

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

My view on the new National Cultural Policy is that it represents an important and positive shift in how culture is understood in Australia. One of the strongest aspects of the consultation paper is that it moves beyond viewing culture only through the lens of arts funding and instead positions culture as central to belonging, participation, wellbeing, and civic life. I strongly support this broader framing.

At the same time, I believe the policy could go further in recognising how cultural futures are formed in the first place.

While the consultation paper focuses thoughtfully on institutions, sectors, creative industries, and adult participation in culture, it gives less attention to children and young people as active cultural participants in the present. In my own research with children around leadership, participation, and inclusion, we consistently see that ideas about who belongs, who can lead, whose voices matter, and who gets represented begin forming very early in life. These assumptions are socially and culturally learned over time through schools, media, communities, institutions, and everyday participation.

For this reason, I believe one of the missing opportunities within the new National Cultural Policy is a stronger focus on what could be described as Cultural Futures. This could potentially form an additional pillar within the policy framework, recognising children and young people not simply as future audiences or future creative workers, but as cultural citizens already shaping and interpreting culture now.

I also believe the policy could place greater emphasis on arts education and participatory cultural experiences as a form of civic infrastructure. These experiences are not only enrichment activities; they are spaces where young people can develop empathy, collaboration, imagination, confidence, voice, and democratic participation. Strengthening access to participatory cultural experiences from early childhood onward could contribute to a more inclusive and connected cultural future.

Another important issue is the balance between prevention and repair. Much cultural policy understandably focuses on addressing inequity after it becomes entrenched, for example through improving representation, diversity in leadership, or workforce inclusion. These are critical priorities. However, there is less attention given to the earlier developmental and cultural processes through which exclusion, stereotypes, and narrow assumptions become normalised over time.

I would welcome a stronger emphasis within the policy on co-design, creative citizenship, and long-term cultural participation, particularly through involving children and young people more directly in shaping what inclusive cultural participation looks like within communities, schools, and cultural organisations.

For me, a stronger focus on Cultural Futures feels like the natural next step in this broader and more ambitious vision for the National Cultural Policy — one that recognises culture not only as central to belonging, participation, wellbeing, and civic life today, but also as something shaped across generations through early participation, representation, and inclusion.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute these views to the consultation process.