

women*scircus



**STRATEGIC PLAN
2026 - 2029
[DRAFT: BOARD APPROVED]**

Acknowledgement

Women's Circus acknowledges the Kulin Nation as the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, train and create and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, communities and culture. We pay our respect to Elders past and present and through them to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Sovereignty was never ceded. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

Marginalised Gender Statement

Women's Circus welcomes anyone to our organisation who belongs to a marginalised gender.

This means we welcome members and staff to our organisation who are:

- cisgender or transgender women,
- transgender men,
- non-binary people,
- gender diverse people,
- intersex people,
- and anyone who is questioning their gender.

Women's Circus understands there is no such thing as 'proof' of gender.

We will not tolerate questioning of someone else's gender.

Women's Circus values each member's development, both creatively and personally, and recognises that self-identity may change over time.

As such, once members have taken out membership, they will continue to be able to access the services and support of Women's Circus, irrespective of their gender.



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Executive Summary

Women's Circus is a social circus organisation empowering people of marginalised genders through creativity, community, and performance. Since 1991, we've championed equity, inclusion, and bold artistic practice from our home in Melbourne's West.

Our 2026–2029 Strategic Plan builds on our strengths, our unique offering of social circus for people of marginalised genders while honouring our legacy and looking to the future with three central priorities: Community Engagement, Membership & Creative Opportunities, and Sustainability. Together, these priorities ensure that our work remains grounded in our values—community, celebration, safety, and legacy—while positioning Women's Circus as a vital contributor to Victoria's creative sector.

Throughout the life of this plan, we will deepen our impact locally in Melbourne's West through culturally safe, co-designed engagement with communities facing barriers to arts participation, including First Peoples, LGBTQIA+, Deaf and Disabled, and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities. We will continue to grow our membership and expand opportunities for youth, families, and intergenerational communities to participate in transformative social circus practice and performance.

We will strengthen creative pathways for members to progress from participation to performance, while fostering collaborations with professional artists that generate bold, socially engaged works reflecting the voices of our communities. Our creative programs will not only nurture emerging talent but also contribute to sector development by modelling best practice in inclusive arts engagement and cultural equity. Across all areas of our organisation and collaboration we'll create meaningful creative industry employment opportunities for people of marginalised genders in Melbourne's West.

To ensure long-term sustainability, we will diversify income streams and invest in governance and organisational capacity. By fostering a positive and inclusive workplace culture, we will remain an exceptional employer and sector leader, committed to empowering people of marginalised genders and shaping culture through the transformative power of circus.

This plan reaffirms Women's Circus' role as a vital creative and community organisation: bold in artistic vision, considered in practice, and connected to the people and places we serve.



Vision

People of marginalised genders are empowered to feel safe and express themselves creatively in an equitable society

Purpose

Women's Circus empowers people of marginalised genders to shape community and culture through social circus

Values

Community: We care for our community and foster belonging through accessible and inclusive creative opportunities

Celebration: We celebrate and take pride in our work and the power and creativity of people of marginalised genders

Safety: We create and hold safe spaces for people of marginalised genders to feel comfortable to be their full selves

Legacy: We respect and value our history and embrace positive social change to work towards our purpose





About Women's Circus

Women's Circus was born in 1991 as a project at Footscray Community Arts Centre, providing a safe space for women survivors of violence. We became known for creating original circus shows, advocating justice and equity for women and their communities. We've now grown into an inclusive community that welcomes all people of marginalised genders with an interest in physicality, circus and performance.

Today, Women's Circus is an internationally recognised leader in the field of social circus. Our innovative programs offer individuals and communities the opportunity to develop skills, confidence and creativity, while fostering a sense of belonging and connection. Our projects and creative opportunities attract leading artists as collaborators and create accessible pathways to arts participation. Our audiences are all those who benefit from experiencing our work: our communities, our membership, youth and families, trainers, creative collaborators, project participants, and the people who watch our work on stage. We have a small team of core staff, working alongside dedicated and experienced trainers, and supported by a volunteer board.



What is Social Circus?

Women's Circus uses circus as a tool for social transformation (termed social circus). Circus has unique advantages when it comes to fostering positive change within communities. Embodied knowledge, trust, risk, playfulness and creativity are intrinsic to social circus. It has the potential to transform boundaries and hierarchies, transcend language barriers, and strengthen communities against erasure and exclusion.

