

**National Cultural Policy Submission**

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Public and anonymous



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am an author and illustrator who works in a library, and consumer of culture. Reading this consultation paper, you can feel the hope behind it. It wants culture to matter, for people to feel seen, and for Australia to build something better than what came before. But as you read it, the gaps become clear - the people who appear vividly, and the people who don't appear at all. Culture is lived by everyone, yet not everyone is reflected here.

The paper highlights Australia's major cultural institutions - national galleries, major training bodies, established arts organisations. It emphasises investment in "national collecting institutions and national arts training organisations," making it clear these are the cultural core.

Professional artists are described as "workers who make substantial contributions to Australia's economic and cultural life," which is true, but it frames culture as something produced by people with formal roles, training and recognition.

First Nations cultures are given prominence, with the paper noting their "crucial place... at the centre of Australia's arts and culture." Digital creativity is also emphasised - young people using online platforms to "collaborate and tell stories in new forms." Exciting, yes, but it suggests the future belongs to those already digitally fluent.

Throughout, the idea of "Australia's story" is a unified narrative. Real cultural life is far more layered and contradictory.

Large communities are silenced in the paper:

Ordinary Australian creatives without access to elite networks. Many produce excellent work yet never receive institutional recognition. The AGNSW holds only one example of Popular bush artist Pro Hart's works - his own donation, while the Powerhouse Museum holds nothing by internationally acclaimed embroidery practitioner Yvette Stanton, despite her major contributions to the field.

Migrant, refugee and diaspora communities. No languages, migration stories, or recognition of art forms carried across oceans. It implies culture counts only when it happens in English or in familiar institutional forms.

Religious cultural communities. For many Australians, culture and faith are inseparable - festivals, rituals, music, food, clothing, storytelling - yet Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jewish and Christian communities do not appear. Culture is treated as secular by default.

Working class communities. The paper notes "rising costs" but not how class shapes who can afford lessons, time, space or recognition. Garage bands, community halls, street dance crews and craft circles are nowhere.

Older Australians, despite the cultural knowledge and creativity they hold.

Rural and remote communities receive only brief mention. Touring and festivals are noted, but not deeper issues like limited venues, patchy digital access or scarce training pathways. Rural people are often stereotyped and rarely represented realistically.

Disabled communities appear only through the Arts and Disability Plan, framed as an access issue rather than a cultural identity with its own aesthetics and histories.

The paper wants an inclusive cultural future, but it sees only some of us clearly. To be genuinely inclusive, the next National Cultural Policy must name these silenced groups, understand their realities, and support their cultural expression and leadership. Culture lives in homes, communities, languages, memories, faith, struggle and joy. It is lived by everyone. The policy should reflect that