

Next Wave, Strategic Plan 2022—2025



On Country



From 60,000 years and to the unborn.

Generations of First Nations people carry a cultural and creative continuum that is intimately connected to the community, lands and waters from which they come.

Theirs is a sovereign, living culture, where storytelling, knowledge and wisdom, grief and celebration continue to be practiced.

On the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nations, we begin – many of us as settlers; carrying with us legacies of colonisation, displacement and migration – seeking refuge and finding home.

Next Wave is privileged to traverse the land and waterways of this continent of many nations – to share in the act of art making and culture building – grounded on justice, friendship and care.

We have much to listen to and learn; we have much to offer; we have much to do.

This always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.



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“Many artists are anxious about the future. The future in regards to climate change, the future in regards to culture, the future in general. Many people think things are impossible to change while artists think about possibilities.

Artists often push against mainstream ideas and question hierarchies. Artists can help us see the world differently, take risks and experiment - and these elements offer a great structure to support an environment for creative learning.

Next Wave is a hub for a new generation of artists so is perfectly positioned to host and facilitate such a program.”

– *Keg De Souza, Next Wave Festival 2008 Artist*

Vision

A world shaped by artists.

Purpose

Next Wave facilitates artists and their arts practices through relationship building and ideas exchange, creative and skill development, and the resources to support the research and presentation of work – across disciplines, art forms and generations.

Values

Justice. Friendship. Care.

A world shaped by artists.

Values

Justice

- **First Nations, first** – forming genuine relationships with elders, communities and artists, to embed best practice throughout all aspects of our operations that is informed by consultation and on-going community engagement efforts.
- **Anti-racist** – committing to racial literacy that is both rigorous and nuanced, which centres the voices of the Global Majority.
- **Self-determined practice** – centering the visions, aspirations and needs of artists and their communities, which are informed by their diverse lived and cultural experiences.
- **Equity** – minimising barriers to engagement, and actively extending opportunities beyond the inner-city to the suburbs, regions and rural communities.
- **Artist-centred** – prioritising money and resources for artists and their projects in relation to overall organisational spending.

Friendship

- **Mutuality** – intrinsically valuing each other as equals, each with the unique opportunity and responsibility for exchange, to give and receive, listen and speak, teach and learn.
- **Cultural integrity** – respecting and honouring individual practice, positionality, and connection to country, context and place, collaborating in ways that are non-extractive and non-appropriative.
- **Generosity** – where relationships beget relationships, connecting artists to an expansive, living and growing network of fellow artists, communities, organisations and audiences across cultures, generations, geographies and artforms.

Care

- **A culture of safety for artists, audiences and staff** – inviting us to bring our full selves to every encounter where personal and cultural obligations such as parenting, caring, Sorry Business, health and wellbeing are given space and consideration.
- **Moving at the speed of friendship** – engendering flexible and responsive work environments, structures, timelines and conditions that are culturally safe, accessible and nurturing.
- **Cultural competence** – investing deeply in training staff and artists to be equipped with the capacity and sensibility to do their most fulfilling work.
- **Healthy work environments, sustainable practices and prioritising wellbeing** – ensuring we thrive, in our physical and mental wellbeing, prioritising health for the environment, as an organisation, sector and society.

Goals

- **Champion** ambitious, equitable and self-determined artist-led dreaming, art making and culture building.
- **Foster** a dynamic culture of learning, relationships and fair exchange across artforms, places, generations and cultures.
- **Model** sector transformation by creating and maintaining a culturally safe environment for artists, audiences and staff.

Strategies

- **Create** and maintain a safe and welcoming home base at Brunswick Mechanics as a community hub for peer connection and learning.
- **Facilitate** artist-centred decision making, art making and learning and exchange.
- **Enact** social change through embedding long-form engagement with civic infrastructure within justice-, relational- and place-based approaches to art making.
- **Cultivate** a self-determined community for artists and audiences in Victoria and across Australia.
- **Foster** democratic and dynamic collaborations and partnerships with stakeholders and community in Victoria and across Australia.
- **Implement** structures to build a stronger organisation that prioritise safety, health and wellbeing in work conditions for our artists, staff and community.

