

National Cultural Policy Submission

Nina Levy, Managing Editor, Seesaw Magazine

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

As one of the managing editors of Seesaw Magazine (arts publication based in WA), we are committed to amplifying First Nations voices on our website by employing First Nations writers and critics. One of the biggest challenges is that First Nations writers are often in such high demand, and are frequently not available as a result.

The challenge is to create and implement strategies that work towards developing more First Nations arts writers, and indeed, more First Nations arts leaders.

A Place for Every Story

Managing an arts publication, the biggest challenge is finding a way to fund arts journalism. Traditionally journalism has been a commercial venture but the old model for funding journalism (via advertising and sales of the publication) is not longer financially sustainable.

Seesaw Magazine is the only publication in Western Australia providing a platform for arts journalism across a broad range of genres. We are providing the “place for every arts story” but it is SO hard to find money to do it.

Currently we are operating on a combination of state govt project funding, donations from readers, support from WA arts companies and occasional larger contributions from philanthropists. This funds three part-time staff members, all of which should be full-time in terms of workload.

We are providing the opportunity, but doing so is a challenge.

Our contemporaries in NSW and Victoria, Audrey Journal and Witness Performance, have both closed.

Arts journalism is in desperate need of support!

The Centrality of the Artist

Like many I am conscious are how hard it is to be an artist, particularly an independent artist... but independent artists are vital to the development of artforms. It's independent artists who push artforms into new places. A universal basic income would be a good starting point for supporting independent artists.

I think, too, that there is a lot of pressure on indie artists and companies to sell their product. While it's obviously important for work to be seen, I think there needs to be acknowledgement that innovation isn't always broadly appealing – think of Stravinsky being booed, for example. As Serena

Chalker observed in an interview with me for Dance Australia in 2016, experimental art is often ahead of its time (<https://www.danceaustralia.com.au/news/a-healthy-dance-ecology1>), which means that it won't necessarily appeal broadly at the time it's made.

The challenge is that more support is needed for independent artists and smaller companies that make experimental work – it's here that innovation starts.

Strong Institutions

For small to medium institutions (including Seesaw Magazine), the lack of funding options is a big issue. There's this yawning chasm between project funding and multi-year funding.

The other issue facing our institutions is the lack of funding for peak bodies and support/advocacy organisations. I note particularly Ausdance WA.

Please attribute this submission to: Nina Levy, Managing Editor, Seesaw Magazine