

Submission: National Cultural Policy Consultation

Introduction:

Dear colleagues,

My name is Amy Maiden. I am an executive leader working at the intersection of arts, culture and the visitor economy, with a specific focus on audience strategy, demand generation and revenue growth. My life's work has centred on how cultural experiences are positioned, accessed and valued within an increasingly competitive experience economy, advising organisations, governments and major cultural projects on how to build, understand and grow their audiences.

This perspective is grounded in both practice and system-level thinking. I work directly with cultural institutions, live performance producers and destination organisations, alongside engagement with tourism and major events sectors that have successfully embedded demand-led strategy as core infrastructure. This cross-sector view makes one point consistently clear: audience does not happen by accident, and it cannot be treated as an operational function alone.

Audience is the mechanism through which cultural value is realised. It underpins revenue, access, impact, relevance and long-term sustainability. It shapes the return on public investment in cultural infrastructure and determines whether Australia's creative output is experienced broadly or remains underutilised.

Despite this, audience and participation have not been given a proportionate or coordinated role within national cultural policy. Responsibility for engagement remains largely decentralised, often sitting within under-resourced teams at an organisational level, without the benefit of shared infrastructure, national strategy or coordinated demand generation.

For this reason, the audience must be treated as a central pillar of the next National Cultural Policy. Not as an outcome of production, but as a strategic priority in its own right.

Elevating audiences within policy settings is essential to ensuring that Australia's cultural system is not only creatively strong, but economically sustainable, widely accessed and globally competitive.

I welcome the opportunity to engage with this process in a deeper way at any moment that is appropriate and look forward to supporting the next chapter of audience development in Australia.

Amy Maiden

Engaging the Audience

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Australia's cultural policy has achieved maturity in the development of production. Over decades, government investment has built a strong ecosystem of artists, institutions, infrastructure and creative output.

What remains underdeveloped is participation.

In a contemporary experience economy defined by competition for time, attention and discretionary spending, audience engagement is not a downstream outcome of production. It is a system that requires coordination, scale and sustained investment.

Current settings place responsibility for audience development largely at the organisational level. This results in fragmented marketing effort, duplicated cost and uneven capability across the sector. At the same time, cultural organisations are being asked to operate in an increasingly complex market, often with under-resourced marketing and ticketing functions relative to the demands placed upon them.

This structural gap is now limiting growth.

By contrast, adjacent sectors such as tourism have institutionalised demand architecture. Other adjacent industries have aligned national, state and regional agencies, building a coordinated system that drives awareness, consideration and conversion at scale. This model does not replace individual operators, but expands the market for all participants by making the category visible, relevant and competitive.

Cultural policy now requires an equivalent demand-side framework.

I recommend the development of a National Cultural Participation Strategy, supported by a dedicated national body or function responsible for driving audience demand domestically and internationally.

This approach would deliver three critical outcomes.

First, it would grow the overall demand for arts and cultural participation. National campaigns and storytelling would reposition arts and culture as a central choice within the experience economy, increasing awareness, relevance and habitual engagement across diverse audiences. It would also increase the return on the significant investment made into cultural infrastructure in the past decade.

Second, it would reduce system-wide acquisition cost. When demand is generated at scale, individual organisations can convert audiences more efficiently, reducing duplicated marketing spend and improving return on investment.

Third, it would increase participation yield through shared capability. A coordinated approach to audience insight, segmentation, data standards and marketing infrastructure would provide organisations with access to tools and intelligence that are currently beyond reach for many. This is particularly important in a sector where audience development functions are often under-resourced.

A national approach would also enable long-term, intergenerational audience development, which cannot be effectively delivered by individual organisations alone. It would provide a ten-year strategic horizon, establish accountability for participation growth, and enable the sector to respond to changing audience behaviours, digital discovery pathways and global market opportunities.

This aligns directly with the intent of Pillar 5. Ensuring Australian stories connect with audiences requires not only content and distribution, but coordinated demand creation.

Australia has invested significantly in cultural supply. The next stage of policy maturity is to ensure that investment translates into sustained participation, economic return and global cultural presence.

Without strengthening demand infrastructure, the sector cannot scale. With it, Australia has the opportunity to grow participation, increase revenue across the industry and position culture as a central driver of national economic and social life.

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