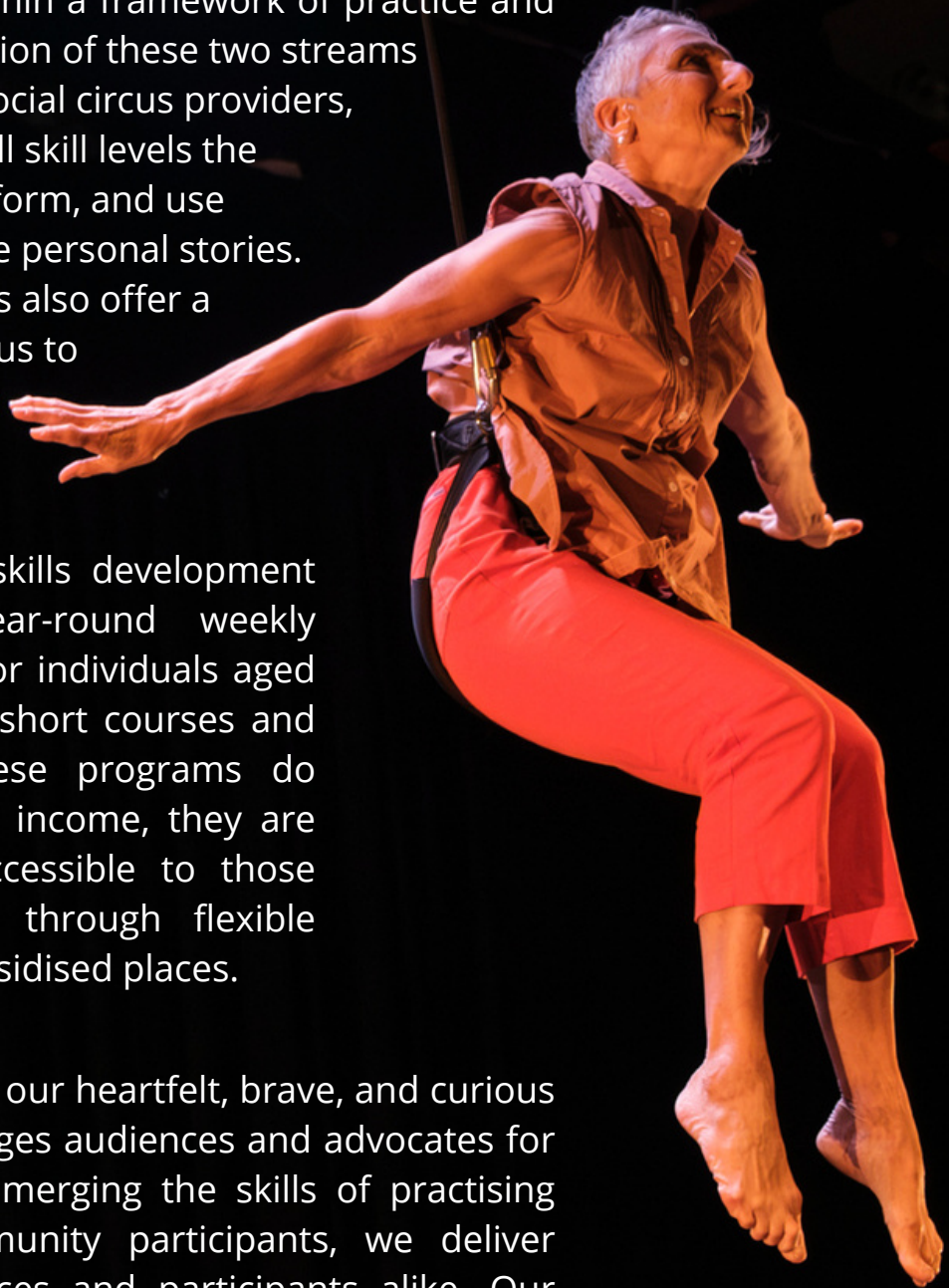
At Women's Circus our emphasis is on the potential of the human body. It's not just about achieving high goals, it's also about the attempt and support. It's about building self-confidence and reclaiming your body. It's about bringing people together, accessing creativity and physicality within a safe space.

Our Framework

Women's Circus works within a framework of practice and performance. The connection of these two streams is unique amongst adult social circus providers, providing participants of all skill levels the opportunity to create, perform, and use circus to explore and share personal stories. Performance opportunities also offer a pathway for Women's Circus to share our message with a broader audience.

● **'Practice'** refers to our skills development programs, including year-round weekly social circus workshops for individuals aged 2 to 70+ and specialised short courses and masterclasses. While these programs do contribute to our earned income, they are made affordable and accessible to those facing financial barriers through flexible pricing structures and subsidised places.

● **'Performance'** showcases our heartfelt, brave, and curious creative work that challenges audiences and advocates for inclusion and equity. By merging the skills of practising circus artists with community participants, we deliver lasting impact to audiences and participants alike. Our future programming will be bold, responsive, and provide opportunities for diverse sections of our community to participate throughout the year.



Moving from 2023-26 into 2026-29

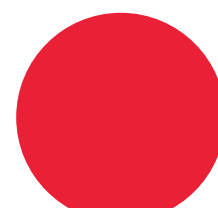
Under new leadership, 2026 will see Women's Circus transition to a new 2026-2029 Strategic Plan, influenced by our current priorities and honouring the underpinning values of the organisation. Our new strategy builds on the long-term goals identified in our 2023-26 plan, while leaning into our strengths, our legacy, and our unique offering of social circus and inclusive spaces for people of marginalised genders.

