

ART PHAR MACY

Art Pharmacy Pty Ltd.



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Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation *Submitted by Art Pharmacy*

Art Pharmacy is an Australian B Corp-certified art consultancy operating across Sydney and Melbourne, approved as an NSW and VIC Government supplier. Founded by Emilyya Colliver, we specialise in public art strategy, artist commissioning and cultural placemaking for major developments. We have worked across corporate campuses, transport infrastructure, master planned communities and major public precincts, including Darling Square, Barangaroo and Qiddiya. We submit this response in the context of our forthcoming white paper, *Art for Master Plan Developments*, which makes the evidence-based case for art as essential cultural infrastructure.

The case for 1% for public art in Australia

Percentage-for-art policies, typically requiring developers to allocate 1% of a project's construction budget to public art, are among the most direct and scalable tools available for embedding culture into everyday life. The evidence is compelling. Toronto studies found people were 50% more likely to linger in spaces with public art, 63% more positive about those locations, and 74% more likely to share them. Chicago's Millennium Park generated an estimated \$1.4 billion in economic impact in its first five years. Art-rich workplaces consistently deliver productivity uplifts of 15-30%.

Australia has a patchwork of percentage-for-art policies at the state and local government levels, but they are inconsistently applied, vary enormously in ambition and enforceability, and are routinely negotiated away during development approval processes. The result is a significant and largely invisible loss of cultural investment that communities are entitled to but never see.

Pillar 2 – A Place for Every Story

Art in the built environment reaches everyone, not just gallery visitors, but residents going about their daily lives. Percentage-for-art programs are one of the few mechanisms that place culture in the path of whole communities. The next policy should provide national leadership advocating for consistent, enforceable 1% frameworks across planning jurisdictions, treating art in the built environment as a core mode of cultural participation, not an afterthought.

Pillar 3 – Centrality of the Artist

Well-designed percentage-for-art programs create sustained income for working artists, but procurement processes frequently undermine this, prioritising cost over artistic integrity and bypassing independent artists. The next policy should establish national standards for artist-led procurement in publicly-funded built environment projects, ensuring 1% investment reaches artists fairly. As our white paper notes, always paying artists for concept work in competitive processes is not just an ethical practice; it yields better outcomes for everyone.

Pillar 4 – Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Realising the potential of percentage-for-art programs requires that the people responsible for administering them are properly equipped. Council staff negotiating directly with developers are often under-resourced, operating without specialist arts knowledge, and vulnerable to pressure from developers seeking to reduce or eliminate their obligations. This is one of the most significant and underacknowledged loopholes in the current system. The next policy should invest in capacity-building for local government arts and planning staff, provide clearer national guidance on acceptable cultural contributions, and establish frameworks that make it harder for developers to circumvent their obligations. The independent cultural sector, consultants, curators and advisors with on-the-ground experience, have a critical role to play here and should be formally recognised and leveraged.

In conclusion

A consistent, well-enforced 1% for public art standard, applied nationally and backed by properly resourced council staff and clear procurement frameworks, would be transformative for artists, for communities, and for Australia's cultural life. Art Pharmacy strongly advocates for that ambition. By embedding art from the earliest stages of planning, we move beyond building projects and instead create places that inspire, connect and endure.

Completed by Emily Colliver (Director of Art Pharmacy)