

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: On behalf of a for-profit arts business; On behalf of an organisation with arts-components (e.g. community organisation, tourism, venue, health, education etc); As an artist; As an individual

A new Australian cultural policy will have the power to ask the right questions to undo the systemic cultural absence of our contested Australian multi-cultural identity. This policy isn't just about funding our artists commercial livelihoods or creating 'real-jobs' and creative careers at home.

This policy provides the opportunity for an Australian re-admission to the world of creative and cultural legitimacy both at home, and abroad. Since 1788, what was brought ashore and enforced in New South Wales was a 'wisdom of silence' as survival instinct (Lawrence 1929). A pernicious and uniquely 'Australian' language of self-exclusion that I believe is the foundational framework for 240+ years of determined absence towards our 'real' Australian voice and identity. We chose to leave ourselves out through our own 'she'll be right' ambivalence.

We had a brief window of legitimacy from the late 1970s up until the closing ceremony of the Sydney 2000 games. Then global digital media ownership took over and fractured our local sense of cultural citizenship, creative production, and local consumption supply chains. Other than this remarkable golden era, modern Australia has sustained a permeating mask of silence to conceal the colonial shame of transportation, expulsion, and exile from 'legitimate' society, and to enforce the powerless dispossession of our indigenous tribes and nations on its own homelands. For our founders this scar was never supposed to be removed or healed.

I believe that the traces of these cultural systems instruct limitation of our own field of Australian cultural production as a commercially monopolised multi-national corporate strategy. A new cultural policy has the promise to once and for all locate an unshakeable national self-respect for our own voice, and to legitimise our Australian cultural identity through regulations, quotas, and cultural rights to thrive at home. Most importantly to ourselves as Australians in the era of constitutional recognition and energy transition, and for the world to finally become acquainted with who we really are.

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

Opportunities here far outweigh the challenges. As we move the nation towards recognition and acceptance of Australia's First Nation's rightful place in our constitution through the Uluru Statement, I'm reminded of the build-up to the Bicentennial in 1988 and then to the Sydney 2000 Olympics. There was initial resistance and scepticism towards the Bicentennial commemoration, but through determined education, well-marketed milestones, and

events, a controversial event transformed the nation through engagement, cultural infrastructure, and a cultural awakening that led to a rare national celebration. And with it came considerable global commerce. We really haven't had an event of such magnitude since the Olympics closing ceremony in 2000. Other than transitioning to a fully digitised nation connected globally. Now in post-election 2022, the pandemic and a federal election challenged Australians to reckon with decisions on Social, Economic, Geo-political, and Emissions reduction consensus, all in the service of a national recovery for our collective future. Australia has always prospered when we have collective goals and targets to work towards. We unite and come together if there is consensus around common purpose. This time is no different, except this opportunity goes far deeper. This generous gift from our First Nations process culminating in the Uluru Statement from the Heart is set to heal a divide in our nation's becoming that has been contested since the colony of NSW was founded through an imported assumption of Terra Nullius in 1788. The opportunity to complete our multi-cultural nation with a foundational understanding (Makaratta) could be our greatest achievement as a nation to date, and will re-invent yet un-considered rewards at home, and globally. It will no-doubt confront the nation's conscience and sense of selfhood. But this moment cannot result in our predictable cultural intuitions of shrinking, sliding, or surrendering to the 'too hard basket' or 'the can kicked down the road.' The acceptance of Constitutional recognition of our First Nation's powerlessness will define us to ourselves, and to the world as never before. It's an opportunity to step out of the shadows of our shame. Any future Australian Creative Policy must protect these real opportunities and challenges presented by the inclusion of our First Nation's patient generosity as a prophecy fulfilled, and a national transformation of our pride, self-respect, and purpose installed for generations to follow.