Engagement with Priority Communities

We will continue to reflect the communities we work with across all areas of the organisation by investing in deep learning, ongoing dialogue and co-design. We will take a renewed focus on place-based communities and deepen our impact locally in Melbourne's West—particularly with communities that face systemic barriers to arts participation—while ensuring our internal practices support the diverse voices we serve. We understand these communities in the West to include LGBTQIA+, First Peoples, Deaf and Disabled and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people.

Our engagement with the LGBTQIA+ community continues to grow and we proudly identify as a queer organisation, with over 50% of members identifying as belonging to this community. We will maintain LGBTQIA+ membership above 50% while growing CALD participation by 5% annually. Throughout our 2023-2026 plan we've supported creative performance and employment opportunities for members of the Deaf and Disabled community, in addition to offering accessible social circus programs. In 2024, 18% of our members surveyed identified as Disabled and 27% as neurodivergent. Whilst we're proud of our achievements with these communities, we recognise other demographics facing barriers to arts participation such as CALD people in Melbourne's West and respond with a strategic priority of supporting these communities.

We've grown our engagement with First Peoples, engaging First Peoples led Na Djinang Circus as a company in residence for four years consecutively, and providing fully subsidised places in our social circus programs and employment for trainers. Our work in this space needs to continue. We plan to approach this work with First Peoples First principles, strengthen First Peoples engagement through annual consultations and measurable participation, and commit to ongoing dialogue and connection with CALD communities in the West. We are well positioned to invest further in our community engagement, acknowledging that identifying networks, building relationships, and improving internal capability are key to driving meaningful social change with those communities we seek to support.



Sector Positioning

Our previous plan had a strong focus on supporting professional circus artists and strengthening our place in the Australian circus sector. After a period of focus on this important goal, Women's Circus is in a strong position to maintain our relationships and sector contribution while shifting our attention to other areas for development. On this basis, community engagement has been identified as a higher priority for our next chapter.

Acknowledging the landscape of the sector and likeminded organisations such as Circus Centre Melbourne and Circus Nexus, we aim to continue to grow as leaders in the field by leaning into our strengths and our place-based focus to compliment the wider landscape. With our distinctive social circus approach, we see the opportunity to contribute to sector development through investing in professional development. We play a key role in creating creative industry training and employment opportunities in the West for people of marginalised genders. We will continue to lead by best practice through capacity building and knowledge sharing, to empower our audiences and create meaningful work with a place-based focus.

We'll maintain our focus on providing creative opportunities for members, creating bold and ambitious work which challenges audiences and creating accessible pathways to arts participation. Our structure enables us to engage with a range of renowned creatives who are leaders in their field, enhancing the breadth of creative practice offered to members and strengthening our position as a creative employer for marginalised genders in the West.



● Looking Forward

The 2026-2029 Strategy will focus on strengthening our capacity to address growth areas and take on new challenges through an equitable and community focused approach.

In 2025-6 Women's Circus was fortunate to be recipients of Creative Australia Victorian Circus and Physical Theatre Operations for Organisations funding which has enabled us to maintain significant growth in our impact and reach. Acknowledging this as a one-time opportunity, we look to a future with a reduced funding landscape and frame 2026 as a year of investment to prepare for a future with changing funding support.

Women's Circus is proud of the achievements we made against our 2023-26 Strategic Plan, some of which include:

- Supporting over 275 professional artists and 36 companies;
- Increasing membership by 28%;
- Presenting four large scale performance works including development and presentation of Small Acts of Resistance, created and performed by WC members aged 50+ and performed at Gasworks Arts Park as part of Midsumma Festival in January 2025; and
- Supporting two creative developments and a performance season by Women's Circus project The Inclusive Ensemble made up of Disabled and non-disabled members and artists.



Our work remains an essential component of a cultural landscape rich in diverse offerings and pathways to participation in the arts, and our decisions are informed by our goal of maintaining a healthy and sustainable organisation into the future.

Women's Circus is uniquely positioned to cement itself as an arts sector leader by embedding rigorous, actionable, and reflective strategic priorities across all levels of its operations. By strengthening community engagement, deepening co-design, amplifying intersectional feminist leadership and engagement with First Peoples, prioritising inclusion, and enshrining robust frameworks for cultural safety, sustainability, and governance, Women's Circus will enhance its clarity, impact, and alignment with best practice. This plan reflects our commitment to bold, thoughtful growth while remaining grounded in our values: community, celebration, safety, and legacy. It positions Women's Circus not only as a leader in social circus, but as a vital contributor to a creative Victoria where all people can see themselves represented, access creative opportunities, and shape culture.



