

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

As an artist, architect, arts organiser and community arts administrator, I strongly support a National Cultural Policy that recognises artists as workers, not hobbyists. The centrality of the artist is essential, but it must be matched by practical support: fair pay, safer working conditions, accessible funding, affordable spaces, and stronger protections for creative rights in digital environments.

The next cultural policy should also recognise the importance of grassroots and artist-led communities. Much cultural participation happens outside major institutions, through volunteer-led groups, local exhibitions, online communities, shared studios, small galleries and independent initiatives. These spaces often create the first point of access for emerging, isolated, regional, disabled, culturally diverse, or financially excluded artists.

The five pillars remain important, particularly A Place for Every Story, Centrality of the Artist, Strong Cultural Infrastructure, and Engaging the Audience. The consultation paper notes that culture strengthens communities, supports wellbeing, drives innovation and contributes significantly to the economy, with cultural and creative activity contributing \$67.4 billion and employing over 591,000 people in 2023 to 2024.

What I would like to see reflected in the next National Cultural Policy is a stronger commitment to accessible cultural infrastructure at the local level. Artists need places to make, present, gather, experiment and connect. This includes affordable exhibition spaces, practical support for artist-run initiatives, funding for community-led programming, and better pathways between local practice and national recognition.

The policy should also address the realities of contemporary creative work. Artists are expected to produce work, promote themselves, manage administration, build audiences, document process, apply for grants, navigate digital platforms, and often do substantial unpaid labour. Cultural policy needs to recognise this full ecology of work and support artists accordingly.

Australian culture is strongest when it is not limited to institutions or commercial success alone. It also lives in communities, informal networks, small rooms, shared projects, experimental spaces and the persistence of artists who continue creating despite financial and structural barriers. A future cultural policy should make those artists more visible, more supported, and more sustainable.