

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

The new National Cultural Policy should draw on the wisdom developed in the 1990s at a time when there was maximum optimism for the Arts generating, reflecting and strengthening culture in place and in community. It was a time of many voices, democratisation and experimentation!

Go and read the research and revisit the artistic work of that period. And consider some of the wonderful results and optimism of that period and its leading edge in community cultural development.

Small to medium community arts organisations need to exist in every community; like the Health Centre, there needs to be an Art centre, that employs local qualified and passionate people and runs open access, free or low cost workshops, and connects youth, elders and vulnerable people together, through shared endeavour. People need to be funded on a mid to long term basis so that they stay in place. Short term project funding does not work and is not sustainable for humans (which we already know).

I worked for 25 years at PACT, St Martins, Shopfront, Curiousworks, Belvoir and Performance Space, Playworks and Playbox (now Malthouse) and I have never seen the sector more depleted and more fragile.

I left to become a teacher in Liverpool as I wanted to keep working in community, on social change and through the arts - however it is fundamentally different to what can be achieved in a small to medium company which is highly reflexible and responsive.

The arts gets into unique places in society - connecting psyche, dreaming and reality - and builds unusual and deep alliances between groups of people. Artistic access, exchange and collaboration creates deep healing and builds resilience in communities.

Fund it publicly, generously and with optimism and trust in results. Healthy, happy people in communities of connection.

Cultural wellbeing is a metric that is well known to shape lives. Subsistence living, surviving and begging for survival is the antithesis and damages people's health. Equity is access to spaces of revival and renewal - of the spirit. Inequity is arts for the few - and this is the system being propagated when we withdraw public funding and support for artistic endeavour, unless it can attract the money of the powerful.

I stand with the arts and people around the country and expect an ambitious, embracing policy with generosity and scope that matches our need for healing and renewal, right now.

Without it, we can already see the global results of starving the spirit and increased inequity. I endorse the principles of the revive group, led by Paschall Berry who articulate how to get to a great policy, and to back that with action.

I anticipate a Policy which embraces - Public funding for Australian arts in community - with the right infrastructure to thrive, the wisdom to build off past strengths, and the vision to heal and uplift through the act of art making in community.