

Trouble in Paradise

Eden-Monaro's arts & entertainment sector during Covid-19

Arts and entertainment employ almost 1,000 people in Eden-Monaro, more than any other regional NSW electorate. As a by-election approaches, polling in shows strong support for government assistance to the arts and entertainment sector in the wake of Covid-19.

Briefing Note

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INTRODUCTION

The federal division of Eden-Monaro will go to a by-election on Saturday 4 July 2020, following the retirement of Labor member Mike Kelly. The seat is well known for its long record as a 'bell-wether' seat, a seat usually won by the party that goes on to win government, so is seen as an indicator of the wider mood of the nation.

The by-election comes against a backdrop of the Covid-19 crisis and the economic challenges that it presents. One sector particularly hard hit has been arts and entertainment. Music venues, festivals, art galleries, theatres and others have all had to shut their doors due to social distancing requirements. Many workers in this sector are casual and survive on short term contracts, so have been ineligible for the federal government's JobKeeper payment. Arts and entertainment industry bodies have called

for a range of support measures including doubling funding to the Australia Council for the Arts and a \$850 million package for the live performance industry.¹

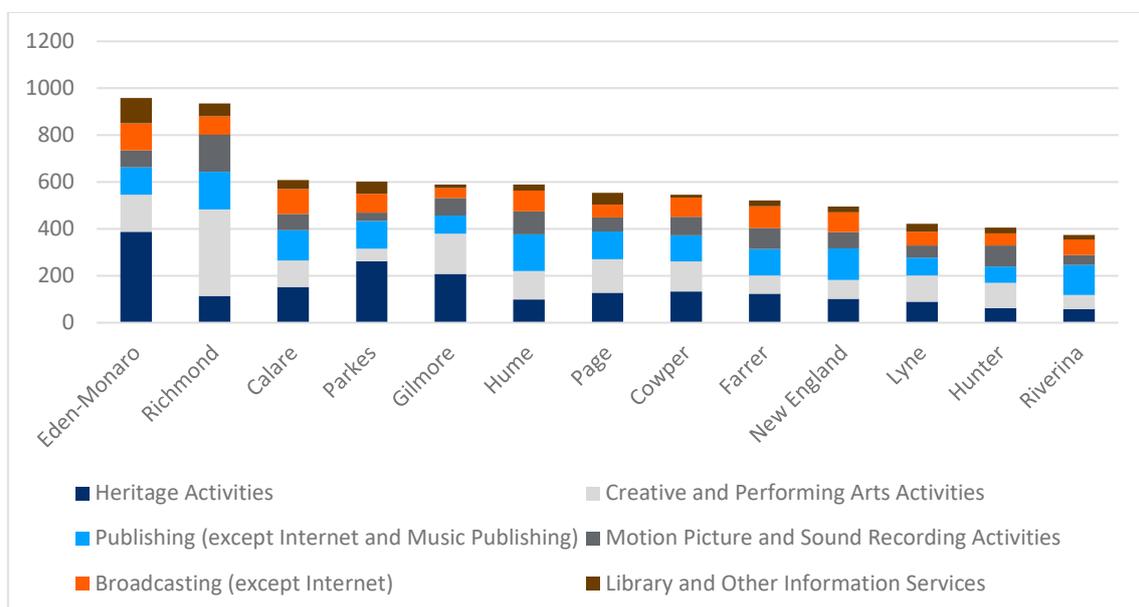
Eden-Monaro boasts a strong arts and entertainment sector, home to nationally and internationally significant events and venues including the Bermagui Four Winds Festival, Eurobodalla Shire’s River of Art festival, Perisher Peak music festival, Threadbo Blues Festival, National Busking Championships at Cooma, Giiyong Cultural Festival and The Q performing arts centre in Queanbeyan. Artists such as ARIA-nominated Fanny Lumsden, Melanie Horsnell and the New Graces are Eden-Monaro constituents.

With such a strong arts and entertainment industry, parties’ policies on support for the sector through the pandemic could play a role in determining the by-election result.

