

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

Eleanor Swan

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

To the Ministry for the Arts, and the Honourable Tony Burke,

My name is Eleanor Swan. I'm a writer, a director, a prop-maker, dramaturg and youth arts advocate. People in my industry would affectionately call me a 'slashie', a person who populates their career with a million different creative jobs. I have wanted to be a creative since I saw my first play at age 5, and it wouldn't have been at all impossible without an education in the arts.

I believe that young people, and education, should be a key pillar in our next cultural policy. We have already seen funding for youths arts organisations drop dramatically, the production of Australian-made children's television fall by over ninety percent and the cost of university arts degrees almost double in cost. Seeing an Australian story on the screen or on stage is something reserved for adults, and the chance to become an artist is something reserved for the most privileged in our society. Australian culture should represent the full breadth of experiences of Australian people, and in order to do this, we need artists of every walk of life, telling stories for both adults and young people. This can't happen if our pathways into the arts are inaccessible.

My recommendations for the new cultural policy:

Fund Art Like Sport

Sport has the privilege of being funded holistically in Australia, with the government recognising that the sports industry would not be possible without the training and support of young people in sports. The same should go for our arts sector. As much as theatre companies, screen bodies and other cultural institutions need support to provide financially-viable jobs within the arts industry, arts education and youth arts need support to prepare young artists for the industry and participate in our audiences.

Make Young People a pillar in our cultural policy.

When Screen Australia was founded, the legislation declared that Screen Australia's purpose was to provide valuable entertainment to Australian audiences, and Australian young people. However, with limited resources, arts companies prioritise stories for adult audiences, overlooking young people. Arts and storytelling is our main method of educating young people in what it means to be Australian. It is vitally important to the continuation of our culture to include young people, and therefore should be of the utmost importance to our cultural policies.

I was lucky enough to grow up surrounded by the arts. It taught me how to think critically, express my emotions and be Australian. While the arts have been inadequately supported and funded by our government as a whole, our young people have been impacted the most. Without proper support for education in the arts, we risk losing our culture entirely. Young people want to be involved in the arts. They are passionate about storytelling and eager to participate in our cultural scene. For that reason, I believe they deserve to be recognised in our next cultural policy.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Swan