

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Dear Minister Burke, I am writing as a First Nations writer, editor and literary agent. There are a number of things that concern me about the National Cultural Policy. Specifically how it will ensure access to the arts First Nations peoples, as well as for people who are from disadvantaged / low socio-economic backgrounds, how freedom of artistic expression will be ensured, and the lack of support for independent booksellers. In a time where Arts degrees have been made more expensive, and barriers to seeking higher education have never been higher due to cost of living and housing problems, I see many diverse voices falling away for the single need to be able to do work that feeds, houses and clothes them.

I support the elements including discussion of First Nations Australian needs etc. But I did not see any discussion of what that might look like. Having lived and worked in public policy for a number of years, I urge you strongly to do it right this time. Nothing about us without us is not just a catch cry. It is literally how many of us work culturally. This type of work cannot be a simple process dictated by a few people in a consultation/working group. There needs to be a wider discussion, with organisations like Magabala and Blak & Bright to help spearhead it with their members/writers/creators, and funding provided to support these organisations to do so. Community consultation can and should always be the core of any policy around us, but sadly it never really is. I urge you to change this status quo with this important National Cultural Policy. I would encourage the policy to include clear outline of how this will be ensured long term so a safe space can be built.

And more broadly across the other areas, specific wording to support others as well such as peoples of colour, neurodiverse creators, those with chronic illness, isolated in rural/remote settings etc. More investment is needed with actual dollar figures attached to it.

The silencing of voices in areas that have traditionally been places that encourage freedom of expression, such as universities and publishing houses, has directly impacted everyone. But disproportionately, those mentioned above. The travesty around the orphaning of black&write is one key example. As an organisation actively working to make publishing more inclusive and safe for First Nations writers and editors, they deserve to be protected and developed. I would like to see opportunities to support organisations in their work and challenge these issues.

There are a few ways to do this - offer support/funding to develop new/safe publishing spaces, awards to recognise bravery in publishing, clear legislation around protected creative expression that moves away from the simplified terms and acknowledges the complexity. These are just some basic thoughts, as this would need to be developed through proper community consultation. Please stop the tokenistic support.

I also urge the government to include meaningful support for local bookshops. They are cultural infrastructure - community gathering places where Australian stories are discovered, where children fall in love with reading, and where literary careers begin. I fully support the recommendations I know have been supplied by the Australian Booksellers Association. I urge the government to act to protect the diversity of voices, freedom of creative expression and our vitally important independent booksellers.

Sincerely, [REDACTED]