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT IN EDEN-MONARO

Eden-Monaro has more residents employed in the arts and entertainment sector than any other regional NSW electorate, as shown in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Arts and entertainment sector employment in regional NSW electorates



Source: ABS 2016 census, accessed via TableBuilder Basic

¹ Brandle (2020) *Live industry presents united front with arts, media as government drags feet on funding*, <https://theindustryobserver.thebrag.com/live-industry-united-front-government-drags-feet-funding/>; Guardian Australia (2020) *An open letter from Australia's arts industry*, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/apr/24/if-our-government-wants-cultural-life-to-return-it-must-act-now-an-open-letter-from-australias-arts-industry>

Figure 1 shows that Eden-Monaro has more residents employed in these sectors than even Richmond on the NSW north coast, which includes the artistic hub of Byron Bay. These two electorates have substantially more people working in arts and entertainment than any other NSW regional electorate.

Beyond the sectors directly involved in arts and entertainment activities, tourism-related industries such as accommodation, transport and hospitality also benefit from the arts and entertainment activities in the electorate. These are also key employers in the electorate with 5,574 workers at the last census, 8.4% of the 66,274 workers in the electorate.

POLLING

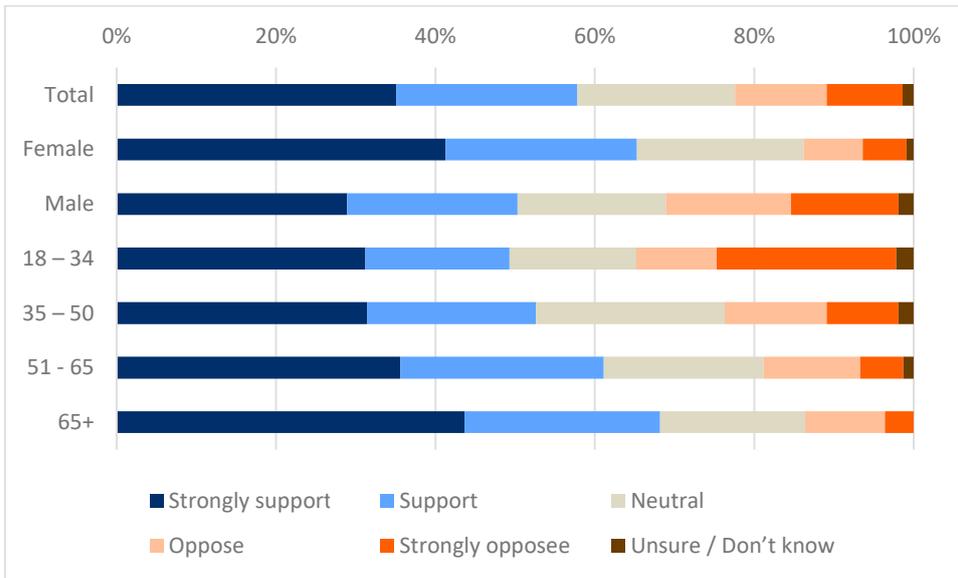
With the strength of the arts and entertainment sector in Eden-Monaro, public support for government assistance is strong in the electorate. The Australia Institute commissioned uComms to conduct an opinion poll of 643 residents in the electorate, conducted by phone on the night of 15 June 2020. Respondents were asked:

The arts and entertainment sector employs around 1,000 people in Eden Monaro. Many venues and organisations in the sector have been negatively impacted by the coronavirus shut down and many of its casual workers have been excluded from the Government's JobKeeper program.

Would you support or oppose a government package of funding and support to the arts and entertainment industry?

The results show strong support across all age groups, as shown in Figure 2 below:

