

Scaling Out the Arts

A Report on Arts Education Decline and ATAR Impacts in Queensland

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Disclaimer:

This report has been prepared using the best available evidence at the time of writing, including consultation feedback, sector data, stakeholder insights, and publicly accessible research. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, completeness and relevance, the findings and recommendations represent stakeholder perspectives and do not claim to capture every circumstance across Queensland's diverse creative, cultural sectors.

The views expressed are those of the contributors and authors and should not be interpreted as official policy positions of any government agency, organisation, or institution. This report is intended to inform planning and discussion and should be read as advisory rather than prescriptive.

Acknowledgement of Country:

We acknowledge the First Nations Custodians of the lands where we create, teach, and share stories. We honour their Elders past and present and recognise the world's oldest continuing artistic traditions. We commit to arts education that respects cultural knowledge and strengthens the creative futures of all young people.

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INTRODUCTION

Queensland's creative arts education system is experiencing a sustained decline in student participation across Dance, Drama, Music, Film & Media, and Visual Arts. Sector consultations led by the Coalition of Arts Teacher Associations (COATA) show that this decline is affecting subject viability, teacher workload, and long-term pathways into tertiary study and creative industries.

COATA brings together Queensland's peak arts education bodies: Ausdance Educators Queensland, Australian Society for Music Education (QLD), Australian Teachers of Media (QLD), Drama Queensland, Queensland Art Teachers Association, National Advocates for Arts Education, and leading academics and arts education specialists. This collective has contributed both consultation insights and a formal submission to the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre's internal study, highlighting how current ATAR scaling practices are reshaping subject choice and weakening the creative talent pipeline.

National research by Professor Sandra Gattenhof and Dr John Nicholas Saunders reinforces these findings, noting that *"students and parents are increasingly making decisions based on perceived ATAR risk rather than educational value,"* narrowing senior pathways and reducing preparedness for tertiary creative programs. As the report states, *"these trends have intensified in Queensland since the introduction of ATAR scaling,"* contributing to emerging workforce shortages.

Declining arts education participation is not simply a curriculum issue, it is a whole-of-system challenge with consequences for wellbeing, workforce capability, cultural identity, and Queensland's readiness for major cultural and economic initiatives, including the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This report brings together COATA's consultation insights and national research to outline the scale of the challenge and the coordinated action required to rebuild Queensland's creative education pipeline.

Executive Summary

Queensland is experiencing a measurable decline in enrolments across all senior creative arts subjects, with flow-on impacts to VET pathways, tertiary programs, and industry workforce supply. Cross-sector consultations confirm that ATAR scaling is a major contributor to subject avoidance, with students perceiving arts subjects as a risk to tertiary entrance outcomes. National research by Gattenhof and Saunders reinforces that scaling is reshaping subject choice, with Queensland experiencing intensified effects since its introduction.

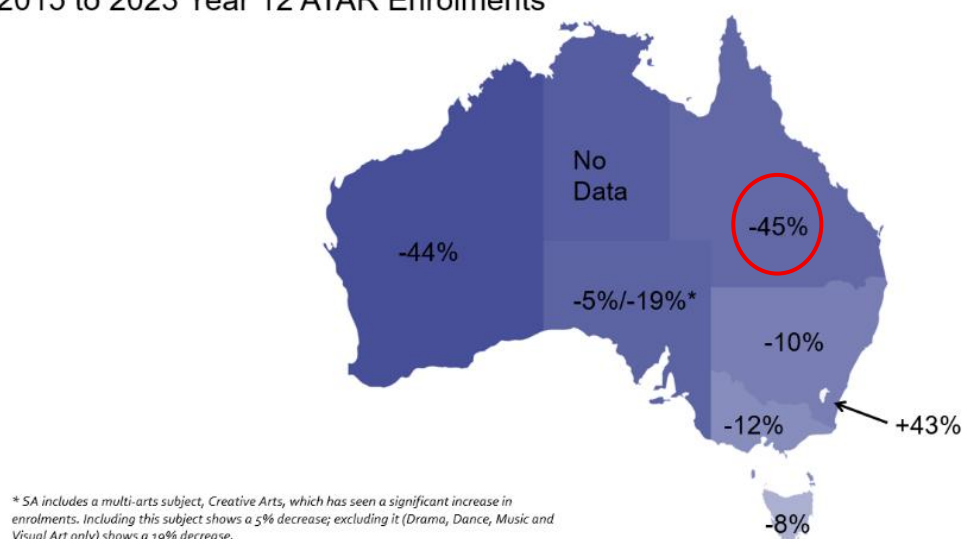
The decline in arts education participation is occurring despite overwhelming evidence that **the arts deliver multiplier benefits across health, wellbeing, cognitive development, cultural capital, and economic productivity**. Creative learning strengthens problem-solving, collaboration, communication, and adaptability - capabilities essential for Queensland's future workforce and central to innovation across all sectors.

