

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Organisation

The Dromana-Drive-In Pty Ltd

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am writing as the owner and operator of the Dromana 3 Drive-In, located on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria. Our Drive-In Cinema has been continuously operated by the same family since 1962, making it one of Australia's longest-running independent cinemas and an enduring part of Victoria's cultural landscape, currently 1 of only 2 drive-in theatres in

Victoria.

The Dromana 3 Drive-In is far more than an entertainment venue. It is a significant community and civic space where people come together for film, school events, fundraisers, festivals, live sport broadcasts, weddings and public celebrations. We regularly host student movie nights, school performances and graduation ceremonies on the big screen, while our annual New Year's Eve event combines local bands, children's entertainment, movies and fireworks for one of the region's major community gatherings.

Our venue is Heritage Victoria listed for its social and cultural significance and is also recognised by the National Trust. While these acknowledgements are appreciated, they do not provide financial support to help sustain or modernise the venue, instead, it devalues the venue in the eyes of financiers.

Over decades, we have watched generations of families share the Drive-In experience together. Grandparents now bring their grandchildren and tell stories of attending movies here as children themselves. Audiences regularly travel from Melbourne, including the surrounding regions & beyond, demonstrating the ongoing public demand for shared cinema experiences.

National cultural policy must recognise that culture depends not only on the creation of stories, but also on public access to them. Cinemas are where films become part of public culture. Without viable exhibition venues, Australian films and documentaries have fewer opportunities to be discovered, discussed and experienced collectively.

Independent cinemas also deliver substantial social and economic value. Our venue supports local employment, contributes to nearby restaurants, cafes and retail businesses, and remains one of the most affordable and accessible cultural activities available to families, young people and older Australians.

The next National Cultural Policy should formally recognise cinema exhibition as essential cultural and civic infrastructure. Independent cinemas should be eligible for cultural infrastructure funding, regional development initiatives, accessibility programs, sustainability grants and night-time economy support especially in regional areas.

Government must also recognise the emerging "Digital Mark II" challenge facing cinemas nationwide. Much of the digital projection infrastructure installed during the original transition to digital cinema is now ageing. Independent Cinemas Australia estimates that approximately 60% of Australia's cinema projection fleet will require replacement or major refurbishment within the next four years, representing a national renewal challenge of approximately \$138 million.

Without a coordinated national response, many regional and suburban communities risk losing access to local cinema altogether, while others may experience declining presentation standards and reduced cultural participation.

Note: Mornington & Sorrento Cinema no longer exist on the Mornington Peninsula.

Any policy committed to supporting Australian stories must also support the venues where Australians experience those stories together.

Paul Whitaker. Dromana 3 Drive-In.