

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I have been an actor and arts educator for over 20 years.

Theatre is a collaborative art and is polyphonic in nature.

We are an ecosystem that includes the artists who make, the society at large, and the audiences who engage with the art. The ecosystem is being harvested and is not being supported and protected. When the ecosystem is not being protected it can look “fine” but the diversity and strength is being undermined and the community is off balance.

How do I make this assessment? It’s hard for artists to survive when on average we make below the poverty line from our art. It’s hard for people to engage with art when they are working so hard and ticket prices are so expensive. It’s hard for people to feel that art and culture speak to them when they aren’t encouraged to make, engage with, or to discuss art and culture. At large a rise in fascism, hate speech and division in society is a symptom of a cultural wasteland.

If you want an Australian society in touch with its humanity, capable of having difficult conversations, of critical thought, of fighting against rising fascism, of creating communities and caring for each other then you must fund the arts like you fund defence. This is your defence against becoming dead inside. This is your defence of what it is to be human.

Suggestions:

Start theatre and art and music education early and consistently throughout the schooling of all students. Artists in residence in every public school in Australia.

More creative kids vouchers to encourage all children to engage with art, theatre, music, dance, literature.

Fund cheap tickets to theatre, dance, opera, put on free concerts. Everyone should be allowed to access our cultural ecosystem. Everyone should be allowed to engage with it.

Artists in residence in every aged persons home. Art therapy offered for all pensioners and children under 8. Offer art therapy sessions as part of mental health care plans under Medicare.

Make arts and fine arts degrees cheaper or free at universities, put arts and fine arts diplomas at tafe. People want to learn about art and engage with it but the costs are prohibitively high.

Universal basic income for artists.

Tax reform for artists. Allow freelance artists to have long service leave accrued the way tradies are across multiple worksites and companies.

Stop taxing awards for artists.

Engage with the arts as politicians. Post a poem or song or artwork or a play or movie or book you like regularly.

Show up and discuss art and make it a genuine part of Australian culture or we risk losing Australian art and culture.