

National Cultural Policy Submission

1469234

Public

Organisation

Church Street Studios



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Church Street Studios is an independent artist-focused creative hub and intimate live music venue in Sydney's inner city that houses composers, producers, musicians, sound engineers and screen professionals. Alongside our long-term studio tenancies and production spaces, we run a regular live music program on weekends in our lounge space — a program focused on deep listening culture, experimentation, community engagement and artist development. From our perspective, one of the greatest strengths of Australia's cultural ecology lies not only in major institutions, but in the small and medium independent spaces where artistic practice actually develops. These spaces (including Church Street Studios) provide affordable access, foster collaboration across disciplines, and allow artists to take creative risks without immediate commercial pressure. As we run a very lean operation, our offerings are generally profitable for the musicians themselves. Importantly, these spaces are often the incubators for the future cultural identity of the nation.

We believe the next National Cultural Policy should include a strong emphasis on the sustainability of independent cultural infrastructure. Across Australia, many artist-run and small-scale venues operate under increasing financial and regulatory pressure. Rising rents, insurance costs, compliance obligations and development pressures threaten the survival of precisely the kinds of spaces that nurture emerging artists and local communities. Small venues should not be treated as marginal to the cultural sector; they are foundational to it.

Church Street Studios strongly supports policies that recognise artists as workers and their cultural contribution as genuine labour. Too often, independent musicians and creators subsidise the cultural life of Australia through unpaid or underpaid work. Sustainable cultural policy must include practical pathways toward fair remuneration, affordable rehearsal spaces, and reduced barriers for independent presenters and venues.

We also encourage the policy to recognise the importance of audience culture. Cultural participation is not only about attendance numbers, but about creating environments where meaningful engagement with art can occur. Intimate listening spaces, experimental programs and community-focused venues help build deeper cultural literacy and stronger social connection.

Finally, we support the policy's emphasis on diversity of voices and First Nations leadership. Australia's cultural identity is strengthened when audiences encounter a broad range of stories, traditions and artistic practices. Independent venues can play an important role in enabling this diversity because they are often flexible and risk-taking in their offerings, community-connected, and artist-driven.

Church Street Studios welcomes the consultation process and hopes the next National Cultural Policy will continue to recognise culture not as a luxury, but as an essential part of Australia's civic, social and economic life.