

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Craft is a poor cousin in current arts policy and practice in Australia.

I strongly support the establishment of a Council for the Visual Arts, Craft and Design alongside the existing councils for Music and Writing, as well as a Ministerial Council for Arts and Culture.

Proper resourcing of established not-for-profit organisations that enables cultural participation, creativity, encourages social cohesion and inclusion throughout Australia and the wider Indian Ocean region is essential as is advocacy and representation by craft practitioners on advisory bodies and national policy making teams. These teams can be further enhanced by inclusion of people with regional voices, or from immigrant backgrounds.

First Nations First

First Nations craft traditions in WA are significant and constantly included by organisations like Indian Ocean Craft Triennial (IOTA) in plans, initiatives and exhibitions. They deserve special recognition alongside visual arts. IOTA also works with first nations people from other cultures – from across the Indian Ocean – they too have a voice and a story worth sharing. Often too, a craft skill worth sharing, perhaps one that was already shared through trade across the Indian Ocean some hundreds of years ago.

A place for every story

Craft is one of the most democratic forms of cultural expression, basic and shared around the world. Regional and working-class Australians make and participate in craft in ways they do not in ballet or opera. Craft can significantly enhance social cohesion and inclusion, especially in regional areas. The stories we tell, we listen to, can challenge us, can wake us up. Our policies and funding mechanisms must be mindful of these variations and possibilities.

Centrality of the Artist

Craft workers are artists and workers but lack the career pathways, recognition and grant infrastructure that other art forms receive. The Irish Government's initiative to pay artists a basic wage is worthy of consideration.

Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Regional WA has no dedicated craft infrastructure; IOTA is filling a gap but needs longer term federal backing to continue trying to reach beyond metropolitan areas AND internationally. Little research has been done to identify the networks and possibilities, available or lacking, in regional WA. 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 must be considered.

Engaging the audiences

Craft as such, has a huge audience here and overseas, as well as making significant contributions to GDP in many countries. It is not being served by national policy frameworks in Australia. Audiences do not only want theatre, music, digital and film entertainment.

It is desirable that this Policy Advisory group also consider craft and visual arts and create a relevant Ministerial Council.

We need a system that delivers improved implementation of the pillars, clearer, fairer investment tools and better coordination across government portfolios and jurisdictions.