

National Cultural Policy Submission

1470962

Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Take action against censorship, political interference and racism in the arts

It is crucial that the forthcoming National Cultural Policy reflects the realities currently faced by artists, arts workers and the broader cultural sector. This submission is grounded in a commitment to decolonisation, anti-racism, anti-discrimination, freedom of artistic expression, and freedom from political interference in the arts.

Commitment to decolonisation, anti-racism and anti-discrimination

(Pillars 1: First Nations First, 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)

The National Cultural Policy must adopt a decolonial, anti-racist and anti-discrimination framework, while recognising and supporting those already leading this work within the sector.

The IHRA definition of antisemitism should be removed from arts, cultural and educational institutions and replaced with the UN Core Stance of Values, which asserts that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights, without distinction of race or ethnic origin, and that no institution, state or individual should discriminate against human rights and freedoms.

Artists as ethical and cultural leaders

(Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist)

The National Cultural Policy must support artists to remain ethical, critical and values-driven contributors to public life and cultural discourse.

Artists must be able to speak freely, sign open letters and participate in boycott actions without fear of reputational or financial harm. Arts institutions must support cultural diversity and protect artists who engage critically with social and political issues, particularly those targeted publicly for speaking against injustice.

Artists must not be instrumentalised by institutions, lobbyists, media organisations or politicians.

Freedom of speech and artistic expression

(Pillars 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)

Strong cultural infrastructure depends upon artistic freedom of expression. This principle is already enshrined in the Creative Australia Act (“to uphold and promote freedom of expression in the arts”) and must remain central to the National Cultural Policy.

Art must be able to facilitate critical discourse, address political realities and critique structures of power. The policy must address the growing culture of intimidation, censorship and cancellation that prevents artists from expressing themselves freely, particularly in relation to nations condemned by the UN for apartheid, genocide or war crimes.

Freedom from political interference in the arts

(Pillars 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)

To maintain strong cultural infrastructure, the arts must remain independent from political interference.

The National Cultural Policy must protect independent, arm’s-length funding processes across federal, state and local governments. Politicians must not influence decisions regarding the allocation or removal of funding for specific artists or projects. This principle is already protected under the Creative Australia Act and must be upheld.

The policy should also support an inquiry into political interference in the arts, including the influence of donations, lobbying and board appointments. Donors and politically connected board members must not shape artistic programming, institutional direction or funding outcomes.