The weakening of the creative pipeline poses risks for tertiary viability, industry capability, and Queensland's ability to meet the cultural and technical workforce demands of Brisbane 2032. Without coordinated action to address ATAR-related distortions, strengthen pathways messaging, and reinvest in creative education, Queensland faces long-term erosion of its creative capacity and diminished readiness for major cultural and economic opportunities.

The Landscape

Schools

21% National decline in school enrolments
2015 to 2023 Year 12 ATAR Enrolments



Source: Gattenhof, S., & Saunders, J. N. (2026). The Polycrisis for Arts and Creative Education in Australia. *Australian Journal of Education*, 70(1), 87-106. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00049441261421275>

Cross-Arts Summary: The Three Shared Themes

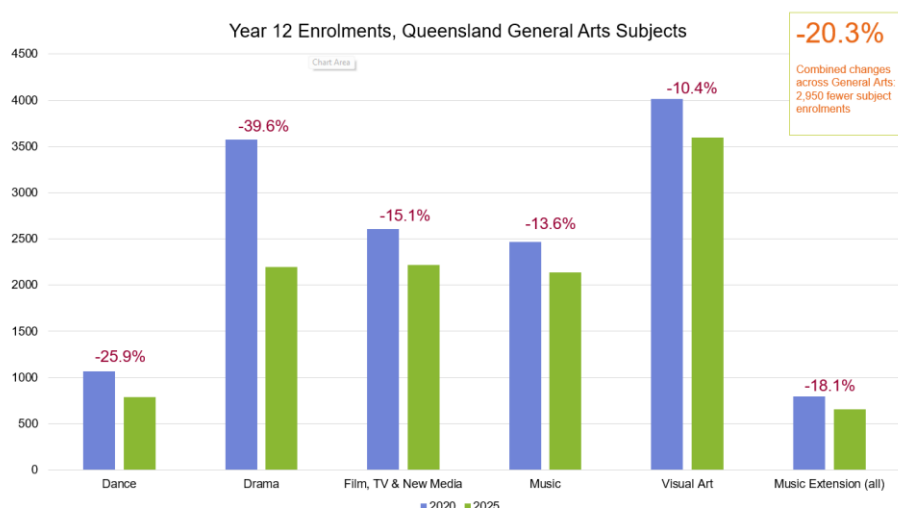
The Coalition of Arts Teacher Associations (COATA), representing Queensland's peak subject associations, convened educators, tertiary institutions, and industry partners to examine the causes and consequences of this decline. The following three shared themes emerged across these conversations:

1. The creative arts education pipeline is collapsing, producing fewer students, lower preparedness, and emerging workforce shortages.

Enrolments in senior General arts subjects have dropped sharply. Schools are combining Applied and General classes and in extreme cases Year Levels, reducing offerings, and relying on co-curricular programs to fill gaps. VET pathways such as Certificate III and Diploma programs have collapsed, and tertiary institutions report smaller, less prepared cohorts. Industry partners warn of emerging workforce shortages across music, screen, performance, design, events, and production, shortages that will directly affect Queensland's ability to deliver major cultural and economic initiatives.

2. ATAR scaling is distorting subject choice, undermining arts legitimacy, and accelerating enrolment decline across all disciplines.

Across all disciplines, students and parents perceive arts subjects as a risk to ATAR outcomes. This perception is driving subject avoidance, narrowing senior pathways, and reducing the number of students entering creative tertiary programs. Research confirms that ATAR scaling is reshaping subject selection nationally, with Queensland experiencing accelerated impacts since the introduction of ATAR scaling. The result is a generation of students discouraged from pursuing creative learning despite its academic rigour, multiplier benefits and transferable value.



