

PRESENTED BY VITALSTATISTIX & RESET ARTS AND CULTURE

BODIES OF WORK

A SYMPOSIUM



**LABOUR RIGHTS FOR ARTISTS
CULTURAL DEMOCRACY FOR WORKERS**

1 - 3 NOVEMBER 2023



Have art and cultural sectors lost their connections to the rights, welfare and aspirations of working people and communities? What can legacies from past alliances and struggles teach us about current campaigns to combat precarity and poverty amongst cultural workers?

What do the histories of union-led initiatives such as 'Art and Working Life' offer us for the future? What can we learn from overseas experiments in basic income or co-operatives? Does the new National Cultural Policy give us hope?

Explore these big questions and more over three days of talks and discussion, activist training and art in the latest edition of Vitals' ongoing Bodies of Work initiative in collaboration with policy provocateurs, Reset Arts and Culture.

1-3 November 2023

Waterside Workers Hall

11 Nile St, Port Adelaide, Yartapuulti

INTRODUCTION

Art has always been a key part of the struggle for a better world. Artists and cultural workers have long forged connections to the rights, welfare and aspirations of other working people and communities. At the same time, artists and cultural workers continue to experience structural precarity, lacking many of the basic rights other workers have won. All of us are facing compound challenges: the housing crisis, rising cost of living, the climate crisis and emerging technologies.

As a new National Cultural Policy returns the emphasis to the artist as worker and to art and culture as work, what strategies can we deploy to make change for ourselves and others? What can past

alliances, campaigns and international models teach us about alliance-building, collectivism, public values and cultural democracy?

The Bodies of Work symposium brings together policy experts, academics, artists and activists, all with a wealth of organising experience. Over three days of talks and discussion, activist training and art, we will explore the issues we face and look at alternative models such as co-operatives, international experiments in basic income, and the history of union-led initiatives such as Art and Working Life. Together, we will make space for collaboration, solidarity, and imagining a better future.

DAY ONE – WEDNESDAY 1 NOVEMBER

Art, communities and activism

10am	Welcome to Country and introduction to Bodies of Work, Vitalstatistix, and Reset Arts and Culture.
10:30am	<p>Keynote: Crying Through Our Singing – A Union Hall, Communal Luxury and Cultural Activism</p> <p>A love letter to and potted history of the Waterside Workers Hall, the power of singing, women and wharfies, and the time for communal luxury, mutual aid and collectivism.</p> <p><i>Speaker:</i> Emma Webb, Artistic Director, Vitalstatistix</p> <p>Emma Webb is the Artistic Director and Co-CEO of Vitalstatistix, a curator and activist, and Executive Committee member of the Arts Industry Council of South Australia.</p>
11:30am	<p>Panel: Art and Working Life – Legacies and Futures</p> <p>A wide-ranging discussion tracing the histories and futures of artists working with unions, including the famous ‘Art and Working Life’ initiative of the 80s, exploring the place of art and culture in everyday life and as a force for radical change.</p> <p><i>Speakers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Ali Gumillya Baker, Unbound Collective, artist and scholar> Catherine Story, artist and ACTU educator> Kathie Muir, researcher and arts worker> Ian Milliss, artist and activist> in conversation with Tully Barnett, Flinders University <p>Dr Ali Gumillya Baker is a Mirning person who has grown up on Kurna country. Ali is Associate Professor in the College of Humanities Arts and Social Sciences at Flinders University and an artist, writer and member of the Unbound Collective.</p> <p>Catherine Story is an artist, union educator and organiser. In all her work, Cath is interested in the value of labour, finding joy and strength in collective struggle, and building hope.</p> <p>Dr Kathie Muir is a freelance researcher, artist and activist and the author of <i>Worth Fighting For: Inside the ACTU’s Your Rights at Work Campaign</i>.</p> <p>Ian Milliss is a conceptual artist and a founder of the Artworkers Union and Union Media Services Pty Ltd, which was instrumental in developing and promoting the Art and Working Life initiative, a partnership between the Australia Council and the ACTU.</p> <p>Dr Tully Barnett is Associate Professor of Creative Arts in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at Flinders University, where she is also Director of Assemblage Centre for Creative Arts.</p>
12:30pm	Lunch – please note that as this is a free event lunch is not provided.

1:30pm

Workshop: Activism and policy toolboxes

This workshop will empower participants to build their skills and develop their ideas for campaign planning. A provocative toolbox of strategies and activities, sharing insights about how the policy process really works. For all levels of activist experience.

