

## National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

My name is Sharon Quill. I live and work on Wiradjuri Country in Dubbo, NSW 2830. I am the Operations & Engagement Manager at Orana Arts, a Regional Arts Development Organisation serving the Dubbo Regional, Gilgandra, Narromine, and Warrumbungle LGAs. I am also Festival Director of The Orana Every Woman Festival and founder of Social Gain, a community-led, for-purpose business. I am submitting as an individual, sharing this publicly in the hope others in regional communities will feel empowered to make their own. The challenge is not that regional Australians lack creativity or cultural ambition. The challenge is that we are consistently left out of the rooms where decisions are made. Too often, policies are written, funding frameworks are designed, and programs are shaped without effective consultation. The result is policy that acknowledges us without genuinely serving us. This very policy is an example. How are remote, regional, rural people being reached so they understand the importance of this document that shapes how arts funding flows across this country for the next chapter? What gets prioritised. What gets funded. Who gets counted. How do they know that without their submission that must include their postcode, rural, regional voices won't show up as a priority in the policy? The next National Cultural Policy must embed regional, rural and remote representation in its design process, not just its language. I would like to see: Regional, rural and remote practitioners and organisations with genuine seats at decision-making tables, on advisory bodies, assessment panels, and in ongoing policy review. Structural inclusion. The RADO network is critical cultural infrastructure. In regions like ours, a RADO is often the only professional arts support for hundreds of kilometres. Sustainable, multi-year funding for RADOs must be a non-negotiable pillar of the new policy not a line item that can disappear in a budget cycle. Investment must follow population reality. Over 10 million Australians now live in regional, rural and remote Australia, and that number is growing. Funding models that concentrate resources in metropolitan centres and ask regions to compete for what remains do not reflect who we are as a country. Regional artists need real pathways, not just grants. Research by Creative Australia shows regional artists earn almost a third less than their city counterparts for creative work. The conditions that allow an artist to simply make without a funding brief or community outcome attached are far more available in cities than in regions. That gap needs to be named and addressed in this policy. I work alongside artists making extraordinary work with almost no infrastructure. I run a festival in which arts and creativity is the conduit for women gathering for connection, wellbeing, culture, and to be reminded that they matter. The arts have the capacity to carry heavy loads and hard conversations. That matters in regional communities where the distances are real and the isolation can be acute. We need regional arts front and centre in this policy, not dropped or rebuilt when budgets tighten. Culture is how communities connect joyfully, survive hard times. It is how young people see themselves and decide to stay. Regional must not be an afterthought in this policy. We must be at the table, not as guests, but as people whose participation is assumed, applauded, funded, and sustained.