3. Messaging and Pathways Information Are Not Reaching Students, Parents, or Schools

Students and parents lack accurate information about creative careers, the breadth of roles available, and the transferable skills developed through arts subjects. Guidance officers and senior school leadership teams often rely on outdated assumptions about creative industries. Industry reports that interns and graduates are entering the workforce without clear understanding of roles, expectations, or pathways. Without coordinated messaging, students continue to disengage from arts subjects, and the pipeline continues to weaken.

2. Cross-Arts Findings

The cross-arts findings show that Queensland's creative subjects are experiencing the same pressures, patterns, and risks across Dance, Drama, Film, Music, and Visual Arts. Teachers and tertiary partners describe a shared story of declining enrolments, weakened pathways, and growing concern about the future talent pipeline. The following insights reveal a system-wide challenge.

COATA's Industry and Tertiary Stakeholder meeting, facilitated by Essential Screen Skills, included contributions from 100+ attendees with representatives from Teachers, Academics, Creative Industries and Government Departments. Attendees called in from both metropolitan and regional areas of Queensland and a few from interstate. Industry representatives ranged from free lancers, small to medium enterprises and large-scale businesses.

2.1 Dance

- Declining enrolments have led to composite delivery of multiple Dance subjects, to multiple year levels, in one classroom. Teachers reported concurrently delivering General Dance, Applied Dance in Practice, VET Dance and/or Australian Curriculum v9 simultaneously, which significantly compromises curriculum integrity, reduces students' access to specialist instruction and leads to teacher burnout. This also limits opportunities for students to experience the wellbeing, physical literacy, and creative confidence benefits that Dance uniquely provides.
- ATAR scaling disadvantages General Dance compared to other General subjects, despite identical cognitive demands. Students, parents and the wider school community see Dance as an ATAR risk, not because of the subject itself, but because of negative ATAR messaging. There is a general lack of understanding about the value of dance education itself, as well transferable skills inherent in the subject including critical and creative thinking, collaboration and communication.
- Parents and students lack understanding of possible dance career pathways. The assumption is that studying dance only leads to being a performer, overlooking the many other pathways available. A dance education paves the way for careers not only in the arts, such choreography, production and arts administration but also occupations in allied health and science, education, community arts, and media and marketing.
- Dance as a subject is systematically being side lined within school timetables. Extra-curricular programs are perceived to fill the gap but lack the academic rigour and reduce dance to a recreational activity. These programs are often delivered by passionate staff who go uncompensated for their time and effort, leading to workforce exhaustion.
- Declining Dance subject numbers have triggered a severe and compounding impact on the dance education pipeline, from secondary to tertiary. Resulting in a direct flow on effect into the workforce, particularly dance related and health industries.
- Solutions include advocating for the review of the fairness of the current Qld ATAR scaling to ensure that no General subjects are valued more than others, clear articulation of the short- and long-term benefits of studying dance, and early messaging about career pathways including establishing partnerships with industry and the tertiary sector.

2.2 Drama

- Composite classes and concurrent delivery undermine curriculum integrity. This reduces opportunities for students to develop confidence, communication skills, empathy and social cohesion, which are key wellbeing and employability benefits of drama education.
- Students increasingly choose co-curricular drama instead of curriculum subjects. This shift reflects a broader trend across the arts where students engage socially and creatively through extracurricular programs but avoid academic pathways due to ATAR concerns. Teachers noted that co-curricular programs are often sustained through unpaid teacher labour, adding to workload pressures.
- Parents question the value of Drama due to misconceptions about limited career outcomes. Many parents believe Drama only leads to careers in the creative industries, rather than recognising its broad transferable skillset and diverse career pathways across law, education and training, communication, journalism, and business. This perception is reinforced by limited wider pathways information promoted in schools.
- Behaviour and engagement challenges are increasing as Drama becomes marginalised. Teachers reported that declining enrolments and reduced timetable priority contribute to lower student engagement, increased behavioural issues, and reduced confidence among students who previously thrived in Drama.
- ATAR scaling is a major deterrent, pushing students away from Drama. Students believe Drama will lower their ATAR, even though the subject uses identical cognitive verbs and academic rigour to other General subjects. Teachers expressed frustration that scaling decisions are opaque and poorly understood, and that Drama is being treated as a “risky” subject choice.
- Solutions include value based messaging, principal engagement, and highlighting transferable skills. Clearer communication about Drama’s role in wellbeing and social development, stronger advocacy, partnerships with industry to showcase diverse career pathways, strategies to elevate Drama’s status within the curriculum.

