

AUGUSTA SUPPLE

AWARD-WINNING WESTERN SYDNEY WRITER | CREATIVE PRODUCER | DIRECTOR

Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation

My name is Augusta Supple. I am an award-winning writer, festival director, creative producer and cultural strategist based in Western Sydney. For more than twenty-five years I have worked across theatre, literature, festivals, government cultural policy and creative industries development in Australia, North America and Europe. My writing has been preserved in the National Library of Australia's PANDORA Archive, and throughout my career I have commissioned, mentored, developed, published or produced work with more than 300 Australian writers and artists.

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of Australia's National Cultural Policy. It's an important document at an important time in Australia's cultural life.

My central concern is that Australia continues to expect extraordinary cultural outcomes from artists while maintaining economic settings that make individual artistic careers increasingly unsustainable. If Australia sees cultural practice and expression as a right of all Australians and if we genuinely value culture as a public good, then artists must be supported through structural reform rather than relying almost exclusively on competitive grant programs and old business structure of "trickle down" employment from cultural institutions.

The not-for-profit model for arts businesses has choked the funding landscape, artistic innovation and the way in which artists and cultural workers perceive and understand their contribution in a world which has shifted its ways of working. This is evidenced that even AI will be reading and scanning this submission. And fair enough too. The time we need all the bureaucrats to spend is not trawling through these docs, but creating meaningful structural changes within how the arts are financially supported. If AI helps you do that – I say – good!

The most important reform would be the introduction of tax settings that recognise the unique nature of artistic labour and the complexity of artist professional development and new work creation. Australia provides generous tax incentives and investment concessions for technology, innovation and research sectors. Similar mechanisms should exist for artists and creative practitioners. Artists often spend years developing work before receiving any income and routinely invest significant personal resources into research, travel, training, equipment, studio space, publishing, promotion and professional development. A broader range of expenses should be deductible and artists should have access to more flexible income averaging and tax-free thresholds that recognise irregular earnings.

I also support investigation of a guaranteed basic income for artists, similar to initiatives trialled in Ireland. Such programs acknowledge that artistic work generates public benefit beyond immediate commercial return. They provide artists with stability to create ambitious work, take creative risks and contribute to civic life without constant financial insecurity.

Housing affordability is another urgent cultural issue. Increasingly, artists who do not own property are being pushed out of the communities they help create. Affordable and subsidised housing for artists should be recognised as cultural infrastructure. Artists contribute to social cohesion, local identity, tourism, community wellbeing and civic pride. Communities lose something valuable when artists can no longer afford to live where they work. So if there is any interest in truly letting artists enter into the housing market – let it be a priority of the Albanese Government. Introduce a mechanism for property developers to get a subsidy if they include subsidised or free accommodation for artists.

Australia should also examine international models that support literature and publishing. Germany's reduced postal rates for books recognise literature as a public good and make distribution more affordable for publishers, writers and readers. France's fixed book price system protects independent bookshops and encourages literary diversity by preventing aggressive discounting from dominant retailers. These are practical policy interventions that strengthen cultural ecosystems rather than simply funding individual projects.

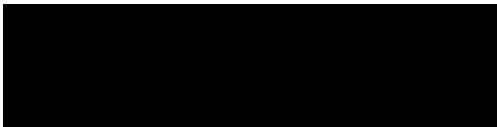
I am particularly concerned by the growing dependence on competitive peer-assessed funding as the primary mechanism for supporting artistic practice. While peer assessment has value, it can inadvertently reward familiarity, consensus and demonstrated success rather than experimentation. Many artists spend enormous amounts of unpaid time preparing applications for highly competitive programs with low success rates. The emotional and financial toll of repeated rejection is significant and contributes to poor mental health across the sector. Competition does not necessarily produce excellence. In many cases it encourages artists and organisations to present safe, predictable projects that align with perceived assessment expectations. The result can be a culture of risk aversion and mediocrity rather than genuine innovation. Artists need more opportunities to experiment, fail, learn and try again without jeopardising their careers.

The policy must also address barriers faced by artists from disadvantaged and working-class backgrounds. Art cannot become a middle-class pursuit accessible only to those with family wealth, home ownership or financial safety nets. Talented artists exist in every community, but many are excluded by the economic realities of unpaid internships, low-paid creative work and increasingly precarious living conditions. Equity measures must move beyond representation and address economic participation – because economic diversity is a part of the reality of Australia and we must not ignore it, or worse, create shame around economic disadvantage.

Finally, Australia needs to foster greater public respect for artists and creative workers. Artists are often expected to deliver social, educational and economic benefits while simultaneously justifying their existence. A healthy cultural nation understands that experimentation, risk and even failure are essential parts of artistic innovation.

Culture is not a luxury. It is how communities understand themselves, tell their stories, imagine their futures and build belonging. A strong National Cultural Policy should therefore focus not only on funding projects, but on creating the economic, social and policy conditions that allow artists to build sustainable lives and long-term careers.

Yours sincerely,



Augusta Supple

Award winning Writer, Festival Director, Creative Producer and Cultural Strategist

Western Sydney, NSW

Woman of the Year (Arts) – Western Sydney University Women of the Year Awards 2025

Woman of the Year – International Film & Entertainment Festival Australia (IFEFA) 2025

Eventex Top 50 Most Influential People in the Events Industry in Australia & New Zealand (2025)

Western Sydney Women Award – Creative and Performing Arts Category Winner (2023)