A Place for Every Story

Australia has had a tricky relationship with its own artistic and creative voice, and this voice's place on a legitimised Australian mainstream media landscape. This landscape is a place where we habitually gather in the digital media age and also face-to-face in our daily lives in Australia. There are global multi-national commercial interests at work in this contested space that reduces the bandwidth for our own stories to be experienced and shared in our own backyard. Taking more control of this contested commercial space could be a bigger war of independence than Constitutional Recognition based on the scale and scope of the economic fields of power in operation in our countries monopolised media industries. What is ahead is a revolution if we have the resolve, and bravery to embrace it. For our stories to thrive, the opportunity has arrived for our cultural voice to regain prominence in our own mainstream media, as it was in 1970s-1990s as a fully 'Australian' cultural priority. The challenge is to convince the current economic field of power of the greater scope available for a re-imagined set of constructive regulations and quotas that guarantees a sustainable home for our own stories, in our own Australian cultural and commercial mainstream. It will be an ideological arm-wrestle between embedded assumed privilege of the status quo, and our emerging sovereign identity galvanised by Constitutional recognition. Currently our stories are held captive from local distribution by monopolized, multi-national ownership. The opportunity here is a reckoning on the value of our own voice as a national resource of tangible, prosperous self-becoming. The challenge is to create educated pathways for legitimate self-respect towards the power and value of our own

stories, and their commercial value as copyright protected local currency. This will mean a war of attrition between the 'corporatized silence of determined absence' for external commercial gain, and the cultural rights of shame-free tall poppies standing up for their right to thrive in the emerging Australian-owned networks of the global media mainstream. It's time to silence the terra nullius status assigned to our own stories by our own cult of forgetfulness {Stanner}. and our embedded intuition that leave ourselves out as 'not good enough,' or seemingly not worthy of our own self-respect. Our stories consistently prove that we excel via any commercial or cultural criteria, and as Australians, we must be committed to standing up and backing their value as inarguable bedrock, even during hot-blooded disagreement.

The Centrality of the Artist

Australians spend thousands on overseas trips over decades to worship at the feet of artists and cultural legacies in Rome, Paris, London, Madrid, Mexico et al. France is the gold star nation regarding the centrality of the artist as the intrinsic spine of their hard-won nationhood. Every French citizen has free access to their Institutions, Galleries and Museums for life. In Australia, being an Artist is not yet fully recognised as a 'real-job.' It's repeatedly viewed in Australia as a liminal space between 'living the dream' and 'getting away with murder' while 'normal people' work their pragmatic lives away as 'real-life.' Many other segments of our Creative Industry have secured legitimate pathways from School, to Uni, to Careers. Our Creative Arts, especially in the plastic arts, song writing, and music are far from secure or legitimised at home. This again is connected to the nature of our contested survival as transportees protected only by our sworn silence, and our fragile playing field of imported 'Australian' cultural production. The cultural systems of 'she'll be right' and 'no worries' rules our less than serious intent to institutionalise the centrality of the Australian artist as being intrinsic to a proud and productive career, legitimised within a generous creative nation that is proud to project itself out to the world through its artistic achievements. The opportunity is to reckon with our shameful, customer/consumer/privileged absence towards giving Australian artists the permission, authority, and trust, to represent our creative identity as the cultured nation we'd honestly like to be known as, but to date not committed to fulfilling. The challenge is to wrest power from those with a gothic 1700s mindset that still believes the Australian artist deserves a garret lifestyle of crumbs at the fringes of legitimate, respectable patronage. Not a real-job, but as a slave to anointed generosity in return for survival as crafts-folk. A revolution will be required to conquer the cringers still clinging to an 'Idea of Australia' as a British tourism branch office that has long-ceased to exist in the hearts of numerous generations of multi-cultural creators now demanding local opportunity and livelihoods in the 21st century at home.

Strong Institutions

Australia has a proud history of sustaining well-funded Artistic and Creative Institutions through the boom and bust creative cycles of the 1960s-1990s. The last 20+ years of Conservative 'white-anting' post 2000 has pushed great galleries, museums, performance companies, and touring infrastructure to the brink. The pandemic was the last straw for far too many Australian practitioners. The attitude from our Federal Government? 'We had to draw the line somewhere.' This only highlighted how poorly we view our one and only national artistic voice. This response was a smirking celebration for conservative economic

