

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Organisation

Experimental Commissioning Consortium



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Who We Are

The Experimental Commissioning Consortium (ECC) is a newly formalised national network devoted to the development and presentation of independent experimental art and performance. It seeks to foster cross-sector collaboration and generate increased mobility and career sustainability for artists in both metro and regional areas. The ECC is led by Performance Space, and includes Abbotsford Convent (VIC), Arts House (VIC), Assembly197 (TAS), Cementa (NSW), Dancehouse (VIC), Metro Arts (QLD), PACT (NSW), Performance Space (NSW), PICA (WA), Punctum (VIC), The Substation (VIC), Superposition (NSW), The Unconformity (TAS), Utp (NSW), Vitals (SA), and Wired Lab (NSW).

Challenges and opportunities

The ECC has been developed in response to a dearth of collaborative commissioning and effective national touring in the independent sector. Over the last decade, we have seen the loss of critical mechanisms that supported this work, including the Time_Space artist lab, and Mobile States touring initiative. The loss of these - and other - initiatives, compounded by the “Covid normal” landscape of increasing costs and decreasing platforms for experimental work, has resulted in lack of mobility, long-term support and career pathways for independent artists. Rebuilding these collective models of commissioning and touring is critical and must be a priority in our National Cultural Policy.

The Revive pillars in our work

The ECC is reflective of the small-to-medium sector’s capacity to collaborate and share resources. Initiatives like this are Strong Cultural Infrastructure. It is within our organisations that Centrality of the Artist is not just an idea, but a daily practice and existential pillar. Through our organisations artists develop their work with support, gain professional experience, and grow their skills and capacity to deliver ambitious and impactful projects. Without the small-to-medium sector investing in experimentation, artists cannot thrive. Our pilot program, co-funded by ECC members and Creative Australia, has generated more than 60 opportunities for the cohort of 8 artists. The ECC builds meaningful bridges between metro and regional artists and audiences, Engaging the Audience across Australia. Further, experimental practice is innately intersectional. Our artist cohort includes First Nations, CaLD, regional, and LGBTQIA+ artists, and artists with disability and neurodiversity. Via the ECC, we deliver A Place for Every Story.

The next National Cultural Policy

To enable the ECC and its member organisations to effectively service artists and audiences, we advocate for a National Cultural Policy that includes:

- An ongoing commitment to a national commissioning and touring fund for small-to-medium organisations.
- Funding streams that support cross-sector collaboration and networked approaches, that multi-year funded organisations are eligible to apply for.
- Incentives for organisations programming new Australian work to encourage creative risk and ensure new voices reach our stages.

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-Acknowledgement of experimental practice as a critical breeding ground for culture, a unique form with its own art historical lineage, distinct from emerging practices, digital or “immersive art”, and dedicated support that reflects this.

Continued commitment to arms-length funding and censorship-free governance, to ensure artists can contribute to civic debate without fear of financial retribution through lost opportunities.

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