

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Making a national cultural policy consistent practice in Australia shows dedication to building a cultural landscape that supports art workers, art students/researchers, artistic practice and cultural institutions where this work, learning, practicing, developing, presenting, engaging and reflecting takes place.

This complex ecosystem requires all levels to be funded, beginning with education. Artists need places to learn, create networks & industry partnerships or the grass-roots of the industry will never grow. The Morrison government's job-ready graduate scheme implemented in 2021 increased the cost of arts training with creative arts degrees rising by 19%, arts, society & culture degrees by 116%. In 2026, a yearly contribution for a commonwealth supported place is between \$9,537 - \$17,399 for an arts, humanities or curatorial student; a mathematics student pays \$4,738. 48 creative arts degrees were discontinued between 2018 and 2025 – in some cases leading to the removal of an entire disciplinary pipeline in a region or state.

<https://naae.org.au/news/creative-arts-and-arts-education-a-national-tertiary-snapshot-20182025>

Artists are more highly educated than the workforce at large with training, qualifications and experience putting them on par with lawyers, doctors and accountants who average incomes of \$98,700 per year. ¾ of artists hold a university degree, over 40% a postgraduate degree, compared with 30% of all Australian professionals and 36% of the wider labour force. Average Australians earn \$73,300, Australian Creative workers earn \$23,200 (\$54,500 if you include teaching or outside work). Professional artists survive on incredibly low incomes compared to other professionally trained individuals with artists spending an average of 73% of their artistic income on expenses related to producing their work. (Australian Bureau of Statistics data, 2021–22.) We need to explore providing a living wage for artists who are increasingly impacted by not only the rising cost of living and global warming in their personal lives, but also how these impact insurance, venue and equipment hire. Artists are also often sole traders facing fluctuations in wages. When they receive sporadic lump sum payments social services support may be cut off, or suspended, creating difficulties paying for medical care and housing ongoing.

(<https://theconversation.com/australian-artists-only-earn-23-200-a-year-from-their-art-and-are-key-financial-investors-in-keeping-the-industry-a-float-228792>)

Collecting institutions have video, film and audio tape resources that are spontaneously combusting before we can save them because we don't have the resources to employ people to do this work and many of our cultural and educational buildings are poorly maintained, few grants support capital works; all factors destroy access to and preservation of history and culture. Grants large and small are notoriously difficult to apply for and often require a skilled and experienced person to research, write and acquit applications that are not available to many community groups or individual artists. It is important that artists and communities have a direct voice in strategic investment through their new individual Creative Australia councils, however if meaningful funding is not available for each arm, and grants remain out of reach for many individual artists or community groups, the ecosystem cannot thrive and grow.