

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous

Individual



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

As a sculptor and art teacher, I've watched the cultural landscape in New South Wales shift in ways that genuinely worry me. The closure of so many galleries in recent years isn't just a professional concern, it feels like a loss for our entire community. These spaces are more than rooms with artworks on walls and plinths; they are places where people from all walks of life can encounter ideas, beauty, challenge, and connection.

Yet these spaces are disappearing, largely because of chronic underinvestment in cultural infrastructure. Australia's public funding for culture remains well below that of many OECD countries - nations like England, France, Germany, and the Nordic states treat cultural life as a public good, not a luxury. When investment falls short, the consequences are immediate: galleries close, programs shrink, artists leave the sector, and communities lose access to the cultural experiences that help them thrive.

As a Western country, Australia shouldn't allow materialistic pressures to erode the cultural foundations that shape our identity. Public investment is not just about supporting artists; it's about supporting the wellbeing of society. When the government steps back, the cultural ecosystem weakens — and once lost, these spaces are incredibly hard to rebuild.

I see every day — through my students and through the audiences who engage with my work — just how powerful art can be. Attending exhibitions and cultural events offers far more than entertainment. These experiences create opportunities for social interaction, community engagement, and a genuine sense of belonging. Visiting an exhibition can foster connectedness in much the same way that participating in a sporting event does; both bring people together around shared moments and shared meaning.

More and more research is showing that engaging with art has measurable benefits for individual health and wellbeing. A recent study highlighted in CNN, for example, found that regular involvement in the arts can support healthier ageing and improve overall quality of life. This only reinforces what many of us in the cultural sector already know: art is essential - it is a vital part of a healthy, connected society.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2026/05/14/health/arts-ageing-study-scli-intl-wellness>

And learning about art- understanding the processes, the risks, the imagination involved - opens people up to new ways of thinking. It encourages curiosity, empathy, and the ability to think outside the box. These are not small things; they are essential skills for a healthy, creative, forward looking society.

That's why the decline in cultural spaces matters so deeply. Without sustained support, we risk losing not only our galleries but the cultural confidence of the nation. Australia deserves a cultural sector that matches the richness of its people — and that requires meaningful, long term investment.