National Cultural Policy Submission

1472137
Public and anonymous
Individual
[redacted]
Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I've supported [redacted] as a donor for several years, and I'm writing to urge substantially increased public investment in Contemporary Dance and First Nations Contemporary Dance.

Private philanthropy plays an essential role, but it cannot and should not substitute for proper public funding. What I see in [redacted] — a First Nations-led company punching well above its weight, touring nationally and internationally, putting works into the [redacted], employing dozens of artists each year — is exactly what public policy should enable across the sector. Instead, companies like [redacted] run on a fraction of what comparable organisations overseas receive, asking private donors to fill structural gaps that are fundamentally a public responsibility.

The case for public investment isn't just artistic. Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts pilot — 2,000 artists paid €325/week for three years — has been independently evaluated as returning €1.39 for every €1 invested, delivering over €100 million in benefits with a net fiscal cost of just €72 million after tax revenue and reduced welfare. Now being made permanent with 97% public support, it's the kind of evidence-based policy Australia should replicate.

First Nations Contemporary Dance is cultural infrastructure, not optional enrichment. It sustains the world's oldest continuing cultures through ceremony, governance and intergenerational knowledge transmission — a Closing the Gap priority. Yet there is no properly resourced, federally funded small-to-medium First Nations dance sector. Companies like [redacted] remain structurally undercapitalized.

From a philanthropic perspective, I want my giving to seed innovation and risk-taking, not patch operating budget holes that public funding should cover. The current model asks private donors to subsidize public goods.

I ask the next National Cultural Policy to:

• Recognise the structural underfunding of live performance — and Contemporary Dance and First Nations Contemporary Dance in particular — as a national priority, and substantially increase recurrent investment in the small-to-medium contemporary performing arts sector.

• Build a properly resourced, federally funded small-to-medium First Nations Contemporary Dance sector, with consistent commissioning pathways, embedded cultural governance and ICIP frameworks, and clear organisational sustainability pathways.

• Pilot an Australian Basic Income for the Arts modelled on Ireland's BIA scheme, paired with a per-artist non-wage project budget and a peer-pitching platform that pools artist budgets to commission new work from the bottom up.

• Establish a dedicated funding stream enabling a small cohort of choreographer-led Contemporary Dance companies — explicitly including First Nations-led companies such as Joel Bray Dance — to employ and sustain permanent ensembles.

• Establish a dedicated live performance export fund, including a presenter-fee matched funding model and a quick-response international disruption fund, with dedicated First Nations-led international exchange infrastructure, and resource the implementation of the existing Tri-Nations Indigenous-to-Indigenous exchange strategy.

Public investment creates the conditions for private philanthropy to do what it does best: take risks, back vision, and open new possibilities. Right now, we're being asked to be the safety net. That's backwards.

Thank you.