Strategic Goals

Our 2026-2029 Strategic Plan centres on three strategic priorities:

Community Engagement,
Membership & Creative Opportunities,
and **Sustainability.**

These priority areas are addressed by a series of measurable short and mid-term goals and activities to ensure accountability and guide us towards achieving our longer-term priorities.



Community Engagement

We remain committed to our grassroots origins of supporting people of marginalised genders facing barriers to participation in the arts. Re-affirming our focus in Melbourne's West, we will strive to ensure our work is accessible, relevant, and shaped by diverse lived experiences and community voices. Building on our strengths and expertise working with LGBTQIA+ and Deaf and Disabled communities, we'll use a partnerships approach to develop our understanding, foster relationships and improve our capability to meaningfully engage with priority groups including local First Peoples and CALD communities.

Development of a **Community Partnerships Strategy (CPS)**, guided by local experts, aims to identify opportunities to deliver community development and wellbeing outcomes through the tool of social circus. Through a **Cultural Engagement Plan (CEP)** co-designed with First Peoples and community voices, we will deepen our understanding and capacity to ensure our engagement is respectful, inclusive, and impactful.

First Peoples Engagement

We recognise an opportunity to strengthen our organisational approach to culturally safe engagement with First Peoples. Building on our existing partnership with First Peoples led company Na Djinang Circus, we will engage Na Djinang on a consultative basis to help guide our approach to First Peoples engagement and developing this area of our CEP. Throughout the life of this Strategic Plan we will engage in ongoing reflection and consultation to better understand what meaningful and culturally appropriate engagement with First Peoples people can look like and to ensure our actions are guided by cultural understanding, respect and accountability.

We will identify and connect with locally based First Peoples networks and community groups, nurturing these relationships through deep listening and respectful dialogue. We understand that genuine collaboration must be grounded in cultural respect, and that our organisation must build its cultural competency at all levels—from board to staff.





Membership and Creative Opportunities

Our members are our key audience. They drive our organisation, our community impact, and our creative contribution. We will continue steady growth and see increased diversification represented within our membership. Tying in closely with community engagement outcomes, we aim to explore how WC membership could be strategically shaped to be more accessible to our local communities who face barriers to participation in the arts.

We recognise our youth are the future of our communities, future members, audiences and engaged members of society. We will continue to promote inclusivity, cultural equity, positive health and wellbeing outcomes through our engagement with youth and families, with a focus on our diverse local communities in the West. The growth of youth programs is a strategic priority, offering a pathway to strengthen local engagement and better serve the western suburbs.

We continue to support cultural equity by offering opportunities for creative projects and public performances to our members, providing space to experience the transformative power of social circus as both makers and performers, creating work representative of community voice and lived experience. Our creative projects support pathways for our community to develop from practice to performance (or to professional level engagement). We will continue to support pathways for members and creatives to upskill and gain hands on experience as employees in the creative industries.

Our creative programming engages professional artists to work with our members, providing unique creative experiences to work with renowned established practitioners from the wider circus and physical theatre sector. This not only increases awareness of and access to professional pathways in the industry for members, but it also provides opportunity for professionals to gain experience working with a community focused approach and supports creation of work that can appeal to a wide range of audiences.

Our creative program provides WC with an opportunity to reach a wider audience and have impact beyond our membership and sector. With a focus on our local communities, seeking performance opportunities in Melbourne's West aims to increase access to participation in arts and cultural activity for our wider community. We will continue to create opportunities for our audiences to engage in social circus programs, performances and creative projects that reflect their lived experiences, ensuring that the voices of Melbourne's West are seen, heard, and celebrated.

Sustainability

Over the next four years we will continue to build a resilient and adaptable organisation that can thrive in a changing cultural landscape. We will diversify our income through philanthropy and earned revenue, invest in strengthening our capabilities and governance to reflect the diversity of the communities we serve, and position us well to be financially and culturally sustainable and stay relevant into the future.

Financial

Our ongoing goal is financial sustainability and less reliance on Government funding. We place focus on investment in fundraising and development through ongoing education at staff and board levels, acknowledging the requirement to plan strategically and nurture long term relationships. We see opportunity for growth by diversifying our income streams and aim to develop and implement fee for service offerings to enhance financial viability.

Sector Development

Through years of experience and our dedicated team, we will continue to cement our place as leaders in social circus within the sector. We will do this by investing in our strong network of trainers and staff, shaping capability building opportunities for the sector to develop, share and adopt social circus principals, working towards an industry which is culturally safe, inclusive and supporting growth and accessible arts and cultural experiences.

Healthy Culture

We acknowledge that while our organisation is shaped by the membership, a key element of what makes it so special is our staff. We aim to continue to provide a welcoming, safe and supportive working environment where our staff feel valued. We support a positive working culture where successes are celebrated, and professional development is encouraged. We understand the importance of strong governance and continue to refine and review our policies and procedures to ensure best practice.



