

National Cultural Policy Submission

1470351

Public and anonymous

Individual

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am a board member of [REDACTED], an Australian arts and cultural organisation that works nationally and internationally across participatory arts, community engagement and socially engaged practice. I am also a tertiary educator in the struggling and devalued HASS sector, and an underpaid writer and all but burnt-out artist.

From where I sit the cultural landscape in this country has never been so fraught. Not since the Abbott/Brandis era has the pain across the sector been so acute. Artists and cultural workers are undervalued yet called upon to do all kinds of psychosocial heavy lifting, often at great personal cost. Cutbacks, fetishes for newness and innovation, AI and the digital, along with the echo chamber that is social media have damaged the cultural sector beyond recognition. So too have economic forces and certain sectoral divisions. Social cohesion is under threat and pockets of outrage fuel political sensitivities in ways that are costly to civic connection.

With all of this in mind, it has never been more important to recognise and restore the value of Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) to Australia's cultural landscape, not as an embellishment or an ornamentation, not as a diversion or a panacea, but as critical infrastructure, scaffolding and ballast that helps communities to thrive, to grieve, to hope, to cope with change and to create and maintain meaningful connections in straitened times.

Culture must not be dialled up, or dialled down against policy whims and along party lines. Artists and cultural workers should not be asked to live with precarity or produce "good" work within ridiculous time frames and ever shrinking budgets. "Engagement" has become a buzzword, at the expense of embedded, continuing and secure cultural relationships and meaningful participation.

Australia's national cultural policy is critical to our continuing democracy, as well as to social cohesion and resilience. It has well documented health benefits as well. It is not novelty, it is nourishment for what remains of our national spirit. With this in mind I submit that a revived National Cultural Policy must:

- centre Community Arts and Cultural Development within cultural and civic infrastructure and support artist wellbeing and workforce sustainability across the creative sector
- Elevate the role of arts and cultural practice in strengthening democracy, building belonging and fostering trust and understanding
- Support longer-term and sustainable investment models for community-engaged practice
- Fully value the cultural, emotional and relational labour undertaken by artists and cultural workers and remunerate us accordingly
- Strengthen pathways for marginalised and disadvantaged communities to participate in cultural life.

Thank you for considering my submission.