

The Cannery Arts Centre welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of Australia's next National Cultural Policy. As a regional arts organisation in Kepa Kurl Esperance on the remote south-east coast of Western Australia, we see daily the vital role arts and culture play in community connection, wellbeing, identity, learning and economic sustainability.

Pillar 1: First Nations First

We would like to see stronger investment in cultural awareness and cultural engagement for arts organisations, arts workers and artists. Regional organisations want to build meaningful and respectful relationships with First Nations communities, but often lack the resources and long-term support required to do this properly.

Funding to support:

- cultural awareness training
- cultural consultation
- relationship building
- development of cultural community engagement plans
- organisational processes for inclusive workplaces, and
- genuine First Nations leadership within arts organisations and programming.

Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story

Regional stories matter. Metropolitan perspectives often dominate arts and cultural conversations and decision-making. Regional arts organisations understand their communities deeply and should be trusted and empowered to lead cultural development within their regions.

We would like to see:

- greater investment in locally-led storytelling, programming and decision-making, rather than short-term metro-led projects imposed onto regional communities.
- Consultation processes, and associated funding to make this happen, should be thorough, conducted over substantial time periods and involve key local stakeholders.
- Accessible higher arts education, essential to ensuring diversity within the arts industry, particularly for people living in regional, rural and remote Australia who face significant barriers to study and creative career pathways.

Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist

Artists need support not only for collaborative or outcome-driven projects, but for artistic practice itself. Art for art's sake matters. Time to develop skills, experiment, research and create is essential to a thriving cultural sector.

We would also like to see:

- Fairer pay and conditions across the arts sector.
- Consideration of universal basic income or sustained living support for artists.

- Greater investment in arts education, particularly in primary and lower secondary schooling, to foster wellbeing, creativity and lifelong appreciation of the arts.
- Long-term operational funding for arts organisations to support sustainable growth, staffing and strategic development, recognising arts organisations as essential community infrastructure, businesses and industries.
- Greater redistribution of funding from large metropolitan organisations into regional, rural and remote arts organisations that are already deeply embedded within their communities.

Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure Regional arts organisations often operate within ageing buildings requiring continual maintenance and upgrades. Continued investment in regional cultural infrastructure is essential to ensure communities can safely access arts and cultural experiences. New builds are not always the solution. Heritage spaces hold immense cultural and community value.

We would like to see greater trust placed in regional arts organisations and their arts workers, recognising that local organisations are best placed to understand, support, develop and advocate for the unique needs, stories and aspirations of their communities. Often regional artists and arts workers are responsible for cultural activities, navigating the complexities, with minimal remuneration. This courageous work takes an emotional toll on many.

- Investing in the artists, arts workers and cultural organisations of remote, regional and rural Australia strengthens the whole of Australia's cultural identity.
- Fair pay and remuneration is needed for all regional artists, arts workers and the organisations that provide the infrastructure, physical and human, to support them. These are giving people wanting better for their regional locations and for too long there 'free' labour has been taken advantage of for the good work they do for communities, often to the detriment to these individuals. Burnout in the arts sector is costing the sector and communities.

Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience

Arts and culture should be accessible as part of everyday life for everyday people, regardless of where they live.

- Investment in regional arts participation, arts education and regional community creative experiences is essential for wellbeing, connection and resilience. These communities hold stories, perspectives and creative practices that are essential to the nation's cultural future. Support regional arts to tell these stories.