2.3 Film & Media

- Enrolments in school, TAFE, and tertiary programs have dropped significantly, reducing the pipeline into Queensland’s rapidly expanding screen and digital-creative industries.
- Film festival submissions have declined in both quantity and quality, limiting opportunities for students to build creative confidence, digital literacy, and collaborative skills. This decline is seen as a direct reflection of reduced specialist teaching in schools and fewer students studying Film & Media in senior years.
- Students and parents do not understand the breadth of screen careers (250+ roles). Industry representatives emphasised that students often only see “director” as a job, with little awareness of the full ecosystem.
- Industry reports severe workforce shortages in production, accounting, design, and technical roles. Interns entering the sector often lack foundational knowledge of screen roles and

pathways, and tertiary educators report that incoming students are less prepared due to declining senior subject participation.

- Solutions include early pathways education, industry partnerships, and unified messaging, as well as expanded VETiS eligibility, sustained funding for creative TAFE programs, and clearer communication to parents and guidance officers about the viability and diversity of screen careers.

2.4 Music

- Classroom music enrolments have fallen dramatically, with many students choosing co-curricular music instead. This reduces access to the well documented wellbeing benefits of music participation, including improved mental health, emotional regulation, and social connection.
- VET pathways have collapsed: Cert III enrolments dropped from 292 to 16. TAFE representatives highlighted that creative Certificate III programs are *not* included in the VETiS Subsidised Training List, preventing schools from offering early vocational pathways. This structural barrier has significantly reduced the number of students progressing into Diploma and tertiary music programs, weakening the entire pipeline.
- Tertiary institutions report declining preparedness and lower musical literacy. This threatens the future supply of skilled musicians, educators, and creative-tech professionals. Incoming students increasingly lack foundational theory, ensemble experience, and technical skills due to reduced access to specialist classroom music in Years 7–12. This threatens the future supply of skilled musicians, educators, composers, producers, sound engineers, and creative-tech professionals.
- AI is misunderstood as a threat, influencing perceptions of music careers. Students and parents often believe AI will replace musicians, rather than understanding its role as a creative tool in composition, production, sound design, and digital performance. This misconception contributes to declining enrolments and reduced confidence in music related career pathways.
- Industry reports that interns and graduates lack awareness of the breadth of music and sound careers. Many students only see performance as a pathway, with limited understanding of roles in production, audio engineering, composition for screen, live events, games, and digital media. This lack of pathways literacy is a major barrier to workforce readiness.
- Music is increasingly being marginalised within school timetables. Reduced subject offerings, composite classes, and limited access to specialist facilities mean fewer students can participate meaningfully in classroom music. Teachers reported that instrumental programs are often disconnected from curriculum pathways, further weakening transitions into senior subjects.
- Solutions include career tasters, contemporary pathways messaging, and stronger school-industry partnerships, advocacy for VETiS inclusion, partnerships with screen, games and live-event industries.

2.5 Visual Arts

- Teachers reported that Visual Arts is increasingly squeezed out of timetables or delivered in composite formats, reducing opportunities for foundational creative skill development. TAFE North Queensland also noted falling demand for arts courses, influenced by the cessation of free TAFE and a changing cohort with more students requiring additional support.
- NSW parliamentary inquiry findings highlight the need for tertiary and industry collaboration rather than competition. The inquiry showed that Visual Arts thrives when universities, TAFE, galleries, museums, and industry bodies work together to strengthen pathways. Queensland stakeholders echoed this, emphasising that fragmented advocacy, as seen in NSW where only music received funding, weakens sector influence. Contributors suggested commissioning an ACER-style report to build a unified, evidence-based case for Visual Arts.
- Increased numbers of students with special needs require additional support and data driven advocacy, as Visual Arts education is strongly linked to therapeutic and developmental benefits. Teachers and TAFE representatives noted rising numbers of neurodiverse students and students with disabilities who rely on Visual Arts as a safe, expressive, regulated learning space.
- A Queensland school that runs the International Baccalaureate curriculum noted that IB scores are not scaled down. Top performing Visual Arts students continue to access high ATAR pathways, including medicine.
- Visual Arts teachers are experiencing increased workload pressures due to composite classes and reduced specialist staffing. Many schools now combine General Visual Art, Visual Arts in Practice, and junior classes in a single room, undermining curriculum integrity and contributing to teacher burnout.
- Museums also warned of downstream impacts: declining artist pipelines will reduce audience participation, threatening funding models reliant on visitation.
- Parents and students often misunderstand Visual Arts career pathways. Families frequently assume Visual Arts leads only to “artist” careers, overlooking pathways in design, architecture, animation, illustration, fashion, games, screen, advertising, community arts, and cultural programming. External providers delivering wearable art and fashion programs are actively seeking data on how Visual Arts contributes to academic success.
- Solutions include stronger data collection, wellbeing evidence, and cross-sector collaboration, alongside advocacy for sustained funding and specialist staffing. Stakeholders also highlighted the need to articulate the “AI proof” nature of Visual Arts, relational, human-centred skills that cannot be automated.
- Questions were raised about QTAC’s private ownership and its role in scaling decisions that undervalue higher-order thinking skills embedded in Visual Arts syllabuses.

