

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Hello, I'm from Hobart and now live in Melbourne. I work in a festival as a programmer. For the past five years, my work has been insecure and underpaid which has affected every aspect of my life. I have recently moved into full-time work and I now realise what a difference it makes. Most notably to my sense of self-worth. I'll outline my experience below.

I'd first like to draw your attention to Kate Larsen's excellent article in her substack. I've worked with Kate before and know her to be an excellent and thoughtful strategist. Her words are here: <https://katelarsenkeys.substack.com/p/have-your-say-on-the-new-national>

Working in the arts in this country is horrendous for one's mental health, well-being, sense of community, and capacity to contribute to society. [REDACTED] while dealing with particularly bad burnout.

Unless anyone contributing to this policy has the lived experience of earning the wage of an average arts worker or creative, or understanding the profound instability of job-hunting every three months while you bounce from festival to festival, then they are not well-placed to make decisions.

The arts are a fundamental human right that all people should have access to. Pricing this access at what its worth would leave them out of the hands of those who need it most - and that shortfall must be made-up by government, like they do ideally with healthcare and education.

In order for artists to create, they must have a sense of stability, including safe shelter. Any psychologist will tell you how impossible it is to create anything while your shelter is under threat. As inequality grows in this country, it is affecting the arts greatly. For those who complain that the arts don't need funding because they're out of touch - the arts are only out of touch because they're now the exclusive playground of the already wealthy.

Many times I have tried to leave the arts, but because my experience is so geared to this work I fail over and over again. As jobs contract across the board, and AI scans resumes, there's no one looking at my resume and realising that my ability to turn around an international festival in 6-months means I do know how to work pretty hard. Or maybe I'm simply going to get \,bored,\, by being able to pay rent in a stable job.

I resent full-time workers so much. They have no idea how hard artists work to keep culture alive. And then these artists, because they know what it is to be poor, discount and undermine their work and labour to make it accessible to others.

Having full-time work, where I know what I can pay in rent, even though I'm still paying too much of my income to rent, [REDACTED] I am reinvesting in my community because I have the brain space for it. I can spend any excess money I have on arts and culture. An investment in people will always reap benefits.

I suggest no mutual obligations for unemployed artists, and a universal basic income for artists. As a start. To get the arts on track and safer for all.