

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Organisation

Bima Wear Association Incorporated



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

From Bima Wear's perspective, the National Cultural Policy is important because it recognises the value of Tiwi culture and the vital role remote art and cultural centres play in keeping Tiwi stories, designs, and cultural knowledge alive, while also maintaining local employment for women in Wurrumiyanga and supporting the broader community.

Bima Wear is much more than a textile workshop, it was established in 1969 and for decades it has been a Tiwi women's social enterprise that supports employment, cultural knowledge sharing, youth engagement, the continuation of Tiwi design and printing practices, skills development, and social care. Policies that support remote art and culture centres help us continue this important work and create opportunities for younger generations, particularly when there are very limited employment opportunities available on the island.

As a very remote art and cultural centre, Bima Wear faces extremely high operating costs, including freight, travel, utilities, accommodation, and the delivery of materials and services to the islands. Accommodation is scarce and expensive, which creates ongoing challenges in attracting and retaining staff. We currently do not have secure long-term funding for our Manager role, and we do not yet have accommodation for our Workshop Coordinator.

Long-term operational funding is essential so that Bima Wear can continue providing stable employment, cultural programs, training opportunities, attendance at art fairs, and promotion of Tiwi textiles and culture to wider Australian and international audiences.

For Bima Wear, culture, employment, and community wellbeing are all deeply connected, and remote art centres should be recognised as essential cultural and community infrastructure. Many of our staff live on minimum wages while facing living costs that are significantly higher than in metropolitan Australia. Basic expenses such as food, electricity, transport, and household goods are extremely expensive in remote communities, and utility services can be unreliable, with power regularly interrupted. These pressures directly affect staff wellbeing and workplace stability, making ongoing support for remote arts organisations even more critical.