

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

As a Vietnamese Australian Teaching Artist with over twenty years of experience across schools, community organisations, and arts institutions, I have witnessed both the strengths and limitations of Australia's cultural landscape. My work consistently centers on empowering young people, supporting emerging artists from diverse backgrounds, and building programs that reflect the lived experiences of our communities. This long-term engagement shows that for Australia's next cultural policy to be effective, it must be grounded in genuine inclusion, practical action, and structural accountability. Australia's cultural institutions carry a legacy of exclusion. The White Australia Policy and the myth of Terra nullius created systems that centred AngloEuropean culture as the default. Though these policies have been formally dismantled, their influence remains embedded in the structures, leadership, and decisionmaking processes of publicly funded cultural organisations.

Today, an Anglocentric mindset continues to dominate major institutions [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and key training bodies [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] These organisations shape national identity, yet their leadership teams, boards, and senior decisionmakers rarely reflect the cultural diversity of contemporary Australia.

A straightforward examination of workforce composition reveals a clear pattern: those in influence positions are overwhelmingly from English or AngloSaxon backgrounds. This raises a core question about cultural governance: how can institutions led primarily by one cultural group make decisions that are genuinely inclusive, culturally informed, and representative of the nation as a whole? In practice, they cannot—and the outcomes of current policies and programming reflect this limitation. Structural reform is essential. I propose that the Australian Government implement a national cultural audit across all major arts organisations and publicly funded institutions. This audit should assess cultural diversity of staff at all levels, with particular attention to leadership and decisionmaking roles. It should examine recruitment practices, pathways into leadership, and barriers faced by culturally diverse artists and arts workers.

The audit's findings must inform clear, measurable strategies for change. These may include:

- Equitable recruitment and promotion practices that actively address underrepresentation.
- Transparent pathways into leadership, including mentorship and professional development programs for culturally diverse practitioners.
- Accountability mechanisms tied to public funding, ensuring that diversity and inclusion are not aspirational statements but measurable outcomes.
- Representation is not symbolic; it is foundational to a healthy cultural ecosystem. When leadership reflects Australia's true diversity, institutions become more relevant, more innovative, and better able to serve the full breadth of our communities.

After two decades of working directly with young people, migrants, refugees, and emerging artists, I know how transformative it is for individuals to see themselves reflected in the cultural life of their country. A genuinely inclusive cultural policy is not only a matter of fairness—it is essential for building a vibrant, future focused Australia that values and celebrates all of its people.