Strategies: How we do it

Strategy	Activities	Output Targets	Impact Targets	Method of Collection	
1	Create and maintain a safe and welcoming home base at Brunswick Mechanics as a community hub for peer connection and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement open door policy • Implement year-round “Introduce yourself” platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 x community events annually • 400 people who use the “Introduce Yourself” platform yearly • 25% Moreland artists, 45% Greater Melbourne artists, 15% Outer-suburb Melbourne artists, 20% Regional Victorian artists, 35% of interstate artists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >80% of artists/participants feel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safe, welcomed and connected to peers • NW activities provided opportunity for practice development and economic opportunities for future presentation growth • felt connected with others in the sector >30% of drop-ins/interactions/ “Introduce Yourself” turn into opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artist / Participant Surveys
2	Facilitate artist-centred decision making, art making and learning and exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed programming model for curated commissions, free creative development and community venue hire at Brunswick Mechanics • Programs include Kickstart, TIDAL, ALL School, Keynote projects, Creative Development residencies and public art work commissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 x Kickstart artists to a total commissioning pool of \$200,000 yearly • 1 x TIDAL project to a total commissioning pool of \$160,000 biennially in year 1 and 2, increasing to 3 x TIDAL projects across Victoria and Australia to a total pool of \$360,000 in year 3 and 4 • 12 x ALL School content commissions to a total pool of \$24,000 in year 1 and 2, increasing to \$36,000 in year 3 and 4 • 4 x commissions annually to create a public art work in external spaces at Brunswick Mechanics • 30% Brunswick Mechanics provided to Creative Development residencies • 1 x Next Wave Keynote projects at Brunswick Mechanics developed and presented biennially • 100% of artists will be paid superannuation by 2022 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >80% of artists agree that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participation increased career & economic opportunities • feel a sense of agency and purpose throughout their engagement with Next Wave • support from early development stages to premiere is integral to the development of new work • Next Wave contributes to the sustainability of their practice 50% of works continue into further development/presentation 5% of strategically targeted events or regular community hires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artist / Participant / Hirer Surveys
3	Enact social change through embedding long-form engagement with civic infrastructure within justice-, relational- and place-based approaches to art making	<p>Activities in Strategy 2, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop partnerships with non-arts organisations and cross-portfolio institutions • Secure cross-portfolio co-funding opportunities • Advocate within and external to the arts sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 x new commission annually to take place within a remote community • 1 x regionally based Creative Producer in Staff • Sector advocacy of organisational best practice for artist-led leadership and modes of working including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 x public relations campaigns annually • Host 2 x peer-to-peer gatherings between artists and arts workers • Participation and presenting at sector gatherings and practice symposiums i.e. Artlands, APAM, ATF etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >80% of artists/participants agree that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation strengthens connection of artists and audiences to the world, Country, culture and land • Participation increased positive views of community’s strength and ability to affect change Annual increase in media coverage that charts Next Wave’s advocacy work nationally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artist / Participant Surveys • Google Analytics • Internal media documentation
4	Cultivate a self-determined community for artists and audiences in Victoria and across Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain matrix of personnel reflecting diversity of practice and lived and cultural experience across Board, Staff, Artistic Directorate and Artists • Create First Nations identified Staff positions, focused professional development and succession plans • Introduce whole-of-organisation approach to Cultural Business including financial commitments • Access and Inclusion embedded in all programming and projects • Develop broadcast opportunities through ALL School and public platforms to share best practice learnings and accumulated cultural capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By no later than 2024 across Board, Staff, Artistic Directorate and Artists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% identifies as First Nations • At least 50% identifies as People of Colour/ Culturally and Linguistically Diverse • 25% identify as d/Deaf or Disabled • At least 50% women • 25% live and work regionally • 1 x Broadcast platform in 2023 and 2025 to showcase Next Wave’s programmed artists and body of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of participating First Nations artists felt supported to share art/stories that reclaim identity, history and stories 100% of participating artists who identify as POC/CALD, d/Deaf or Disabled, as women or who live/work regionally, feel a sense of agency, hope and purpose >80% of all programmed artists feel that participation increased knowledge of / empathy for different cultures and practices >80% of audiences felt that the works reflected a broad and inclusive range of voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artists / Audience Surveys
5	Foster democratic and dynamic collaborations and partnerships with stakeholders and community in Victoria and across Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new partnerships that leverage national work, including presenting organisations, arts and non-arts organisations, local and national businesses • Invest in hospitality-driven engagement to scope new potential partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual 10% increase in LGA-focused partnerships for Kickstart nationally • 1 x new biennial TIDAL commission in Victoria (outside of City of Melbourne LGA) in Year 2 • 1 x new biennial TIDAL commission nationally in Year 3 • 1 x new “major subscriber” with LGA, local library or university for ALL School annually • 3 x partnership-led programs or events at Brunswick Mechanics • Annual 25% increase in artists engaged in regional Victoria and nationally • Annual 25% increase in use of “Introduce Yourself” by artists from regional Victoria and nationally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >80% of artists and audiences agree that participation increased connection, trust and respect OR understanding and empathy for others >80% of artists identify Next Wave as a key supporter of ongoing pathways for work presentation after development >80% of corporate partners value their contribution to contemporary arts >80% of audiences felt it had something to say about the world in which we live 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artists / Audience / Partner Surveys
6	Implement structures to build a stronger organisation that prioritise safety, health and wellbeing in work conditions for our artists, staff and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Operational Plan: Leadership and Management for organisational and staff related activities • Annual review and update of Artist contracts • Annual programming review • Stakeholder consultations – Artists, Community, Partners, Funders, Donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Operational Plan: Leadership and Management for organisational and staff related output targets • Annual stakeholder focus groups and surveys • Artist participation surveys scheduled for post-activity; and mid-point check in for longer engagements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of Next Wave participants agree they had agency while working with Next Wave 90% staff satisfaction with professional development opportunities and wellbeing programs >80% of programmed artists identify Next Wave as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expanding employment opportunities • contributes to the sustainability of their practice • Satisfactory with application of OH&S measures >80% of programmed artists and staff feel supported by Next Wave, in success and failure >80% of artists and audiences report feeling welcome and secure at NW events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artist/Participant Surveys • Staff performance reviews

