

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

Silvia Da Rocha



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

My response is drawn from my personal perspective, having worked in museums and galleries since 2002 - as a student of Literature and Art History, as a trained conservator since 2011 internationally and in Australia. I now work with heritage and collection management in local government – which also means I now wear many hats: curator, sector developer, local history librarian, researcher, and programmer. I have dedicated my working life to culture in Australia. However - when I read Revive, I look and I look and I don't see myself in this document. Collections and their ongoing care requirements are specifically mentioned as something not addressed by this document but rather will be assessed as part of ongoing budget process (pg75), with following paragraphs detailing the essential link between these collections and their ability to significantly improve life and society. It is noble to want to improve policy to strengthen collections, but this statement essentially removes museum collections from this document. I look for myself in Revive, and I am told to look elsewhere. What I want to see in the updated document: 1. Appreciation of museum workers as keepers, custodians, creators, and storytellers. Revive is replete with support for artists, musicians, and writers (all very good) – but none for the museum worker, archivist, curator, or conservator. We are essential to ensuring movable, tangible, and intangible culture is communicated but our work in culture is rarely acknowledged with tangible support. It is wonderful to have a federally funded body to assist with art, theatre, and performance – but why is there no museum equivalent? 2. An inclusive and multi-disciplinary definition of culture. Culture should be defined as an organism informed by tangible and intangible culture. Museums and their collections support research, art, and understanding in society. Museums preserve physical items as witnesses to truth, and help create identity and belonging within society. They do this by creating links between humans, nature, science, society, and memory. While I see that Revive acknowledges this to a degree, the next step is never taken – to materially support the function of collections and those who work in them. 3. An acknowledgment of the crisis in museums and collections. Collections are all vying for a decreasing pool of funding. So few grant schemes support collections care as a priority. Volunteer-run museums are all experiencing a decline in support alongside the natural attrition of volunteers with no clear succession plan in place. Collections are essential and yet most are in peril. 4. Digital outcomes are essential but should not replace access or physical objects. Making statements like 'increasingly people interact with culture digitally' should be deeply interrogated and investigated. Essentially culture is a visceral, human, physical, and interactive experience. I would like to see a strong statement that we will not replace access to movable heritage with digital formats, whilst ensuring they are used and developed alongside cultural experience.