

National Cultural Policy Submission

1471888

Public

Organisation

Polyglot Theatre



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Polyglot Theatre is a Melbourne based contemporary theatre company with 48 years of history creating exceptional participatory arts experiences for children and families. Our work sits across every pillar of Revive, recognising children as artists, audiences, collaborators and cultural citizens now.

Polyglot urges the Australian Government to recognise children as a priority cultural cohort and apply a children's lens across all five pillars of the next National Cultural Policy. We support sector calls for stronger structural recognition of children and young people, including a 10-year national arts strategy, with ring-fenced investment to make it real.

Polyglot's commitment to First Peoples knowledge and culture is foundational. Our office sits on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country and we actively engage in deepening our understanding of history, continuous culture and connection to Country. Policy must invest in First Peoples-led arts for children and young people, including sustained models that enable First Peoples artists to lead work for and with children.

Polyglot reaches beyond 40,000 children and families every year, with 90% accessing our work for free or at low cost. This deliberate strategy removes financial barriers to participation. Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises every child's right to participate freely in culture and the arts. Polyglot values children as participants, agents, creators and collaborators, not passive recipients of culture. Theatre for young audiences is a professional practice centred on children and young people as audiences and contributing members of their communities and is precisely where lifelong cultural participation is forged.

Children's theatre is essential infrastructure, supporting creativity, belonging, emotional literacy, confidence, connection and community cohesion. This work cannot sit inside the Arts portfolio alone. It requires coordinated investment across Arts, Health, Social Services and Early Years policy. Arts education must also be recognised as essential to this ecology, with stronger pathways between schools, artists and cultural organisations so access is not determined by postcode, income or school resourcing.

Since 2021, Polyglot generated 1,958 artist employment opportunities and paid \$5.3 million in wages to arts professionals. Wages and creative fees constitute over 65% of our annual turnover. Investing in artists through paid development and long-term engagement produces richer work and a healthier sector. Future policy must protect sustained artist investment, particularly in the small-to-medium sector where much of Australia's artistic development occurs.

Polyglot's international history spans 23 countries across five continents. Australian work for children is valued globally, but the issue is not demand; it is feasibility. Rising travel, freight, remount, visa, insurance and contingency costs mean invitations can become untenable for small-to-medium companies. International touring and exchange must be recognised as core infrastructure, supported by a framework connecting policy, export, diplomacy and practical touring realities.

Australia's next National Cultural Policy needs to affirm that children's culture is not peripheral. It is foundational to how a nation forms its identity, participation and creative future. Children are not only future audience. They are artists, collaborators, participants and audiences now.