

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous

Individual

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I work as a self-employed performance artist, emcee, teacher, mentor, producer, and writer based in [REDACTED] and tour regularly around Australia. Arts impacted my life positively in countless ways from primary school onwards, but I became fully self-employed in the arts 16 years ago. I'm 40, mid-career, have ADHD & disabled 2yrs ago by Covid triggering Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME/CFS), POTS & MCAS. I caught both rounds of Covid while working.

My industry sector is predominantly "fringe" performing arts (burlesque, sideshow, clowning, variety) and my work largely outside of classic theatre companies or publishing. Most productions, training, workshop offerings, etc are self-funded or small business funded.

My achievements in the sector include winning [REDACTED], named twice in a yearly, prestigious global Top 50 [REDACTED], producing a number of well-received shows and maintaining a career as a self-funded sole-trader and arts worker in Australia.

I engage with:

- affordable studio spaces (\$25p/hr or less): my nearest affordable studio is supported by private & Creative Australia funding, other two are small businesses a 30+min drive or over an hour on public transport

Libraries

Green/outdoor public spaces: As weather permits I prefer outdoor spaces to read, write & do admin when not at home to avoid viral risks of indoor spaces

Small business hospitality venues: there are very few other options for ultra small, small to medium performance venues which have the infrastructure needed

Self-funded and (very occasionally) grant funded producers & venues: who hire me to perform

One of the biggest challenges affecting my practice/work/community is:

Generative AI & lack of protection from its impacts in absolutely every possible way: culturally, socially, financially, environmentally, politically.

Censorship

Risking serious health issues, disability or further disability by turning up to work in venues which are not properly ventilated, masking is not encouraged & viral safety is not discussed.

Lack of accessible venues & studios, no support for new venues & small business venues to retrofit for accessibility.

Lack of funding for developing art & maintaining an arts practice

Lack of small to medium performance venues & those which are open are almost all privately funded & risk closure because of lack of government support. Often individuals or couples risking their livelihoods, health, sanity and savings to try to create spaces for community.

A culture which focuses predominantly on defining art as either purely grandiose, spectacular & easily consumed, or something you buy/the end outcome, or as frivolous and elitist. There's a lack of understanding about how much arts policy & funding actually covers, and how much arts contributes to almost every part of life in Australia.

Some solutions I see:

Strong policies on generative AI which protect artists & plan for the future

Financial support for artists in the development & exploration phase of projects including grants, microgrants & fellowships that have a more inclusive perspective of what “excellence” is in the arts

Simplified grant applications

Financial support for small businesses hospitality performance venues use their space to share art

Financial support for organisations & venues to introduce cleaner air measures and access measures