

## A National Cultural Policy Submission by Sarah Hatherley

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The 2022 policy submission template identifies 5 goals from the 2013 Creative Australia National Cultural Policy. However, when compared to the original document, they're in fact an abbreviation of the original goals. I believe the omissions are significant and will have a detrimental effect on the results, skewing the direction of submissions by stakeholders. I have restated the original goals below, highlighting the areas where they differ from the template.

Goal one: Recognise, respect and celebrate the centrality of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity.

Goal two: Ensure that government support reflects the diversity of Australia **and that all citizens, wherever they live, whatever their background or circumstances, have a right to shape our cultural identity and its expression.**

Goal three: Support excellence and the special role of artists and their creative collaborators **as the source of original work and ideas, including telling Australian stories.**

Goal four: Strengthen the capacity of the cultural sector to contribute to national life, community wellbeing and the economy.

Goal five: Ensure Australian creativity thrives in the digitally enabled 21st century, by **supporting innovation, the development of new creative content, knowledge and creative industries.**

The 2022 National Cultural Policy Framing document identifies 5 pillars for us to consider in developing the next cultural policy. These reflect a narrowing of the ambition that was reflected in the original goals.

**First Nations first:** recognising and respecting the crucial place of these stories at the centre of our arts and culture.

**A place for every story:** reflecting the diversity of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture.

**The centrality of the artist:** supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture.

**Strong institutions:** providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture.

**Reaching the audience:** ensuring our stories reach the right people at home and abroad.

These have been refined into goals that 'underpin the 5 pillars', further shaping policy direction down a narrow pathway to commercialising culture.

**First Nations:** Support thriving and self-determined First Nations creative ecosystems.

**Participation and inclusion:** Create opportunities for all Australians to participate in and contribute to arts and culture.

**Thriving arts and cultural sector:** Support skilled, diverse ecologies of artists and organisations.

**Public value:** Strengthen the capacity of the creative sector to deliver benefits to Australians.

**Creative economy:** Build sustainable, networked and globally recognised creative industries.

UNESCO has an international framework to measure culture, referenced in Australia's 2013 Cultural Policy. Their 7 pillars, or dimensions, are clearer with less overlap, and definitely worth considering - see chart at the end of this doc. Australia will be benchmarked against them after all.

## **TELLING AUSTRALIAN STORIES AND VALUING IP.**

Goal three of the 2013 Cultural Policy aimed to ‘support excellence and the special role of artists and their creative collaborators as the source of original work and ideas, including telling Australian stories.’

In 2022 this aspiration has been whittled down to ‘Centrality of the Artist: supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture.’

Supporting the artist as ‘worker’ is in recognition of the difficulties faced by many sole-traders in the gig economy left behind through the COVID pandemic. But it’s a far cry from ‘supporting excellence and the special role they have as the source of original work and ideas.’ We all create culture, but the special role of artists is their quest for excellence and their ability to create valuable IP.

But most significantly the new framework ignores the importance of ‘telling Australian stories’.

It is technically possible to ‘support excellence and the special role of artists and their creative collaborators’ while making Hollywood movies on the Gold Coast. But that overlooks the opportunity to support Australian ideas, the development of Australian IP, and the sharing of Australian stories.

A Cultural Policy that does not explicitly place a value on Australian stories and original ideas fails us socially and commercially and limits our evolving identity.

## **PUBLIC VALUE**

In 2013 the goal was ‘to strengthen the capacity of the cultural sector to contribute to national life, community wellbeing and the economy.’

The new goal, ‘to strengthen the capacity of the creative sector to deliver benefits to Australians’, feels a little transactional. And if COVID lockdowns taught us anything, it’s the value of the arts sector in supporting community wellbeing.

We need this goal of supporting strong institutions to have clearer ambitions about the contribution the cultural sector can make, otherwise it’s easy to interpret ‘delivering benefits’ as an economic return on investment the Government expects for its support.

## **THE RISKY BUSINESS OF ENSURING CREATIVITY THRIVES.**

The final 2013 goal was ‘to ensure Australian creativity thrives in the digitally enabled 21st century, by supporting innovation, the development of new creative content, knowledge and creative industries.’

Redefining that pillar to focus solely on, ‘reaching the audience: ensuring our stories reach the right people at home and abroad’, ignores the bigger challenge.

Understanding what is required to ensure that creativity thrives is essential if we are to have something valuable to offer audiences at home and abroad.

Creativity is driven by curiosity and fearlessness. To create something new - invent something that has not existed before - requires a leap of faith. Risk taking needs to be understood and supported.

To innovate is to make changes in something established, and there is an inherent discomfort in that process. We are asking people to set aside the established - what we know to be true. But what if it doesn’t work? This natural wariness can stifle creativity. There is an enormous amount of work to be done in this area.

Australians value success, nowhere more passionately than on the sporting field. But do we truly value innovation? I would argue that we do not. We celebrate successful innovation, after the event. But most innovators describe a lonely solo journey battling against the orthodoxy of their industry.

