

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

The forthcoming National Cultural Plan must reflect current issues faced by artists, arts workers, and the wider sector. I am concerned by the prevalence of censorship, political interference, and racism. This submission is grounded in a commitment to decolonisation, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination; artists as the moral compass of the sector; unlimited freedom of artistic expression; and freedom from political interference.

Decolonisation, Anti-Racism, and Anti-Discrimination (Pillars 1, 3 & 4)

The National Cultural Policy must take a decolonial, anti-racist, and anti-discrimination approach, taking leadership from sector workers already active within this framework. The IHRA definition of antisemitism must be removed from all arts, cultural, and educational institutions and replaced with the UN Core Stance of Values: “The UN asserts that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, without distinction of any kind, including race or ethnic origin. It maintains that no state, institution, group, or individual should make any discrimination in human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Artists as the Moral Compass (Pillar 3)

The Policy must support artists as ethical, values-driven leaders of the sector and community. Artists must be able to speak freely, sign letters, and engage in boycotts without harming their livelihoods or reputations. Arts and cultural institutions must respect cultural diversity, supporting, championing, and caring for the diverse conversations artists bring, particularly those targeted by media for speaking out against injustices. Artists must not be instrumentalised by institutions, lobbyists, media, or politicians.

Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression (Pillars 3 & 4)

Strong cultural infrastructure relies on artistic freedom of speech. This is enshrined in the Creative Australia Act (11.e “to uphold and promote freedom of expression in the arts”) and must be upheld in the Policy. To create strong infrastructure, art must be able to facilitate critical discourse, address political issues, and critique power and class structures. The culture of intimidation preventing artists from creating freely must end. The Policy must address the censorship, targeting, and cancellation of artists speaking out against injustices, particularly regarding nations condemned by the UN for apartheid, genocide, and war crimes.

Freedom from Political Interference (Pillars 3 & 4)

To maintain strong cultural infrastructure, the arts must remain independent of political interference. The Policy must guarantee independent, ‘arms-length’ funding processes across federal, state, and local governments. Politicians must not influence or advise on funding provision or removal for specific projects or artists. This is enshrined in the Creative Australia Act (article 14.2) and must be upheld in the National Cultural Policy. A key action must be implementing an inquiry into political interference via donations, board memberships, and lobbying. Donors must not influence arts organisations, and board members tied to political parties or lobbyists must be removed.