

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Organisation

Patch Theatre Company

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Australia's cultural identity is shaped from childhood. Children are participants in cultural life, a right enshrined in the UN Convention. Theatre is proven to engage children's creativity, imagination, confidence and place in the world, but opportunities to ignite these abilities are declining. The next National Cultural Policy presents the opportunity to recognise children's theatre not as a subset of the creative sector, but as its foundation.

We have a long way to go to ensure that every child grows up with access to arts experiences. Patch has a 53-year legacy connecting children to culture but without stronger co-ordinated government partnership our work is at risk. CHILDREN'S THEATRE ALLIANCE calls for a dedicated 10-year National arts strategy for children and young people, anchored by a Children's Theatre Investment Fund to re-activate this shockingly diminished sector to ensure companies can innovate, engage and help children to thrive.

Small and mighty companies are the most agile innovators: leading the way in regional touring, international exchange and reaching marginalised communities that larger organisations rarely serve. This work deserves structural recognition, not project-by-project precarity.

We strongly endorse the Australian Live Performance Export Alliance's call to name live performance export as a strategic priority and establish a dedicated export fund for tour ready organisations. Global demand for Australian productions is growing, Patch has experienced an exciting increase from international partners, that we currently seek the resources to meet. International cultural activity is not peripheral, but vital to sustaining careers of Australian artists, and the viability of the performing arts ecology. Australian live performance export is both an economic and cultural engine, building international relationships, cultural exchange and diplomatic connections that underpin a globally connected society. A cross-government mechanism linking arts, foreign affairs, trade, tourism and state agencies would ensure Australia competes as a confident cultural presence on the world stage.

Children's theatre is uniquely positioned to deliver across portfolios including Arts, Education, Health, Regions, First Nations, and Youth. Embracing the cultural and social infrastructure principle through genuine collaboration – outlined in the Early Years strategy 2024-2034 - will unlock the full value of this work, aligning investment with the broad public good it already generates.

Australia's artists, technicians and arts workers are world class! The next policy is an opportunity to shore up that talent by creating sustainable career pathways that keep skilled people working and growing within the sector. Key opportunities include:

Properly indexed multi-year funding grants, giving organisations the confidence to invest in the longer term

Increased investment in Playing Australia tour funding, ensuring professional arts reach children in every corner of the country as a right, not a privilege

1.5 times tax-deductible donations for DGR endorsed arts organisations, extending impact of philanthropic partnerships

A business innovation and sustainability fund to help companies evolve and strengthen.

Australia's children deserve a cultural policy that sees and values them. This is Australia's opportunity to invest in the stories that shape us from the very beginning and share them with the world.

