

National Cultural Policy Submission

1466845

Public

Organisation

SongFest Inc



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

SongFest Inc is an incorporated not-for-profit association based in WA. We directly organise 3-4 choir festivals each year and support a further 2. These events engage approximately 2500 singers annually. SongFest is also developing a range of social singing initiatives that connect community singers and musicians with communities of need to provide sustainable, volunteer lead projects. SongFest currently hosts 4 dementia friendly singing groups, a public housing singing group at Wandana Flats in Subiaco, a singing group at Tuart Place in Fremantle for care survivors and will open a singing group for cancer patients and their carers in May. All of our social singing projects are collaborations with other community organisations and rely on no grant funding.

Our work in the social singing area has highlighted the need for cultural practice to be fundamentally participatory. The professionalisation of Arts has made Australians (and the developed world) consumers of culture rather than participants. This undercuts the core role that cultural activities play in connecting people and building cohesive and robust communities because the bonding hormones released in the human brain when singing, dancing, or undertaking team activities connect to the performers (fandom) rather than the people we should be singing and dancing with (community). Cultural policy must remove barriers to the most fundamental tool at our disposal to connect our community at a time when social cohesion appears most fragile. This is achieved by;

- promoting singing, and specifically harmony singing, in the widest possible range of social contexts. Community choirs are not enough to address this decline in Australia's singing culture. This requires a marketing campaign to make singing a high profile part of being a good citizen together with an investment in community singing leaders. Under an effective cultural policy Australians should expect to sing whenever and wherever they interact.
- Investing in and actively developing an Australian national repertoire that is introduced to all children through schools and promoted to the entire population across a range of media. A multicultural Australia currently doesn't have a song that everyone in Australia could start singing and expect everyone around them to join in. In the face of the Bondi terror attack there was no song that all Australian's could sing, with those that were suffering the most, that expressed our grief and shared loss. Australia needs this as a nation if we are to truly utilise culture to enhance the lives of all Australians. This repertoire needs to incorporate First Nation and multicultural influences to create an engaging collection that Australians are proud of and speaks to the full, emotional expression of what it means to be Australian.

OFFICIAL

- Remove the requirement for not-for-profit organisations to apply for and pay for copyright licencing on works performed for free. Cultural cohesion and lower barriers to entry are more important than the minimal income and disproportionate administrative burden placed on volunteer organisations under the current arrangements. Songs that are already successful in the public domain should become the property of those who sing them together. This is the cultural fabric of a society, not the ongoing income of the artist.