

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I have worked in Australia's cultural sector for over 30 years, as a writer, editor, theatre-maker, and event producer. For 25 of those years, I was employed at a senior level in community engagement at a national cultural institution. My responsibilities included delivering event, education and research programs, publishing, and fundraising.

I have seen incredible changes in Australia's cultural life over that time. Technological change has, for good and ill, transformed the delivery of cultural programs and resources. Trove, delivered by the National Library of Australia, for example, has transformed research practices. But despite many changes, the financial position of the majority of Australia's arts workers, cultural institutions and organisations remains precarious.

Data released by the Office of the Arts last year shows that Australia's creative sector contributes \$67 billion to GDP. Economic benefits are not the end of the story. There is a large body of research that demonstrates the positive impact of the sector on health and wellbeing, democracy, diplomacy, social cohesion and learning. The arts are not a 'nice-to-have'. They are essential to the well-being and success of a society.

I am grateful for the initiatives introduced in Revive to assist with the sustainability of careers in the cultural sector and support the focus on the Five Pillars. However, the impacts of Covid-19 on the sector, cost of living increases, and the reliance on short-term contracts for workers means that arts workers continue to live unsustainable lives, often below the poverty line. An unsustainable sector, where arts workers and organisations are focused on short-term survival, risks the well-being of the nation.

I am calling for:

Support for Sustainable Careers

- Tax reform to support creators and arts workers, including tax-free treatment of prizes and grants.
- Exploring solutions to the rising costs, notably insurance and production costs, faced by organisations and individuals delivering creative programs. The costs of insurance, in particular, inhibit innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Piloting a 'basic income for the arts' scheme, drawing on the experience of Ireland, and testing whether it is viable in the Australian context.

Growing Audiences for Australian Stories

- Embedding cultural experiences in schools so that all children have an opportunity to develop a love for books, theatre, music, dance that tell Australian stories. This might include national funding for school libraries and librarians, as well as creator-in-school programs.
- Providing incentives for organisations such as streamers, digital platforms, publishers, theatre companies, concert promoters to include significant Australian content in their programming. For example, international musical acts be required to include Australian bands as support acts; incentives for theatre companies to program new Australian plays.

As a member of Marion Ink, the ACT's writers centre, I support the submissions of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) and Books Create Australia.

Yours sincerely,

Kathryn Favelle