

National Cultural Policy Submission

Inner West Council

Submitted: On behalf government or government body

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

First Nations

There is an opportunity to harness Aboriginal arts and culture in our local communities and as part of national identity. It is critical that Aboriginal communities and creatives are active agents in curating and leading cultural expression and placemaking. Local communities have their own ideas how cultural expression should occur, and local places are excellent opportunities to connect to Country, community and Aboriginal understandings.

The Inner West's Aboriginal community advocates that local languages and intergenerational arts and cultural projects, particularly in early childhood, have a key role to play in embedding this understanding. Council also supports opportunities to support Aboriginal artists to take on projects and commissions of increasing scale and to support key local stakeholders, such as Boomalli Arts Cooperative. This enhances the richness of public art for all, as well as building capacity in large scale works for Aboriginal creatives.

Creative Inner West: Cultural Strategy's first priority is to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are at the centre of all we do. Council is committed to creating leadership and employment opportunities for Aboriginal organisations, artists, curators and cultural leaders.

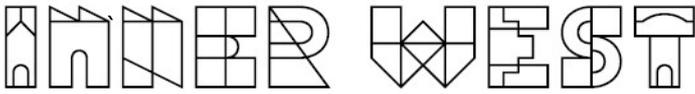
As per the Australia Council, supporting First Nations arts and culture is the single greatest contribution we make to our national and global identity. The Inner West is home to more than 2,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, many successful Aboriginal artists and has a strong history of Aboriginal justice campaigns. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and culture have a central role in our places and creative life and one of the key pillars in the Creative Inner West Cultural Strategy is "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures at the centre".

A Place for Every Story

A new National Cultural policy will need to work in partnership with local government to ensure that access to culture and participation in creative life is possible, regardless of geographic location or socioeconomic status.

Inner West supports arts and believes culture is for everyone. Typically, community development, inclusion and multicultural projects can be separated from arts projects. This separation needs to be broken down and capacity and local relationships need to build equity by providing opportunities and support for those who are not usually included in the arts, as either audiences or practitioners.

As stated in our Creative Inner West: Cultural Strategy "our community believes that cultural exchange and sharing stories supports our values... we share culture and heritage across



generations and acknowledge that we have intersecting histories, identities and personal experiences.”

The Centrality of the Artist

Following a unanimous resolution of Council, Inner West Council recently held an Arts Summit to hear directly from the artists and were repeatedly told that artists ability to merely survive is constantly threatened. We need a policy that addresses this. The policy needs to explore the economic dimensions of the arts both in contributing to a vibrant national economy as well as the economic sustainability of the arts as a career.

There is an increasing recognition of the importance of arts and culture in local main street activation and night time economies. However, removing regulatory red tape for cultural activities is only part of the puzzle. Council’s Art Summit heard that unstable funding and employment conditions for artists puts the sector at risk, which has been highlighted by COVID19. Arts funding is highly competitive, and artisans and arts practitioners are often reliant on their own entrepreneurialism to keep their practice afloat and find affordable spaces to practice.

The role of local government and places is extremely important in support of artists. By developing and employing local artists, rather than buying in national or international artists, local governments can support local artists and nurture their role in local identity, placemaking and economy, as well as nurturing talent of future national significance. Council believes increased funding from state and federal level should be distributed to local governments to fund artists.

Inner West Council recognises that the artist is the creator of culture and recognises art as a profession.

Strong Institutions

The small to medium arts sector, particularly creative spaces, independent venues, and cultural production spaces are an essential layer of creativity and culture in our national ecosystem. Focusing only on larger peak organisations or failing to safeguard places where culture is made (like studios, small galleries, workshops etc) threatens the sustainability and vibrancy of our art and cultural sector. It is critical that affordability of creative spaces and relevant planning and regulatory measures are considered in supporting the local arts sector.

Local governments have a key role to play in connecting and harnessing locally relevant arts and culture, nurturing talent, and connecting this to our national cultural identity and international market. Often the private and independent arts sector seeds the small to medium layer of making and presenting, and they often miss out on ongoing funding and support from arts funders. Increased funding from state and federal level should be distributed to local governments for funding arts organisations and creative spaces.

The small to medium sector is often overlooked and in recent years have been the first to lose out on funding. However they are the foundations of the creative industry and by ensuring they can thrive we are building capacity of the local sector and contributing to a prosperous and flourishing creative ecosystem.

Reaching the Audience

Covid forced the issue of audience retention and development in a new way. In having to adapt to digital formats, there have been positive lessons that can be applied to the future; however we need to address the digital inequity that this new accessibility via this medium highlighted.

Local research has revealed that marketing approaches are often functioning in outdated models. A more nuanced approach to marketing and reaching audiences is required, including; young people, and youth-specific independent marketing that is not adverse to taking appropriate risks; translation and culturally diverse networks, local, community based networks; accessible information and engagement.

Council believes key organisations, such as Destination NSW, should be engaging with and funding local areas to highlight smaller, local hubs of creative activity, as well as large flagship events of state and national significance.

At our recent arts summit, the sector told us that schemes such as the state run Dine and Discover vouchers were vital in audience development and sector survival.

Arts should be embedded in education from an early age and new career pathways need to be developed.

Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

A coherent approach across all three levels of government is absolutely necessary.