Program Highlights

Art that materialises our imagined futures in tangible ways.

Program/Strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>Brunswick Mechanics Brunswick Mechanics is our physical home in Melbourne. We will open our doors to host local community events, artist residencies and presentations, using the venue’s theatre, studio spaces, office and digital broadcasting infrastructure.</p>	X	X				X
<p>TIDAL A suite of large-scale commissions for mid-career artists in and around Melbourne that take the provocation of “art as public space” and respond to the locality, community and cultural context of current times through long-form research and development, iterative outcomes, and artist-led responses and interventions to civic infrastructure.</p>		X	X	X	X	
<p>Artistic Directorate The Next Wave Artistic Directorate is our new, artist-led approach to decision-making. The Directorate comprises eight experienced artists from across the continent. They bring insights from diverse lived and cultural experiences, practices and geographical contexts, to guide the organisation and drive tangible change in how we curate.</p>		X		X	X	X
<p>Kickstart Kickstart is our flagship artist development program, commissioning 10 early-career artists annually in the development and presentation of new work, where they live. Kickstart artists will be supported flexibly, according to each artist’s timelines and outcome requirements. They will be supported locally through partnerships with peer organisations and local members of the Artistic Directorate. We will provide extensive networks, communication channels, audience and community engagement and production support.</p>		X	X	X	X	
<p>ALL School ALL School is our artist-led learning and exchange program. We will host a monthly series of artist-led programs/classes/workshops/offerings/happenings to critically contemplate the changing contexts in which we practice. Delivered as a hybrid digital and in-person program, ALL School is an opportunity to experiment with learning platforms and digital delivery models to broaden our reach and engagement.</p>	X	X	X	X	X	

Each of Next Wave’s flagship programs are discussed in greater detail in Appendix 1, below.