forces that have effectively devastated a generation of talented Australians due to a stubborn inability to understand the intrinsic value of the creativity industry to Australia's global economic and social fortunes. We have had our institutional skeletons in mothballs for years, they just need to be re-nourished and re-activated, and re-built as part of an overall creative renovation revolution. First in spirit, then investment, then institutions set in stone. This insurgency must be motivated against the creaking culture of bullying dominance by the incumbent economic fields of power, standing-over the centrality of the Australian Artist in a legitimate, self-respecting Australian creative nation. Australia consistently does swings, roundabouts, and rollercoasters that has imprinted an 'iffy' cultural identity to the world. As pillars go, the dormant institutional foundations in Australia come from deep roots, goals, aspirations and funding guidelines throughout our short history. Any future renaissance will only come with the honest recognition and acceptance of what's been withering our creative capacity without leadership since the see-sawing of Governments since 1996. We have shining examples of sustainable institutions over generations in Sport. When does Australia step-up, and grow-up its attitude towards what is a vast lost resource of creative national commerce, careers, and global self-esteem built to co-exist alongside our Sporting industries? Any future policy demands honest reflection on where we've succeeded and why, but more urgently, where we have failed ourselves, and left ourselves out of legitimacy, through enforcing our stubborn cultural self-exile in exchange for multi-national profit-taking.

Reaching the Audience

With the arrival of digital media at the turn of the 21st century, the novelty, and global connection via the internet/www fractured our sense of local 'cultural citizenship' that was glued together in supply chains and consumption habits via print, TV, radio, cinema, and video. With digital, in the blink of an eye we transitioned from a national audience of the Television age, with predictable mainstream unification and intuitions, into a 'nation' of individual users with individual habits and routines ever-expanding through digital innovation, products, and behaviours. 22 years later our Australian audience operates in a lazy limbo between global and local identity where the bandwidth is owned primarily by leading multi-national platforms. If we are to become net exporters of our own destiny, we need to wrest back sovereign ownership of our own production and distribution as currency and property of immense Australian-owned value. Our digital behaviours are now baked into our Australian sociology, but our sense of local self-respect is absent in contrast. It's time to re-connect our commercial and cultural allegiances for the long-haul ahead and build the health of our mainstream media pulse to ourselves. The opportunity is to become a re-branded version 2.0 of a material/digital storehouse of Australian local talent, careers, and content with our own local signature and brand of wit and wisdom that flows from First Nations through to multi-cultural creative industries operating locally, and globally. Reaching the local audiences and growing a functioning market-place at home starts with proudly saying 'Made in Australia.' Not as a hollow corporatized kangaroo logo bounding across a mythical commercial wasteland, but as a boomerang of legitimacy that exports and returns education, careers, and livelihoods to a proud, honest, whole-hearted Australian mother-lode of local enterprise. A revised Australian Creative Policy must incentivise reward for sovereign enterprise, not just persuade an emotional 'good times' connection. The stakes are much higher.

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

As an Australian communication designer, design educator, and published songwriter, the place of First Nations in my creative practice is deeply inspirational. It is a proud cornerstone of our national identity, and a growing strategic opportunity to re-frame our ambivalent cultural citizenship and embed a new spirit of authenticity and legitimacy into our own global sense of Australian self-esteem. Ever since Prof. Russell Kennedy (now at Deakin) presented at the AGIDEAS Conference in 2012 in Melbourne with his research on “Appropriate or appropriate? Strategic considerations when representing indigenous culture in communication design and branding,” the integration of First Nations representations into Australian mainstream media, and especially song writing, and music has grown apace. It’s a prophecy that will deliver Australia its commercial promise and social completion at home and on the global stage. Lissa Barnum and I were signed to Hot Records as ‘Vitabeats’ in the mid 1980s (Boom Box on Classic Countdown https://iview.abc.net.au/video/LE1601V011S00_40.02) when Warumpi Band, Yothu Yindi, Oils, Archie Roach and Kev Carmody (with Paul Kelly and Michael Gudinski) started the indigenous music revolution that eventually delivered Gurrumul’s triumph in 2008. I began my PhD at UTS on Australian Song in 2015. I’m currently writing a book that focuses on the confounding gap between the authentic grain of the Australian voice delivered by First Nations artists (and numerous multi-cultural voices both homegrown and immigrant Australians), and the avoidance sustained by the multi-national music monopolies that plague our practitioner’s ability to present our own Australian voice consistently on our own mainstream media and generate education, careers, and valuable livelihoods at home. The First Nation’s Voice into the Australian constitution referendum is a lightning rod for the re-invention of our national identity, and that starts at home. Our First Nation’s Australian songlines are literally grounded in the landscape below the modern Australia where we walk each and every day. This is in itself is a Makaratta for our own Australian field of cultural production and the field of power within it that has acted as a handbrake towards our song and music practitioners for the past 2 decades. Since 2000 up to the recent election, our Creative Industry has showed resilience and determination to prosper against conservative odds of dis-promotion, ridicule, exclusion, and de-funding. Along with our LGBTIQ creators, our First Nations producers are now an inspirational lighthouse for the local/global levelling of the cultural/commercial playing field in Australia. A reinvigorated Australian cultural policy will confirm the profound structural change required to achieve this leap forward for our creative future, and locate our ‘real’ identity for the global generations ahead. Both in our Asian backyard and within the established centres of global Arts & Culture where we belong to be represented.

