National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public
Individual
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[redacted]
Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I write as a long-time arts administrator and lifelong supporter of the sector, rather than as a practising artist. I hold a Bachelor of Arts (Performance Studies; Art History & Theory) and spent the first part of my career in the corporate sector before moving into arts administration in late 2012. From this point of view - close to the work but not dependent on creative practice for my income - I want to put my support behind initiatives that materially improve the livelihoods of the people who actually make the art.

My submission addresses Pillar 3 (Centrality of the Artist) and Pillar 4 (Strong Cultural Infrastructure), with the principle that any review under these pillars must be designed in genuine partnership with First Nations artists and organisations consistent with Pillar 1 (First Nations First), recognising cultural and ceremonial labour as work.

A Minimum Income Scheme for Artists (Pillar 3):

Australia should pilot a Basic Income for the Arts modelled on Ireland's scheme, which was evaluated as successful and extended and confirmed in 2025. A weekly baseline payment to a defined cohort of working artists would address the income insecurity that pushes artists out of the sector and into unrelated work. It would treat creative practice as the professional vocation it is.

Strengthen base operational funding for Not-for-Profit Performing Arts companies (Pillar 4):

Creative Australia already provides ongoing operational funding to major performing arts companies through the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework, jointly with state and territory governments. However, in real terms this funding now covers only a small share of what it costs to run these organisations. From my professional experience, the gap is increasingly being filled by philanthropy. The result is that donations are now subsidising core operating costs - things such as utilities, administration, venue costs - rather than seeding new commissions, artist fees and development. Baseline operational funding should be lifted to a published target share of eligible operating costs, CPI-indexed, with utility and administration costs explicitly covered, so that philanthropy can return to its proper role of funding new work and other initiatives, rather than subsidising the costs of running the organisation.

Subsidised access to publicly-owned venues (Pillar 4):

State and nationally significant venues should be made available to not-for-profit companies and independent artists at subsidised rates under a clear eligibility framework.

Fund the arts in proportion to what the industry contributes (Pillars 3 & 4):

The arts and creative industries contributed $67.4 billion to Australia’s economy and employed over 591,000 people in 2023-24. Funding should reflect that contribution. A clear, published target set as a share of the sector’s economic value and reviewed regularly, would mean arts are funded for what they’re worth, not from what’s leftover after everything else has been paid for.

I thank you for the chance to contribute to the shaping of the next National Cultural Policy. This is a terrific opportunity to really make a meaningful difference and build on something great.