

## National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous

Individual

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am an Australian performer, writer, producer and filmmaker. Like the majority of working artists in this country, I sustain my creative practice alongside unrelated employment — not by choice, but by necessity. The time and energy spent working jobs outside my field is time and energy not spent developing projects, building skills, collaborating with other artists, or contributing to the cultural life of this nation. This is not a personal failing. It is a structural one — and it is one that another country has already shown us how to fix.

I urge the Australian Government to examine Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) scheme and consider its adoption as a central pillar of the new National Cultural Policy.

The Irish model: proof of concept

Ireland launched its BIA pilot in 2022, providing €325 per week to 2,000 eligible artists and creative workers. The results, independently evaluated and published in 2025, were unambiguous. Recipients spent an average of 11 more hours per week on their creative practice compared to a control group. Among artists without the basic income, roughly one in seven had stopped working in the arts within two years; among recipients, almost none did. Average arts-related earnings among recipients increased by over €500 per month. Reliance on social welfare declined.

The scheme has since been made permanent, with a successor programme running from 2026 to 2029. Every major political party in Ireland committed to its continuation. A public consultation found 97% of respondents supported making it permanent. The total cost: approximately €25 million per year — a modest investment for a transformative outcome.

The Australian case

The challenge facing Australian artists is identical to the one Ireland identified and acted upon: income precarity forces artists out of their practice and into survival work, depleting the very talent and output that enriches our national culture. Competitive, project-based grants — while valuable — do not provide the stability an artist needs to develop a body of work, take creative risks, or sustain a long-term career.

A Basic Income for the Arts in Australia would be an investment in cultural production — in the films, performances, writing and stories that define who we are as a nation, that represent us to the world, and that future generations will inherit.

Recommendations

I call on the new National Cultural Policy to:

1. Commission a feasibility study and design framework for an Australian Basic Income for the Arts, drawing directly on Ireland's pilot model and independent evaluation methodology.
2. Establish a time-limited pilot programme — modelled on the Irish scheme — targeting professional artists across all disciplines, with rigorous independent evaluation built in from the outset.
3. Ensure the scheme complements rather than replaces existing grant funding, addressing the gap between project-based support and sustained creative practice.

Australia has the evidence, the precedent, and the need. What we require now is the political will to act. I respectfully urge the Government to take this step.