2.6 Tertiary Sector

- Universities report declining applications, reduced preparedness, and pressure to cut creative programs. Reduced enrolments in senior arts subjects and weakened VET pathways mean fewer students are arriving at university with the foundational skills required for creative degrees. This is placing pressure on institutions to consolidate or discontinue programs, particularly in regional areas.
- ATAR scaling is a major barrier to entry, with inconsistent adjustment points across institutions. Students perceive creative subjects as ATAR risks, reducing the number of applicants and limiting the diversity of students entering creative tertiary programs. Adjustment policies for arts subjects vary widely across universities, creating confusion and inequity.
- Funding constraints are limiting program viability and innovation. Creative programs are more expensive to deliver. Institutions report that short-term or inconsistent funding (including limited periods of targeted investment) has previously boosted enrolments, but the absence of sustained funding makes it difficult to maintain program quality, staffing, and long-term workforce development.
- The lack of VETiS access for creative qualifications is weakening the pipeline. TAFE representatives note that creative Certificate III programs are not included in the Subsidised Training List for VET in Schools (VETiS), preventing schools from offering these pathways. This has led to a collapse in Cert III enrolments (e.g., Music falling from 292 to 16), reducing the number of students progressing into Diplomas and tertiary study. Without VETiS access, students miss early exposure to industry aligned creative training.
- Workforce shortages threaten Queensland's ability to deliver major events and meet industry demand.
- Solutions include unified tertiary advocacy, consistent adjustment policies, expanded VETiS eligibility for creative qualifications, and coordinated messaging to schools. Tertiary institutions emphasise the need for sector-wide alignment on ATAR adjustments, sustained funding models, and stronger partnerships with schools and TAFE to rebuild the pipeline.

4. Evident Themes Across All Disciplines

Pipeline Collapse

Declining enrolments ➡ reduced quality ➡ fewer tertiary students ➡ workforce shortages ➡ diminished cultural and economic capacity.

ATAR Distortion

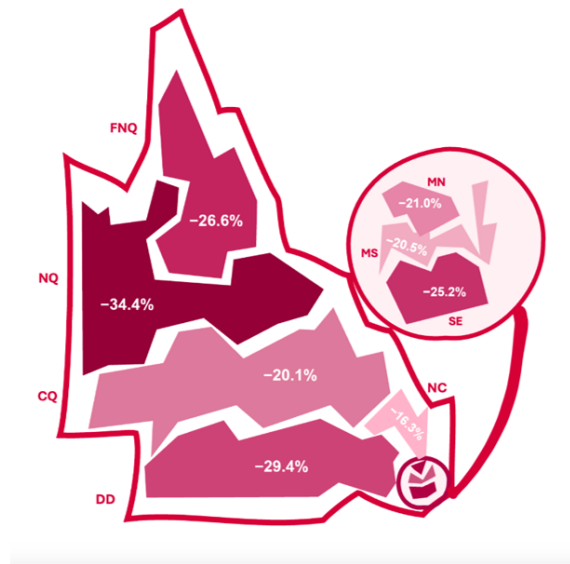
Scaling drives subject avoidance, reshapes pathways, and undermines creative literacy, wellbeing, and future workforce capability.

Messaging Failure

Students, parents, and schools lack accurate information about creative careers, transferable skills, and the arts' multiplier benefits.

The Hive Assembly: Seeing Red Report

- 34 schools stopped offering Senior General Arts altogether
- 120 of 435 continuing schools had one or no Senior General Arts subjects in 2026



Source: www.thehiveassembly.com

Implications for Queensland

When creative arts subjects shrink, students lose access to the outlets that support confidence, connection, and mental health, and communities feel the cultural impact.

