

National Cultural Policy Submission

1472144

Public

Individual

Agnes Michelet



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Dear Minister,

Yesterday, on a rainy afternoon, I watched for two hours two artists at the top of their craft, illuminating with their presence the large space I have the privilege to care for. The large doors were open for anyone to come in or out as they pleased. About 40 curious minds came in. They all stayed, transfixed, gently rocked by uttered words, the muted electric wails of a guitar, two casually clothed bodies moving with the power of their long-gained practice on the dark floor, holding us to this moment.

This is my artform, dance. My duty is to look after choreographers, to give them space, to offer them respite when the pressures of simply existing as artist in contemporary Australia are too high. My space has more than a 20-year dance history, it exists like a fort by the Sydney harbour. The fight to retain its integrity as a dance space never goes away. My mission is to look after artists in the belief that their searching will go far-reaching in time. A large battered black and white photo hangs high in the reception. We see at work Ryuichi Fujimura, Raghav Handa, Jane McKernan. They are amongst our contemporary treasures.

There were times when my organisation had resources to invite an artist for a month-long lab with 10 paid choreographers, when international artists were regular guests invited for workshops and participants paid to attend, when five to six choreographers annually could be offered supported residencies. Until last year, I could sustain the engagement of a First Nations curator as core. Today, with no indexation of State funding since 2012, unsecured federal funding, and minimal Council support, we still stand as one of the “lucky” ones, proudly advocating for our mission which artists dearly defend. The space is there, wages have gone. Like the suburban trees taken down one after the other in the invisibility of the mass, I see artists slowly disappearing, swallowed by administrative jobs in the very institutions which should support them, giving up.

The centrality of the artist IS our pillar.

Numerous studies prove that dance is good for our brains, our bodies, our human intelligence, from cradle to death. Yesterday afternoon, we could feel it in our guts. The rain sounded softer, the landscape had brightened in the mist, we felt warm inside.

Ivey Wawn and Rhiannon Newton had offered the gift of their art. They gave us comfort from a week of submitting applications to the only round offered by our State until the end of 2027! The questions asked were discombobulating, all to do with AI's idea of a business plan? Nothing to do with art-making!

Revive has a simple task: let artists be with the support they deserve as any Australian, a wage for their work; when they make, when they train, when they take leave, when they are sick, when they negotiate, when they plan, when they pass on, when they dream.

Agnes Michelet

Artistic Director, Critical Path

Granville, 24 May 2026