

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am a story teller and the story I'd like to tell you starts with a conversation with an artist, a maker who also happens to teach at a Melbourne art school. The conversation was about another small, but important art project that had lost its relatively small but important State and Federal funding, despite its international standing and previous success. It will go ahead though, with limited local government funding and the generosity of the person who started it over 10 years ago who will work twice as hard for less and the makers, who are already working various jobs to support their practice, who will give their time for free to make it happen. Because, it's important that it does happen. It's important for the people who will be inspired by the works, it's important for the diverse galleries and businesses who will show and sell the works, it's important for the city that will host the project to support its claim to Australia's arts and culture crown. And it is of course important for the makers and artists in this niche sector of the arts world to have their craft highlighted for a few days, maybe sell something and to be able to meet and share themselves, their work and learn. When I told the artist, maker and teacher that the decision had been made to go ahead with the program despite the lack of funding and on the basis of volunteers, she was unsurprised. 'Of course', she said, 'they are artists, that's what they do, they make art, there's no choice.' And that is true and inspiring but it is also something that governments and institutions take advantage of - that's the sort of response that leads to further funding cuts. Why provide funding when people will do it for free? But, what is equally true is that what those artists and makers do, what they make, has value beyond the economic and even the aesthetic, for the whole community, not just parts but ALL our community. And just that - the significant value and benefit to the whole society inherent in the making and sharing of art - is actually what any 'National Cultural Policy' needs to recognise, articulate and highlight, not only to gain social licence for what it is proposing but even more importantly as a means of influencing political thinking so that within a highly contested and limited budget environment, appropriate and on-going funding can be also made secured to support its implementation.