

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: On behalf of an organisation with arts-components (e.g. community organisation, tourism, venue, health, education etc)

Public submission

What are the challenges and opportunities you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you?

We believe that the pillars provide a good starting base for a cultural policy. We recognise that this is the first national cultural policy that has been implemented in many years, and want to commend the government for its efforts in creating a structure for the arts and cultural industry to follow. In preparing a submission for this policy, we have surveyed our cohort to find out what they believe are the strengths and weaknesses in the pillars.

Below we have listed the three top pillars:

- First Nations First: This pillar should be the most important for the government to maintain as it recognises that First Nations people are integral to our national culture.
- Strong Cultural Infrastructure: We believe this emphasises the organisations and environment that make a vibrant arts sector possible.
- Engaging the Audience: Emphasising engaging the wider population, this pillar challenges the notion that the arts are only for those who can afford them.

Overall, our cohort believes that the pillars are logical, clear and provide a path for the industry to follow.

Below we have listed the weaknesses:

- Sustainability and stability of the policy: We are concerned that the policy will easily be abandoned in change of government, or that there are no enforceable legislations being considered.
- Funding structure: The current funding structure does not provide support for independent artists, in particular emerging artists. The structure also provides funding for one-off events, rather than long-term sustainable funding for artists to continue their practice.
- Education: There is a lack of support for tertiary education, and we would like to see this remedied. We are seeing arts degrees increase in price to substitute other degrees, and we believe this is unfair.

Why do the five pillars matter to you and your practice?

As students, each coming from a variety of different fields within the Arts and Cultural sectors, and as active participants in the sector, we believe that having a clear policy that addresses key weaknesses within the current cultural network is foundational for development. The five pillars matter to us as they directly impact our daily lives and our hope for a better future. We believe that each pillar tackles its own issue within the Arts and Cultural sector and that each is important in order to create a strong and thriving cultural sector.

Our University is a multi-cultural environment where each experiences Australia and contributes to it differently, explaining why the first two pillars (‘First Nations First’ and ‘A place for every story’) matter to us deeply. We, students and staff, acknowledge that we learn, work and create on the land of First Nations people and understand how integral First Nations people are to our national culture. People that are part of our cohort all have different backgrounds and therefore believe that the inclusivity highlighted in the first two pillars of *Revive* bring to the cultural sector is extremely important.

Being artists ourselves, and/or engaging with artists and cultural institutions, we understand the importance of the centrality of the artist in the formation of a sustainable and flourishing cultural sector, and also understand that it is organisations and companies that make arts possible, which is why the third and fourth pillars of *Revive* matter to us too.

Lastly, we believe that the pillar ‘Engaging the audience’ places emphasis on how to engage more of the population in the arts, breaking down the stigma that arts is only for the financial elite and betters the cultural sector by making it more accessible and inclusive, something our cohort can appreciate as it increases our possibilities to channel a positive impact on our society.

What would you like to see reflected in the next National Cultural Policy?

The next iteration of policy must be determined by values that respect the vitality of the arts and cultural sectors at all levels, mediums, and sizes. Policy needs to support and progress the importance of cultural wellbeing both within the sector and for the greater population. The national cultural policy must focus on long-term sustainability and stability through practical methods that create equitable funding distribution, representation and opportunities. The importance of cultural wellbeing both within the sector and for the greater population must be supported and developed through special attention to engagement in arts and culture. Cultural policy must further support diversity and vibrancy from the foundational inclusion of First Nations practices and stories, by attending to the cross-ministerial nature of culture and recognising that the health of Australian cultural life is drawn from many departments.

The nature of work in the arts can be precarious and often poorly paid, undermining the significance of the work. However, the government has the ability to ease the level of inconsistency and support the strength of the industry. Investigating and implementing a model of basic income for artists, as has been successfully achieved elsewhere internationally, would improve Australia’s cultural might internationally and support the stability of the sector domestically. Integrating artists into the Australian welfare system is the provision of care for those expressing the nation’s cultural identity and articulating the priority of the sector.

In addition, the health of arts and cultural sectors is reliant on the provision of support at all levels. Consistent funding for small to medium actors including individuals, venues and production spaces ensures vitality across the industry, instead of concentrating funds in major organisations. Expanding the grant models used by Creative Australia including microgrants,

scholarships and trusts will support the industry at all levels, nurturing spaces, art forms and people at all levels.

Emerging arts and cultural workers must be better supported through education and training. An increase in federal support for tertiary arts education equal to other domains recognises the significance of the work for the cultural wellbeing of the whole population and the continuity of the industry. This must primarily include Centrelink recognition of cultural workers through broadening eligibility of arts degrees for Youth Allowance, Austudy, ABSTUDY and Jobseeker to recognise the advantage of training for the sector. The Higher Education Contribution Scheme must also be re-examined to recognise the vitality of cultural workers as aligned with other disciplines.

Embedding arts education more closely in early education and secondary education is essential to fostering an understanding of social, cultural, and economic value of artistic practice. Through involvement in arts practice from early education, the widely-held conception of arts careers as frivolous and lacking contribution is challenged. It will further increase desire to engage in cultural activities and practices and support social wellbeing, cohesion and community.

Expanded financial incentivisation of audiences are required to ensure sustenance and growth. A structure of mixed methods such as vouchers, digital currency, tickets benefits and standardising a structure of demographic differentiated ticketing diversify and increase the ability for audiences to engage in various aspects of arts and culture. Respect for the industry and creative labour from the level of education to retirement must be supported by improved engagement by and accessibility for audiences at all ages in order to create an abundant future for Australia's creative wellbeing and broader cultural ecology.