

Take action against censorship, political interference and racism in the arts

As a regionally based artist, despite the rhetoric of this government, things have never been more difficult for this sector. From increasing cost of living pressures, limited support for the independent sector and increasing 'McCarthyistic' style of interference by governments, especially the Labor government.

This has already lead to a chilling effect among artists and institutions that deliver programming and funding self censoring. Labor's encouragement of increasing govt interference has also already opened the door for more draconian rules by the QLD LNP government, including the direct targeting and deplatforming of artists.

Much of the current policy and budget considerations leave little for independent artists or arts organisations, this is even more so for regional artists and arts workers who by proximity alone are already often left out of the conversation in the arts or cut off from opportunities and support. More direct support is needed for regional artists and less duplication of services. In my region alone there are four 'regional peak bodies' associated with various levels of government all delivering similar style of programs and opportunities with limited impact.

Regional Arts Australia needs to directly supported and mentioned in not only the policy but also the budget, with specific allocations of support given noting its increasing need to connect the regions artists and independent arts associations to the Federal conversation. This should be accompanied with a streamlining of process and a greater representation of support through Creative Australia's programs. Not just for artists working in the regions and rural but also supporting associated independent arts ogranisations with greater access to multi year organisational funding.

It is crucial that the forthcoming National Cultural Plan reflects current issues faced by artists and arts workers, as well as the arts sector at large. I am concerned by the prevalence of censorship, political interference and racism in the arts. As such, this submission is grounded in core values of and commitment to decolonisation, anti-racism, anti-discrimination; artists as the moral compass of the sector; freedom of artistic expression without limitations; and freedom from political interference in the arts.

- **Commitment to decolonisation, anti-racism and anti-discrimination**
(Pillars 1: First Nations First, 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)
 - The National Cultural Policy must take a decolonial, anti-racist and anti-discrimination approach. It should respect and take leadership from those in the sector who are already working from a strong decolonial, anti-racist and anti-discrimination framework.
 - The IHRA definition of antisemitism must be removed from all arts, cultural and educational institutions and be replaced with the UN Core Stance of Values: "The UN asserts that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, without distinction of any kind, including race or ethnic origin. It maintains that no state, institution, group, or individual should make any discrimination in human rights and

fundamental freedoms.”

- **Artists are the moral compass of the sector** (Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist)
 - The National Cultural Policy must support artists to continue to be ethical and values-driven leaders of the sector and broader community.
 - Artists must be able to speak freely, sign letters and participate in boycott actions without harming their reputation and livelihoods.
 - Arts and cultural institutions must respect cultural diversity, and support, champion and care for the diverse conversations that artists bring to their programs, particularly those who have been targeted in the media for speaking out against injustices.
 - Artists must not be instrumentalised by institutions, lobbyists, the media and politicians.
- **Freedom of speech and artistic expression** (Pillars 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)
 - Strong cultural infrastructure must be based on artistic freedom of speech. This is already enshrined in the Creative Australia Act (11.e “to uphold and promote freedom of expression in the arts”) and needs to be upheld in the National Cultural Policy.
 - In order to create strong cultural infrastructure, art must be able to facilitate critical discourse, address political issues and critique power and class structures.
 - In order to create strong cultural infrastructure, there must be an end to the culture of intimidation that prevents artists from expressing and creating art freely.
 - The National Cultural Policy must address the prevalence of censorship, targeting and cancellation of artists who speak out against injustices, particularly in relation to nations that have been condemned by the UN for acts of apartheid, genocide and war crimes.
- **Freedom from political interference in the arts** (Pillars 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)
 - In order to create strong cultural infrastructure, the arts must remain independent and free from political interference.
 - The National Cultural Policy must ensure independent and ‘arms length’ funding processes across federal, state and local government. This includes ensuring that politicians at all levels must not influence or give advice that results in the provision or removal of funding support of a particular project or artist. This is already enshrined in the Creative Australia Act (article 14.2) and needs to be upheld in the National Cultural Policy.
 - A key action for the National Cultural Policy must be to implement an inquiry into political interference in the arts, including through donations and board membership and lobbying.
 - Donors must not influence arts organisations and institutions.
 - Board members with connections to political parties or lobbyists must be removed.

[REDACTED] - Independent artist and arts worker.

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