

National Cultural Policy Submission

1472728

Public

Organisation

Windmill Production Co

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Windmill Production Company is a leading Australian arts organisation, creating original work for young audiences that are presented nationally and internationally. Based in South Australia, we are a significant employer of artists and creative workers, contributing meaningfully to the national cultural economy. We welcome this opportunity to advocate for our core audience: children and young people.

While we acknowledge the strength of all five pillars of the proposed policy, our focus is on Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience. Specifically, we urge the urgent establishment of a framework ensuring every child in Australia has access to live theatre experiences.

Children represent approximately 23% of Australia's population, yet fewer than half attend a live performing arts event annually. This reveals a critical access gap for a cohort comprising nearly a quarter of the nation. Addressing this inequity is not a niche investment but a national priority. Live theatre is uniquely powerful in building social cohesion; it fosters literacy through narrative, develops empathy by exposing children to diverse perspectives, and encourages civic engagement by helping young people interpret the world around them. These are foundational skills for a democratic society. Shared cultural experiences create a sense of belonging, connecting children to each other and to broader national stories.

Australia has demonstrated what is possible when participation is prioritised. With approximately half of Australian children participating in organised sport weekly and universal exposure through the national curriculum, sport is embedded as a cultural norm. No equivalent framework exists for the arts. While sport is guaranteed, access to theatre remains inconsistent.

Simultaneously, Australia's children's theatre sector demonstrates extraordinary calibre. Windmill's productions, including 'Bluey's Big Play', have toured globally to venues like Madison Square Garden and London's Royal Festival Hall. This proves children's theatre is not only a social good but a significant cultural export. International models in Denmark and Finland show that near-universal access is achievable through sustained public investment and school integration.

To bridge this gap, we propose the National Cultural Policy must:

1. Establish a dedicated national fund to support the creation, production, and touring of original Australian theatre for children, ensuring equitable access regardless of geography or socio-economic background.
2. Introduce a subsidy for children's theatre. Works cost the same to produce as adult theatre, yet ticket prices are significantly lower. Subsidies would support presenters and keep tickets affordable for families and schools.
3. Develop an Arts Access Program integrating live theatre experiences into the national curriculum for all school-aged children at every level.
4. Endorse the Government's cultural pass for 13–25-year-olds.

When government prioritises access, participation follows. By embedding children's access to theatre within the next National Cultural Policy, the Australian Government can deliver a profound return: strengthening social cohesion today while cultivating the audiences, citizens, and storytellers of tomorrow.

We also strongly endorse submissions by:

- Children's Theatre Alliance

- NPAPF Organisations
- CAST
- Live Performance Export Alliance
- Live Performance Australia
- Theatre Network Australia
- SA+Carclew Youth Arts