

National Cultural Policy Submission

1472878

Public and anonymous

Individual

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I'm grateful to voice experiences and concerns with the state of arts as part of interconnected systems of communities and care that can holistically set everyone up for healing, wellbeing and thriving in life.

As an independent emerging artist, I have been lucky and grateful to experience programs for emerging artists in arts advocacy, gallery art, producing live performance and community radio. These emerging arts programs have been incredible exposure to different forms of artmaking, community-building and a range of paid, voluntary and self-funded ways that people engage in the arts. These programs provide exposure to existing arts system but it doesn't feel possible, easy or stable to sustain a livelihood within it. These opportunities are rare, temporary, not often pathways to more sustainable careers or creative development opportunities. It feels like I will always be 'emerging', accessing only what is available to this wide grouping of artists, which also includes those who have been practising and sharing their work consistently for many years. All this feels like being encouraged to dream big, but living in shrinking realities.

The arts are vital in cultivating community, understanding myself, my cultural contexts and journey towards wellbeing — the depth of living expertise, transformative healing and connective possibilities in community arts and cultural development is a beacon of hope and place of grounding in the crises of isolation, rising costs, and global uncertainty. CACD workers and artists working within their communities need to be more supported in this vital social work.

Making and experiencing creative arts is not easy to access. It is an immense privilege and fight to find pockets of energy and time to create, experience and share art. I, along with most artists I know, especially culturally and racially marginalised, working class and poor, disabled, trans and queer artists, have to supplement or put aside creative practices to find paid work or financial support to meet our basic everyday needs. The barriers intersect with financial limitations navigating chronic illness, intergenerational trauma and mental health in prohibitively expensive health, medical and disability support systems.

In my stints as an arts worker and in government roles, the values and intentions around accessibility, equity, community engagement and cultural safety need more consistent support and specific resourcing to be put into best practice. Words and plans around equity, diversity and inclusion are there, but my experiences as a public-facing worker, researcher, or engagement coordinator, have always felt limited by time, resources or lack of institutional support prioritising these vital aspects of improving work and life. It's hard to be supporting visitors with their access and cultural needs, when your workplace isn't being supported to meet your own access and cultural needs. It's also hard to voice access and cultural needs in precarious casual or contract work when I'm just exhausted living with chronic illness and trying to make rent and grocery bills. Paid roles in lived experience arts advocacy go some way to offer support in voicing these concerns towards structural changes that could help more people.

It's hard to sum up all the difficulties, barriers, joys and hopes I have in my ranging experiences in the arts - I hope this is one of many opportunities for myself and so many others to be listened to, and truly heard.