A Place for Every Story

Australia has a sustained a commercial song and music enterprise that has been operating since our first song was published as sheet music in Australia in 1834. A song of the Menero tribe was actually an indigenous song transcribed for voice and piano. (Austral Harmony Sydney Uni 2020). It is important to recognise that there is a legitimate Australian song culture that has been in commercial operation in Australia for 188+ years. It

is also critical to recognise that the original inhabitants of the continent of Australia have maintained a song writing custom well-before the nation's colonial founding in 1788, and then its commonwealth federation in 1901. (Barnum 2022). Our re-booted Australian song and music enterprise needs to reinforce the central nature of this sovereignty as a foundation stone of Australia's creative vision for a future policy process. Not unlike what was stated in both 'Creative Nation' (1994) and 'Creative Australia (2003), the difference now is that we've seen an industry wide collapse building prior to the pandemic, where we saw the slow but steady shrinking of 'the place of our stories' disappearing from our own mainstream media consumption, in favour of the dominance of imported voices being tagged as our own through multi-national marketing departments of major labels and media corporations. There must be a place for every Australian story as a cultural right at home for practitioners, not only as a commercial import strategy for an assumed legitimate Australian music industry. The new policy must legislate against what we've learned from the past 2 decades of slide, ambivalence, and the broken compact of our own Australian cultural citizenship. The policy should legislate for expanding the bandwidth for every emerging Australian voice to be seen and heard, educated, mentored, and sustainably fostered at home with real-jobs pathways and careers. This means planning sustainable cultural, social, symbolic and economic systems, not only creating funding for patronage through grant allocations. Structural change is our only hope.

The Centrality of the Artist

For Australia to own a legitimate seat at the table of global creative enterprise, it is time to finally put to rest the pernicious cultural systems of silence, cringe, tall-poppy, fake-egalitarianism, and Terra Nullius that sustains our ambivalent 'why so serious mate' avoidance of taking ourselves seriously as a country that whole-heartedly sustains a culture of real Artists, real-jobs, and self-respecting careers. We consistently leave ourselves out of consideration due to a lazy sense of absent self-respect. We don't do it with our sport stars, but we do find the time and effort to under-valorise and leave out the pursuits our artists outside of the scheduled commercial awards from commercial associations. Where are the statues and monuments of our Artists and Creators in our cities? Instead of Golden Guitars, could we have statues in cities of our foundational First Nation's songwriters and artists? This is the glaring gap in the identity Australia has presented in the 21st century. I think it goes much deeper than simple hesitation, uncertainty, or shyness. It's a missing piece of our DNA that needs to be repaired and re-instituted if we want a seat at the table of global creative self-recognition. It's not about big-noting, boasting, or marketing, it's about formal self-respect of who we are and who we can be. We need to stop counting ourselves out so easily and start legislating the place of the Artist into our social, cultural, symbolic, and economic playing field at home. This means industrial affairs, conditions, awards, quotas and planning our 'centrality of the Arts' infrastructure. Start loving ourselves at home unconditionally, like you would family or kin, so the whole world knows that we deeply love our Artists place in our lives and depend on them to thrive at home on behalf of our own national identity.

Strong Institutions

Living within a legitimate, well-managed ecology of reliable institutions bolsters a constructive, creative practice and embeds certainty and reliability. That's a rule of thumb everywhere you go in the world of mature creative cultures. Whether individually,

