

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

For forty years, I have worked in secondary, tertiary, and community education, especially with vulnerable and marginalised people. For the past twenty-five years, I have also seen how powerfully the arts can change lives, particularly through the Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) sector. I am deeply concerned that this vital sector has not been formally recognised in the current cultural policy framework.

For more than two decades, I have brought [REDACTED] to rural and regional Victoria. In all my experience in education, few organisations have matched its ability to inspire personal, social, and cultural change.

Its performances and workshops have had an extraordinary impact, particularly by making the arts accessible and transformative for regional Victorians who are most disadvantaged.

For decades [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] has delivered performances and workshops across our region. Their work reaches mainstream secondary students and, crucially, young people outside mainstream education, including those experiencing homelessness, foster care, residential care, or involvement with the juvenile justice system. [REDACTED] also works with the teachers, youth workers, carers, child protection staff, and community leaders who support them.

The outcomes are often life-changing. In country areas, the challenges faced by marginalised people can be intensified by isolation, limited anonymity, and entrenched prejudice. Young people living with trauma, mental ill health, addiction, identity struggles, or caring responsibilities may feel particularly unseen and unsupported.

Many still assume these issues belong only to the city. Despite reports and repeated calls for action, too little changes. How do we shift that? The arts.

Over the decades, tens of thousands of people have echoed my experience, as shown in [REDACTED] extensive evaluations. Their work changes lives not only for participants, but also for the community members who witness their performances.

This was evident again on [REDACTED]'s most recent tour of north-east Victoria, when young people said they felt reassured that 'I'm not alone anymore' and inspired: "I don't feel so different now. These were kids like us ... maybe one day I could do something great too." More than 62% of audience members last year said the experience changed how they would view others: "This performance helped me be more understanding and less judgmental."

This is just one example of the extraordinary role the CACD sector plays nationwide across multidisciplinary artforms. If the National Cultural Policy is to improve equity and inclusion, the CACD sector must be formally recognised and funded accordingly.

For the sake of thousands of country people, especially the young, the marginalised, and the voiceless, I sincerely hope the draft National Cultural Policy can be revised. It must acknowledge that, for many Australians, especially the most disadvantaged, the CACD sector is their main pathway into arts and culture.