

National Cultural Policy Submission

1472384

Public

Individual

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

2011

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

As an arts worker in the visual arts sector for over 50 years, I agree broadly with the five key pillars of the Cultural Policy, but I can see key areas for future improvement. Both relate to the visual arts sector, in its widest conception, which in the current Creative Australia makeup does not have a dedicated Visual Arts reference and decision-making body: in short, there is no body of visual arts industry experts, such as Writing Australia for example, offers to writers and to literature.

This lack of a group/board/council that would engage in broad and informed forward planning for the sector is sorely felt. Currently the sector lacks the ability to undertake strategic planning under the leadership of Creative Australia, which has in fact served it well for many decades.

The Australian visual arts sector is vibrant, internationally significant, and a hybrid place of multi-disciplinary invention of the most exciting kind. Its broad embrace takes in First Nations artists, performance in all its forms, digital storytelling and experiment of many kinds, design, and crafting, as well as the making of arts objects of all kinds, to name some of the adjacent fields of endeavour. However, such a volatile hybrid space, which is constantly changing, requires careful and consistent attention to its development if it is to thrive. And it urgently needs sophisticated specialised knowledge - these urgent needs are well summed up in the submission made by the fourteen CAOAs organisations. (Disclosure: I am currently Chair of 4A.)

It has been abundantly clear in the last eighteen months that the lack of a dedicated visual arts council has led to several disastrous outcomes, which have damaged the lives and careers of Australian artists, and the reputation of

Australia's cultural seriousness: I refer to the debacle surrounding the selection, decommissioning and subsequent reinstatement of Khaled Sabsabi for the Australian Pavilion at the 61st Venice Biennale. This caused the entire cultural sector to question the wisdom of Creative Australia, when it was obliged to defend CA's own artist selection procedures. In my entire working life, which has included many stints on Australia Council committees and boards, including as Deputy Chair and Acting Chair of the Visual Arts Board between 1994-98, and a period as Acting Chair on the Australia Council itself, I have never witnessed such a comprehensive policy failure, and hope never to again.

Recently it has been evident that the defunding of the Australian Design Centre, Sydney, has been caused partly by the inability of Creative Australia, in its current makeup, to make policy and intervene decisively to take industry development forward. Craft and design are crucial for telling Australian stories, and for developing ideas to be mobilised through industrial production, but only with careful assistance.

I urge Creative Australia to attend, now, to the vibrant and exceptional visual arts sector by forming a dedicated group of industry experts.