

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Hello,

I am writing as an artist, researcher, and a producer working in community arts contexts, based on Whadjuk Country in Western Australia. A lot of my work centres collaborative approaches to making, is often made in dialogue, and involves working with people from non-arts contexts.

There are many big challenges facing the arts. There are also a lot of smart and talented people who show up, committed and passionate in what they do. Recently, I have been thinking about time, and the time it takes to seed ideas, test ideas, to start making, to start again, to show works, tour works, reshow works. The time it takes to have an original thought, or to develop relationships strong enough to take artistic risks. The juggle and sacrifices it takes to do this amongst cost-of-living, raising families, and holding down other jobs that keep the lights on. The bravery of artists standing behind works that try to feel/say/do something that might sit outside the norm.

I'd like to advocate for a policy that centres artists in everything, at every level, because without artists, there isn't much to go from. Artists are the moral compass of the sector. Key suggestions based on my experience include:

- Increasing the funding afforded to artists through grants. Better support the development of practices, not just the realisation of works. Affording more people — from diverse backgrounds, places, classes — the time to think big.
- Advocate for and implement a living wage for artists. Artists are generally highly educated and underpaid, continually forced to justify their existence. Imagine living in a country where art making was a viable and legitimate career choice, made without compromise.
- Support artists living across the country — this is not to say that artists in big cities on the eastern seaboard should be supported less, but that policy should seek to build equally strong artistic communities and opportunities across the country. If we want truly original work we need better access so that artists can imagine a sustainable practice existing outside of one or two cities.

Further, I'd recommend that steps are taken to address the censorship, political interference and racism that affects the sector. We need to be able to speak freely without harm to our livelihoods. Cultural institutions have a duty to respect the cultural diversity of artists, and the conversations that these artists bring and forefront. This country has a dark and unresolved history, and we are living in a time of live streamed genocide; of division, displacement, and inequality. Environmental crimes enacted in the name of progress. We need critical discourse without risk to people's careers. Finally, I'd like to advocate for better support for socially engaged practice, and the community arts and cultural development sector. CACD shows us the value in coming together, to live in ways that centre each other, hold space for discordant truths, and tackle complex conversations through the voices of those with lived experience. It can show us a way through.