Strategic Goal Community Engagement	Measurable Outcomes/KPIs
Goal 1: Strengthen relationships and engagement with local communities in Melbourne's West with particular focus on those which face barriers to participation in the arts.	• Develop and implement a Community Partnerships Strategy (by end of 2026) informed through community consultation, including identifying the communities not currently engaging with Women's Circus and working strategically to prioritise deepening understanding of these communities needs, how they experience barriers to arts participation and establish new connections. • Establish a minimum of two new community partnerships per year, prioritising First Peoples-led, LGBTQIA+, CALD and disability organisations, including co-designing programs and securing funding for delivery (ongoing). • Participate in at least three local community events annually to increase visibility and build local connections (ongoing). • Identify and build ongoing relationships with key stakeholders across the West, including community focused organisations, schools, councils, and venues, engaging with minimum three new or ongoing stakeholders per year.
Goal 2: Work with respect and culturally safe practices at the heart of what we do. Reflect this through development and implementation of both a Cultural Engagement Plan and Community Partnerships Strategy to guide our approach, ensure organisational capacity building and accountability.	• In consultation with First Peoples, community members and leaders, co-develop and publish a Cultural Engagement Plan (CEP) by mid 2027 to guide culturally safe and respectful engagement. • Strengthen existing partnership with Na Djinang Circus by continuing to support Na Djinang as a company in residence, as well engage on a consultative basis to advise on CEP strategy. • Increase representation from groups facing access barriers to arts participation including First Peoples, CALD, LGBTQIA+ and Deaf and Disabled communities amongst staff, trainers and board to 50% by 2029 to ensure community representation at all levels. • Provide at least two professional development opportunities annually for staff and board members focused on improving organisational capacity and cultural competency (ongoing) with minimum one of these annual engagements to be First Peoples led.

Strategic Goal Community Engagement	Measurable Outcomes/KPIs
Goal 3: Be a leader in achieving positive social impact through community engagement in Melbourne's West, using social circus to tell the stories of our communities. To increase diversity in the arts through access to creative experiences and delivery of accessible creative programs that respond to the needs of communities facing barriers to arts participation.	• Deliver a minimum of two community engagement projects in 2026 and increase number of projects year on year. • Evaluation demonstrates that social circus program participation has measurable impact on improving health, wellbeing and community connection for our communities • Data captured on participants demonstrates increasing reach and engagement across priority groups each year. • Targeted marketing and communications strategies for new programs and community projects reflect high levels of ongoing participation (80%) and increased pathways to membership (10%).



Strategic Goal Membership and Creative Opportunities	Measurable Outcomes/KPIs
Goal 1: Continue to increase our membership and increase diverse representation from communities who face barriers to arts participation, including First Peoples, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), LGBTQIA+ and Deaf or Disabled communities. Maximise potential engagement with youth and families' communities.	• Utilise CSP to grow membership from communities who face barriers to participation (from 2027 onwards). • Increase membership by 10% each year (ongoing), with a target of 50% of members from groups facing barriers to arts participation by 2029. • Maintain social circus program classes at an average of 90% in overall enrolments (ongoing). • Offer free or discounted membership to First Peoples of marginalised genders and increase representation within membership by 5% annually (ongoing). • Offer a minimum of one performance opportunity per year for youth classes participants (6-12 year olds) (ongoing).
Goal 2: Continue to provide our membership and communities in Melbourne's West with accessible creative opportunities to engage in the arts. We will achieve this through programming that responds to community interests, and by offering creative development, project and performance opportunities that reflect and amplify community voices.	• Establish a youth performance troupe (13–18-year-old) by 2028, with a minimum of one public performance opportunity per year (ongoing). • Offer at least two ongoing social circus program classes in offsite locations by 2028. • Provide a minimum of two creative development opportunities for members per year. • Co-design and present a minimum of one creative performance work each year including two large scale works by 2029 that reflect the lived experiences of our membership. • Offer a minimum of two social circus program offerings or creative projects per year aimed specifically for participants from community groups facing barriers to arts participation. • Increase audience reach by 10% annually, with audience demographics showing stronger representation from groups facing barriers to arts participation.
Goal 3: Be a leader in providing accessible engagement to the arts through circus, strengthening pathways for members to transition from participation to performance and develop from participation to community connectedness.	• Offer minimum two opportunities per year for members to collaborate with professional artists. • Annual membership survey demonstrates increasing level of community connectedness within member community each year. • Facilitate a minimum of two opportunities annually for members to come together beyond training/performance to strengthen community cohesion (ongoing).

