

National Cultural Policy Submission

1469735

Public

Individual



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

The consultation paper Towards a New National Cultural Policy presents an encouraging vision for the future of arts and culture in Australia. It recognises that culture is not only entertainment, but something that shapes identity, community, wellbeing, and the stories we tell about ourselves. The document highlights the achievements of the Revive policy since 2023, including support for creative projects, regional arts, accessibility initiatives, and investment in Australian storytelling across film and media.

What stood out to me most was the paper's focus on storytelling and connection. The document explains that culture strengthens communities and brings people together through music, festivals, dance, libraries, and film. As someone from Western Sydney, this resonates strongly because culture there is deeply lived and community-based. Storytelling happens everywhere: at family gatherings, train stations, churches, schools, sports grounds, and local events. Western Sydney is one of the most culturally rich parts of Australia, yet it is often spoken about by institutions rather than spoken with.

I think there is an ongoing issue within the arts sector when it comes to representation from Western Sydney. Organisations frequently seek artists who have a "connection" to the area, but many of these people no longer live there or are disconnected from the realities of the communities they represent. There is a difference between having history with a place and actively living within it. Western Sydney changes rapidly, and the people who currently live and breathe it understand its complexity in ways that cannot always be replicated from a distance. If this new policy genuinely values diverse voices, then local artists and community-rooted practitioners should be prioritised in leadership, programming, and decision-making.

As a Pacific Islander creative, I also reflected on the policy's idea of "A Place for Every Story." Pacific communities have contributed greatly to contemporary Australian culture, particularly in Western Sydney, yet our stories are still often treated as niche, secondary or are non-existent. Pacific artists continue to create important work despite limited long-term investment and institutional support. Representation should not only mean visibility on stage or screen, but also trust in Pacific-led organisations, artists, and cultural knowledge.

From the perspective of someone within the LGBTQIA+ and MVPFAFF++ communities, the paper also raises questions about belonging and safety within the arts. For many queer Pacific people, art becomes a space where we can express identities that are often misunderstood or invisible elsewhere. However, queer Pasifika stories remain underrepresented in mainstream arts spaces. Inclusion must go beyond surface-level diversity and create culturally safe opportunities for queer and trans artists of colour to lead, create, and tell stories on our own terms.

Overall, I believe the consultation paper presents important ideas about the future of culture in Australia. However, its success will depend on whether these commitments lead to real structural change. For communities like mine eg Pacific, queer, and Western Sydney-based, meaningful support means long-term investment, authentic representation, and allowing communities to lead their own storytelling rather than simply being consulted after decisions are already made.