

National Cultural Policy submission from Alise Hardy (visual arts educator, arts worker and artist)

Arts and education are intrinsically linked. We all know that the evidence is in on the benefits of arts learning and participation for young people. Perhaps what is not as clear is how much our children and young people value the arts. I am a visual arts educator and artist who has dedicated their career to visual art learning and engagement, and to listening and advocating for children and young people in the visual arts sector. Like all arts educators, children and young people tell me how much they value the visual arts in school and outside of it.

Young people need the Labor government to elevate the visual arts for young people and make it visible, provide opportunities to participate in visual arts activities as an artist and as an audience member, and invest in quality teaching and learning to ensure a career as a visual artist is viable, sustainable and equitable.

First Nations

Visual arts teachers are often afraid to get it wrong and so steer clear of focussing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in teaching and learning. At the same time, many teachers and educators, particularly those working in early learning centres and primary schools, are not trained in the visual arts, let alone trained in how to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways. This means young people are missing out on the most important Australian story.

We need:

- First Nations led training and resources for educators from early-years through to secondary education that encourages truth telling.
- Investment in training for First Nations artists and craftspeople who want to become visual arts educators and teaching artists.
- Identified and fully funded places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school leavers in visual art higher education courses across all states and territories.

A place for every story

Children and young people make up more than 30% of the Australian population ([ABS, 2022](#)) and their stories are the stories of our present and our future. Children and young people deserve to see themselves reflected back to them in our national collections and in their local communities. Art made by children and young people is art in its own right, and should be valued in the same way we value art created by adult artists.

We need:

- Art developed by, with and for children and young people to be included throughout the National Cultural Policy.
- The development of a Young People and Culture Framework.
- Funding to create a dedicated exhibition space in all schools so that children, young people, school staff, parents and communities can consistently experience the importance of publicly displaying young artists' works of art.
- A framework for access to university and TAFE, career and professional practice development, so that young people can see a pathway to a career in the arts, regardless of socio economic background or location.

The centrality of the artist

Children, young people and arts educators are artists and creators of culture. All Australian Visual Arts curriculums treat children and young people as artists as they create, present and respond to their own works of art, and that of others. Visual arts teachers, who are increasingly expected to be practising artists themselves, and teaching artists working in schools, galleries and communities are children and young peoples' co-artists. Despite the quality of our curriculums, enrolments in senior secondary visual arts subjects has declined dramatically since 2012 ([ABC, 2022](#)). Not surprisingly, this decline coincides with the decimation of arts funding that began in 2013.

Children and young people also need to see that a career as an artist or arts worker is an option that they can choose and that they are supported to choose. Teachers, parents and guardians also need to understand that a career in the arts is not only rewarding but is also a viable choice that won't leave their students and children living in poverty.

We need:

- A mandatory visual arts curriculum taught by specialist teachers in all schools from early years to senior years.
- A reversal of fee increases to Creative Arts university courses and an equitable tertiary education system that doesn't target Creative Arts degrees with fee increases on the false basis that they do not lead to employment.
- Support for universities and TAFEs to expand delivery of professional practice units for all arts students.
- An industrial Award rate for the visual arts and craft which legislates the payment of artists' fees.
- Awarding of public arts funding to be dependent on the payment of visual artists at or above minimum standard rates as set out in NAVA's Code of Practice, and that funding amounts can support these rates.

Strong Institutions

A myriad of institutions support children and young people's learning, engagement and participation in the arts. The National Cultural needs to include institutions at all levels of

education and those supporting visual art teachers and teaching artists, including universities offering initial teacher education courses, state and territory visual art teacher associations, peak bodies like Art Education Australia (AEA) and National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) and youth arts organisations.

Years of decline in arts funding has also seen visual arts education devalued and under-resourced. High quality visual arts education and experiences at school is essential for a thriving arts industry. Likewise, recognition of children and young people as artists and investment in visual arts experiences for families, children and young people at our major national, state and regional galleries needs bolstering and securing.

We need:

- Funding for a visual artist-in-schools program in every school that Ensures artists are engaged by the education department respectfully (fair contracts).
- Funding to employ dedicated curators for children and young people at all national and state run galleries.
- A mandate for specialist Visual Art teachers in every primary and secondary school to support the teaching of the new Australian Curriculum 9.0.
- Longer-term investment in organisations that support young artists and visual art education.

Reaching the Audience

Children and young people are artists, audience members, and consumers of art products themselves, and they too should have access to arts and cultural experiences that are appropriate to them, their development and learning. For children, and for many young people, arts educators and families play a key role in facilitating this access. Even for young people who seek out their own experiences, many can still not access Australia's collections because of physical location or poor internet connection.

We need:

- Government funded bursaries for regional and remote schools to attend our national and state run galleries.
- Government funded grants for regional and remote schools to pay for accommodation and child-care support for artists-in-schools.
- NBN blackspots to be fixed.
- A boost to the Community Heritage Grants (CHG) program funding to properly digitise collections and license images of artwork for sharing on Trove.
- Investment in new funding to support the professional presentation of Australian artists, artworks and exhibitions in the digital space, ensuring artists' copyright is protected and they are paid ongoing publishing fees for their content.