Strategic Goal Sustainability	Measurable Outcomes/KPIs
Financial: Build a sustainable and resilient financial model by diversifying income streams, reducing reliance on government funding, and strengthening our expertise and strategies in fundraising and development.	• Secure a minimum of one new philanthropic partner or relationship annually (ongoing). • Increase the level of donations by a minimum of 5 new donors per year, and 10% year on year increase in funds raised (ongoing). • Develop and review business case for diversifying fee for service income streams including corporate workshops and paid performance opportunities and increase delivery of diverse fee for service offerings by end of 2026, with anticipated growth of additional 5 number of total bookings each year or 20% growth in fee for service income each year from 2027.
Sector Development: Strengthen Women's Circus' position as a leader in social circus and community-focused practice by investing in trainer professional development, maintaining best-practice and sharing our specialist expertise with the sector, increasing capability in inclusive practice —ensuring our community benefits from creative exchange, increased awareness, and greater participation in the arts.	• Engage with a minimum of one value aligned professional circus company and up to three aligned artists per year through residencies or creative collaborations. • Contribute to sector development by supporting a minimum of one emerging circus artist each year through subsidised venue and training access • Contribute to the creative employment opportunities for people of marginalised genders in the West by: - Employing a minimum of three professional circus artists per year as part of our creative programming; - Supporting a minimum of two production specialists (lighting, sound, technical, production manager etc) annually through paid employment; and - Continuing to employ a minimum of 25 social circus trainers per year. • Host or participate in a minimum of one professional development activity each year sharing specialist expertise with sector colleagues. • Collaborate with sector colleagues to identify pathways for professional development opportunities for our community of trainers and creatives, participating in development and/or delivery of minimum two sector development activities annually.

Strategic Goal Sustainability	Measurable Outcomes/KPIs
Healthy culture: Foster a healthy, positive and inclusive working culture that positions Women’s Circus as an exceptional employer—safe, supportive, and rewarding—while attracting and retaining diverse representation from communities which face barriers to arts participation across staff and board. Strengthen organisational capacity to engage meaningfully with diverse communities through both programming and leadership.	• Annual staff and board surveys demonstrate increased job satisfaction (ongoing). • Increase representation from groups facing barriers to arts participation including First Peoples, LGBTQIA+, CALD, and Disabled amongst staff, trainers and board to 50% by 2029 to ensure community representation at all levels. • Continue to offer paid parental leave and budget for childcare support for creative projects (ongoing). • Continue to offer staff free access to an Employee Assistance Program (ongoing). • Offer a minimum of two paid professional development opportunities annually for all staff (ongoing). • Annual performance reviews demonstrate increase in professional development of staff. • Hold a minimum of two opportunities per year where board members can connect with staff and membership (ongoing). • Conduct annual review of governance policies and procedures to maintain best practice, including succession planning and cultural equity benchmarks (ongoing).



Financial Context

We will continue to deliver healthy revenue from our core business, being the social circus training program. We will remain competitive with our pricing and continue to consider cost of living pressures given that cost was a key barrier to participation from our 2024 Members' Survey.

In 2025-6 Women's Circus is fortunate to be recipients of Creative Australia Victorian Circus and Physical Theatre Operations for Organisations funding of \$300,000, which has enabled us to maintain significant growth in our impact and reach across all areas of our business including creative programming. Acknowledging this as a one-time opportunity, we look to a future with a reduced funding landscape and frame 2026 as a year of investment to prepare for a future with changing funding support. We plan to do this through investing in our fundraising and development capability, strengthening fee for service offerings and increasing project generated income. We will also continue to focus on operational efficiencies and ensure we maximise the interest earning capacity on our credit funds.

	2025	2026	2027	2028
Income	714,972	792,370	664,308	656,000
Expenses	703,529	794,034	665,778	652,036
Operating Result	11,443	-1665	-1470	3964
Closing Retained Profits	190,532	188,867	187,397	191,361
Reserves as % of Turnover	26%	23%	28%	29%



Risk Management

RISK	PROBABILITY	IMPACT	MITIGATION
ENVIRONMENTAL & EXTERNAL			
Economic downturn - rising living and operating costs	Medium	Medium	Budget forecasting for increased operating expenses, monitoring of enrolment trends.
Change in local, state, federal government policy	Medium	Medium	Diverse funding streams including strong earned income, donations and philanthropic funds. Programming covers multiple policy and funding themes to minimise reliance on any one source (e.g. arts, social impact, ageing, gender equity and health).
FINANCIAL			
Inability to secure target for donations and philanthropic funds	Medium	High	Approved contingency plan in place, prioritising alternative funding sources, improving earned income and government funding.
Cash Reserves deplete causing financial insecurity	Medium	High	Approved contingency plan and long-term financial forecast in place. Board prioritises strategic planning and forecasting.
MARKETING & REPUTATION			
Reliance on members as audience	Medium	Low	Continual growth in memberships and wider community participation, partnering with philanthropic and community partners to expand reach.
Ineffective communication of our social and health impact and its value	Medium	Low	Marketing and communication resources prioritised. Marketing and communication goals aligned with strategic plan to promote our impact and value.

