

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Organisation

Spinning Plates Co



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Spinning Plates Co is an independent theatre company—two actors who have chosen to pursue a career in the arts. Our work has been critically-acclaimed, awarded, and deemed essential to Melbourne’s current theatrical landscape. Because there’s no living wage for artists in this country (unlike Ireland), and paid theatre jobs are scarce, we self-fund and produce our own work so we can do what we love. Essentially, we pay lots of money from our own pockets for the privilege of putting on a great piece of theatre at one of Melbourne’s more well-known, hireable theatre spaces.

The maths is simple but devastating: despite sold-out seasons and rave reviews, we’ve still ended up in the red. Our budget spending is NOT exorbitant; our creative team work within incredibly restrictive budgets to create work to the best of their ability, in exchange for small honorariums or profit share. Currently, most artists on our team receive approximately 7% of MEAA’s mandated wage and we struggle to offer even that. To offer a proper wage, tickets would need to be \$180—which no theatre goer can reasonably afford in the current climate.

But the venue costs are too high. These theatres are merely trying to pay their own rent; if the government covered the rental costs for these theatres, then the theatres could actually focus on supporting their artists, and we could stand a chance of breaking even—or actually making a profit. As it stands, most independent theatre companies operate on a profit share model, which leaves the artists with either empty pockets, or a few bits of loose change.

Our dream is that we can make a living wage off our art and properly pay the artists who work on our shows.

Another huge issue is the importing of overseas artists into lead roles—particularly in our film and TV. These artists may add star-power, driving up potential investors, but it leaves the product confused and distinctly un-Australian. Australia’s lauded film identity of the past now feels non-existent. This pushes established Australian actors into supporting roles; consequently, the ladder has been pulled up for the rest of us. We’re relegated to the mere hope of an audition for a “50-wornder”—an embarrassment in exchange for the decades of independent industry experience and tens of thousands of dollars poured into local training institutions.

Australia’s local reinvestment mandate for streaming revenue is a shameful 7.5%, while the European Union’s is over 20%. No wonder our most successful artists head overseas at the first opportunity. Our government needs to invest more in its own, local artists. There is INCREDIBLE independent theatre being made and staged in Melbourne, yet the everyday person has no idea these theatres even exist. Our hope is that the new National Cultural Policy pours money back into funding Australian artists across theatre, film and TV. That it celebrates and upholds the great medium of theatre, supporting hard-working, talented local artists to keep bringing work to its stages.