

National Cultural Policy Submission

1471547

Public

Individual

Angela Buckingham



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

As playwright, considering the Centrality of the Artist in the Revive Review, it is hopeful that artists are recognised as essential workers needing sustainable careers, fair pay, safe workplaces, and long-term professional pathways, but this not just a question of pay scales or IR regulations. It is about having the institutions where artists can earn their living, be creatively supported and win opportunities. In my career and creative community, La Mama Theatre, is a critical contributor to career viability.

La Mama is a creative incubator that supports artists creatively and economically, recognising both are necessary for artists to produce; offering something simple and rare - a structure in which artist can make work with manageable financial risk. The model is lean, practical and artist lead. By reducing the upfront costs, sharing knowledge and providing the long-term relationship with audiences, La Mama allows artist to focus on the essential act of transformation; turning ideas into performance.

This matters because theatre is built in rehearsal rooms, in front of audiences, through iteration and testing. With La Mama these ideas become productions that can travel, evolve and reach wider audiences across the country and the world. La Mama is the starting point for many works; a proving ground that makes future presentations possible.

The economic logic is as important as the artistic one. By lowering the financial threshold for production La Mama Theatre distributes risk in a way that encourages experimentation. Artists are able to test ambitious ideas without the pressure of immediate commercial return. Furthermore with 80% to 100% of the box office going to the artist there is immediate financial return to the creatives who invest so much into these creative beginnings. This work creates the pipeline. Works developed at La Mama frequently move on to festivals, main stage companies and touring circuits. The broader sector benefits from a steady influx of work that has already been refined in front of an audience and creative workers that have professional experience.

Equally significant is the role La Mama Theatre plays in sustaining careers for emerging artists. It offers a first professional foothold. For established practitioners, it remains a space to take creative risks that larger institutions cannot accommodate. Careers are not built in single leap. They are constructed through repeated opportunities to make work. La Mama provides those opportunities consistently across generations. This is seen in the large numbers of creatives who get opportunities at La Mama – between 1500 to 2000 a year. La Mama alumni work across Australia's theatre sector, a vital source of innovative, skilled, resourceful practitioners.

Artists are highly productive workers. We take intangible inputs, ideas, questions, provocations, and convert them into tangible outcomes, performances, employment, audience engagement and cultural value. A single production employs writers, actors directors, designers, technicians, marketers and administrators. It draws audiences into shared experiences, having social and economic ripple effects. La Mama's model maximises this productivity, ensuring more ideas reach the stage. It is critical to our theatre sector producing quality work. With this context, it is essential that La Mama is here for generations to come.