

## National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

My name is Eleanor Downes. I am an arts manager, facilitator and arts worker with over 35 years' experience in arts and community cultural development. My work with communities has been led by the motivation to enable access, participation and a platform for stories and expression of culture across ordinary Australia which is far from ordinary. Regional arts organisations and artists explore and express the life of regional communities and often become the backbone of life for many.

I am currently working with two diverse companies who exemplify the role the arts can play in the lives of individuals and its importance for regional communities, Second Echo Ensemble and Inscape Tasmania.

I am a board member of multi arts, artist led organisation Second Echo Ensemble, a company shaped by disability practice, lived experience and realities. For more than 20 years, Second Echo artists have created work across performance, film, sound, visual art, installation and community practice, often from positions outside traditional pathways and institutional structures. The work is grounded in a simple belief: every story counts.

I am business manager with Inscape Tasmania, an arts health organisation that has been delivering arts into hospitals and health settings for more than 10 years. Inscape engages professional artists to bring their artform into clinics and hospitals to enrich the experience and wellbeing of patients, their families and carers.

These companies realise the potential of the arts and of artists, the broad and unique skills they offer and how they can engage in life affirming ways, directly with the everyday of Australian lives. A cultural policy should recognise and enable the skills and experience of artists to intersect with Australians, to become part of our daily lives.

This requires acknowledgement and acceptance in the funding models which have traditionally directed artists and organisations who work with disability and in health settings to health and community funding. Areas that are over stretched and to which the arts models do not fit comfortably. Support is not available for artists whose work intersects and crosses sectors, who bring their unique skills and expertise into new environments and directly benefit ordinary Australians.

Revive has helped make arts and culture visible. It has recognised artists as workers and created Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan, this is important because it finally names d/Deaf and disabled artists, arts workers and audiences within national policy. That work needs to continue.

In regional Tasmania artists work across arts, disability, health, education and community contexts because scale, sustainability and survival demand it. This reveals how interconnected these systems already are, despite policy structures that continue to treat them separately.

The next policy must move from segmented pillars. Artists, audiences, communities and institutions are interconnected, while cultural practice itself is fluid, adaptive and relational. These practices move across disability arts, community practice, social engagement and digital culture, yet policy structures do not always recognise this complexity well.