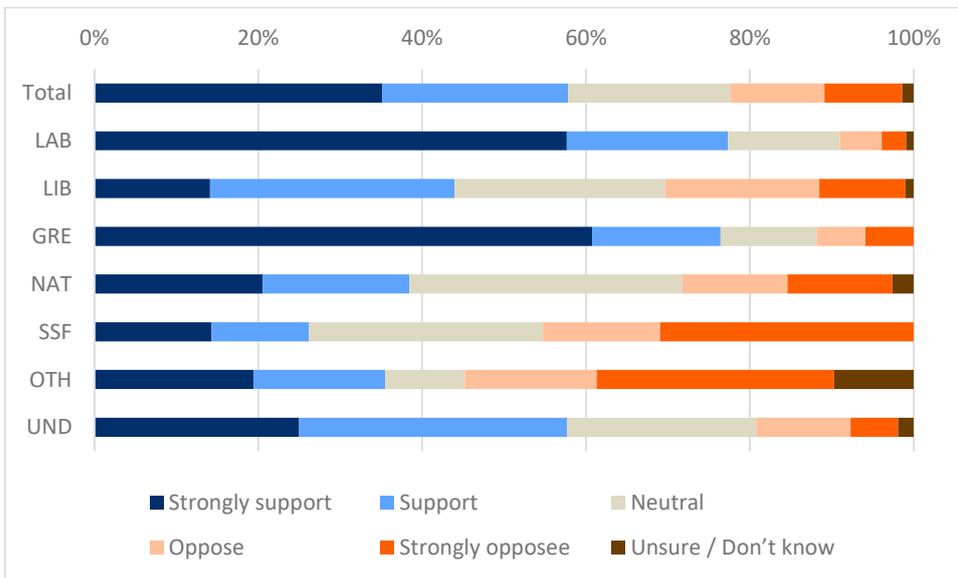
Figure 2: Support for arts and entertainment sector package by age group



Source: uComms opinion poll

Support for an arts and entertainment sector package is highest among Labor, Green and undecided voters, as shown in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3: Support for arts and entertainment sector package by age group



Source: uComms opinion poll

Figure 3 shows support is lowest among those intending to vote for Shooters Fishers and Farmers and the Nationals.

See appendix for detailed results.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS AND EMPLOYMENT

Beyond political considerations, funding for arts and entertainment is a good policy response to the pandemic from an economic perspective. Not only has this important sector been hit particularly hard, but it is labour intensive. For every million dollars of turnover in arts and entertainment, nine people are employed according to Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates.²

This is far higher than more capital-intensive industries. For example, construction sees around 1 job per million in turnover, mining has 0.59, while oil and gas extraction has just 0.25. Support for labour-intensive sectors such as arts and entertainment, with links to other labour intensive sectors such as tourism, will support far more jobs through the pandemic recovery period than attempts to create a “gas-fired recovery”.³

² ABS (2020) *8155.0 - Australian Industry, 2018-19*,
<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/8155.0>

³ See for example, Foley (2020) *Gas to fire economic recovery and capitalise on cheap oil prices*,
<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/gas-to-fire-economic-recovery-and-capitalise-on-cheap-oil-prices-20200421-p54lw8.html>

APPENDIX - DETAILED POLLING RESULTS

Question: The arts and entertainment sector employs around 1,000 people in Eden Monaro. Many venues and organisations in the sector have been negatively impacted by the coronavirus shut down and many of its casual workers have been excluded from the Government's JobKeeper program.

Would you support or oppose a government package of funding and support to the arts and entertainment industry?

	Total	Female	Male	18 – 34	35 – 50	51 - 65	65+
<i>Strongly support</i>	35.1%	41.2%	28.9%	31.2%	31.4%	35.6%	43.6%
<i>Support</i>	22.7%	24.0%	21.4%	18.1%	21.2%	25.5%	24.5%
<i>Neutral</i>	19.8%	20.9%	18.6%	15.9%	23.7%	20.1%	18.2%
<i>Oppose</i>	11.5%	7.4%	15.7%	10.1%	12.8%	12.1%	10.0%
<i>Strongly opposee</i>	9.5%	5.5%	13.5%	22.5%	9.0%	5.4%	3.6%
<i>Unsure / Don't know</i>	1.4%	0.9%	1.9%	2.2%	1.9%	1.3%	0.0%

	Total	LAB	LIB	GRE	NAT	SSF	OTH	UND
<i>Strongly support</i>	35.1%	57.7%	14.1%	60.8%	20.5%	14.3%	19.4%	25.0%
<i>Support</i>	22.7%	19.7%	29.8%	15.7%	17.9%	11.9%	16.1%	32.7%
<i>Neutral</i>	19.8%	13.7%	25.7%	11.8%	33.3%	28.6%	9.7%	23.1%
<i>Oppose</i>	11.5%	5.1%	18.8%	5.9%	12.8%	14.3%	16.1%	11.5%
<i>Strongly opposee</i>	9.5%	3.0%	10.5%	5.9%	12.8%	31.0%	29.0%	5.8%
<i>Unsure / Don't know</i>	1.4%	0.9%	1.0%	0.0%	2.6%	0.0%	9.7%	1.9%