

## National Cultural Policy Submission

1469454

Public

Organisation

Babbarra Women's Centre

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

My name is [REDACTED], and I work as the manager at Babbarra women's Centre, a community-controlled Aboriginal art and culture centre based in Maningrida supporting approximately 70 artists, 7 indigenous arts workers and senior cultural custodians across Maningrida and the surrounding Homelands. Our centre incorporates 12 language groups from the ARnhem Land region.

In my role, I see first hand that the everyday work of our centre goes well beyond the production and sale of art. We support members to care for country, mentor and look after youth, record significant cultural stories, share their culture through art on the international stage, engage in cross cultural diplomacy, pass on cultural knowledge between Elders and younger generations, or providing a safe and healthy place where people can come together to practice and share culture. What this looks like day to day is a busy screen printing studio and centre that is a hive of activity, a blak space that is Indigenous led where people can be themselves.

Our work also creates meaningful employment and non-government income opportunities, supports community wellbeing, engages young people and strengthens other under-resourced services in our community, including education, health, aged care and disability support.

Much of our work takes place in remote and isolated environments, with limited infrastructure, small teams and significant operational pressures. Despite this, our centre has delivered strong outcomes for artists and community and contributes to a nationally and internationally recognised arts and culture sector.

At Babbarra women's Centre this includes traveling to India to develop an award-winning cross-cultural exhibition called karri-djarrk-durrkmirri that was supported by the Centre for India-Australia Relations, exhibitions at major institutions like the National Museum of Australia, presenting Indigenous fashion on the Country to Couture Runway, participating in amazing events like the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair and driving 600 kilometers on four wheel drive roads to attend those events. We also support staff to study at Batchelor Institute and travel interstate to events and exhibitions, always mindful of developing capacity. We work with the local school and health services to deliver activities that contribute to closing the gap on health, education and access to employment.

However, this work is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. In my role, I am seeing challenges across all areas of operation, especially wage increases that are not being matched by our IVAIS funding. Operational costs are increasing such as fuel, flights, food and transporting arts equipment. Our customers cannot pay more so it is not a matter of putting all our prices up to match inflation. When the economy slows down, so do the number of arts sales. We have growing administrative and governance responsibilities. These pressures are not reflected in our current funding settings and are placing increasing strain on our ability to continue this important work.

To continue supporting artists, culture and community into the future, we need stable and adequate core funding, recognition of the full scope of work delivered by art and culture centres and investment in workforce and infrastructure needed for sustainable operations in remote contexts.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Kind regards

[REDACTED], Manager, Babbarra Women's Centre