

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Vitalstatistix Inc.



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Australia's cultural policy articulates the importance of artists, yet the structural conditions required for viable and sustainable practice remain unaddressed.

Independent artists and producers operate within a project-based funding model that fails to account for the full lifecycle of creative work. Essential labour—development, producing, relationship-building, and post-presentation activity—remains largely unfunded, normalising a system in which artists subsidise the sector through unpaid work. This requires structural reform, including piloting a universal basic income for artists and expanding multi-year operational funding from four to six years to enable continuity, planning, and retention of expertise. Increased investment in fellowships for artists and arts leaders, is critical to support research, international engagement, and development of the sector.

Precarity is compounded by the absence of long-term pathways. While emerging artists receive targeted support, there are limited mechanisms to sustain mid-career and established practitioners, resulting in attrition and loss of cultural capital at the point where it is most valuable.

The experimental arts sector remains one of the most under-resourced and misunderstood parts of the ecology, despite its critical role in artist development and audience formation that supports many art forms. It operates as a pipeline for innovation while receiving disproportionately limited support. With adequate investment, Australia could become a leader in this space. Models such as the Experimental Commissioning Consortium, demonstrate how coordinated approaches unlock this potential.

The sector is experiencing a significant skills deficit, particularly in technical and production roles, resulting from workforce loss during COVID-19. Without intervention, this will continue to limit the scale and ambition of Australian work. A coordinated national technical workforce strategy is required to rebuild capacity, strengthen training pathways, and retain skilled workers.

Ambition must be matched with resources for implementation. Equity, access, and cultural safety carry real costs. Accessibility and audience development cannot be absorbed within existing project budgets without diminishing artistic outcomes and must be funded as core infrastructure. Leadership from people from diverse experience and backgrounds requires sustained investment in organisational capacity, workforce development, and culturally safe processes. Without this scaffolding, policy risks becoming procedural rather than transformative.

In relation to infrastructure and audiences, investment must extend beyond buildings to the conditions that enable participation. Many artists / organisations rely on ageing venues that are not fit for purpose in terms of accessibility or climate resilience. Audience development requires strategic, long-term, relationship-based investment.

If Australia seeks to achieve works of scale and international relevance, it requires a substantial increase in investment. Current funding levels do not align with policy ambition.

Artists / arts workers must be recognised and resourced as experts. Consultation must translate into trust, reflected in funding structures that support continuity and equity.

Recommendations:

UBI for artists.

Extend multi-year funding from four to six years to stabilise the sector and retain expertise.

Establish a technical workforce strategy.

Invest in Fellowships.