

National Cultural Policy Submission

Anonymous

Submitted: As an artist

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you?

The Centrality of the Artist

I feel like this is tokenistic and idealistic in the current state. If we believed in the centrality of the artist, we would give them financial support to work on their craft, to create beautiful works of art in whatever form that comes.

With grants so competitive and skewed towards those artists who are "proficient at grant writing" you leave out a mass of artists who don't even stand a chance at financial support. A basic living wage would centralise all artists in their work, so they can produce without the incredible stress and burden of not making money while they create.

Strong Institutions

Without government support, and strong intuitions that nurture and celebrate artists, we will be a dying breed. The desire to create is always with us, but the know-how, the financial scaffolding, the time and space to allow for the process is lacking.

Reaching the Audience

The goal of most writers is to see their work in the hands of readers. For most, this is via a publisher. Unfortunately the gatekeepers of the industry hold all the power. It seems to be irrelevant how keen and ambitious you are as a writer. Once you sign that deal any marketing budget is at the publisher's discretion. Without a large backing to get word of your book out into the world, it is easy to be eclipsed by bigger authors. Propping up debuts and "small fish" seems to be a lower priority for publishers. It would be great to have a semi-even playing field to all start off from and that way audiences would get access to a diverse range of works, which you hope is the whole point of writing/creating/storytelling.

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why.

First Nations

This is our history and their stories must be cherished, told and celebrated.

A Place for Every Story

Just as there is a wide diversity of readers, there is a wide diversity of authors. We need to make space for many voices so readers feel connected and their experiences are validated.

The Centrality of the Artist

In an ideal Arts world, the artist would be central to the process. Without artists, there are no creations. This seems an oversimplified and obvious statement but our current policies don't support the artist in any way that can make them central in the creative process. For me, I could not have written my novel if I didn't have a husband earning a full-time wage. I also have 4 children, so finding time to do it and not feeling immense guilt at earning little to no money while I created was an

impediment to progress. The Centrality of The Artist almost feels like a lovely idea that is a long way from reality.

Strong Institutions

I was paid a small advance for my novel which in no way covered the 7 years it had taken me to write it. Now it's on shelves, I will not see another cent until I earn out that relatively small advance, and even then, the money we earn as authors is abysmal. We are the last in the chain to be paid – on royalties twice a year! There's absolutely no way I could support a family as a creative and if our circumstances change, I will have to give up writing to pursue a steady income.

Artists have insecure work, no fair pay, no workers' rights, no superannuation or leave entitlements. Most of us earn below the poverty line and that comes down to a lack of supportive institutions.

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

I have adopted these points from the submission by Jennifer Mills because she articulated it all so clearly and I completely concur.

1/ recognise that artists are essential workers, we are entitled to the same rights as other workers: fair pay, superannuation, leave entitlements, capacity to bargain collectively, and recourse to dispute resolution when conflicts arise.

2/ It is vital that the PLR/ELR scheme be expanded to include digital lending rights, as recommended by the Australian Society of Authors.

3/ a basic income scheme, job guarantees, fellowships, and public employment schemes such as artists in schools. When funding arts organisations, funding bodies must prioritise organisations and projects that directly employ artists in secure work.