

National Cultural Policy Submission

Anonymous

Submitting this application as an artist and an individual.

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

The Centrality of the Artist:

Artists, especially young artists cannot be centered, celebrated, and uplifted if they do not have access to the tools required to make their art.

To put the artist first in any kind of creative practice, process or outcome, means to provide the tools and opportunities that allow them to create art in the first place- without these tools and opportunities, we young artists simply do not exist outside our own small circle of young artists.

Challenges facing centering the artist include a lack of affordable, accessible (meaning both physically accessible and easily bookable without needing to jump through hoops to book spaces) rehearsal and creation space, a lack of paid accessible opportunities, which in turn comes from a dearth of accessible funding for young artists.

Young artists are desperate to create bold, daring, and exciting new work, but we are the first people to be rejected from funding opportunities; we haven't had the experience our older colleagues have had with grant writing, and we are often looking for much smaller sums of money or micro-grants that simply aren't available. We're so desperate to create this work that we go ahead, without funding, or we use our own personal savings to create the work; jamming it around our day-jobs that pay rent. Then when we use this work as evidence to apply for the next grant or funding opportunity, we're told we still don't have the experience, expertise or body of work to support our submission. This happens over and over again, and we're stuck in a limbo of 40 hour work weeks to pay bills, and then additional 40 hour work weeks trying to create something that is so vital for society, with no societal help. This leads directly to burn-out, and so many artists decide to give it all up because it is soul-sucking in every way imaginable. We push ourselves to the limit of what is emotionally, physically, and mentally possible, only to be told we're not worth the little funding the industry has to offer.

To center the artist means to provide accessible funding opportunities; rehearsal spaces, and networking events that aren't reserved for experienced artists, but are for everyone (how can we expect to learn from each other if we're kept isolated with artists our own age and experience level?). It also means providing the education on how best to utilize these new opportunities (grant-writing workshops, networking seminars, and plain-speaking instructions on how to jump through the multitude of hoops we're required to jump through for something as simple as booking a rehearsal room).

The opportunity to safe-guard the arts exists- but not if we do not nurture, support, and uplift our young and emerging artists. Art is joy. And if we want joy in our society in 50 years time, let alone ten years time, we must take action for our youth now.

Reaching the Audience

The challenge most arts makers face when getting people to engage with their art is two-fold; firstly the cultural divide in Australia is a growing chasm, and secondly art is expensive.

We're a nation built on stories; storytelling was and is vital to many First Nations cultures; our grandparents loved nothing more than to gather at the Pub and have a yarn with the neighbors; and my generation of young people is exposed to stories in every format imaginable across the internet. We love stories! We're also a nation who believes that true-blue salt-of-the-earth type people are who we want to surround ourselves with, and tall-poppies need to be chopped down immediately. Somehow, somewhere along the way (and I suspect it's a lack of comprehensive arts education; both practical and appreciative), we associated theatre and the arts with being elitist and snobbish. This immediately has created a needless class divide where we other artists, or if we work in the arts, we other everyone else. This othering, which creates a massively elitist class-divide is one of the biggest challenges facing artists when trying to reach audiences.

The other challenge is somewhat self-explanatory- art is expensive. How can we break down the aforementioned class divide when it costs over \$100 to see a musical? Or \$50 to go watch the orchestra play? Or \$45 even for an Indie show. Artists ABSOLUTELY need to be paid and their contributions to society valued. But surely with more funding and more opportunities, we as artists wouldn't need to rely on cashed up audience members to support us?

There is so many opportunities to create pathways to accessing the arts (financially, education-wise, etc), and as soon as we do that, I believe we would start to break down the barriers that divide society over the arts.

Please tell us why the five pillars are important to you and your practice and why.

The Centrality of the Artist:

The arts is about radical individuality and collective collaboration. It's not about being a cog in a machine and realizing someone else's artistic vision- we all need input and we all need opportunities.

Without these opportunities, and facing the challenges I mentioned above, I am watching so many of my colleagues, peers, and friends become disillusioned with the industry and leave it completely at an alarmingly rapid pace. I don't want to be 60 or 70 or 90 and live in a world where I have to tell my grand-children what once was- I want my grandchildren to live in a world where accessing art and creating art is as easy as sending a text or going down the street. But if we do not center the artist and their practice, we risk creating a society where art (and joy) is a distant memory.

Reaching the Audience

Art is too much fun to be left to the few who currently have access to it. Art is about stories; and these stories have the potential to create joy, heal, start conversations, and bridge barriers. But if we cordon the arts off from mainstream society, and don't take radical steps to reach audiences, we limit the extent of the very thing we do.