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Can this inquiry turn the tide?

Over half the review panel members are from art forms dealing with words or a background in words. Hopefully these skills will bear fruit for all the arts in Australia. Dance, visual arts and music have much lower representation. Dancers, visual artists and musicians tell stories too, just in different ways. Many genres of music, such as our professional orchestral sector, are not represented on the review panels at all.

One in 24 experts on the panels are from WA, and none from Perth. WA per capita lags continually in Federal arts support, further compounded in regional areas where many First Nations people live. These regions suffer from long-term deficient public investment in the arts, along with education and health. For Western Australia, national policy must account for place and scale. Distance, higher touring and freight costs, regional and remote communities, First Nations cultural leadership, proximity to Asia and the Indian Ocean, and the need for equitable national visibility all require explicit recognition. **In terms of WA, in so many ways, the Australian arts “flagship” model is broken.**

In 1977 aged 19, I began a continuous professional symphonic career and instrumental teacher. I endorse the excellent and comprehensive submission from the Media, Arts and Entertainment Alliance. Arts and culture are much more than funding - they are how we build ourselves as individuals and as a society. We need a system for improved implementation of the pillars, clearer investment tools and better coordination across government portfolios and jurisdictions to increase ethical, sustained investment, to reverse decades of lag, in terms of inflation and per capita.

I encourage the Australian Government to adopt a policy that strengthens creative careers, prioritizes arts education as a national capability strategy, supports a national audience and participation scheme, and aligns cultural policy with education, regional development, health, diplomacy and social cohesion. For example, arts education implementation would mean building every school with a hall to create a level playing field for all students in the arts. One student studying Year 12 music performance at a large Perth suburban high school will soon be examined playing her instrument at advanced level in a facility not designed for music.

Culture should be treated as public infrastructure. It supports belonging, identity, education, wellbeing, social cohesion, democratic participation, regional liveability and Australia's relationships with the world. Cultural infrastructure is not only buildings. It includes artists, cultural workers, programming, operations, governance, local relationships, touring systems, digital access, data, education pathways and community trust. Investment in physical assets must therefore be matched by investment in the people and systems that make those assets culturally productive. For flawed funding arrangements and governance reasons (as well explained in the MEAA submission), my orchestra has replaced a harp player with four philanthropy managers.

Much greater attention is urgently needed to consider the impacts and ethics of chasing sponsorship and philanthropy. **Arts infrastructure and governance must be changed so it can be driven by artists themselves and remain in public hands.**