

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous

Individual



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

As an artist and an art educator I feel strongly about the way forward. There must be freedom for artists to express views even when they are contrary to government and are dissenting. Art is a way to forge a strong, principled society. Don't gag is.

The forthcoming National Cultural Plan must respond to the conditions experienced by artists, arts workers and the wider cultural sector. This submission expresses concern about censorship, political interference and racism, and is grounded in commitments to decolonisation, anti racism, anti discrimination, the role of artists as ethical leaders, the protection of artistic freedom and the need for independence from political influence.

The National Cultural Policy should adopt a decolonial and anti racist approach that follows the leadership of those already working within these frameworks. Cultural and educational institutions must remove the IHRA definition of antisemitism and adopt the UN Core Stance of Values, which affirms that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that no state, institution, group or individual may discriminate in the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The National Cultural Policy must uphold the ability of artists to act as ethical and values driven contributors to public life. Artists must be able to speak openly, sign collective statements and participate in boycott actions without fear of reputational or economic harm. Institutions must respect cultural diversity and support the wide range of conversations that artists bring to public programs, including those who have been targeted for speaking against injustice. Artists must not be used instrumentally by institutions, lobbyists, media or political actors.

Strong cultural infrastructure depends on genuine artistic freedom. The Creative Australia Act already recognises the obligation to uphold freedom of expression in the arts, and this must be carried through into the National Cultural Policy. Artistic practice must be able to engage in critical discourse, address political matters and examine power and class structures. The policy must confront the culture of intimidation that restricts artists from creating and expressing themselves freely. It must address the ongoing censorship, targeting and cancellation of artists who speak against injustices, including those involving states condemned by the United Nations for apartheid, genocide or war crimes.

A strong cultural environment requires independence from political influence. The National Cultural Policy must ensure that funding processes at all levels of government remain independent and at arms length. Politicians must not influence decisions that provide or remove funding for particular artists or projects, consistent with the Creative Australia Act. The policy should establish an inquiry into political interference in the arts, including the influence of donations, board appointments and lobbying. Donors must not shape the direction of arts organisations, and board members with political or lobbying affiliations must be removed.

Please strengthen the position of artists through this policy.