

National Cultural Policy Submission

1472342

Public and anonymous

Individual



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)



The critical challenge as I see it is the fragility of the local arts ecology within [REDACTED] especially within the genre of theatre and live performance. An internal [REDACTED] government brief revealed the [REDACTED] invested in 2024/25, supporting the arts, festivals, cultural heritage etc, amounted to less than [REDACTED] per person, the lowest of every state and territory in Australia. Even more damning is the fact that this investment has not materially changed since 2016-17.

When I was a student seeking a career, the presence at the time of both a theatre-in-education and a professional theatre company in [REDACTED], the former performing in my public high school, was the catalyst for my commitment to my vocation. Now, as an established local actor here in [REDACTED] there are no professional theatre companies in operation. Five years ago, there were two.

My concern is not nostalgic, it's pragmatic: there can be no talk of 'career pathways', 'visitor economy attractions' nor [REDACTED] without a fundamental reckoning that investment in the arts by this state, let alone the country, needs to address, at the very least, CPI increases as every other sector demands. If governments at all levels truly value the arts in all its forms, locations and manifestations, show us the money!

What is so baffling for established, mid-career artists such as myself is the fact that returns on investment in the arts are so evident: the \$500,000 the State Government contributed to the Netflix production of 'The Survivors', drew in \$8 million for the local economy. It is enervating spending your professional life arguing for your worth. Politicians of all identities are very comfortable speaking to the advantages of a culturally dynamic sector and all the advantages that brings and contributes to a socially cohesive, stable and dynamic community, but exceedingly reluctant to actually pay for it.

What is the opportunity being lost? With no ongoing professional theatre presence in [REDACTED], a generation of [REDACTED] students are not being exposed to local stories, written by local writers, crafted by local creatives, fuelling their dreams of working in this sector. Outreach to diverse communities, touring work within the state, expanding the art form and sustaining audiences and the communities they live in, are all waning.

If nothing else, I would love to see the new National Cultural Policy champion how to invest finite finances, across all tiers of government, cognisant of social demographics, to ensure our arts and culture system delivers for all Australians and does so in line with OECD modelling. But one example articulated in A New Approach: 'Australia's tax system can play a role ... by facilitating financial inflows and streamlining operations'. I welcome whatever it takes to systemically address the inequities and lack of appetite to recommit meaningful government subsidy for the arts to boost productivity within our cultural sector so that artists can get on with the job.