THE SECOND WOMAN



“Increasingly we are seeing diverse models and approaches for knowledge sharing. As an established artist, I am interested in working with fellow artists at various stages of career development, to rethink the role of the independent artist as cultural agent and chart new paths for sustainable artistic production and practice. To me, this mode of knowledge sharing has huge relevance right now. Next Wave, with its long history of working with emerging artists are the ideal organisation to facilitate the process.”

– Luke George, Next Wave Festival 2008 Artist

2022 Onwards

In its 36th year, Next Wave is dismantling our festival model and reorienting our way of working. We are challenging whose aesthetics and knowledge we privilege as ‘contemporary and experimental’ practice, and where and how power is held. We build on the strengths of our legacy to forge new ground in the Victorian and national arts landscape.

Established in 1985, Next Wave has been a Melbourne-based biennial multi-art festival platform showcasing contemporary and experimental new work by young and emerging artists. Next Wave provides significant resources and organisational support to realise major works and evolutions in practice through key commissioning programs like Kickstart. Next Wave artists have continued to shape contemporary artistic culture, and many works that premiered at Next Wave have gone on to tour the continent and beyond our shores.

Next Wave commits to transforming our models and approach to renew and refocus our commitment to artists and practice development. As we face a sector that is reckoning with itself, we must clearly define how we are uniquely placed to contribute to the arts ecosystem.

Instead of seeing a ‘centre and its periphery’ of the ‘city and the regions,’ we see countless ‘centres’ that inter-relate in unique ways, bringing their own distinctive, valued and place-based knowledge. Next Wave is a network traversing a continent of many nations, cumulatively building relationships and cultural capital in abundance.

Next Wave prioritises different approaches to knowledge and power. We work from diversity – of lived and cultural experience, of artform and practice, of geographical, social and community contexts.

We continue to support artists and practice development through major commissioning programs. From a strong home-base in Melbourne at Brunswick Mechanics, we are looking to outer-metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, and across the continent. We prioritise processes that start with elders, community and place.

We continue to support emerging artists through programs like Kickstart. We are building an intergenerational focus through an Artistic Directorate of experienced practitioners and commissions for mid-career artists through TIDAL and ALL School. We foreground a collegiate approach, engaging artists as self-determined and equal partners, developing projects on terms that best serve each work.



On Curation

In 2021, we are rethinking the current approach to artist callouts. We will pursue curation done with rigour, care, transparency and integrity. From 2022 Next Wave artists will be primarily engaged via a curatorial model, with artists directly invited to join core programs such as the Artistic Directorate, Kickstart, TIDAL and ALL School.

Artists have reported that traditional artist 'callouts' and 'Expressions of Interest' formats don't always provide the equal playing field presented at face value. These processes can favour conventional types of literacy and cultural initiation that often maintain the status quo. These processes also add to disproportionate and unremunerated labour – a serious burden for independent practitioners, especially with cultural/domestic caring responsibilities.

We will proactively engage with artistic and cultural practice taking place within our communities. We will actively seek out artists and works, especially those overlooked by the broader sector, for engagement with Next Wave.

Our Creative Producers each have an artistic or producing practice outside of their Next Wave role and are engaged within and across multiple communities as practitioners. Members of the Artistic Directorate are chosen for their independent artistic and curatorial practices, as well as their connection to communities, professional and cultural insights and sector-wide relationships.

The Artistic Directorate will develop curatorial pillars to guide Next Wave's approach to curation. These will be revisited periodically during their two-year term of engagement and renewed biennially as new members join the Artistic Directorate.

