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LABOR ARTS FUND IS MANY MONTHS TOO LATE

Tony Bourke has finally announced some COVID support for the arts sector – many months too late.

Since the election Minister Burke has refused to release \$20 million in committed funding under the Coalition Government’s RISE program that could have assisted the arts sector for the last few months.

Instead Mr Burke has been obsessed with his cultural policy hobby horse leaving the arts and performance sector to struggle through recovery from the pandemic without additional support since May.

Even now all we have is a vague announcement; the full details of Labor’s scheme are yet to be revealed including how much funding is available and the specifics of what determines eligibility to receive payments under the Fund.

All Mr Burke needed to do was to use the existing RISE funding and the money could have already been flowing into the sector. Instead his new fund is not kicking off until November and only runs for 3 months.

RISE effectively operated as a pre-insurance scheme because grant recipients knew that the funding they received did not have to be returned if an event was cancelled due to COVID. RISE funded more than 541 projects creating over 195,000 job opportunities across Australia, for experiences reaching more than 55 million Australians as the sector recovers.

A good example is Byron Bay Blues Fest in April this year which would not have gone ahead without the \$2.4m injection it received from this fund.

Labor's fund is a case of giving with one hand and taking with the other.

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