

National Cultural Policy Submission

1471603

Public

Individual

James Pensini

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

My name is James Pensini and I have been a music educator for more than twenty years. In my time I have been fortunate enough to work for and with every type of educational institution (Public, Private, Catholic Systemic, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary) and I now have the privilege of leading Orchestral Training and Artistic Programming for the Sydney Youth Orchestras.

Whilst there are many amazing young musicians, programs and opportunities for young people run by dedicated (and usually overstretched) arts professionals and music educators in Australia, the thing that keeps people like myself awake at night is the question - but what about all the young people in Australia who never even had the chance to hold a musical instrument, let alone learn one? Whilst learning a musical instrument is but one form of creative participation, it is by all impact measures a powerful one that can and does open doors to infinite expressive, social and life changing experiences, all but inaccessible by any other means. My life was profoundly and irreversibly changed by the opportunity to learn a musical instrument. My story is not unique but it is becoming more unlikely, Music Education and Youth Arts have progressively become less and less accessible to those without significant financial means. In many places around NSW (and I am sure Australia) there simply is no such thing as Music Education let alone the opportunity to learn a musical instrument as part of a musical education.

It would be wonderful if as part of the new National Cultural Policy thought could be given to the potential musical pathway of every young person in this country;

Where will they learn to sing as the foundational skill to all music making and who will teach them?

Will they have access to a musical instrument and who will teach them?

How and where do they continue to be inspired, work hard and grow?

Which institutions will help them along their pathway and help them to find other like-minded individuals?

How are these institutions funded?

How will these young creatives then use their humanity and talents to help tell human and impactful stories in the age of AI and generic content creation?

Historically the arts have been criticised for simply being a museum of the past, however, as a society we stand on the precipice of deciding collectively what it is that actually makes us thinking, feeling and expressive beings. Quite simply put there has never been a more important time for equitable access to the possibility of genuine creativity to be prioritised, championed and delivered in this country.

Thank you for your important work.

James Pensini