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## **Government must revisit JobKeeper debacle in the arts and entertainment**

Revelations of a \$60 billion underspend on JobKeeper mean there is now a compelling case for the income subsidy scheme to be broadened to include freelance arts workers who have fallen through the cracks.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance says today's news that only just over half of the \$130 billion allocated for JobKeeper will go to a reduced number workers is a serious indictment of a scheme that from day one has excluded a large proportion of the arts and entertainment workforce.

The union is calling on the government to revise the eligibility criteria to include the non-permanent workers who make up the bulk of the arts and entertainment workforce.

"It's no wonder the funding allocated for JobKeeper has been so underspent when tens of thousands of workers in the arts and entertainment are not eligible because they work as freelancers or casuals from gig to gig and production to production," said MEAA Chief Executive Paul Murphy.

"In a recent survey of more than 1000 MEAA members, almost one-in-five said they had been declined access to both JobKeeper and JobSeeker.

"A similar number had been unsuccessful in claiming for JobKeeper but would be able to claim the lower JobSeeker support. In total, 35% of members surveyed had been told they were ineligible for JobKeeper.

"This makes a mockery of Arts Minister Paul Fletcher's claim that up to \$10 billion in government support will flow into the arts and entertainment sectors.

"Mr Fletcher must urgently make the case to the Treasurer to redefine eligibility for JobKeeper so some of the unspent \$60 billion goes to workers in the arts and entertainment industries.

"Our members are telling us they are struggling to make ends meet with no prospect of going back to work for what could still be several months.

"A staggering 68% of respondents to our survey said they have no paid work, while 24% have some paid work but their hours and opportunities have been reduced. Sixty per cent said they had no significant income and 30% said their income had been significantly reduced.

"It's time for the government to act."

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