



Submission: National Cultural Policy 2026

To: Office for the Arts

From: Jon-Claire Lee, President, JCL Productions Pty Ltd

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Subject: Building an Inclusive, Connected, and Global Cultural Landscape

Introduction

As President of **JCL Productions** and a professional with over 40 years of experience as a producer, director, actor, and writer, I welcome this consultation on the next chapter of Australia's cultural policy. My career has been dedicated to bridging cultures, from the world premiere of the multicultural anthem *We Are Australia* in March 2025 to the cross-cultural historical stage comedy *Donald's Inferno*. To achieve the government's **2030 vision** for connected services, our cultural policy must be **inclusive, user-friendly, and measurable**.

1. Telling the Stories of Multicultural and Indigenous Communities

Strategic Alignment: *Criterion 2 (Know your user) and Criterion 3 (Leave no one behind)*

The core of our national identity lies in **Pillar 1 (First Nations First)** and **Pillar 2 (A Place for Every Story)**.

- **Inclusive Representation:** Support must prioritise stories reflecting our diverse reality, such as my film *What Really Happened Was...*, which examines the perspectives of Asian and Caucasian teenagers through the issues of bullying and sexual abuse.
- **Understanding Diverse Users:** Policy should recognise the linguistic and cultural needs of ethnic minorities, a cause I championed as President of the **NSW Federation of Ethnic Schools**.
- **Safe Storytelling:** We must ensure digital tools for storytelling are inclusive and do not amplify ethnic tensions.

2. Funding for Worldwide Distribution

Strategic Alignment: *Criterion 1 (Clear intent) and Criterion 9 (Monitor your service)*

Under **Pillar 5 (Engaging the Audience)**, our intent must be to connect Australian stories globally.

- **Measurable Global Impact:** While productions like my Australian feature films *Greed* (Amazon Prime) and *Innocent Killer* have won top prizes in India, Spain, France, and the USA, more targeted funding is needed for **worldwide distribution** to ensure measurable success on the global stage.
- **Digital Export Pathways:** We must invest in distribution systems that allow Australian films, TV series (including my vertical dramas like the 70-episode *How to Become a Female Billionaire*, currently on ShortMax), and music videos to reach international markets seamlessly.

3. Simplifying Access to Grants

Strategic Alignment: *Criterion 4 (Connect services) and Criterion 6 (Don't reinvent the wheel)*

To strengthen **Pillar 4 (Strong Cultural Infrastructure)**, the grant process must be **user-friendly** and **connected**.

- **Integrated Grant Systems:** Multicultural and Indigenous artists need centralised access to grants covering the entire lifecycle—development, presentation, and marketing—both nationally and internationally.
- **Leveraging Existing Networks:** We should not "reinvent the wheel" and instead utilise established organisations to facilitate funding for diverse causes.
- **Data-Driven Access:** The grant process should be a **simple and connected** digital experience that reduces the administrative burden on diverse creators.

4. Supporting Young Artists as a Viable Career

Strategic Alignment: *Criterion 8 (Innovate with purpose) and Criterion 10 (Keep it relevant)*

Pillar 3 (Centrality of the Artist) must focus on making the arts a sustainable, long-term career for the next generation.

- **Future-Proofing Careers:** We must innovate funding models to support young artists, ensuring the arts are a recognised economic contribution.
- **Professional Training:** Continued support for institutions like the **Sydney Talent Company** and other multicultural talent agencies and talent schools is vital for providing the skills needed to navigate a digital landscape.
- **Adaptive Workplaces:** Funding must ensure **safer and fairer workplaces** that adapt to technology and AI, protecting the rights of young creators as advocated by the **MAVA committee**.

Conclusion

By aligning the next National Cultural Policy with the **Digital Service Standard**, we can ensure that our cultural services do no harm, remain relevant, and build trust. Let us help the world "know us better" by empowering our most diverse voices.

Jon-Claire Lee

President, **JCL Productions Pty Ltd**