- Workforce shortages across screen, music, events, design, and production.
- Reduced cultural participation and weakened community arts ecosystems.
- Tertiary program viability risks, including potential closures.
- Reduced readiness for Brisbane 2032, with insufficient local creative talent and technicians.
- Long-term economic impacts, as creative industries contribute significantly to innovation, tourism, and cultural identity.
- Diminished wellbeing outcomes, as fewer students access arts-based mental health and engagement benefits.

4.1 Olympic Creative Workforce Implications

This section brings together Brisbane 2032 workforce projections and industry advisory insights to argue that creative arts education is a critical enabler of both Games delivery and long-term economic and cultural resilience.

- Brisbane 2032 will drive a major, sustained workforce surge across Queensland's visitor and creative economies, with demand for an additional 75,000–140,000 workers and 40,000–70,000 volunteers.
- Creative industries - including screen, music, fashion, design, live performance, festivals and cultural programming - are core to Games time experiences and cultural tourism, meaning their workforce needs mirror the scale of the visitor economy.
- Industry advisory groups emphasise that creative arts education is a foundational enabler of Games delivery, long-term sector growth, and Queensland's cultural and economic resilience.
- The QTIC workforce roadmap, while focused on tourism and events, highlights long lead roles and capability gaps that directly apply to creative industry sectors, reinforcing the need for early, coordinated workforce planning.

5.2 Implications and Opportunities for Creative Arts Education

- **Long lead creative roles:**

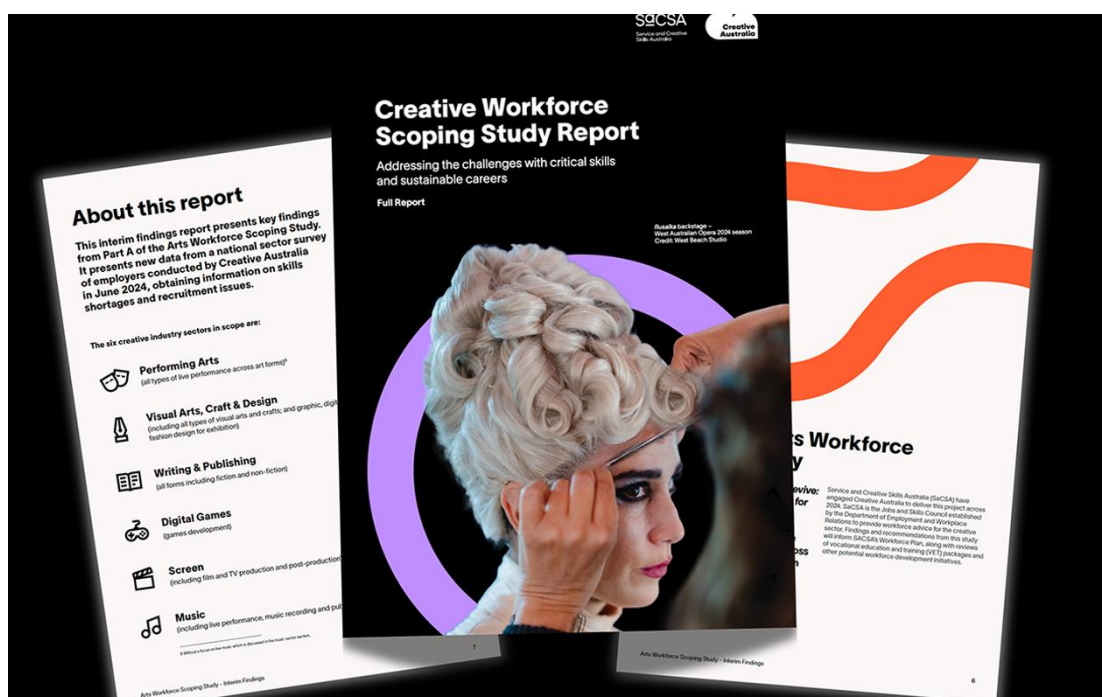
Mid-career capability and leadership roles require 4 to 8 years of experience. Executive producers, creative directors, senior designers, technical production leads (audio, lighting, vision, staging) and cultural program curators require 5 to 10 years of development, mirroring long-lead roles identified for tourism and events. Creative arts education must therefore front-load advanced pathways (degree-level, postgraduate and industry residencies) from 2026–2028 to ensure Queensland has a deep pool of senior creative talent by 2032.

