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## **SUBMISSION TO THE NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY CONSULTATION**

My name is Steven Weir and I am Co-Director of [Amplifier Collective](#), a certified social enterprise working across civic engagement, social impact and inclusive community development. I am also Co-Chair of [All The Queens Men](#), an Australian arts and cultural organisation working nationally and internationally across participatory arts, community engagement and socially engaged practice

Across both roles, I increasingly see artists and cultural workers being asked to hold spaces that are deeply social, political and emotional in nature. In communities experiencing rapid change, social fragmentation, housing insecurity or institutional mistrust, community arts practice is often one of the few things creating genuine connection, dignity and participation.

This is why Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) practice matters so deeply within Australia's cultural landscape. CACD is not peripheral to public life. It is part of the social infrastructure that helps communities navigate change, build belonging and maintain connection to one another.

Too often, however, this work remains undervalued within policy settings and funding structures. Governments increasingly speak about resilience, wellbeing, inclusion and social cohesion, yet the artists and cultural workers delivering these outcomes frequently operate in precarious conditions, with limited long-term security or recognition.

Community-engaged arts practice also carries significant cultural, emotional and relational labour. Artists are often working within complex community contexts shaped by inequality, displacement, trauma, discrimination or social division. This work requires time, trust and care. It cannot be reduced to short-term project outcomes or transactional consultation processes.

In my own work, particularly in communities experiencing disadvantage, I have seen firsthand the importance of trusted cultural relationships and creative participation. Communities under pressure do not simply need engagement processes. They need opportunities for visibility, expression, connection and agency. Artists and cultural practitioners are often uniquely positioned to create these spaces in ways institutions alone cannot.

At the same time, the broader environment for socially engaged and participatory arts practice feels increasingly fragile. Many organisations and presenters are navigating heightened political sensitivities around inclusion, identity and representation, alongside growing financial pressure

and audience uncertainty. This can create caution around programming and reduce opportunities for ambitious community-led cultural work.

National cultural policy should recognise that CACD practice is central to a healthy democratic culture. It creates pathways for participation, supports social cohesion and strengthens community resilience in ways that extend far beyond traditional arts metrics.

I would encourage the new National Cultural Policy to:

- Recognise Community Arts and Cultural Development as a vital part of Australia's cultural and civic infrastructure.
- Support longer-term and more sustainable investment models for community-engaged practice.
- Better acknowledge the cultural, emotional and relational labour undertaken by artists and cultural workers.
- Strengthen pathways for diverse communities to participate in cultural life, particularly communities experiencing marginalisation or structural disadvantage.
- Support artist wellbeing and workforce sustainability across the CACD sector.
- Recognise the role arts and cultural practice play in strengthening democracy, belonging and public trust.

As governments and institutions continue to grapple with social fragmentation, declining trust and rapid community change, the role of artists and cultural practitioners should not be underestimated. Community arts practice creates spaces where people can gather, participate, feel visible and imagine futures together.

Culture is not ornamental to public life. It shapes how communities understand themselves, navigate change and remain connected to one another. Community Arts and Cultural Development practice continues to play an essential role in this work and deserves meaningful recognition and investment within Australia's future cultural policy settings.

Kind regards,



**Steven Weir**

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