Speaker: Greg Ogle, Senior Policy Officer, South Australian Council of Social Service

Greg Ogle has worked and volunteered in policy and campaign roles in a range of community organisations, including as a senior SA and national campaigner at The Wilderness Society. Greg is currently Senior Policy Officer at the South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS).

3:30pm

Break

3:45pm

Panel: Campaigns, alliances and civil society

An inspiring discussion of current campaigning work, building alliances across unions, communities and civil society, what cultural organising looks like today and what it might offer the future.

Speakers include:

- > Abbey Kendall, Director, Working Women's Centre
- > Aira Firdaus, union and community organiser
- > Ben Eltham, arts commentator and NTEU activist
- > Dale Beasley, Secretary, SA Unions
- > Jessica Alice, Chair, Arts Industry Council of South Australia
- > Pas Forgione, activist, Anti-Poverty Network of South Australia
- > in conversation with Emma Webb, Vitalstatistix

Abbey Kendall is an employment and industrial lawyer and a feminist unionist. She is the Director and the principal solicitor of the Working Women's Centre, Adelaide.

Aira Firdaus is an activist across unions and human rights organisations with experience organising in precarious and labour hire settings, including industries such as farms and food processing.

Dr Ben Eltham is a journalist and Lecturer in Media and Communications at Monash University's School of Media, Film and Journalism, where he is Branch President of the NTEU.

Dale Beasley is Secretary of SA Unions, the peak body for the South Australian trade union movement.

Jessica Alice is a writer, poet and broadcaster. She is CEO of Writers SA, Chair of the National Young Writers Festival, and Chair of the Arts Industry Council of South Australia (AICSA).

Pas Forgione is the Secretary of Anti-Poverty Network SA, a grassroots advocacy group composed of people with lived experience of poverty and unemployment.

Emma Webb is the Artistic Director and Co-CEO of Vitalstatistix, a curator and activist, and Executive Committee member of the Arts Industry Council of South Australia.

5:30pm

Arts Industry Council of South Australia event

Jessica Alice, Chair, AICSA in conversation with South Australian Minister for the Arts, the Hon. Andrea Michaels MP, about the SA Government's new taskforce into sustainable careers for artists and arts workers. Incl drinks, snacks and networking.

7:30pm

Close

DAY TWO – THURSDAY 2 NOVEMBER

Basic income, dignified work, real rights

10am	Coffee and updates.
10:30am	<p>Keynote: A Basic Income for Artists - The Irish Experience</p> <p>An exclusive-in-Australia presentation about the successful campaign for a basic income for artists pilot in Ireland and the lessons arising from the first year of its implementation.</p> <p><i>International guest speakers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Angela Dorgan, CEO First Music Contact> Sharon Barry, Director, Culture Ireland> Introduced by Justin O'Connor <p>Angela Dorgan is the CEO of First Music Contact (FMC), the national resource organisation for musicians in Ireland. The former Chair of National Campaign for the Arts, Angela championed the Basic Income for Artists pilot that began in 2022.</p> <p>Sharon Barry is the Director of Culture Ireland and the project lead for Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts pilot.</p> <p>Prof Justin O'Connor is Professor of Cultural Economy at the University of South Australia and Associate Director of Creative People, Products and Places Research Centre (CP3).</p>
12:30pm	Lunch – not provided.
1:30pm	<p>Panel: Winning cultural labour and income rights in Australia</p> <p>A deep dive into how the arts and cultural sectors can 'dare to struggle, dare to win' - what we should be fighting for in our unions, workplaces, and the public policy space, and what we might dare to imagine next.</p> <p><i>Speakers include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Ben Eltham, arts commentator and NTEU activist> David Pledger, artist and activist> Ian Milliss, artist and activist> Jennifer Mills, writer and MEAA activist> Penelope Benton, Executive Director, NAVA> Sam Whiting, scholar and activist> In conversation with Jessica Alice <p>Dr Ben Eltham is a journalist and Lecturer in Media and Communications at Monash University's School of Media, Film and Journalism, where he is Branch President of the NTEU.</p> <p>David Pledger is a conceptual, media and performance artist, and a curator, writer and futurist who operates at the intersection of art, technology and science, and explores their relationships to society and culture.</p> <p>Ian Miliss a conceptual artist and a founder of the Artworkers Union and Union Media Services Pty Ltd, which was instrumental in developing and promoting the Art and Working Life initiative, a partnership between the Australia Council and the ACTU.</p>

1:30pm

Jennifer Mills is an author, a freelance delegate at the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), and a Director of the Australian Society of Authors.

