

ANONYMOUS

Submission: National Cultural Policy

Australia's arts and cultural sector remain widely valued by the public, yet it is structurally under-supported across policy, education, and workforce conditions. While 98% of Australians engage with the arts and a clear majority support public funding, current frameworks do not adequately translate this public value into consistent national policy.

1. Lack of national consistency in percent-for-art schemes

Australia does not have a unified, legislated national percent-for-art scheme, resulting in inconsistent investment across states and territories. While some jurisdictions have adopted policy-based approaches, these are not uniformly mandated or enforced.

This inconsistency leads to:

- uneven access to public art across communities;
- missed opportunities to integrate artists into infrastructure delivery;
- reduced long-term cultural and economic value.

Recommendation:

Introduce nationally consistent legislation mandating a minimum 1% allocation for public art across all federally, state funded and major development infrastructure projects, with flexibility for local government delivery.

2. Decline of arts education in schools

Despite strong public support for arts education, the presence of arts subjects in school curricula continues to decline. This reduces early engagement with creative practice and limits pathways into the sector.

Recommendation:

- Reinstate arts as a core learning area within the national curriculum;
- Fund partnerships between schools and practicing artists.

3. Rising costs and reduced access in tertiary arts and humanities courses

Access to tertiary arts and humanities education has been significantly impacted by rising tuition costs and the reduction of course offerings across universities. Fee increases have disproportionately affected arts and humanities disciplines, making them among the least financially accessible areas of study.

At the same time, universities have scaled back or discontinued programs in response to funding pressures and shifting policy priorities. This dual pressure - higher costs and fewer available courses - is constraining entry into the sector and narrowing the diversity of voices within Australia's cultural landscape.

The long-term impacts include:

- Declining enrolments in arts and humanities degrees;
- A weakened pipeline of future artists, educators, and cultural workers.

Recommendation:

- Reduce student fees for arts and humanities degrees;
- Stabilise and expand course offerings across universities;
- Introduce targeted scholarships and fee subsidies;
- Recognise arts and humanities education as a critical contributor to Australia's cultural, social, and economic development.

4. Minimum pay standards for artists

A persistent issue across the sector is the expectation that artists work for low or no pay, often justified by exposure, 'they love what they do', mischaracterised as requiring no specialised expertise. This undermines professional practice and devalues artistic labour.

Recommendation:

- Establish minimum pay standards for artists across all publicly funded projects;
- Require adherence to fair pay benchmarks as a condition of government funding;
- Align artist remuneration with other professional sectors.

5. Superannuation and employment security

Many artists work as freelancers without consistent access to superannuation or employment protections, resulting in long-term financial insecurity.

Recommendation:

- Mandate superannuation contributions for artists engaged through publicly funded work;
- Develop portable entitlement schemes for freelance creatives;

- Explore models that provide baseline protections for gig-based cultural workers.

Conclusion

Australia's arts sector is widely supported yet inconsistently resourced. The combination of fragmented public art policy, declining education pathways, rising tertiary costs, and insecure working conditions is undermining its sustainability.

A coordinated national approach - anchored in legislated investment, accessible education, and fair workforce standards - is essential to ensure a resilient and inclusive cultural future.