

National Cultural Policy Submission

1472651

Public

Individual

Kelly Butler



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I work as the Art Centre Manager at Maningrida Arts & Culture (MAC), a community-controlled Aboriginal art and culture centre based in Maningrida, Arnhem Land. MAC supports approximately 300 artists, arts workers and cultural leaders annually across more than 32 homelands, over 100 clan estates and more than 12 language groups.

In my role, I see firsthand that the everyday work of our centre goes far beyond the production and sale of art. We support artists and families to remain connected to Country through regular homelands and bush trips, support the passing on of cultural knowledge between Elders and younger generations, and provide culturally safe spaces where people can gather, work, teach and maintain cultural practice.

Our artists continue to create work of national and international significance, while remaining deeply connected to community life, language, ceremony and cultural responsibility. Alongside MAC, our broader Arts & Culture group includes Bábbarra Women's Centre, the Djómi Museum and the Cultural Research Office, all of which contribute to preserving and strengthening culture in the region.

Our work also creates meaningful employment and non-government income opportunities, supports community wellbeing and engages young people through artistic and cultural practice. The art centre often fills gaps left by under-resourced services in areas including education, wellbeing, tourism, cultural heritage and community development.

Much of this work takes place in a remote environment with limited infrastructure, small teams and significant operational pressures. Despite this, MAC has supported artists and community for over 50 years and contributes to a nationally and internationally recognised arts and culture sector.

At MAC, this includes supporting artists to participate in major national and international exhibitions and projects, facilitating artist travel and professional development opportunities, supporting tourism and cultural education activities, and working alongside artists and community members to care for significant collections and cultural materials held within Djómi Museum and the Cultural Research Office.

However, this work is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. In my role, I see growing pressures across all areas of operation, particularly around staffing, housing shortages, increasing freight and fuel costs, ageing infrastructure, rising administrative and governance requirements, and the increasing expectations placed on remote art centres by funding bodies, institutions and the broader arts sector.

Remote art and culture centres are being asked to function simultaneously as arts organisations, museums, tourism operators, cultural authorities, archives, research bodies and community services, without funding models that reflect this reality.

To continue supporting artists, culture and community into the future, remote Aboriginal art and culture centres need stable and adequate operational funding, investment in workforce and infrastructure, and recognition of the full scope and significance of the work we undertake every day.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Kind regards,

Kelly Butler

Art Centre Manager

Maningrida Arts & Culture

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL