

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Australian Government's next National Cultural Policy as a disabled practising visual artist, arts worker and educator. I understand the sacrifices unsupported creative work demands and which this policy has the opportunity to address. Based on unceded Wadawurrung Country in Ballaarat, I acknowledge that this continent has been a place of creativity, teaching, learning and sharing since time began. To honour this legacy into the future will require meaningful investment and recognition that the arts depend not only on audiences and institutions, but on the labour and wellbeing of artists themselves.

While the five pillars of *Revive* remain important, especially 'First Nations First', which, led by First Peoples, should foreground all decision-making, the next National Cultural Policy must go further in addressing financial barriers to creative work. Specifically, the 'Centrality of the Artist' pillar needs to move beyond symbolism and into economic policy. At a minimum, artists need secure income, fair pay and superannuation. [The Visual Arts Work report](#) found that the average income from a visual art or craft practice in 2023-24 was \$13,937 (well below the poverty line); that 82% of artists supplement their income through other work; and that arts workers earned an average of \$63,031 compared with \$100,017 earned by the general workforce. This reflects my experience. Although I'm highly qualified, completing a practice-led PhD in 2024, I work long hours, sometimes seven days per week, for which I'm often underpaid. Last financial year, I earned \$4,448 from my creative practice. During the same period, I worked three additional jobs, all on insecure contracts or a casual basis, earning \$49,250.

I make four specific calls to policymakers:

Implement a national universal basic income scheme for artists. This would ensure a regular, fair income to sustain creative practice and address income precarity. Such a program has benefits for all, seen through Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts pilot, which was recently made permanent. [The Conversation](#) reported that for every €1 of public money invested, society received €1.39 in return. Artists participating in the program also reported better mental health, general wellbeing and productivity because 'they were less stressed about their finances'. Formal employment status would also enable independent artists and arts workers—not considered employees if they operate as sole traders—to organise.

Connect public funding to fair pay for artists. Increase public funding so organisations are required and resourced to meet [NAVA's Payment Standards](#).

Address income tax for artists. [As NAVA suggests](#), artists' income is often uneven, with some years of higher earnings due to grants, prizes or commissions alongside longer periods of low income due to significant amounts of unpaid or underpaid labour. Targeted reform is needed to ensure tax obligations don't outweigh the financial value of these accomplishments.

Citizenship status should not determine funding eligibility. Creative Australia funding eligibility should include Australian residents for tax purposes, not only citizens and permanent residents.

I am happy to discuss any aspect of this submission further.