

National Cultural Policy Submission

1472539

Public

Organisation

Kaiela Arts

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Kaiela Arts is an Aboriginal-led arts organisation operating on Yorta Yorta Country, supporting over 40 First Nations artist members and employing 10 First Nations staff across a team of 14, with 75% First Nations board representation. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the next National Cultural Policy and write as an organisation with direct, daily experience of what it takes to sustain and grown First Nations cultural practices in regional Australia. The five pillars proposed for Revive #2 provide a sound framework but each is incomplete without honest attention to what's missing.

First Nations First cannot be realised while south-east Aboriginal artistic practice continues to be under-represented and devalued relative to work from northern and central regions. The misconception that south-east Aboriginal art is less \,authentic\, or culturally relevant persists despite a powerful contemporary resurgence. The next policy must explicitly recognise the diversity of First Nations artistic traditions across all regions and strengthen implementation support for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) legislation. This must included resourcing organisations to meet ICIP compliance requirements without being overwhelmed by administrative burden.

A Place for Every Story and Strong Cultural Infrastructure must together acknowledge that cultural infrastructure is not limited to flagship institutions. Kaiela Arts operates from the Shepparton Art Museum on peppercorn rent, a precarious arrangement on which our capacity to serve our artists and community depends. Sustainable support models for small-to-medium organisations (S2Ms) must be recognised as foundational infrastructure, not an afterthought. Strong Cultural Infrastructure also means investing in our workforce with entry-to-leadership pathways that make First Nations creative voices sustainable over time. Kaiela Arts is actively growing the next generation of First Nations creative workers in a region with significant gaps in tertiary creative industries education and pathways. Without policy settings that provide more opportunities for training and professional development, provide tailored HR and psychosocial and cultural safety support for S2Ms, and fund leadership development, that pipeline will not hold.

Centrality of the Artist also demands that we address the workforce crisis directly. Grant amounts and cycles have not kept pace with inflation or the true costs of running culturally safe, community-embedded programs. Short-term funding cycles force organisations like ours into constant uncertainty, driving staff attrition and burnout. Multi-year, high-impact grants are not a luxury - they are a precondition for planning, stability and genuine self-determination. The next policy must also establish formal payment standards and/or awards that recognise and value creative work equitably, moving beyond voluntary frameworks that leave too much to goodwill.

Australia's cultural story is strongest when its oldest voices are resourced to lead. Kaiela Arts asks the next National Cultural Policy to move beyond recognition and into resourcing with increased operational funding, workforce sustainability, regional equity and First Nations self-determination not as aspirations, but as measurable commitments. Without that shift, the sector loses the organisations doing some of the hardest, most essential cultural work.