

National Cultural Policy Submission

1472277

Public and anonymous

Individual



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Hello! I am a freelance sound designer, playwright and composer working in the independent and mainstage theatre sector.

I am also an independent musician, private music teacher and drama facilitator for young people.

I studied a Comms/Theatre undergraduate and obtained my masters in writing for performance from NIDA in 2016, and after a decade of attempting to establish a sustainable career as an artist, I have observations about my experience and the system that produces experiences like mine.

I am not in the minority when it comes to freelance artists who wear \,many hats\,. When people joke that artists don't want to work \,normal jobs\, because we don't like the hours, I have to agree; myself and every freelance artist I know works MUCH MORE than a full-time work week! Between needing multiple income streams to offset the meagre pay in my field and rising costs of living, it is not tenable to prioritise a balanced working week.

This, combined with the nature of casual employment (lack of super/sick pay/leave), contributes to a pattern of constantly burning myself out, and becoming too sick to work, sacrificing any income altogether. It would be beneficial to receive support in the form of government supported health leave to supplement missed income and this viscous cycle from continuing.

In addition, govt supported super contributions would be beneficial, as quite often the nature of unregulated, low fee casual employment results in an inability to prioritise super. It is not a lack of financial literacy that sees many arts workers fall behind in their later years, but rather working at a significant disadvantage for most of their careers.

The majority of my work is subject to the discretion of production company budgets and this will determine if I am paid an award rate, if at all. Regulation or financial/grant writing assistance and greater structural support to independent producing bodies would mean artists don't just rely on the profit-share model to support themselves - under profit share models, artists are only paid for a fraction of the time they give to creating work of a professional Standard.

Because there are unclear pathways linking the mainstage, funded work and the self-funded independent sector, the standard for delivery in Indie theatre is exceptionally high; every job could be your \,magical ticket\, to your next paid gig, even if that job has a tenth of the budget required to execute to that standard. It would be beneficial for more initiatives to mentor, unskill or transition freelancers were made available and more support given to mainstage establishments in order to broaden their capacity to on-board new artists, as well as continue to support established artists.

As there are only a finite and infinitesimal amount of full-paid design positions available, an entire generation of emerging designers like myself are needing to choose between being able to feed and support ourselves and taking on the next job which may or may not create future opportunities. As a result, artists with no financial safety net are less likely to continue, weakening our robust community and systemically erasing the perspectives of creatives from certain sociocultural backgrounds. I myself am lucky to have a safety net, but if even I am struggling, what hope do others have?

We are open to greater design union support, also.