- **Integrated production and screen ecosystem:**

Queensland's positioning as a global hub for screen production, with explicit policy intent to integrate music and fashion into this ecosystem, requires education pathways that combine screen, sound, costume, digital design, games, and live event production. This includes cross-disciplinary qualifications, micro-credentials and work-integrated learning aligned to large-scale event and screen pipelines.

- **Creative workforce as part of Games mobilisation:**

Lessons from London 2012, Rio 2016, Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 show that without deliberate planning, high-skilled creative and technical roles can flow to external workers while local residents are concentrated in lower-level jobs. For Brisbane 2032, creative arts education must be explicitly linked to procurement, commissioning and programming so Queensland-trained creatives are embedded in headline projects, not just peripheral roles.



The Service and Creative Skills Australia Creative Workforce Scoping Study makes clear that workforce development begins on the first day of school, not at the point of recruitment. We therefore need a coordinated pipeline from Arts education in schools, through accessible tertiary education and training, and into sustainable creative careers.

[Creative Workforce Scoping Study - Service and Creative Skills Australia \(SaCSA\)](#)

Creative Workforce Risks for Queensland

A summary of the major threats facing Queensland's creative talent pipeline.

Risk Category	Description of Strategic Risk	Evidence Base	Implications for Queensland (2026–2032)	Urgency / Timeframe
1. Mid-Career Capability Development for Leadership Skills	Insufficient pathways for mid-career creatives to progress into senior leadership roles (executive producers, creative directors, senior designers, technical leads, cultural curators).	- Long-lead roles require 4–8 years development. - Declining tertiary enrolments across all arts disciplines. - ATAR scaling reducing senior subject participation.	- Queensland may be forced to import senior creative talent for Brisbane 2032. - Loss of cultural ownership of Games-time programming. - Reduced economic multiplier benefits from local creative employment.	Critical pathways must be strengthened by 2026–2028 to meet 2032 demand.
2. Technical Production Workforce Gap	Shortage of skilled workers in audio, lighting, staging, vision systems, costume, makeup, props, production accounting.	- Film, Music, Drama and Dance pipelines collapsing. - VET Cert III and Diploma enrolments down 80–95%. - KPMG projects 75,000–140,000 additional workers needed in visitor + events economy.	- Insufficient technical workforce for ceremonies, festivals, live performance, screen production, cultural programming. - Increased reliance on interstate/overseas contractors.	High technical roles require 2–5 years development; action needed by 2026.
3. Screen Ecosystem Workforce Shortfall	Insufficient skilled workers across screen production, digital design, games, sound, costume, post-production.	- Declining enrolments in Film & Media, TAFE screen programs, and tertiary screen degrees. - Industry reports declining quality and fewer entrants. - Queensland's Time to Shine identifies screen as a strategic growth sector.	- Queensland's screen hub ambitions undermined. - Reduced capacity to deliver Olympic broadcast, digital content, cultural storytelling.	High screen roles require 2–4 years development.
4. Creative Educator Workforce Decline	Shortage of specialist teachers in Dance, Drama, Music, Film, Visual Arts.	- Concurrent delivery causing burnout. - Declining enrolments reduce subject viability. - Tertiary institutions report fewer graduates entering teaching.	- Insufficient educators to rebuild the pipeline. - Reduced access to arts subjects, worsening long-term workforce shortages.	Critical educator shortages already impacting subject availability.

