

**National Cultural Policy Submission**

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Aaron McCann

Filmmaker, Author, Founder of Banshee Hills

I am an Irish-born, Australian-raised filmmaker with over 20 years in the industry. I write, direct, produce, and have served as an Assistant Director on major productions. I am a former board member of the Australian Writers' Guild.

I urge the government to pilot a Universal Basic Income (UBI) for Australian artists, modelled on the permanent scheme recently adopted in Ireland.

The Challenge:

The cultural sector faces a crisis of instability. Delayed Australian content quotas for streaming platforms have drastically reduced local opportunities. Writers, crew, and practitioners take second and third jobs to survive. During COVID, the arts were hit hardest—live music was shut down, theatre was deprioritised, and Screen Australia and ABC faced cuts while international content flooded our screens.

This precarity undermines Indigenous, multicultural, and emerging voices competing against the massive marketing budgets of US and UK counterparts.

A Proven Solution: The Irish Model

Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts pilot gave 2,000 artists €325 weekly for three years. Evaluation found:

For every €1 invested, society received €1.39 in return.

Participants earned more from their art, worked more creative hours, and reported significant mental health improvements.

The scheme was recently made permanent.

An Australian Pilot Program:

A three-year pilot for 10,000 artists at \$540/week would have a gross cost of \$842 million. Because the payment is taxable, the net cost would be lower; around \$795 million.

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For context:

Australia provided over \$3 billion in tax breaks to the fossil fuel industry between 2019 and 2023.

HomeBuilder cost \$2.5 billion.

The Digital Identity pilot received over \$500 million.

An \$800 million investment in artists is affordable—especially compared to less transparent corporate concessions.

What a UBI Would Achieve:

A UBI would supplement, not replace, existing income. If artists earn above MEAA minimums, they pay tax on combined earnings—a win/win.

Stability would allow artists to:

- Develop original Australian IP.
- Tell diverse stories reflecting our nation.
- Strengthen a cultural sector worth \$17 billion annually to the economy.

Conclusion:

The new National Cultural Policy must learn from COVID failures and the impact of delayed quotas. A UBI pilot is bold, evidence-based, and urgently needed. I urge the government to invest in our creative future.

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