RISK	PROBABILITY	IMPACT	MITIGATION
OPERATIONAL			
Reliance on small staff team	Medium	Medium	Program objectives aligned with available resources. Staff development, partnerships and collaborations utilised to expand capacity. Growth in number of Board members in 2025 to provide greater support across the organisation
Unstable availability of casual circus trainers	Medium	Low	Opportunities for trainers to take on additional roles and responsibilities. Investment in healthy workplace culture and professional development of trainers
Dependency on key staff, i.e. Executive Director	Medium	Low	Approved Strategic Plan, budget forecast and succession plan in place. Engaged staff and healthy workplace culture.
GOVERNANCE			
Lack of planned and timely board succession	Medium	Low	Approved Strategic Plan and Board Charter in place, development of succession plan key short-term focus. Board member renewal in 2025-2026



Board



Noni Sproule - Board Chair

Noni (she/her) has been engaged in community, trade union, women's health and social equity activism for almost 20 years. More than ten of those years in Melbourne's West. In her professional life, she has worked to create impact across the government, not for profit and private sectors in the health, education and justice sectors. Noni stepped into the role of Board Chair in 2025 and has broad experience in community organising, partnerships, campaigns, engagement, communications, change, strategy and funding. Both Noni and her young son, Augie, train as part of social circus and feel incredibly lucky to be part of such a special community.



Eleanor (El) Boydell

El Boydell (she/her) is an experienced project manager with a history working in the arts, events and education sectors. She is currently working in the Victorian government's Major Events team, supporting projects, funding programs and strategy development. As a freelance creative producer, El has worked to bring creative visions to life with Wit Incorporated, Memetica, Women's Circus, Emerging Writers, Festival and more. El has been a training and performing member with Women's Circus since 2015.



Dr. Melinda Smith OAM

Dr. Melinda Smith OAM (she/her) has over 30 years experience in disability and education. In 2008, Melinda began promoting the health and wellbeing outcomes of dance for people with disabilities. In 2018, Melinda created her first solo work, Spasmotive. The next phase of her work sees her creating a series of audio-visual expressions of life in social isolation. Melinda lives with cerebral palsy and is an advocate of disability inclusion. In 2019 she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Deakin University. Melinda recently became a member of the Deakin University Disability and Inclusion team as a lecturer in Inclusive Arts.



Amy Lynes

Amy Lynes (she/her) is a Senior Workplace Relations Consultant with the National Retail Association, a not-for-profit organisation that represents the interests of retailers and quick service restaurants across Australia. Amy is passionate about authentic leadership, and empowering others to reach their potential and achieve their goals. As an experienced people leader, Amy has spent over decade leading Human Resources teams and managing complex business projects. Amy's broad range of expertise spans the entire people experience; from recruitment to learning and development, strategic planning to industrial relations, work health and safety to employee engagement, Amy is dedicated to helping organisations leverage their people to drive them to success



Maggie Tekell

Maggie (she/her) has a decade of experience working within the public arts sector. Since 2011, she has held positions at the Australia War Memorial, Sydney Opera House, Melbourne Recital Centre, Circus Oz and currently at ACMI, generating revenue from private sector support and developing fundraising strategies for the organisation. Throughout her employment history she has built strong relationships and maintains strong networks with donors, philanthropic trusts and foundations and government stakeholders. Maggie believes in the power of circus, the way it can generate community and empower, engage, and challenge people. She has always looked to Women's Circus and been inspired with the extensive training programs and the commitment to gender inclusion and equity.



Lisa Jumar

Lisa (she/her) has over 20 years of experience in the finance industry, working in banking, accounting, and in-house finance management roles. She thrives when helping small businesses manage their finances, providing practical financial, operational, technical, and strategic advice. She is a strong ally for the LGBTQIA+ community and is thrilled to bring her finance knowledge, practical strategy and previous Board experience to Women's Circus.



Karen Taranto

Karen (she/her) is interested in social justice and equity, working in a range of social policy roles across the community sector and government, and most recently at an industry ombudsman. Born in the Philippines, she migrated to Australia as a toddler, and was raised by a strong mother and grandmother, who taught her that joy and community can always be found in dance and music. Karen regularly performs music and theatre works in venues and festivals around the country, and is thrilled to bring a diverse mix of lived experiences to the Women's Circus board.



Peta Granger

Peta (she/her) is an experienced retail director and business leader specialising in retail and digital sales, brand innovation and strategic growth. Peta led the Lush ANZ business for the last 10 years harnessing the shared values of staff, customers and the public to prove that ethical values and behaviour drive sales and growth. She has cultivated a large body of international experience across more than 35 countries, bringing a wealth of strategic expertise and proven adaptability to organisational cultures, unique group dynamics, change management, opportunity and crisis. She understands the governance, structure and culture needed to take various sized organisations to the next level, and drives long-term growth and sustainability. Peta is a passionate audience member of circus, comedy and live music, and loves camping and festivals with her daughters.



