.com.au

CLIENT CASE STUDIES

BUS STOP FILMS

Not-for-profit organisation using filmmaking to raise the profile of people living with disabilities.

The Journey: Before and After Business Connect

Bus Stop Films, in operation since 2009, teaches filmmaking to adults with intellectual disabilities and other marginalised groups. They also create a series of short films every year highlighting the talents of local filmmakers and giving their participants real-world experience on set.

While the organisation was successful in its outreach, it faced significant legacy challenges when Tracey Corbin-Machett took over as CEO in July 2019. The organisation was heavily reliant on government grants and philanthropic funding and needed to become more business-like in its approach to ensure long-term sustainability. The previous founder's departure also highlighted a dependency on the CEO for basic administrative tasks. Tracey sought business advice from Creative Plus Business through the NSW Business Connect program to address these core issues and find ways to commercialise Bus Stop Films' offerings.

The Support Received

Commencing in August 2020, Tracey worked with a creative business specialist advisor, Monica Davidson, to strategically commercialise the organisation's services. They collaborated to transform Bus Stop Films' offerings into clear, marketable packages for potential clients. This included developing specific workshops and disability consultancy services tailored for the film industry.

Additionally, they focused on improving internal processes and procedures. The goal was to reduce the organisation's dependency on the CEO for administrative duties, freeing Tracey to focus on strategic growth rather than day-to-day tasks.

The Impact: Measuring Success

The outcomes of this collaboration have been significant for Bus Stop Films. The organisation has successfully developed a suite of services and consultancies that can be sold to larger clients. A major success is the signing of a large and ongoing contract with the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) to deliver Diversity and Inclusion Training with a focus on disability.

Bus Stop Films is now a registered social enterprise, and has launched Bus Stop Employment as a commercial adjunct to their creative offerings, a professional, inclusive and reliable service for all people with disability seeking work in the screen industry. They are also presenting the Driving Change Employment Summit in 2025, a first of its kind event exploring disability employment in the film, TV and commercial production industries.



One of Bus Stop's participants at work.

Visit Bus Stop's website to find out more:

www.busstopfilms.com.au

and the Driving Change Summit here:

www.drivingchangesummit.com

FUTURE FORWARD

A Blueprint to Creative Industry Support

The NSW Business Connect program offers a crucial blueprint for how regional, state, or national bodies can effectively support the development and sustainability of the creative industries, particularly for professionals facing the realities of the 'gig economy'. The success of the program highlights the following foundational principles for designing future creative industry support initiatives.

1. Specialist, Tailored Advice is Essential

The creative industries face unique business challenges, with nearly four out of five creatives operating portfolio careers marked by short-term contracts and freelancing despite 41% of professional creatives perceiving their business skills as 'non-existent'.

Future programs must:

- **Prioritise Sector-Specific Expertise**
Ensuring that advisors possess mandatory experience running a creative business, sector-specific tertiary qualifications, and business/financial/marketing expertise to provide meaningful, practical support.
- **Offer Flexible, Confidential Mentoring**
The one-to-one, confidential advisory model resulted in 94% of clients reporting an improvement in their main business issue. Offering ongoing, multi-hour mentoring with a commitment to accountability remains paramount for deep-impact support.

2. Whole-of-Sector, Whole-of-Region Approach

The Creative Plus Business model was the only whole-of-sector business support program for the creative industries in Australia. This comprehensive reach, working with every sector and stage of professional development, is critical to building a robust creative ecology.

3. Embed Services Regionally

Counter to assumptions that creative business activity is concentrated in metropolitan areas, almost 68% of participants were from outside the Sydney metropolitan area. Future programs must integrate a delivery model that extends beyond metro borders, as demonstrated by the program reaching 49 locations across NSW and successfully working closely with the NSW RADO Network, regional councils and local creative agencies, galleries, and organisations.

Future programs must maintain Cross-Sector collaboration, and continue offering support to a diverse range of disciplines, from Visual Art/Craft (29%) and Design (15%) to Screen & Media (14%) and Performing Arts (13%), to ensure a strong, interconnected industry.

4. Focus on Wholistic Wellbeing and Resilience

Creatives working in the gig economy often struggle to safely and effectively navigate their working life, leading to challenges with confidence and wellbeing.

- **Integrate Wellbeing and Business**
Future support should follow the example of programs that successfully demonstrated increased participant confidence in managing challenges, mental health, and safety practices after receiving business-focused professional development.
- **Proactive Crisis Response**
Future funding should also allow for the delivery of rapid, sector-specific guidance during disasters, as seen with the successful 'I Will Survive' webinar and the Creative Industries Recovery Forum after the NSW floods.

5. Leverage Strategic Partnerships and Infrastructure

The effectiveness of the program was amplified by leveraging partnerships and acting as key infrastructure within the creative ecosystem.

- **Partner with Local Intermediaries**
Continue collaborating with trusted organisations, venues, galleries, and Regional Arts Development Organisations to ensure broad access and community relevance.
- **Recognize Value-In-Kind (VIK)**
The formal ability to add professional advisory and skills training as VIK support in government funding applications for individuals and organisations (e.g., funding from Sound NSW, Screen NSW, Create NSW) provided a significant impact. This mechanism is crucial for adding non-financial, professional value to funded projects and should be replicated.

The end of the Business Connect Creative Industries stream leaves a significant gap in the infrastructure that supported creative workers across the state. Creative Plus Business remains committed to applying these learnings through all our future initiatives.

ABOUT CREATIVE PLUS BUSINESS



Meet the team behind NSW Business Connect

If you're a creative practitioner exploring the intersection of art and business, and need some guidance, we're the team you've been looking for.



Creative Plus Business is a national social enterprise dedicated to helping creative practitioners and arts professionals develop their entrepreneurial skills.

This includes learning and developing practical abilities in small business, financial literacy, planning, strategy, and marketing. We also keep wellbeing at the centre of all our programs.

Since we started in 2016, we've helped thousands of individual arts practitioners and creative organisations from across all sectors to develop and strengthen their entrepreneurial abilities, overcome challenges, and thrive in business.

All our offerings foster self-sufficiency through self-employment and entrepreneurialism.

Our focus is on providing peer support for practitioners to help them build capacity and self-determination for their professional careers. Our stellar team of experts possess real-world experience in professional arts practice and running creative businesses and organisations, so we know what it's actually like to carve out a career in the creative industries.

We're passionate about giving creatives the tools they need to self-determine their professional career, build their capacity, improve sustainability and become less reliant on external funding.

The support we provide helps creative professionals to increase commercial success while maintaining their values and pursuing their creative passion and artistic ambitions.

Our Vision

To contribute to the growth and success of every creative business,
no matter what size, no matter what industry.

Be Creative. Make money. Love Your Work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all who contributed to the success of the BUSINESS CONNECT program:

CREATIVE PLUS BUSINESS

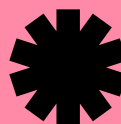
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BUSINESS CONNECT PROVIDERS

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Program Information

To learn more about BUSINESS CONNECT, or to create a bespoke program outline that meets the needs of your community or organisation:

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