

National Cultural Policy Submission

1470081

Public and anonymous



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am writing this submission from the perspective of both a disabled arts worker and a disability support worker who supports a disabled creative and arts leader to participate in Australia's cultural sector.

I am an autistic woman with ADHD, and my work sits at the intersection of disability support, arts participation, advocacy and cultural access. Through my role, I regularly support participation in board meetings, arts events, festivals, performances, workshops and creative industry spaces.

This work has given me a unique insight into how inaccessible Australia's cultural sector still is, and how much invisible labour is required for disabled people to participate within it.

Although my role is formally classified as disability support work, in practice it often becomes cultural facilitation work. I assist not only with daily support needs, but with the logistical, emotional and access-related labour required for disabled artists and leaders to participate professionally in the arts sector.

This can involve:

navigating inaccessible venues and transport

sensory regulation support in overwhelming environments

executive functioning and scheduling support

communication support

advocacy with organisations and venues

adapting rapidly when accessibility planning fails

facilitating networking and professional participation

As a neurodivergent support worker myself, I also experience firsthand how exhausting and unsustainable this labour can become. Many disability support workers operating within arts and cultural spaces are themselves disabled, casually employed or financially insecure, yet they are helping sustain the infrastructure that allows disabled participation to occur.

Without this often invisible labour, many disabled artists, speakers, board members and cultural leaders would simply be unable to participate consistently in Australia's cultural life.

However, this contribution is rarely recognised within cultural policy conversations.

Accessibility is still too often approached as a compliance issue or optional add-on, rather than as essential cultural infrastructure. Disabled creatives and the people supporting them are frequently expected to absorb the emotional, logistical and financial burden of inclusion themselves.

This creates burnout not only for disabled artists, but also for the support workers, carers and informal networks who help sustain participation behind the scenes.

A future National Cultural Policy should recognise that meaningful inclusion requires ongoing investment in access infrastructure, disability leadership and the labour that makes participation possible.

Policy should prioritise:

embedded accessibility funding across arts programs and events

recognition of access labour as skilled professional work

sustainable funding for disability-led arts organisations

accessible venues, transport and event planning

paid disability advisory and leadership roles

pathways for disabled creatives into sustainable careers and leadership positions

Australia's cultural sector is stronger when disabled people can participate fully — not only as audiences, but as artists, workers, advocates and leaders.

Meaningful inclusion requires more than visibility. It requires systems, funding and infrastructure that recognise the real labour involved in making cultural participation accessible.