In the rapidly changing world, creativity has never been more vital, in the arts and in almost every industry. But to ensure Australian creativity thrives, we need to acknowledge the challenges creators face in doing things differently. We need fewer gatekeepers and more people with bold, risk-taking ideas pushing through the door.

**A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY TO TRANSFORM THE LIVES OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

‘Cultural’ relates to the arts and to intellectual achievements. But it also relates to the ideas, customs and social behaviour of a society.

I’d like us to consider the social behaviour of our society.

According to 2022 research conducted by Ipsos and the Global Institute for Women’s Leadership, Australian men rank among the most misogynistic in the western world.

Over the last 15 years Australia has dropped from 15 to 50 on the World Economic Forum’s Global Equality Index. New Zealand, by comparison, ranks 4.

Australia ranks equal first place for Women’s Educational Attainment, and yet our Political Empowerment in 54<sup>th</sup> place sits between North Macedonia at 53 and Liberia at 55.

If Gender Equality was an Olympic sport, Australians would be outraged.

And yet, Australian men rank second highest, behind Saudi Arabia, in agreeing with the statement, “Gender inequality doesn’t really exist.”

Gender equality is not just about jobs and opportunities in the arts, it’s about tackling the scourge of violence against women and children. And the National Cultural Policy is the ideal place to tackle the problem at its source.

There is consensus in international and national research that violence against women arises in the social context of gender inequality. “There is no doubt that violence against women and children is deeply rooted in power imbalances that are reinforced by gender norms and stereotypes.” Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, March 2016

The 2013 Creative Australia National Culture Policy stated, “Culture is not created by Government, but enabled by it.”

So has Government inadvertently been enabling misogyny?

One of Australia’s most cherished values is egalitarianism. Everyone having a fair go. But just as our love of mateship - companionship or friendship, especially between men – is gendered, there is a propensity to treat men as default humans thereby ignoring the perspective of the other half of the population.

While our goals can talk about ‘all Australians’, we need to be reminded of the tendency to view the male perspective as universal.

**So we need to ensure that the female perspective is explicitly given equal weight in our cultural policy.**

The ‘myth of male universality’ - the misguided belief in the objectivity, the rationality, the point-of-viewlessness of the white male perspective – has already buried generations of stories by women, and those stories are essential to present a balanced view of our society.

The ‘myth of male universality’ is a term coined by Caroline Criado Perez, best-selling author of Invisible Women: Data Bias In A world Designed For Men. She claims, “The history of humanity. The history of art, literature and music. The history of evolution itself. All have been presented to us as objective facts. But the reality is, these facts have been lying to us. They have all been distorted by a failure to account for half of humanity—not least by the very words we use to convey our half-truths. This failure has led to gaps in the data. A corruption in what we think we know about ourselves. It has fuelled the myth of male universality.”

Without explicit recognition of the importance of women in shaping the narrative of what it is to be Australian, our culture will remain deeply ingrained in inequality and a dangerous place for women and children.

Headlines like, “I’m sick of living in a culture that tolerates violence against women”, give us a clue to the pervasiveness of the problem, but also the kernel of the solution.

So many of our Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence organisations talk about the cultural change required to turn the tide on this national crisis. But with limited funds for long term educational programmes, it’s difficult to make inroads.

Primary prevention, or stopping the violence before it happens, is the most compassionate and economically prudent approach. Knowing that a culture of disrespect towards women is a precursor to violence, we need to cultivate a culture of respect for women. Their ideas, their voices, their leadership.

**The National Cultural Policy to ideally placed to make it our goal as a nation: to value and celebrate female artists and their stories.**

Elevating women in this way, will not take anything away from men, but it will acknowledge the enormous contribution of women to our culture. And their voices in public life will help harmonise an imbalance that we have grown inured to.

UNESCO has an international framework to measure culture that will benchmark Australia’s achievements over the term of this policy. Quite rightly, gender equality is one of the key dimensions.

It is vital that the female perspective is embedded in our cultural policy if we are serious about the elimination of violence against women and children.

7 Dimensions	That measure the...
<b>Economy</b>	...contribution of the culture sector to economic development and its potential for growth
<b>Education</b>	...priority given by public authorities to support an education system that offers the broadest possible coverage, values diversity and openness, and promotes a competitive and creative class
<b>Governance</b>	...public commitment towards creating the conditions to structure the cultural sector, strengthen cultural processes, and promote diversity of views and voice
<b>Social participation</b>	...way in which cultural practices, values and attitudes may orient behavior, inclusion, cooperation and individual empowerment
<b>Gender Equality</b>	...objective and subjective gaps between women and men in their opportunities and rights to take part in cultural social, economic and political life
<b>Communication</b>	...conditions of access, enjoyment of diverse content and freedom of expression
<b>Heritage</b>	...public commitment to set up and enforce standards, policies and measures to protect and promote heritage, while ensuring access and sustainability

Each dimension in the grid is comprised of at least 1 indicator, while some of them may include as many as 5 indicators.

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