

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am an Honorary Associate of Museums Victoria, and was a member of the National Inquiry into Folklife in Australia (1986). I also had a short internship at the Smithsonian Institute Centre for Folklife and Cultural Policy (Washington DC). Since then I have written extensively on Australian cultural policy.

It is my belief that the Australian Government has not yet adequately addressed the meaning and significance of culture in our society. In particular, the five pillars of national policy are too focused on performance (viz Pillars 3 and 5, 'the centrality of the artist' and 'engaging the audience').

I would like to see our policy documents begin with definitions of culture, such as, culture is the sum total of all the things that human beings make, do and believe. Culture may vary between different groups of people, who may be united by ethnicity, occupation or location, for example. It can take numerous forms, such as music, literature, fine art and technology. It includes folk culture or folklife, which is often defined as 'the culture of everyday life', and may include customs, beliefs and material objects. Folk culture may be tangible or intangible.

I suggest that Pillars three and five be redefined to include more accurate definitions of culture, reflecting the indicators given above.

Dr Gwenda Beed Davey AM, PhD. 19 April 2026