

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Thank you for allowing submissions to the review of the National Cultural Policy. It is vitally important that we have a policy that supports and appropriately values the Arts, and arts workers, in Australia.

Who Am I:

I'm an actor and director, having graduated from NIDA in 2008, and with almost two decades of experience working in theatre, film, and television. Notable films include BUCKLEY'S CHANCE starring Bill Nighy, and ELLIE & ABBIE, AND ELLIE'S DEAD AUNT by Monica Zanetti. I've performed as an actor for the Sydney Theatre Company, Belvoir St Theatre, Bell Shakespeare and Melbourne Theatre Company. I have also performed in numerous Independent Theatre productions, including well established and under-supported companies such as Siren Theatre Company.

Challenges:

Despite what some might call a comparatively successful career in performance and theatre, my annual earnings are frequently less than \$60k per year. I have had to work part time as a yoga teacher to sustain myself. Due to the nature of work being made on a freelance basis, I present terribly on paper, and constantly have difficulties securing rental properties. The option of home ownership is completely impossible.

The current expectations of working for free in Independent theatre de-value artists and the work they make. Over my 18yr career, I would have offered close to 10,000 hours of unpaid labour in an effort to \break into\, paid work. Even now, with a decent reputation to my name, I am still often having to work for free to continue the momentum of my career and maintain my craft. In no other industry is this acceptable; it would be considered preposterous to have medical professionals expected to do free labour 18 years into their careers in order to keep their skills sharp. There is an unclear, and unsupported, trajectory from tertiary artistic training to the theatre and film industry; even once semi-established as an artist, there are no structural supports to career growth or skills enhancement. Often the term \feast or famine\, is used to describe the realities of an artist's career.

Suggestions:

1) Strong Cultural Infrastructure: Fund Arts like Sport.

The federal government should fund a 10yr National Arts and Culture Strategy that creates pathways for artists, similar to what is already established in sport; from junior sport to professional athletes.

2) Centrality of the Artist: Basic Living Wages for artists.

When covid provided artists lucky enough to meet the criteria for \$750 per week in support, we celebrated. For most artists, this was a pay increase. The Prime Minister at the time stated \if one of us does it tough, we all do it tough\, in an attempt to appease high income earners. A basic universal income for artists needn't be costly. Overseas there are clear examples from France and Ireland of the success of two and three year long guaranteed wages for artists, with positive social, cultural, and economic outcomes.

3) A Place For Every Story: Create Policy that Protects Diversity.

I'm trans. And one of the key reasons I chose to transition so late in life is because of the risk it poses to my career as a performer. It would be hugely supportive to see more structures in place that support minorities (indigenous, disability, LGBTQIA+, immigrants, etc). Structural support such as funding, requirements and inclusion quotas in companies, and upskilling programs for members of those minorities.

Thank you for reading my submission.

