

National Cultural Policy Submission

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The Centrality of the Artist

As a visual artist there are a range of concerns that must be addressed as to our place within the arts, this would also apply to a range of artists such as musicians, dancers, writers but I know most clearly my artform and some disparity we may have in cases such as royalties, some standard rates even if just casually understood, much larger accepted project budgets. But there is a lot to be addressed for ALL artists in all areas, a lot of work to do.

- artists create the art/content/output that is the value the industry requires to exist; to fill galleries, to show in festivals, to sell to collectors, to curate into exhibitions, to require for opportunities, commissions, proposals etc.
- Yet Artists have no conditions as 'worker' we are paid in token fee's per project, output, artwork, exhibition. There are no rates of pay-award rates-minimum wage, no consistency of fee's, we may not be paid at all or in exposure or opportunity coin which is still rife. Sometimes we pay a fee or a commission or sometimes we pay both.
- There is disproportion even in government who ought to example best practice, it is accepted to pay less or token fee's. For example, as peer assessors we may receive a fee for final meeting hours, yet much more reading and preparation is required, we are well aware many of the arts workers we are working with are being paid for every hour they work or a much higher percentage, same as reading our applications we write unpaid. Councils often charge to exhibit and take commission with very little assistance for install etc and do not see the issue in this, "we get plenty of applications wiling to show with these conditions" It must start and be exemplified on local, state and national government levels.
- We have no known or tangible career ladder or trajectory, our career stages: emerging, mid or established are vaguely and conflictingly marked often by years practicing and little else or other blurring variations.
- yet we must demonstrate, prove, or reason our case on the basis of 'professional practice' 'career trajectory' 'professionalism' in a career where we do not have the basic entitlements, conditions, unacceptable notions such as working for free or having to pay to work as any other 'worker' The fair work commission does not apply to us, we are like independent contractors.
- A large percentage of our work is applications for competitive opportunities, these are unpaid and becoming less. Some of these opportunities require unpaid or minimally paid workshops to compete for one place, or letters of reference. Orgs and Institutions appear to want a larger number of applicants for one 'winner.' How many artists need to be rejected? 20, 50, 100?

- We are tired of the competition, the rejections, the feedback if given at all that is arbitrary, and the amount of work just to compete, over and over and over. That we need to be fostered, pushed, grouped or workshoped to make a good commission or application or good work. Instead give us skills, ask us questions, let us talk, have faith in what we do in our medium.

Artists and arts workers are not in the same position and need to stop being lumped together. One, arts workers, are rightly so fighting for better, fairer, more even, and transparent rights, more job security, overtime, and the like and these are all really important.

Artists as I have stated above keep everyone in jobs to some degree, this is simplified but we have not come close to this level of workers basic rights and income security or value.

I am not sure it is the right direction to ever consider us the same, to use these career or professional markers, we must be valued in a different way. We must have more and different opportunities, the equal of more jobs. To have new ways to work beyond exhibitions, artwork, talks or workshops. Other ways to be integrated into daily society and paid such as schools, offices, streetscapes but even more out of the box, yet creating creative work as that is what we do. Smaller projects, collaborations, consultations, on boards, new arts ministers should routinely consult with independent artists not just orgs. To have value we must be seen, treated, and consulted as valuable. To be central we must be treated, valued, paid, and consulted not as the same but central. Basic income would be ideal.

Strong Institutions

We need stronger institutions on all levels, and in all states with artists from ALL states. Small, med, and large. ARI (artist run), state, private, commercial, and experimental. And everything in between. All consulting with artists, artists on boards, taking feedback and really listening to their arts community without fear or repercussion. If artists are afraid to speak out in the arts, we have a big problem.

We need different models, much less constant competition and of course much, much more funding. New funding, sponsors, patrons, more way's to be self-sufficient, more ways to sell all kinds of work, realistic budgets, that also out the artist at the forefront.

Institutions that do not just proclaim their own position as advocate or flagship or experimental, but artists concur. Institutions that listen and are not out of touch. Models like 4 exhibitions a year are stagnant and diminish opportunities. Larger group exhibitions are needed more often, invitation not just application. Many invitations to varied career levels, not the same artists over and over, new combinations, fresh ideas, swap's and indoor, outdoor, residencies, touring many more varied exhibitions, also putting the artist as central. Free studios, studio visits, sharing visitors, sharing resources, curators looking further, deeper, wider, what was seen last month, what hasn't been seen, what needs to be seen again.

Institutions that reach out and are not closed off and insular. Where the donors don't only get special treatment, the artists do. That nurture careers, that open their doors, that look to new audiences, that promote artists, that use their resources like documentation on their websites so past exhibitions can still be seen in their real in space glory, not just to give to the artists or go into storage. That give real tangible feedback, not just on failed proposals, that see those in the community working tirelessly with minimal resources to also support artists and make opportunities and band together, this includes publications looking to regional, ARI's not just major institutions.

These are just some examples, and I am painfully aware there are many, many, many more.

Education is absolutely crucial from primary school to year 12 to university/art school and here again the business/career focus of universities loses the creative and critical skills. We are professional but we are more or different. Bring art focus back!