

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

Ian Pidd

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am a freelance theatre and festival director who works across a variety of organisations from Dark MOFO (Tas) to Everybody NOW! (QLD), I am the AD of the Wanderer Festival (Southern NSW), and the creator of SWING (Sydney Opera House, Ten Days On The Island). I work throughout the country and OS. My work spans traditional theatre, installations, programming music festivals, to directing large scale participatory spectacles. I have worked professionally as an artist for over 40 years, and pretty much loved it every minute of it.

Many submissions will make lots of great points, many of which I will agree. But I would like to champion two strands of creativity that my opinion any cultural policy should champion above all others:

1. Maximising Participation
2. Breaking the arts out of traditional arts spaces into everyday life.

I'll briefly expand on both.

1. Participation. By this I mean encouraging all artists, arts organisations, and funding bodies to prioritise projects and processes that bring non-artist and \,vernacular\, community artists more deeply into contact with professional arts activity. Ideally these folks should be IN the works. This can be as simple as bringing local choirs and brass bands into professional music projects (Her Majesty's 150th, Ballarat, 2025), to handing over entire chunks of the projects output to the general public (The Ogoh Ogoh project, Dark MOFO). This OUGHT to mean that major festivals and the state theatre companies, orchestra's etc, have KPI's that included participatory milestones beyond passive audience numbers.

2. Break the arts out of the arts ghettos. By ghettos I mean arts centres, arts precincts, major arts galleries, major festivals, etc. Examples could include: Artist In Residency projects in hospitals, workplaces, prisons etc. Professional creative projects having outcomes in shopping centres, sports clubs, closed streets, etc. Public Art projects which are more than murals and sculptures in parks - why not a housing development having a recording studio rather than a bad piece of sculpture, why not an office block having an animation studio in its basement rather than 700 dreadful paintings in each office room.

As part of this strategy I would also take much of the state subsidies of the major city arts festivals - Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne (Rising), Adelaide and Perth, and distribute those funds to festivals in smaller cities and towns. Dark Mofo is a perfect example of the transformation that can happen to a smaller city by a major festival. Seriously, the big arts festivals in Sydney and Melbourne in particular (which are fantastic festivals by the way - that's not my point) make very little impact on the general population and are largely attended by the same folks seeing art at the same places at other times of the year. Lets have really big festivals in Wollongong, Ipswich, Bendigo, Cairns, Murray Bridge.

To maximise both participation and the deepening of arts into non arts spaces requires much better artists training. Training that produces graduates who see their roles as far more than simply making works for the tradition arts spaces and the screen. It also requires arts education at primary and secondary levels to break out of the \,we are training new young artists\,, into thinking of the arts as social space

We might also need to spend a bit more time celebrating amateur art making - community theatre, choirs, brass bands, pipe bands, rock bands.