MEDIA RELEASE

McClelland requests Council to reinstate 2-year additional funding support while calling for coordinated Government support.

November 2026

McClelland Sculpture Park + Gallery is calling for a coordinated funding response from all levels of government to secure the future of one of Victoria's most significant cultural institutions.

The statement follows recent public discussion regarding McClelland's financial position and Council's proposed modest additional support package.

McClelland welcomed all conditions attached to Frankston City Council's proposed additional funding of $100,000 per year over two years, including enhanced governance measures, ongoing financial transparency and Council representation at Board meetings as a non-voting observer. McClelland confirmed it accepted all proposed conditions and remains committed to working constructively with Council on future opportunities.

Unfortunately, the Council have now advised that no further funding will be made available as the joint venture partner withdrew their interest in October, a further condition of the funding support, which was ultimately outside the control of McClelland.

Lisa Byrne, Artistic Executive Director of McClelland Sculpture Park + Gallery, said the organisation values its longstanding relationship with Council and appreciates the support it has received over many years though noting that this support had been decreasing gradually from 2019 ($75,000pa) to (2020) $50,000pa and now $25,000pa.

"Frankston City Council has been an important partner of McClelland for decades, and we recognise its continued commitment to arts, culture and community through initiatives such as the Frankston Regional Arts Trail and ongoing support for our programs and events."

"We are not asking Council to solve McClelland’s challenges alone. On the contrary, our position has consistently been that securing McClelland's future requires a coordinated commitment from local, state and federal governments that reflects the significant cultural, educational and economic value McClelland delivers to the region and Victoria."

"We remain committed to working collaboratively with Council and all stakeholders to find a sustainable pathway forward."

For more than 55 years, McClelland has served as a unique destination where art, sculpture, nature and community intersect. The organisation welcomes approximately 60,000 visitors annually, including more than 21,000 Frankston residents who receive free entry, representing an estimated community benefit of $240,000 each year.

McClelland continues to support exhibitions, education programs, artist residencies, music events, community markets and festivals, while maintaining a nationally significant sculpture collection and extensive bushland environment.

The organisation said its financial challenges stem from a long-term structural funding gap. Comparable cultural institutions receive between $20 and $30 in government support per visitor, while McClelland receives approximately $2 per visitor. Over many years, the organisation has relied on strategic asset reserves to bridge that gap, but those reserves are now approaching exhaustion and are expected to be depleted by March 2027.

McClelland is currently seeking a coordinated contribution of $250,000 annually from each level of government for five years while it pursues longer-term sustainability initiatives, including a potential development partnership on adjoining land. Following the unexpected withdrawal of a development partner in October, McClelland is now in discussions with three alternative partners.

The organisation also reiterated its commitment to retaining the community guilds based at McClelland, while noting that significant building maintenance, safety and compliance challenges must be addressed to secure any ongoing occupation.

McClelland warned that without additional support, especially from local government, there is a risk the organisation may not remain operational long enough to play its intended role in the Frankston Regional Arts Trail when it launches in 2027.

"McClelland is far more than a gallery," said Lisa Byrne.

"It is a cultural, educational and community asset that belongs to the people of Frankston, the Mornington Peninsula and Victoria. We are focused on ensuring future generations can continue to experience the extraordinary combination of art, nature and community that has defined McClelland for more than half a century."

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