

National Cultural Policy Submission

1467629

Public

Individual

Amanda Douge



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I'm an AACTA award-winning actress, writer and scholar who left Australia for the UK twenty years ago. I am currently completing Doctoral research at University of Glasgow in how poetics and performance can intervene towards climate transformations, and lecture in drama at University of Greenwich.

I can summarize my perspective with a simple anecdote, when I resided in Australia even when on television and in more than one major production, when a member of the public asked what I did and I said that I was an actor the response was, "Yeah, but what's your real job? What do you do for money?"

Across two decades in the UK, no-one has ever said that to me. Ironically, even when I have had to move into arts education for income.

If I had to articulate the reason that this difference in public attitude is so profound, I would say that there is pride and understanding of the work and the value of the cultural professions in the UK that comes with seriousness, reverence, investment and deep respect.

The arts are not an engagement tool for fostering creativity in future corporate workers.

They are not a salve to foster diminishing community by promoting participation in local settings or once a year events.

The arts are not an industry gateway to lucrative careers in the U.S or UK.

Yet this is how they are often framed and discussed in Australian contexts.

I observe a fiscal nervousness and awkwardness in discourse about the arts in Australia where the disciplines are made to justify their relevance, existence and their budgets to administrators and the public over and over again.

What theatre, literature, film, television, visual art, music, poetry, dance and all their glorious hybrids add to the soul of a nation and to its continual nourishment is unquantifiable.

Spreadsheets or a consultation paper will never be able to measure the value.

I'd ask why does this invisible worth make Australia so uncomfortable?

What I believe would benefit a National Cultural Policy most going forward is to intervene on the attitudes and assumptions that maintain reductive views.

I would recommend to the council:

- Improving arts education and cultural access at both primary and secondary levels
- Invest in long term secure funding for arts institutions that provide opportunities for entry level, mid-career and senior artists across their entire careers.
- Improve the way arts are spoken about and referenced at senior political levels.
- Protect Australian cultural outputs from global market forces and secure distribution hubs such as dedicated Australian stages and dedicated Australian cinemas.
- Significantly subsidize and tier all ticket prices and ensure meaningful access points for all Australians, across whole of life.

OFFICIAL

I've met many Australians who have never seen a play, an unthinkable situation in the UK. I know Australians who feel entirely excluded from the cultural life of the nation. If there is one meaningful solution from the vantage point of the UK, it must be to ask why and build from there.

OFFICIAL