

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Speaking directly to the 'centrality of the artist' pillar, I strongly encourage you to build approaches that acknowledge the artist as an autonomous, fundamental and central agent in all cultural creation. Audience development, etc., should follow from the artistic practices, rather than become an overbearing incentive that bends practices towards perceived audience interests/demands. Audiences often don't know what they want to see until they see it – otherwise there would never be innovation. Too often programmers and funding structures reinforce tried and true, safe programming decisions under the guise of audience development. At the very least, the pendulum needs to swing back towards the artist as the primary authority on their practices. Audience development should be more about exposure, accessibility (in terms of availability/frequency/proximity/affordability of art encounters, but not artistic content) and literacy.

TIE ORGANISATIONAL FUNDING PROPORTIONATELY TO SPEND ON ARTIST FEES/SALARIES

Within a professionalised arts sector, very often the institutional structures of funding, organisational operations, presentation expenses, etc., overwhelm the place of the artist who should be central. Fractions of large budgets end up allocated to artists, after capital works, operational overheads, managerial staffing, etc. To counter this, funding at all levels could be tied to proportionate spend on artist fees/salaries, as compared with other administrative/operational personnel expenses. This would demand a recalibration of institutional structures to re-centre artistic labour, rather than seeing it as a luxury or after thought, or late-stage add-on, or something that can be delivered cheaply or for free. // Meanwhile, some initiatives like Creative Workplaces risk being too blunt an instrument, failing to consider the wholly unstandardised, broadly impoverished workplace conditions of an independent artistic sector. The sector – which sits in a no-man's land between hobby, vocation, pass-time and profession – needs bespoke solutions that meet the conditions on the ground. E.g., imposing strict employer-employee relationship obligations on a freelance, gig-based independent artist seeking a grant to collaborate with other gig-based independent artists, without accounting for the otherwise total absence of institutional frameworks and support structures, completely stifles flexible and responsive creative practice. Sometimes funding for a few thousand dollars shared between an artistic collaboration, is better than no money at all. In this instance, demanding minimum wage/working conditions/employer-employee rights and obligations, on every independent artist needs some nuance to truly meet the circumstances with fairness.

TRY AND UNDO THE EMPHASIS ON THE COHERENT PROJECT PITCH AS A CONDITION OF FUNDING

Too many funding structures are tied to project pitches that ask an artist to provide a coherent fiction about a project idea that is not yet made. This practice denatures the creative process, which is one of unfolding discovery. A compelling or coherent project pitch a quality outcome.

IN GENERAL, SIMPLIFY SIMPLIFY SIMPLIFY, TRUST TRUST TRUST

Reduce complexity. Keep acquittals simple. I have worked in other areas of public-private engagement – specifically infrastructure construction. The relative complexity of arts funding in terms of administrative procedure, principled narrative justification, etc. is out of whack