

I am an independent curator, arts worker and writer based on Dharug Country in Western Sydney. I have curated and produced exhibitions and programs locally, nationally and internationally. Over the past 17 years, I have worked across visual arts, performance, Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) and music.

I believe the most urgent and key issues facing my arts peers and community are:

- Censorship, political interference and racism in the arts
- Decolonising the arts sector
- Equitable participation and support for: First Nations, Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CaRM), underrepresented Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD), and Deaf and Disabled artists and arts workers
- Recognition of Western Sydney region in the national arts ecology
- Recognition of Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD)
- Increasing precarity of independent practitioners
- Rising cost of living and housing unaffordability affecting the survival and sustainability artists and artswokers

1. Censorship, political interference and racism in the arts

The National Cultural Policy must take the following actions to address censorship, political interference and racism in the arts:

- **Commitment to decolonisation, anti-racism and anti-discrimination** (Pillars 1: First Nations First, 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)
 - The National Cultural Policy must take a decolonial, anti-racist and anti-discrimination approach. It should respect and take leadership from those in the sector who are already working from a strong decolonial, anti-racist and anti-discrimination framework.
 - The IHRA definition of antisemitism must be removed from all arts, cultural and educational institutions and be replaced with the UN Core Stance of Values: “The UN asserts that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, without distinction of any kind, including race or ethnic origin. It maintains that no state, institution, group, or individual should make any discrimination in human rights and fundamental freedoms.”
- **Artists are the moral compass of the sector** (Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist)
 - The National Cultural Policy must support artists to continue to be ethical and values-driven leaders of the sector and broader community.
 - Artists must be able to speak freely, sign letters and participate in boycott actions without harming their reputation and livelihoods.
 - Arts and cultural institutions must respect cultural diversity, and support, champion and care for the diverse conversations that artists bring to their programs, particularly those who have been targeted in the media for speaking out against injustices.
 - Artists must not be instrumentalised by institutions, lobbyists, the media and politicians.
- **Freedom of speech and artistic expression** (Pillars 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)
 - Strong cultural infrastructure must be based on artistic freedom of speech. This is already enshrined in the Creative Australia Act (11.e “to uphold and promote freedom of expression in the arts”) and needs to be upheld in the National Cultural Policy.

- In order to create strong cultural infrastructure, art must be able to facilitate critical discourse, address political issues and critique power and class structures.
- In order to create strong cultural infrastructure, there must be an end to the culture of intimidation that prevents artists from expressing and creating art freely.
- The National Cultural Policy must address the prevalence of censorship, targeting and cancellation of artists who speak out against injustices, particularly in relation to nations that have been condemned by the UN for acts of apartheid, genocide and war crimes.
- **Freedom from political interference in the arts** (Pillars 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)
 - In order to create strong cultural infrastructure, the arts must remain independent and free from political interference.
 - The National Cultural Policy must ensure independent and 'arms length' funding processes across federal, state and local government. This includes ensuring that politicians at all levels must not influence or give advice that results in the provision or removal of funding support of a particular project or artist. This is already enshrined in the Creative Australia Act (article 14.2) and needs to be upheld in the National Cultural Policy.
 - A key action for the National Cultural Policy must be to implement an inquiry into political interference in the arts, including through donations and board membership and lobbying.
 - Donors must not influence arts organisations and institutions.
 - Board members with connections to political parties or lobbyists must be removed.

2. Decolonising the arts sector & equitable participation and support for: First Nations, Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CaRM), underrepresented Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD), and Deaf and Disabled artists and arts workers.

The National Cultural Policy must take the following actions to address decolonising the arts sector and equitable participation and support for: First Nations, Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CaRM), underrepresented Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD), and Deaf and Disabled artists and arts workers:

- Strengthen First Nations self-determination, cultural authority and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) protections across national cultural policy.
- Explicitly name Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CaRM) and underrepresented Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) communities and set direct, measurable actions to address their systemic underrepresentation
- Develop and resource a national, industry-led Anti-Racism and Cultural Equity Strategy aligned with the Australian Human Rights Commission's (AHRC) National Anti-Racism Framework and Multicultural Framework Review Roadmap.
- Establish a CaRM Creator Fund and protected funding streams for CaRM-led organisations and projects and creatives.
- Establish a national CaRM Leadership, Workforce and Participation Pathways Strategy across the arts, screen and creative sectors.
- Protect freedom of artistic and creative expression and establish safe reporting mechanisms for censorship, racism and discrimination.
- Embed compulsory anti-racism, cultural safety and equity training across publicly funded organisations and require equity action plans and accountability mechanisms.

- Measure and report on diversity across workforce, leadership, funding, programming, commissioning, collections and audience participation.
- Reform funding, tax and regulatory systems to improve equity and access for CaRM creatives, community-led practice and small-to-medium organisations.
- Regulate AI industries and develop AI guidelines specific to the creative sector, and ensure equitable participation, cultural and intellectual rights and artist protections within emerging technologies and digital cultural spaces.

3. Recognition of Western Sydney region in the national arts ecology

Western Sydney is one of Australia's most multicultural areas, with 38% of the population speaking a language other than English at home, and up to 90% in some suburbs. Currently, Western Sydney is grouped with Greater Sydney when considered for geographical spread of funding. Western Sydney is, culturally and socioeconomically, vastly different to the rest of Sydney.

A key recommendation to recognise the importance of Western Sydney to the national arts ecology is:

- Consider Western Sydney a separate region in arts funding data collection and when considering the geographical spread of funding

4. Recognition of Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD)

The National Cultural Policy must take the following actions to address the structural under-recognition and under-resourcing of CACD:

- **Formal Recognition**
Explicitly recognise Community Arts and Cultural development within the new cultural policy as a distinct and essential field of practice.
- **Establish a National CACD Entity**
Embed a national body dedicated to CACD within Creative Australia to lead coordination, advocacy, research and sector development.
- **Increased investment in CACD practice**
Supporting local arts initiatives that strengthen social cohesion and foster belonging in Australian communities
- **Invest in Workforce & Practice Sustainability**
Support training, mentoring, wellbeing and trauma-informed practice frameworks specific to the needs of CACD practice.
- **Reform Funding Models**
Shift to long-term, place-based and relational investment models for CACD practice.
- **Embed CACD Across Policy Areas**
Position CACD across health, disaster management, climate adaptation, justice, education and regional development.
- **Strengthen Research & Evaluation**
Further develop national CACD data, impact measurement and evidence frameworks.
- **Equity of Access**
Ensure equitable access to funding, resources and participation nationwide.

5. Increased precarity of independent practitioners and rising cost of living and housing unaffordability affecting the survival and sustainability artists and artswokers

As an independent curator and arts worker of over 16 years, I have found it increasingly difficult to sustain a career in the arts due to:

- Rising cost of living
- Housing unaffordability
- Reduced opportunities for independent curatorial voices
- Racism and censorship in the arts

The National Cultural Policy must take the following actions to support independent creative practitioners and address the rising cost of living and housing unaffordability, to ensure the survival and sustainability artists and artswokers:

- Introduce a basic living wage for artists and creative workers
- Introduce affordable housing for artists and creative workers
- Provide tax breaks for artists and creative workers
- Introduce and enforce award rates for artists and creative workers in all industries
- Annual leave, sick leave and parental leave entitlements for freelancers
- Recognition of the importance of independent curatorial voices to diversify arts galleries and institutions