

Media Release

20 March 2020

An Update from Penrith Performing and Visual Arts Regarding Covid-19

On 18 March the Prime Minister announced a ban on non-essential gatherings of more than 100 people, effective immediately and in NSW the ban is in force until midnight on 16 June 2020. The immediate effect of this ban is a closure of The Joan's three theatres.

The impact of the COVID-19 virus on cultural life is being keenly felt by all involved in the organisation; as artists have advised that they are unable to travel, as tours are cancelled or postponed, and more and more venues suspend performances even ahead of the ban.

Currently, the Main and Loungeroom Gallery and reception at Penrith Regional Gallery, the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre, and Penrith Conservatorium's individual tuition classes remain open, with additional cleaning operations in place and enough space to observe social distancing recommendations.

Yesterday Penrith Performing and Visual Arts cancelled all workshops and classes that put people in close contact with each other for the remainder of Term One, including Q Theatre's Studio Q drama classes. However, it is likely that Term Two will also be affected. This is despite the fact that schools will remain open.

The overwhelming health advice is to practice social distancing, to self-isolate if possible. At such a time the regular delivery of programs - which are about coming together to learn in a safe, collaborative group environment - become impossibly high risk despite all precautions. The organisation must put community safety first and must do what is necessary to flatten that curve and protect those most vulnerable in our community and assist the healthcare sector to cope and minimise the spread.

PP&VA is acutely aware that the cancelled programs are run by independent contractors who rely upon this income to survive. The organisation's business model relies upon patron fees to enable these services. Both will be hard hit by this decision.

Like many other arts organisations, PP&VA asks that if patrons are able to donate their refund – or keep it as a credit in their account against future activity, this will assist it to honour the contract fees and to help artists and the organisation to survive through this crisis. It is also understood that many will not be in a position to do this.

“We have been enormously heartened by the number of patrons indicating their preference to maintain a credit or to donate their refunds.” Said PP&VA CEO Hania Radvan, “These are difficult and unprecedented times for us all, but the response from our community, the messages of support and the coming together of our arts industry colleagues across the nation has warmed our hearts. We need now more than ever to be agile in our creativity – and we while we look forward to welcoming audiences back to our venues in the future, we will be looking for ways to deliver art to you: safely, from a distance.”

In the meantime, PP&VA is looking to set up ways to move as much activity as possible online, to use

Phone (+61 2) 4723 7611

597 High Street Penrith NSW 2750
PO Box 2, Penrith NSW 2751

www.ppandva.com.au

PENRITH PERFORMING & VISUAL ARTS

THE JOAN
Q THEATRE
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PENRITH REGIONAL GALLERY

the enforced isolation as an opportunity to connect with audiences in new ways.

Patrons should feel free to reach out by calling the Box Office on 4723 7600 Monday – Friday from 9am – 4.30pm. During busy times calls will be placed in a queue and answered in strict rotation.

Patrons can also reach out via email by contacting newsfromthejoan@penrith.city

FURTHER INFORMATION / INTERVIEWS / IMAGES /VIDEOS

For more information, please contact:

Jaala Hallett, PR Coordinator jaala.hallett@penrith.city | 0431585817