

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: On behalf of a for-profit arts business; As an individual

First Nations

Challenges

- Being considerate of the many nations and groups – all with different cultural stories, experiences with bureaucracy and expectations.
- Timeframes – First Nations artists need to work within their own time frames which are an important part of the cultural norms.
- Creating institutions that engage with First Nations artists in new and innovative ways and create culturally safe places for ATSI artists. The large majority of our institutions are based on centuries old models and processes that are based on privilege and power – largely determined by older white males.

Opportunities

- Establishment of a peak First Nations arts body – that provides support, advocates and offers advice on the preservation and promotion of First Nations arts and culture.

A Place for Every Story

This pillar probably resonates the most with me because it aligns with the idea that art is embedded in everyday life. I think you could actually flip it to be “every place has a story also” – which makes sense. The opportunities within this pillar are to better promote the arts as an essential part of everyday life – like people engage with sport at an amateur level but we also treasure and invest in professional athletes we also need to support amateur engagement in arts – not just in passive ways but in active ways. The capacity to share and enjoy stories is integral to life.

I believe local government is an ideal vehicle for the engagement of people in arts at this level and they should be better supported, funded and encouraged to foster stronger and more prosperous communities through the arts.

Other opportunities

- Arts and Health – there is a massive amount of data that proves the value and importance of arts in feeling well and improving health. We are yet to take a bold stance in this space Australia and invest adequately. If we look at key health problems in this country – mental health decline, obesity, heart disease, substance abuse etc we seem to be making very little ground on changing the status quo. Surely then it is time to invest in different ways of addressing these issues – a redirection of health expenditure towards arts and health initiatives make sense – both from a preventative and recovery perspective.
- Increasing awareness of arts – so that the average citizen recognises and values art to the point where they are willing to invest time and money into it. I believe part of the challenge here is that people don’t necessarily recognise that they engage with art on a daily basis and that it is important to them. People read books, listen to music, watch films – but don’t see it as “art” we need to change that and could do so with a campaign / mechanism where art in all its forms is recognised and easily identified as such – bit like the heart foundation tick – we could have a “this is art” marker.

The Centrality of the Artist

Fostering artists and ensuring they have strong and sustainable careers is vital to everything else in a cultural plan – it won't work otherwise. Creating a universal basic income for artists and encouraging them to contribute to place and community in exchange as well as developing their practice would be a great way to improve the situation for artists.

Strong Institutions

Two comments on this one

1. As above our institutions are essentially based on very old systems and processes that espouse privilege. Rethinking these to look at new and more innovative models of operation for institutions is essential. Otherwise the lack of diversity in arts audiences will continue to be an issue.
2. Regional galleries are essential to regional and rural Australia and in some parts of the country they are very very poorly funded – SA for example – the majority of regional art galleries are volunteer run and under-resourced. For some communities these organisations are the only cultural place for many hundreds of kms. They are about more than pictures on walls and provide education, health, social connectedness opportunities and improve the look and feel of places. They are vital and need support!

Reaching the Audience

Data suggests Australian arts audiences are largely educated white people – mostly middle-aged women. Surely, we can get better at this and need to continue to work on our capacity to ensure relevance. Resident artists embedded within local government, schools etc would change people's perception of art and promote value and purpose – all whilst reaching audiences in their own places and spaces – not necessarily galleries and performing arts centres.

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:

I think I have covered this in my responses above. I work as an arts and culture freelancer – working with Councils and organisations to develop arts and cultural plans – so I appreciate how important it is to foster story-telling and would advocate for that above most things.

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

- Universal basic income for artists
- Artists in residence embedded within local government and schools.
- A greater focus on arts and health with the development of arts and health studios that people can access like they might access a gym or sports centre. They can participate in individual arts activities or group activities.
- A national awareness campaign that identifies art in all its forms and increases people's understanding of art and its value more broadly.
- Bigger investment in arts spaces in regional Australia.
- Funding for the piloting of arts and cultural tourism that bring together tourism operators and artists in very practical ways.
- Universal agreement on indicators to measure arts and suitable funding built into funding programs to evaluate and measure impact of arts and culture.