Penelope Benton is an artist and the Executive Director of the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA).

Dr Sam Whiting is a Lecturer in Creative Industries at the University of South Australia, a Fellow of the Australian Basic Income Lab, a member of AICSA's executive committee, Vice-President (Academic) of UniSA's NTEU Branch, and an elected councillor for the City of West Torrens.

Jessica Alice is a writer, poet and broadcaster. She is CEO of Writers SA, Chair of the National Young Writers Festival, and Chair of the Arts Industry Council of South Australia (AICSA).

3:30pm

Break

4pm

In-conversation: *CoUNTess: Spoiling Illusions since 2008*

A conversation about Melinda Rackham and Elvis Richardson's extraordinary 2023 publication about data, gender politics in the asymmetrical art world, and the ground-breaking project The Countess Report.

Speakers: Melinda Rackham in conversation with Jennifer Mills

Melinda Rackham is a leading feminist writer, curator, artist and scholar, and currently Adjunct Research Professor at University of South Australia.

Jennifer Mills is an author, a freelance delegate at the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), and a Director of the Australian Society of Authors.

6pm

Performance Lecture: *A Perfect Day* by Catherine Ryan

A guided listening tour through 'pop song schedules' – songs in which the singer lists everything they do in a day. This darkly funny and smart performance work explores how the pressure to be productive determines the rhythm of our existence under contemporary capitalism, through subversive pop song samples and numerous low-brow musical interludes.

Catherine Ryan is an artist, writer and performer living on Wurundjeri Country (Melbourne). She makes video work, sound work and performance lectures, with a current focus on musicology and the experience of time under neoliberalism.

7:30pm

Close

DAY THREE – FRIDAY 3 NOVEMBER

Culture as Foundational

10am	Coffee and updates.
10:30am	<p>Panel: New thinking about culture and social foundations</p> <p>A globally informed panel looking at the wide range of new ideas and empirical work which is changing thinking about culture and public policy. A touchstone here is the work around culture and the social foundations undertaken by the Reset Arts and Culture Collective and their collaborators overseas.</p> <p><i>Speakers include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Abigail Gilmore, University of Manchester> Ben Eltham, Monash University> Justin O'Connor, University of South Australia> Tully Barnett, Flinders University> Introduced by Susan Luckman <p>Dr Abigail Gilmore is Senior Lecturer in Arts Management & Cultural Policy at the University of Manchester and the author of <i>Culture, Participation and Policy in Municipal Public Parks</i> (Palgrave).</p> <p>Dr Ben Eltham is a journalist and Lecturer in Media and Communications at Monash University's School of Media, Film and Journalism, where he is Branch President of the NTEU.</p> <p>Prof Justin O'Connor is Professor of Cultural Economy at the University of South Australia and Associate Director of Creative People, Products and Places Research Centre (CP3).</p> <p>Dr Tully Barnett is Associate Professor of Creative Arts in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at Flinders University, where she is also Director of Assemblage Centre for Creative Arts.</p> <p>Prof Susan Luckman is Professor of Culture and Creative Industries, Director of the Creative People, Products and Places Research Centre (CP3), and the Cultural and Creative Industries Research Platform Leader of the Hawke EU Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence at the University of South Australia.</p>
12:30pm	Lunch – not provided.
1:30pm	<p>Participatory Session: A New Cultural Policy - Culture, democracy and change</p> <p>A participatory process that will bring together the themes of the three days, make space to plan campaign priorities and consider how to elevate progressive change both inside and outside the national cultural policy framework of 'Revive: A Place for Every Story, A Story for Every Place'. Time to collaborate, build solidarity, and imagine the future together.</p>
4:30pm	Drinks and networking

6pm

Performance Lecture: *A Perfect Day* by Catherine Ryan

A guided listening tour through ‘pop song schedules’ – songs in which the singer lists everything they do in a day. This darkly funny and smart performance work explores how the pressure to be productive determines the rhythm of our existence under contemporary capitalism, through subversive pop song samples and numerous low-brow musical interludes.

Catherine Ryan is an artist, writer and performer living on Wurundjeri Country (Melbourne). She makes video work, sound work and performance lectures, with a current focus on musicology and the experience of time under neoliberalism.

7:30pm

Werk - DJs Ben Eltham and Catherine Ryan

10:30pm

Close

VITALSTATISTIX



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Arts South Australia



Flinders
University

Assemblage Centre
for Creative Arts



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Port Adelaide Enfield



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South Australia

Creative People,
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