5. Loss of Local Cultural Capital	Reduced capacity to deliver culturally significant programming led by Queensland creatives.	- Declining arts participation reduces cultural literacy. - Fewer students progressing to tertiary arts programs. - International Games: high-skill creative roles often outsourced.	Queensland risks losing cultural ownership of 2032 ceremonies, festivals, First Nations programming, and cultural tourism experiences.	High cultural programming requires long-lead development.
6. Weak Cross-Disciplinary Capability	Insufficient workers trained across integrated creative fields (screen + music + fashion + digital + live events).	- Current education pathways siloed. - Olympics require integrated creative ecosystems. - Industry calling for cross-disciplinary qualifications and micro-credentials.	- Workforce unable to meet hybrid creative demands of Games-time experiences. - Reduced innovation and economic multiplier effects.	Medium-High requires curriculum reform by 2027.
7. Volunteer & Temporary Workforce Skill Gaps	Volunteers and temporary workers lack creative literacy needed for cultural programming.	- KPMG: 40,000–70,000 volunteers required. - Declining arts participation reduces baseline creative skills.	- Reduced quality of visitor experience. - Lower cultural cohesion and diminished community engagement.	Medium volunteer training must begin by 2029.
8. Economic Productivity Loss	Reduced creative workforce undermines Queensland's cultural and visitor economies.	- Arts deliver multiplier benefits: wellbeing, innovation, cultural capital, economic growth. - Declining participation reduces future creative productivity.	- Lower economic return from Brisbane 2032. - Reduced long-term growth in screen, music, design, fashion, festivals, cultural tourism.	Critical impacts extend beyond 2032.
9. Mental Health & Wellbeing Impacts	Reduced arts participation weakens wellbeing outcomes for young people and future workforce.	- Arts linked to mental health, engagement, social cohesion. - Declining access to arts subjects reduces protective wellbeing factors.	- Higher stress, lower engagement, reduced resilience in future workforce. - Lower community cohesion during Games mobilisation.	High wellbeing impacts already visible.
10. Equity & Regional Access Risks	Regional students disproportionately losing access to creative pathways.	- Many regional schools now offer only one arts subject. - TAFE and tertiary creative programs closing due to low numbers.	- Regional Qld may be excluded from Games-time creative opportunities. - Reduced statewide cultural representation.	High regional access declining rapidly.

Recommendations

The following recommendations outline the practical actions Queensland can take to stabilise the creative pipeline, strengthen pathways, and build the capability needed for both Brisbane 2032 and long-term sector resilience.

1. Review Tertiary Entrance System

- Incentivise students to study subjects that align with their interest, aptitudes and aspirations.
- Universities review their entry requirements to attract students who have contextual foundational skills and knowledge. Students are fit for the course.
- Align Queensland with international models using raw subject scores.

2. Strengthen Creative Pathways Messaging

- Develop a statewide creative careers campaign.
- Equip guidance officers, careers counsellors and School Administration teams with accurate, contemporary information.
- Provide parents with clear, accessible career pathway resources.
- Highlight the arts' multiplier benefits across wellbeing, skills, culture, and economy.

3. Rebuild the Creative Arts Education Pipeline

- Protect senior subject offerings and reduce reliance on composite classes.
- Reinvest in VET pathways, including VETiS, Cert III and Diploma programs.
- Expand excellence programs and school-industry partnerships.
- Embed wellbeing and cultural-capital benefits in curriculum messaging.

4. Support Teacher Workforce Capacity

- Increase specialist teacher training and PD.
- Reduce concurrent delivery of multiple subjects.
- Provide workload relief for co-curricular and extra-curricular arts programs.

5. Strengthen Tertiary–Industry Collaboration

- Develop coordinated pathways plans across universities, TAFE, and industry.
- Align tertiary offerings with workforce demand, including Brisbane 2032 needs.
- Advocate jointly to government for policy and funding reform.
- Promote the arts' economic multiplier effect to Treasury and Jobs portfolios.

Conclusion

Queensland's creative education system is at a turning point. If we don't act together now, we risk losing the skills, cultural energy and creative capability that make the state vibrant and competitive. Teachers, tertiary educators and industry leaders are all seeing the same pattern: fewer students entering creative subjects, shrinking VET and tertiary pathways, and growing pressure on the workforce just as Queensland prepares for major cultural and economic opportunities like Brisbane 2032. The evidence is clear that these trends won't correct themselves, they need coordinated, statewide action.

By tackling ATAR scaling issues, improving pathways messaging, and rebuilding the creative pipeline from school through to industry, Queensland can strengthen a sector that delivers far more than artistic outcomes. Creative arts education boosts wellbeing, confidence, cultural identity, innovation and economic growth. With the right reforms, Queensland can build a future-ready creative workforce, support thriving communities, and ensure the state is positioned to shine on the national and global stage.

References

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ISJA Industry Consultations 2025 and 2026

Arts and Music Education and Training Inquiry – NSW Parliament

KPMG Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games Summary Report

Queensland Time to Shine

The Mandarin – How Brisbane can use the Olympics as a workforce opportunity

Training Priorities Plan 2026-2027

QTIC Workforce Roadmap 2026 – 2035

Further Reading

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