

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous

Individual

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

The consultation paper outlines important achievements since the introduction of Revive. While these initiatives are acknowledged, the lived experience of many regional artists and arts workers suggests that these policy settings have not yet translated into sustainable career pathways or improved employment conditions.

After more than three decades working professionally in the arts, I have recently made the difficult decision to step away from a full-time arts career. This was not due to a lack of commitment, skill or contribution, but to the economic reality of a sector that remains structurally underfunded at an operational level. Arts positions continue to be advertised at salary levels significantly lower than comparable roles in other sectors and industries. Regional arts organisations face ongoing challenges securing stable operational funding, limiting their ability to offer competitive wages or long-term employment. As a result, experienced practitioners are increasingly leaving the sector in order to achieve financial stability.

While policy emphasises the “centrality of the artist” and recognises the economic and social value of creative work, the regional cultural workforce remains highly precarious. Reliance on short-term project funding creates cycles of uncertainty, professional burnout and workforce attrition. When skilled arts workers exit the sector, communities lose cultural leadership, institutional knowledge and long-standing relationships that cannot easily be replaced. This ongoing erosion of cultural capacity has not yet been adequately addressed through current policy settings.

There is also a clear gap between policy rhetoric and public perception. Although national narratives position the arts as drivers of innovation, wellbeing and productivity, there has been limited coordinated effort to shift community attitudes about the value of creative work or the level of investment required to sustain it. The enduring stereotype of the “struggling artist” continues to shape perceptions about remuneration and career viability. For many practitioners, this stereotype reflects everyday reality rather than outdated myth.

The decline of specialist arts education in schools further compounds these challenges. Despite references to investment in creative learning initiatives, access to qualified arts educators and sustained curriculum delivery is diminishing across many communities. Without consistent exposure to high-quality arts education, future generations are less likely to understand the broader value of creativity. Arts learning is not solely about training professional artists; it builds critical thinking, collaboration, innovation and cultural literacy across all sectors.

For regional practitioners, the next national cultural policy must deliver tangible structural change. Increased operational funding, a coordinated effort with state governments, equitable wage frameworks comparable to other industries, sustained investment in specialist arts education, changes in curriculum emphasis and a coordinated national effort to reposition creativity as essential to workforce capability and community wellbeing are critical. Without decisive action, the sector risks continued loss of experienced professionals and a continued weakening of the cultural infrastructure that underpins identity, resilience and innovation.