

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Organisation

The Ravens Theatre Company

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am writing on behalf of The Ravens Theatre Company, a newly established not-for-profit professional theatre company based in Central Victoria.

The Ravens Theatre Company was created to address what we see as a major cultural gap in one of regional Victoria's most vibrant artistic communities. Castlemaine is widely recognised for its extraordinary arts culture, with institutions and events including the Castlemaine State Festival, Theatre Royal, Castlemaine Documentary Festival, Fringe Festival and Jazz Festival. Yet despite this rich creative ecosystem, there has never been a dedicated professional theatre company producing ambitious theatrical works in the region.

This has significant consequences for both artists and audiences.

Regional communities deserve access to high-quality professional theatre without needing to travel to Melbourne. Theatre is not simply entertainment — it helps communities process life, expand perspectives, build empathy and foster connection. When regional audiences lack access to professional artistic experiences, communities miss out culturally and socially.

At the same time, artists living in regional areas struggle to sustain careers because there is little or no professional work available locally. We are already experiencing this challenge directly. There is a shortage of trained theatre professionals in the region because actors, directors, designers and technicians often have no choice but to relocate to Melbourne for work opportunities. Even finding set designers, lighting designers and experienced production staff locally is difficult.

Independent regional theatre companies also face structural barriers that make sustainability extremely challenging. Funding opportunities remain heavily concentrated in metropolitan areas, while regional companies are often expected to deliver ambitious outcomes with limited infrastructure and support. Affordable rehearsal and performance spaces are difficult to access, and independent companies rely heavily on volunteer labour and goodwill.

We believe there is a strong appetite for ambitious professional theatre in regional Australia, both from local communities and metropolitan audiences willing to travel for cultural experiences. Our inaugural production, *The Seagull* by Anton Chekhov, has already demonstrated this demand.

We would like to see the new National Cultural Policy place greater emphasis on:

long-term support for regional professional arts organisations

increased investment in independent and emerging theatre companies

affordable creative and rehearsal infrastructure in regional communities

pathways for regional artists to build sustainable careers locally

increased support for youth access and arts participation in regional areas

recognition that access to professional arts and culture should not depend on geography

Regional communities are not culturally secondary to metropolitan centres. Investment in regional arts is an investment in stronger, healthier and more connected communities across Australia.