

# National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted:      On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation  
                         On behalf of an organisation with arts-components (e.g. community organisation,  
                         tourism, venue, health, education etc)  
                         As a worker/professional in an industry who uses arts (e.g. art therapist, tour guide)

**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**

[The CREATE Centre, University of Sydney](#) welcomes and endorses First Nations Cultures as the first pillar of the National Cultural Policy. All Australians need to have a deep understanding of and connection to the oldest continuous cultures in the world. For too long much of the learning about First Nations cultural and arts practices has been superficial and/or tokenistic for many children and young people. In recognition of this, the recent review of the Australian Curriculum called for the development of a stronger focus on First Nations Cultures and arts across the curriculum

Substantial funding and resourcing needs to be allocated to support First Nations artists, arts workers and arts educators to develop arts and culturally appropriate education programs for all sectors of the community.

This is also an opportunity to make sure that First Nations Australians artists, art-makers and arts educators are adequately represented on the boards of arts organisations and cultural institutions.

## **A Place for Every Story**

Over the last three decades unequivocal research has established that story and quality arts processes and experiences are central for who we are as human beings as well as in facilitating our moral and ethical compass. This is often expressed as the importance of the Arts 'for the sake of the Arts'. Australia needs much more than this. It needs cultural and arts experiences that re-imagine our society and what we as a nation (together with others) must do to explore real alternative possibilities for a country, and a world in crisis. In addition, an understanding of our cultural heritage, alongside creative arts processes can enhance our engagement, learning, health and wellbeing.

Yet, any funding for cultural and arts institutions, programs and organisations has been a last consideration or afterthought of any budget decision during the last decade of coalition government.

Not everyone has easy access to their own stories, or to our cultural institutions or to the provision of quality arts processes and experiences . Ongoing cuts in funding for arts organisations, cultural institutions and arts education in early childhood centres, schools and universities and other providers have led to inequitable access and resources. Too often the dominant narratives in our country are still the privileged ones despite the increasing diversity of our population and the reality that nearly half our residents have been born overseas.

## **The Centrality of the Artist**

A National Cultural Policy should embed an understanding and appreciation that cultural experiences and engagement in the Arts are essential for a healthy community. Artists, art-makers, teaching artists, curators, creatives and arts educators must therefore be acknowledged, strongly supported as central to our building of more equitable communities across the country.

Teacher professional learning programs across the different arts disciplines also need to be supported and funded. Existing teacher professional learning models involving teaching artists working alongside teachers to increase teacher knowledge and confidence in teaching the Arts currently offered by arts organisations could be further developed and extended.

## **Strong Institutions**

Early childhood centres, primary and secondary schools and universities need educators who understand the importance of quality creative arts processes and cultural experiences in learning, particularly language and literacy learning. In neoliberal times there has been a huge reduction in the policy emphasis and funding for this essential aspect of education across all sectors. The fee increase in the Arts courses at universities is but one example.

## **Reaching the Audience**

Every Australian should have access to a broad variety of cultural and arts experiences and programs Rural and remote and economically disadvantaged communities have often been starved of these opportunities. Children and young people also need to be engaged yet youth arts organisations have received little or no funding in recent years.

Cultural officers and relevant government subsidies and grants should be available to support artists and arts educators as well as cultural and arts organisations across the country in the creation, promotion and dissemination of their work supported by appropriate resources.

Given technological innovations and ongoing development, consideration should be given to how ALL audiences can be reached. While a grant of \$316.5 million allocated

in the last coalition government budget to build an Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander cultural precinct is something to celebrate, the question of why its location would be solely in Canberra must be asked. Similarly \$9.3 million over two years has been allocated for the National Museum but this is in Canberra as well.

**Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:**

### **First Nations**

First Nations cultures are unique and need to be acknowledged, celebrated and better understood by every Australian so this pillar should be a high priority. Better recognition in the National Cultural Policy should align with the current intention to enshrine a First Nations' Voice in the Australian constitution.

The CREATE Centre, University of Sydney, will continue to provide opportunities for First Nations artists, academics and art-makers to share their expertise, experience and understandings with its members.

### **A Place for Every Story**

Policy and funding needs to embed a range of pathways for our upcoming generation of artists, creatives and arts educators to ensure diverse stories and cultural experiences are accessible for all, regardless of geographical location and socioeconomic status or heritage. Many small and medium arts and cultural organisations, especially those in remote and regional areas, and those for children and young people, are struggling to survive without regular long term funding. This situation worsened during covid and subsequent lockdowns when significant amounts of money were allocated to large scale events in major cities in attempts to use these as part of economic recovery: a very different approach to that of Ireland.

[The CREATE Centre, University of Sydney](#), offers a regular series of free online conferences and webinars with partner organisations. Each is recorded on [CREATE's YouTube channel](#) which means they can be viewed at any time that is convenient and used for a range of different purposes. In the three years since the CREATE Centre was established it has built a membership and affiliate membership of more than 2000 who receive its regular e-newsletter. The Centre has also seeks funding to commission artistic interludes in these events where possible. Its roundtables on issues (for example, 'Education and the Arts' and 'The Arts and Youth Mental Health' ), which provide both networking across sectors and opportunities to plan research initiatives, are offered in blended format so that all who wish to participate can be involved and contribute.

