

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous

Individual



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

My main desire for the Cultural Policy is that it supports independence: we need independent publishing houses, we need organisations to not be lobbied, we need our government arts bodies not to be lobbied or bullied by [REDACTED] as per Khaled Sabsabi.

We need to support literature and within that smaller organisations to exist and thrive – those that often give writers their starts: literary journals, local events and smaller independent publishing houses. At the moment more investment goes to prop up failing cultural institutions than small-to-medium sized (S2M) organisations, which consistently outperform their larger counterparts in terms of reach, representation, access and return on investment.

My main focus though is that government spending on arts and culture should be proportionate to evidence of its impact and value over lobbying interests.

On a related note: taking its lead from the Australian Government, arts and cultural organisations have recently discovered a newfound duty to preserve ‘social cohesion’ – over and above their stated purpose or values, and apparently redefined to mean social consensus, conformity and coercion. Australia has entered its ‘cultural McCarthyism’ era, characterised by rising authoritarianism, regressive legislative change, deepening cultural unsafety, racism and religious intolerance, and an unprecedented increase in arts and cultural censorship.

At last count, 70 Australian arts and cultural organisations initiatives and groups have been accused of many more instances of censoring, threatening or otherwise harming their own artists, cultural workers or audiences between 2023 and 2026 alone (on top of many others harmed by those outside our sector).

This has not only happened in the time of Revive, but been explicitly enacted by Premiers, Ministers and statutory authorities (amongst others) – making hypocrites of policy makers, funders and cultural organisations, and increasing the risks they hoped their actions would avoid.

Prioritisation of such problematic and inconsistent definitions of ‘social cohesion’ over organisational purpose and basic human rights must be immediately stopped and reversed – and its devastating impacts repaired.

The arts must not be subject to censorship and lobbyists. Art has many roles in society but important ones are: to challenge, to unsettle, to provoke, to inspire and to represent. Bowing to media and lobby campaign against a certain artist or arts worker or festival etc. truly undermines freedom of expression in this country and the very existence of our democracy. If you silence artists and the arts, you silence debate and you silence criticism. That’s how democracy is eroded.