collectively, or as bigger established businesses or companies. It brings surety for practitioners to follow their risky Australia-based creative aspirations, knowing that the relationships you have worked long and hard to create regarding your own working conditions, and institutional links with visionary goals and ambitions through well administered networks. It makes the super-human effort required worth taking on, and believing in. Without the clear institutional foundations of a strong, well-funded level playing field of production and reception, you live in constant fear and trepidation, and the risk can easily turn into personal collapse of health, family, and decades of creative career investment. This has been the Australian creative reality since the arrival of the digital transition starting in the late 90s. In the 80s in Australia we had a flexible dedicated institutional continuum with strong independent leadership. With the profound changes that digital transition brought, and the upheaval in our political, economic, and climatic reality, the whole show started to fragment and fray against creative practitioner's safety and livelihood. Trust was ebbing away the institutional certainty that we'd all learned to rely on to maintain our fragile momentum. We have to educate ourselves to foster robust, committed institutions. The stark truth is the recent cunning destruction of our tertiary education's achievements by the conservatives through ideological negligence will scar this country as much their handbrake on climate transition. A creative life is hard enough in this country against so many odds. Being surrounded by powerful institutions that are hell-bent against your legitimate aspirations to survive need to be exposed, then re-constructed on behalf of our cultural right to thrive {Rankin bigHart}. This will only happen if we are brave enough to cultivate real Australian pride and self-respect for our creative institutions and practitioners. This means retiring our lazy cultural intuitions that choose to sustain our shame of absent avoidance.

Reaching the Audience

If you look at the creative/artistic cultures we admire, and so eagerly strain to replicate, there are some simple guidelines for engaging our local audiences towards our own artists and creative industry practitioners. We all know about local weekend markets where young people make 'stuff' for sale and grow grass-roots businesses. The media-mainstream in Australia needs a more 'local-market' mindset with platforms to match. We had Countdown on ABC-TV from 1974 to 1987, it became the weekly focal point of our golden age of Australian song and music. We wouldn't have grown into existence without it. It was a magnet for talent and a supply chain for Australian consumers to foster. If you look at YouTube now, what sustains creative businesses is exposure, content, product and data. The USA and UK have numerous chat chows that act as the conduit between local producers and livelihoods from their local productions. It's a tried- and-true system of supply and demand for local consumers. The US has a dozen platforms, the UK too. What do we have in Australia? Mainstream breakfast TV. This is almost the full extent of promotion of our own creators on mainstream media channels. No talk shows, no live showcases, except the odd niche series recently on ABC-TV or funding drive events for emergencies eg Bushfires and Floods. We need a consistent, well-supported media mainstream showcase/market-place infrastructure. We had it in the TV era, but for some reason we've decided it's 'too hard' or 'not really us.' We should demand a legislated number of platforms that foster and promote our creative industry to ourselves to create robust, cultural career pathways to connect with our creative education institutions. There are plenty of models we could easily follow. Only a rare few, like Adam Hills, have succeeded via Britain. Maybe Rockwiz with Julia Zemero

gets a guernsey too. The fact we have none of this infrastructure underlines our stubborn inability to promote our own creators to our own citizens to generate reliable, sustainable livelihoods for our treasury of talented creators, who currently are forced to go offshore to follow their dreams. For a wealthy, educated country like ours, this can only be described as shameful and inadequate if we are to be taken seriously as a net exporter of our own talent at scale. As we've already seen, the simple success of our enterprise at home is what gives us the authenticity and legitimacy to be included in global Arts & Culture markets. Let's legislate and re-build the local mainstream media infrastructure to deliver reliable future success at home, and globally.

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

I believe the purpose of the next Australian Cultural Policy is:

1. Communicating and representing with inarguable clarity what 'being Australian' means to each citizen within the multi-cultural population of Australia.
2. Presenting the myriad creative arts versions of what 'being Australian' means both locally and globally - to proudly explain who we are, what we believe, and what we honestly care about via reception and distribution locally as first priority. A functioning creative policy will locate our voice and aspirations to ourselves and to the world. By building the foundational cultural conditions for this creative production Australia will:
3. Proudly protect and distribute our own sovereign creative currency and capital. This Australian cultural estate will institutionalise:
4. AUSTRALIAN Creative arts production / Education / Careers / Livelihoods / Real-jobs / Property / Identity / Cultural, Social, symbolic and economic legitimacy at home.
5. This uniquely Australian currency and capital must now contain the long-tail of ancestral pre-colonial history up to today, and into our united imagined future.
6. This Australian Cultural Policy, built on the pillars of:
 - a. First Nations - A Place for Every Story - The Centrality of the Artist - Strong Institutions - Reaching the Audience - represents a storehouse repository of our legitimate Australian multi-cultural identity as local and global currency of becoming and belonging, with shared prosperity derived from its sustained material and symbolic creation.