

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Arts and culture is everywhere in Australian life, yet too often remains invisible in our national thinking.

The National Cultural Policy should place participation at its centre. Art is not something reserved for experts, institutions or capital cities, it should be experienced, created and shared by everyone. The more Australians recognise culture as part of everyday life, the more they will invest in it.

This requires investment not only in major cultural institutions, but in the local cultural ecosystems that allow participation to happen every day. Libraries, festivals, community centres, galleries, live music venues, museums, creative hubs and grassroots arts organisations are often where people first engage with arts and culture in meaningful ways. These places build creativity, confidence and connection, yet they are frequently under-resourced and rely on an unsustainable volunteer workforce.

If participation is genuinely the goal, Australia needs long-term investment in cultural infrastructure, workforce development and locally driven programming, particularly in regional communities where access is uneven despite extraordinary creative capacity. Change the way people see art, so that next time you are developing a National Cultural Policy, everyone makes a submission not just artists/arts-workers and arts organisations. Develop a campaign that positions art as essential, in the same way that people invest in sport, they will invest in art. Like Norm's "Life Be In It" but "Art Be In It"!

Art also possesses extraordinary "superpowers" that remain underutilised in public policy. Storytelling builds social cohesion, strengthens identity and helps communities navigate change. Art fosters empathy, challenges behaviours and creates common ground in increasingly divided times. The research is in, it's not anecdotal, its fact!

The arts are a powerful health intervention. Australia continues to invest in responding to complex issues such as loneliness, mental ill-health, obesity, substance abuse and loneliness, often through systems that struggle to create lasting change. Arts and cultural participation can play a significant role in health, wellbeing and community resilience in engaging, human and cost-effective ways.

The 2014 National Arts and Health Framework was an important beginning, but it's time for a genuine national strategy for arts and health, one that clearly articulates the value of creative participation to health and wellbeing and provides practical pathways for implementation across government portfolios, health systems and communities.

Regional Australia must be recognised not as a secondary cultural market, but as a cultural powerhouse. Regional communities are custodians of story, landscape, heritage and identity. To unlock potential, regions need sustained investment in people, programming and infrastructure. Too often funding remains short-term, fragmented and city centric. Regions require greater decision-making power, support for local cultural leadership, affordable creative spaces, touring and investment models that recognise the true cost of delivering cultural activity across regions.

The new Policy should position arts and culture not as a “nice to have”, but as essential national infrastructure, critical to our health, economy and social fabric. Australia’s cultural future will not be built in flagship institutions, it should be built in communities, with creativity woven into everyday life.