

**National Cultural Policy Submission**

1468623

Public

Individual

Emma Gibson



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

My perspective is as a mid-career playwright who has consistently created work since 2010. As an independent artist from a regional, low-SES background, I have always needed a day job, which has slowed the progression of my artistic practice. Financial viability and career pathways are the key barriers I have faced. I have participated in multiple development programs and early career initiatives with theatres and arts organisations in the ACT, NSW and Vic, but there is a gap for mid-career artists and a 'one-and-done' approach both for career development and the creation of work. At the end of the process, there's no sense of 'what next'. Most of my plays have taken 1-2 years to develop and had a life on stage of only 3 weeks. Despite my proactive attempts to tour, there is a lack of opportunities to connect with venues in a coordinated way - especially in independent theatre. I am currently working on a show at La Mama, and their new model offers me great hope that this will change - but this cannot depend on their efforts alone. To achieve pillar 3 - the centrality of the artist - arts organisations and venues must change the way they work and collaborate. This could include a more coordinated network of touring venues, scaled by size and type to better connect work with audiences. The sector and funding bodies must also look beyond bricks and mortar to better understand and invest in less visible forms of infrastructure - particularly how organisations provide the pathways for artists and their work that are so sorely needed. Funding often excludes operational or staffing costs, however, artists at all stages, but particularly in early/mid-career need continuity in career progression opportunities, rather than the 'one-and-done' approach I mentioned, which results from short-term or project funding. Finally, creation of new Australian work should be prioritised over importing or re-mounting international work. We may have moved beyond the cultural cringe, but Australia's arts and culture still apes the UK and US when it comes to programming decisions, rather than recognising, understanding and nurturing our own cultural identity - one with that can benefit from the longest continuous civilisation of artists, storytellers and creatives.