To ensure we remain accessible to all artists, including those outside the expansive networks of our staff and Artistic Directorate, Next Wave will create a welcoming approach to all artists. Through a 'Getting to Know You' platform, Next Wave invites artists to introduce themselves all year round. Next Wave producers will review these submissions regularly and explore potential engagement.

Rationale for Transformation

Sector Analysis

For many practising artists and arts organisations, 2020 was an inflection point allowing for a reckoning and reconsideration of how to operate going forward. As a sector we have said we will ‘do things differently,’ ‘re-ignite,’ ‘reset,’ or ‘rebuild,’ but what does that look like? And what could it look like?

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought live arts across Australia and the world to a grinding halt, including Next Wave’s festival in May. Ongoing restrictions continue to disrupt festivals and events and this is likely to continue over the coming years. While the pandemic has had a massive impact on the arts, its impacts also served to highlight a precarity and inequity that has long plagued artists and the broader sector.

Of particular concern to Next Wave is the chronic positioning of independent artists at the ‘bottom of the food chain’ within the Australian arts sector in terms of agency, resources, financial security and sustainability of practice. As arts organisations navigate ongoing funding uncertainty and challenges to the viability of pre-pandemic delivery models, we are conscious that we perpetuate a gig-economy contracting of artists and bear a collective responsibility to actively work towards improved working conditions for artists as we engage them. Leading the sector in this area, Next Wave moves towards an approach and practice that challenges existing growth mentalities around ambition, scale, risk and impact, and that doesn’t see artists burning out as part of business as usual.

Not A Festival

We understand the Next Wave Festival has been a beloved institution with a fiercely loyal and deeply invested base of artists, partners and audiences, however we are confident and excited to take Next Wave into a new model.

In moving beyond the festival, we strengthen our sustainability as an organisation, and the sustainability of the practices of every artist, producer and staff member we engage. We also position our organisation to meet and embrace the unprecedented challenges and opportunities of 2022 and beyond.

Key reasons that informed our decision making include:

- To re-think and extend on our geographical scope. The festival model oriented Next Wave’s activities around Melbourne as the centre of gravity. We now shift focus to privilege artists working across all of Victoria and Australia, in different contexts, including suburban, regional and remote, and who have different lived and cultural experiences – increasing access and extending opportunities to these artists and their communities.
- Festival saturation, with over 430 festivals currently delivered in Victoria, including a congested calendar of offerings that overlap with Next Wave’s core audience and artistic constituency, including Rising, Yirramboi and Melbourne Fringe. Formerly ‘competitors’ to the Next Wave Festival – these organisations can now become collaborators and co-commissioning partners to present well-supported Next Wave-produced works.
- Better use of resources and better regulated work and producing patterns. The festival model is resource intensive, with significant financial and environmental costs on flights, and significant expenditure in marketing, administration and production costs, taking money away from artist fees as a proportion of the overall budget. A distributed calendar of activities will create better-regulated work patterns for artists and staff across the year, guarding against burnout, encouraging a measured approach to expenditure. This will enable Next Wave to be more responsive to the community, allowing workload and support for projects to ebb and flow between staff, and it will reduce competition for resources – through funding cycles, venues, publicity, etc. – between commissioned Next Wave artists.
- Digital developments. Embracing evolutions of artistic and organisational work in online spaces, Next Wave will be a high-functioning de-centralised organisation, supported by a robust digital infrastructure, including digital broadcasting for workshops, performances, lectures, discussions and administration.
- Responsive to the pandemic. Our new model is also a proactive response to the recurring challenges facing the live arts sector because of the restrictions on public gatherings and events. It is prudent to expect significant disruptions and constraints to continue in coming years.



“Next Wave has a history of responsive and artist driven practice, valuing what artists know and do and trusting us to do it and share it. Their track record of supporting artist and arts workers throughout their careers/practices make them the ideal organisation to create and support this space.”

– *Sarah Aiken, Next Wave Festival 2014 Artist & Creative Development 2019 Recipient*