

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Australia's national identity should be inclusive of all cultures and histories, but I believe current cultural policies risk creating division by placing one group above others. While Indigenous history is undeniably important and deserves recognition and preservation, I do not believe that putting "First Nations First" should come at the expense of broader Australian cultural identity or the contributions of other Australians throughout history.

Modern Australia has been shaped by many generations of people, including European settlers and migrants who built infrastructure, towns, industries, agriculture, institutions, and artistic traditions that form a major part of the country's heritage today. Traditional Australian landscape painting, bush poetry, colonial architecture, folk music, wartime history, and rural culture are all part of Australia's story and should continue to be valued, funded, and preserved without apology.

Policies that prioritise one cultural perspective above all others can unintentionally alienate ordinary Australians who want to feel equally represented in their own country. Many people support Indigenous recognition while also believing that national unity matters more than separating Australians into categories based on ancestry or identity. A healthy cultural policy should aim to bring Australians together through shared identity, not reinforce divisions between groups.

The reaction to some recent high-profile art awards, including debate surrounding the Archibald Prize, reflects a wider frustration among parts of the public who feel contemporary institutions are becoming overly political or symbolic instead of focusing on artistic merit itself. Some Australians feel there is increasing pressure for art, media, and cultural funding to prioritise ideology, activism, or identity politics over technical skill, universal themes, or preservation of traditional Australian styles and stories.

There is also concern that many Australians with deep family roots in this country feel increasingly hesitant to express pride in their own heritage or traditions for fear of being labelled insensitive or outdated. Yet preserving "traditional white Australian" history does not require erasing Indigenous history, just as acknowledging Indigenous history should not require diminishing the experiences and achievements of others. Both can exist side by side.

A balanced cultural policy would recognise Indigenous Australians as an important part of the nation's foundation while also ensuring equal respect for the broader Australian identity that has evolved over generations. Cultural preservation should include all Australians — Indigenous, European, migrant, rural, urban, and multicultural communities alike.

Ultimately, national culture works best when people feel included rather than ranked. Australia's future should be built on mutual respect, shared contribution, and preserving the full complexity of our history, rather than elevating one narrative above all others.