

National Cultural Policy Submission

1468957

Public

Organisation

Mudlark Theatre



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

We welcome the direction of the new National Cultural Policy, particularly the continued focus on strong cultural infrastructure. Recognising that arts and culture are essential to Australia’s economy, wellbeing and identity is important.

From our perspective as a Tasmanian company, the key issue is not creativity or demand, but sustainability. Mudlark Theatre has been operating for almost 20 years and is now the last remaining professional company in Tasmania focused on developing and presenting new text-based theatre. Despite this, we are facing the possibility of losing core funding simply because there is not enough investment in the state system to sustain the sector.

This reflects a broader problem. In Tasmania, and likely other regional areas, state funding has not kept pace with costs. Organisations are operating at or beyond capacity just to continue delivering work. The result is a sector that is fragile, where even long-established companies with proven impact are at risk.

The policy’s focus on cultural infrastructure is important, but in practice this needs to include the small-to-medium organisations and independent artists who actually create and present work. These organisations are the backbone of the sector, particularly in regional areas where there are fewer large institutions.

Greater access to multi-year, indexed operational funding would make a significant difference. At present, most organisations operate with short-term or uncertain funding, which limits planning, staff retention, and the ability to take creative risks. Stability at this level would improve efficiency and allow organisations to focus on producing work and supporting artists.

There is also a role for federal settings to respond to gaps at the state level. Where state investment is insufficient, the national policy can help ensure that regional sectors do not lose capacity. Without this, there is a real risk that parts of the country will lose their ability to produce professional work altogether.

Finally, the policy should continue to recognise that different parts of the sector need different types of support. Independent artists rely on project funding to create new work, while established organisations provide the structure, employment and pathways that sustain careers over time. Both are essential, and both need to be supported in a balanced way.

Overall, the direction of the policy is positive. Strengthening long-term funding structures and recognising the realities of regional practice will be key to ensuring that the sector remains viable.