

National Cultural Policy Submission

Anonymous

Submitted as an individual

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

There is an opportunity to shift the dominant narratives about Australia through resourcing and empowering Indigenous-led creative practice. By dominant narratives I mean the dominant understandings about the past of this continent that mystify and denigrate the identity and culture of First Nations peoples, the true histories of frontier conflict and assimilation, and the systemic racism that underpins most cultural institutions including the education system. There is an opportunity for the cultural sector to lead this shift because of the strength and power of First Nations creative practice – which is incredibly diverse and exciting. I think the cultural sector needs to do everything it can to resource and champion Indigenous-led creative practice including self-determination in the management of cultural heritage. Empowering Indigenous Knowledges through creative practice can pave the way for real world impacts that address the injustice and inequity faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples every day. This shift needs to be led by First Nations people and follow the mantra “Nothing about us, without us!” I think such a shift and a reimagining would also lead to a much healthier and vibrant cultural sector in Australia for everyone.

A Place for Every Story

A national policy should reflect the diversity of creative and cultural practice in Australia and not reflect a hierarchy of cultures that puts the Western canon first. This is an opportunity and also a challenge.

The Centrality of the Artist

The work of artists needs to be valued and we need a system that supports their health and wellbeing. So many of the permanent jobs in the cultural sector are not for artists who most often have no sick leave, superannuation etc. a situation exacerbated during the pandemic. Artists are continually asked to do things for free or accept tenuous working conditions. Yet the cultural sector is one of the biggest economies in the nation. This situation is not fair. I support a national policy that would give a living wage to artists. I also support programs like Artists in Schools. Valuing creative practice can be built into the education system.

Strong Institutions

We need cultural institutions that are for everyone. The pandemic has shown as the importance of local community. There is an opportunity for locally based cultural centres to play an even greater role in the lives of local people. For example, places like the Footscray Community Arts Centre and regional art galleries.

Reaching the Audience

There is a challenge around infrastructure for regional, remote, and senior communities to be able to participate in the digital realm. Zoom has made it possible to collaborate more easily on projects. However, I have found it is not always accessible for older people, or those living in remote or regional areas. I am sure there are many similar challenges of access not only to the digital realm, but to participating in the cultural sector.