Guaranteed, regular funding and resourcing should be allocated to ensure the development of high quality children's and youth theatre, dance and music. Australian made film and television also needs appropriate funding.

## **The Centrality of the Artist**

The CREATE Centre, University of Sydney strongly believes in the central role the artist can play in the community more broadly. The role of the Artist can be reinterpreted and reimagined to allow them to undertake Applied Arts work more effectively in health, education and wellbeing contexts through offering further professional learning, accreditation and support structures. The Centre is working on a Masters in Applied Arts (Education, Health and Wellbeing) and more detail is available if appropriate.

We are aware of the need most artists have to support themselves with other work and this inhibits the important contributions they are able to make. Providing a 'living wage' to performers for the next three years should be considered as an effective way of using an Arts-supported economic renewal.

For example:

- in the literary arts, the average income of an Australian engaged in the literary arts (novels, picture books writers, illustrators, poets) is \$16,000.00/year;
- funding to support contemporary music ceases in the current budget in 2024 – this will hugely disadvantage the large majority of regional and community bands and orchestras
- over the last decade we have seen the demise of many youth arts organisations and this needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- dance, the basis of telling so many of our Australian cultural stories, is sadly too often overlooked

The Irish government has demonstrated very clearly its goal is to 'sustain' Irish art, music, dance and stage performers after Covid. It has just announced \$28.3 million to go to 2000 performers and venues. Each performer will receive equivalent \$400/week for 3 years. Venues can apply for equivalent \$10,000 – a significantly different view of the Arts and the importance of the Arts in the culture of Ireland than currently in Australia.

## **Strong Institutions**

The CREATE Centre at the University of Sydney aims to develop and strengthen multidisciplinary partnerships that engage experts throughout the University with arts, health and education organisations. We explore:

- new knowledge and innovative research in creativity and the arts as it affects education, health and wellbeing
- new possibilities for professional practice for the education and health sectors and beyond

- deeper, authentic partnerships with schools, arts and health organisations and other stakeholders to offer innovative professional learning (for example, [School Drama with Sydney Theatre Company](#); [The Creative Schools Initiative with Auckland University](#) and [On Demand Plus with the Australian Theatre for Young People](#))
- the collection, analysis and representation of evidence about the impact of creativity and arts processes and practices on social and emotional wellbeing. Our research processes are co-designed and employ various art forms (including narrative, drama, song, artworks, film and dance) along with traditional research methods to reach a wide audience inside and beyond the academy.

All cultural, educational and arts institutions must all be strengthened through the provision of adequate funding and resources.

There should be equitable resourcing and study opportunities for all arts disciplines in every school and in higher education institution.

The skills shortages in the Creative Industries should also be endorsed as a priority on the National Skills Commission list.

Arts professional teaching associations, peak bodies, and service organisations should be funded to enable the actualisation of the National Cultural Policy.

In 2021-22 budget 'arts and cultural development' received \$159 million. In the 2022-3 budget this was reduced to \$20 million and only \$2.4 million was projected for 2023-4. This massive loss of support must be addressed.

## **Reaching the Audience**

The Regional Arts fund is one of the most likely to support equity of access. This must be appropriately funded and staffed. Opportunities for all Australians to have access to arts and culture must be prioritised in the National Cultural policy.

Similarly, adequate funding must be restored to the National Gallery of Australia, the National Literature Centre, the National Library of Australia and their state and regional counterparts. Screen Australia, Australian Theatre for Young People, Barking Gecko are examples of other arts organisations that need guaranteed long term funding to reach their specific audiences

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

Our cultural institutions (museums, galleries, national centres) and our artists and arts (theatre, visual arts, songs and music, dances, films) create, reveal, illuminate, reflect, develop and critique the soul of Australia. Unfortunately every cultural institution and arts organisation across the whole of Australia has been and is suffering from a total

lack of attention and support. This is difficult to understand given that the Arts are a multi-billion dollar industry in this country! They provide \$111 billion to the economy – over 6% of Australia’s Gross Domestic Product. And 876,000 people, 8% of the Australian workforce are employed in the Arts– many more than are employed in mining! As someone once remarked, ‘the day that the Australian government spends as much money supporting the Arts as spent on subsidising fossil fuel companies, will be the day that Australia regenerates its soul’.

There is also a long history of supporting some of the more elite cultural and arts organisations and companies, while others have been overlooked, perhaps judged as less respectable or conformist. In a recent article Croggan describes a ‘punitive targeted vindictiveness towards those Arts and arts organisations’. This must stop. There may be a need to educate our politicians about the decades of research that demonstrates the role that quality cultural activities and arts experiences should play in the lives of all Australians so they understand the importance of serious

investment in cultural institutions across the country and of an arts-rich education for all learners. This needs to be recognised, emphasised and made more explicit in this cultural policy.

For too long the Arts portfolio has been an add-on to other portfolios. There needs to be a dedicated Cultural and Arts portfolio. In addition, Arts and Education have been siloed in the structure of ministerial portfolios. All Australian learners in early childhood, primary, secondary schools, higher education and beyond need diverse cultural experiences and quality arts education embedded in the curriculum ( Dance, Drama, Literary Arts, Media Arts, Music, Visual Arts). This should be a central tenant adequately resourced with professional learning programs for educators in a National Cultural policy.