

# National Cultural Policy Submission

## Anonymous

Submitted: As an artist

**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**

I am a freelance actor, broadcaster, voice artist and MC based in Lutrawita/Tasmania. I have worked as a professional actor for over 30 years in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Japan and now returned to my hometown of Nipaluna/Hobart. I share this context to emphasise I speak as an established, mid-career artist. Despite my longevity in the performing arts sector, finding the wherewithal to keep going, to keep working in my chosen careers is one of the most challenging set of circumstances artists face. There's no surprise performing artists traditionally face career ups and downs, it truly can often be 'feast or famine'. It is a highly peripatetic career path and not many last beyond their 30s. To reach ones 50s and to still feel the dread of lack of continuity of any kind of work pattern is destabilising and dispiriting.

I know only too well this is the pattern of the gig economy but the biggest challenge, and national shame frankly, is that established artists, many exceedingly well known and/or respected within their sector, are so vulnerable to financial hardship and poverty in the later stages of their careers and lives. Random high-profile gigs create a myth of prosperity within the sector but mid-career artists have usually been compelled to find alternate means towards an income: teaching, arts administration eg. However, anecdotally I am aware of significant artists compelled to drive taxis and live off their credit cards. (I am not attacking taxi drivers with this comment rather trying to illustrate that revered Australian artists are denied the chance to work with any sense of confidence and continuity when gigs can last one hour, one week, perhaps 2-3 months).

In terms of opportunities, via the National Cultural Policy I would like to encourage greater awareness of and support for senior, mid-career artists across all disciplines and genres.

For example this year Ireland is piloting a new basic income scheme (Basic Income for the Arts) in Ireland. The scheme is to support the arts and creative practice by giving a payment of 325 Euro a week to 2000 artists and creative arts workers. The main objective of the scheme is to address the financial instability faced by many working in the arts. The ecology of our arts and cultural sector is fragile and without our 'tall trees' to provide leadership to the sector, mentoring younger artists and sharing the stories of older Australians, we are all culturally diminished.

**Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:**

### **The Centrality of the Artist**

Centrality of the artist underpins my vocation and my 30 plus year career. Telling stories through diverse media – stage, screen, airwaves eg - is profoundly significant to me personally and professionally. I am proud to work in a sector that contributes \$14.7 billion AUD in value added GDP. However stagnant wage growth and diminution of funding is forcing individuals and organisations especially in the micro-small-medium sector to simply give up and retrain, cease their artistic work and/or leave the sector entirely. The greater the sector is supported, encouraged, respected and nurtured, the greater we in turn as artists can enrich our local communities and beyond.

### **Strong Institutions**

Like many Australians, I am deeply concerned by the fact media ownership in our country resides in too few hands and this is unhealthy for any democracy. No one desires a monotone culture yet we risk losing important voices and stories from across Australia due to this confluence of events and economic instability that is forcing local coverage to reduce and dissolve. I would like to see our NCP recognise the importance of locality and authenticity of place for Australians and our desire to hear our stories, in our voices.

Similarly attacks on ABC and the erosion of its funding base by previous governments is deplorable as such attacks have been ideologically driven and sustained.

## **Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?**

As someone who is regionally based, I urge the NCP to not neglect our small to medium sector. It is through these lean, nimble organisations that young artistic leaders, creators and directors gain their first toehold towards their artistic careers. It is in the small to medium sector that risk flourishes and experimentation is encouraged. In this regard it truly is the 'engine room' of Australian cultural talent.

Finally I would like to see safeguards installed within the structure of the NCP that ensures an Arts Minister can never interfere in the equitable and ethical distribution of government funding such as occurred infamously under previous arts minister Senator George Brandis in 2015.