National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public
Individual
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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Australia's cultural policy must move beyond narrow and performative ideas of what "diverse cultural work" looks like.

Too often, artists from culturally diverse backgrounds are only supported when our stories fit a framework that is familiar and comfortable to a white Australian perspective — stories centred on trauma, war, displacement, oppression, or cultural suffering. These stories can absolutely be important and necessary. However, when they become the main expectation placed upon culturally diverse artists, the sector reduces us to a checkbox rather than recognising us as full creative voices.

This approach limits the kinds of stories we are allowed to tell. It creates a system where artists from non-white backgrounds are expected to explain themselves, justify their existence through hardship, or create work that translates our cultures into something easily understood through a dominant white lens.

We are asking for support that allows us to create beyond those limitations.

Culturally diverse artists should be funded and supported to make work that is imaginative, experimental, joyful, strange, contemporary, funny, abstract, political, everyday, and deeply human — not only work that educates mainstream audiences about cultural difference or trauma.

Our cultural identities are part of who we are, but they should not become restrictions imposed on our artistic practice. We should not have to shape our work around funding guidelines or assessment frameworks built from limited cultural understanding and experience within theatre, film, music, and dance sectors.

A truly inclusive cultural policy would trust culturally diverse artists to define our own narratives, aesthetics, and creative priorities. It would recognise that authentic representation is not achieved through box-ticking diversity measures, but through genuine investment in artists as complex creators with broad artistic visions.

Support our work by allowing us to simply be artists — not representatives forced into narrow cultural categories. Give us the freedom to tell richer and more innovative stories without limitation from systems that do not fully understand the depth and diversity of our experiences.

Australia's arts sector will become stronger, more original, and more globally relevant when culturally diverse artists are empowered to create on our own terms.