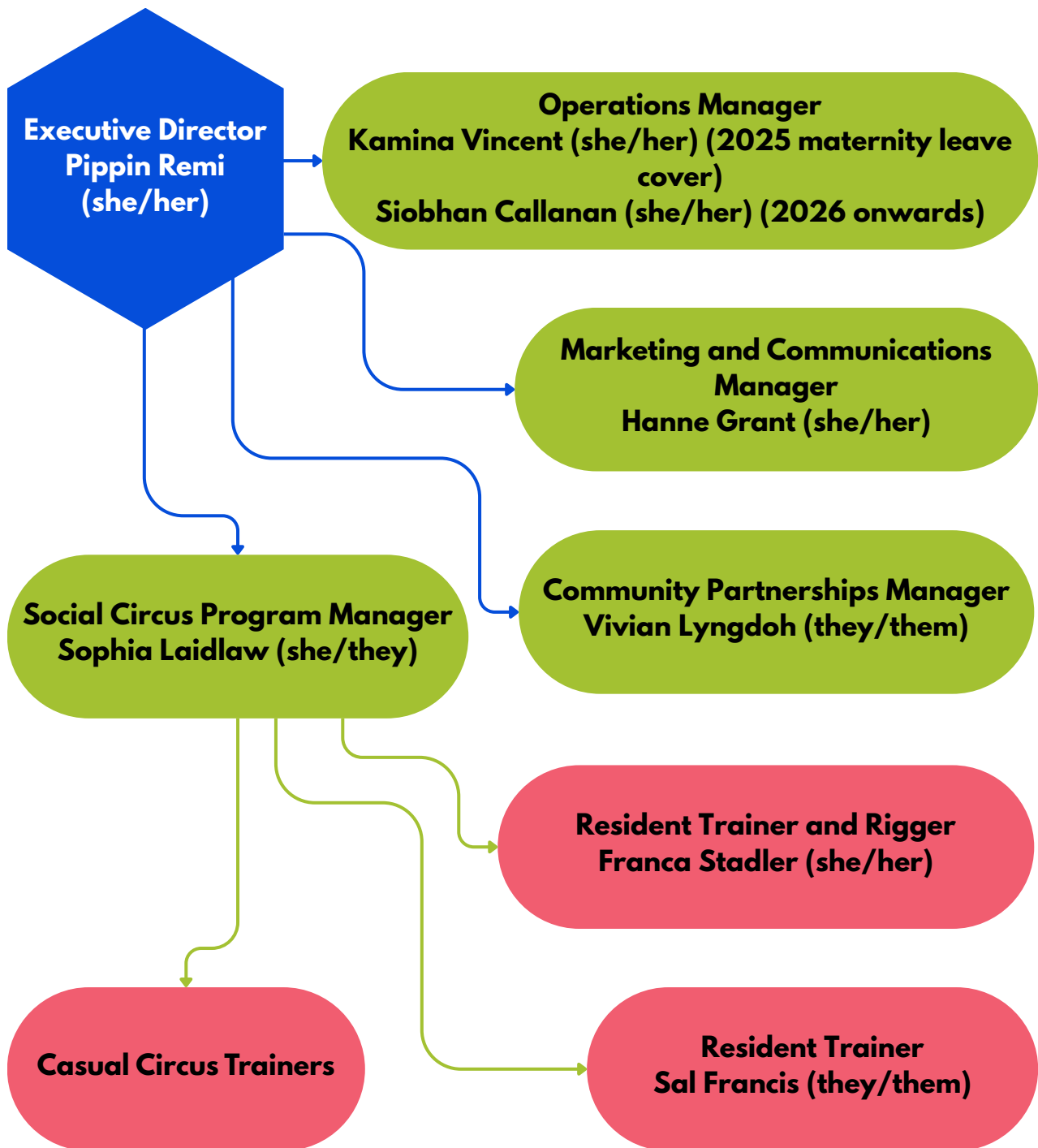
Jack Nicholls - Board Secretary

Jack (they/them) is an Australian speculative fiction author and journalist. Their work has appeared in Tor.com, Business Insider, Beneath Ceaseless Skies, Auralis and Grist, and they write essays at Medium. They studied history and climate change, giving them a good grasp of the past and the future, and they do their best to keep up with the present. They are a current training and performing Women's Circus Member.

Women's Circus is currently in the process of recruiting three new Board members who will be appointed at our October meeting.

Organisational Structure

We are proud to support creative employment opportunities for marginalised genders. Our team is diverse, intergenerational and multi-disciplinary, combining years of industry and organisation experience with fresh energy and new sector knowledge. We are committed to supporting the professional development of our program participants and members, providing opportunities for them to grow and develop their skills and providing pathways to paid employment.



women*scircus

Instagram: @womenscircus

Facebook: /womenscircus

Linked In: Women's Circus

Youtube: @womenscircus

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