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

“GDP measures everything except that which makes life worthwhile.”

Robert F. Kennedy

Creativity should be Australia’s most valued commodity. It is our most exciting potential area of growth.

This National Cultural Policy should, at its very heart, address the intrinsic worth of creative education and arts training. Young people are the future of our cultural health as a nation and the organisations that guide and inspire them are the pipeline.

Research over many years is conclusive, there is a link between creativity and the natural motivation to learn. This applies across all learning. Innovation, critical thinking and problem solving are valuable attributes for employment in every industry, not just the creative ones.

We are the National Youth Circus and a proud member of the Arts8 group of national arts training organisations. These world renowned institutions must be strong and resilient, appropriately funded, and fully supported to remain global leaders. Australian culture is an important export and in our field of expertise, circus is amongst the very best with an international reputation for groundbreaking work that continues to define and redefine the artform.

Our 80 full-time students are aged between 8-18 and our school-based circus arts program remains unique in Australia. Our own academic school provides a general education with circus and the performing arts as the cornerstone.

We teach our young artists to be receptive and open to many and all influences. The training philosophy is to strengthen and condition the bodies of the students, so they are capable of learning and adopting chosen skill sets quickly and easily. We are preparing children to enter an industry ten years in the future and it is impossible to predict what that industry will look like. We want our artists to be at the forefront of the future circus, making circus in their own image.

Flying Fruit Fly Circus graduates populate the professional sector throughout Australia and in major circus centres around the world including Montreal, Quebec, Paris and Melbourne. We continue to produce performance ready graduates with high level skills at an international level - young artists with professional attitudes and a healthy regard for the craft, networked into the sector through their introductions to artists from all parts of the industry.

Our learning journey grows knowledge, strength, resilience and artistry. Our students transition not only into circus and the creative industries but also into a wide range of university degree courses and career choices. The skills and self-confidence they build with us at the Flying Fruit Fly Circus are a scaffold for success – their critical thinking, creative approach and determination helping them to excel in whatever field of endeavour they choose.

Shouldn’t all young people have these same opportunities?

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These are the skills that industries across the globe are demanding, so the national focus on STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) rather than STEAM (including Arts) is stifling Australia's future. Schools should embed creativity in the teaching of all subjects. The arts should be elevated to an equal footing with so-called core subjects, not just considered a soft option or an extra-curricular activity. They are the key to our future success as a nation.

The cultural and creative industries are one of the world's most rapidly growing economic sectors, globally providing 30 million jobs and generating revenue of nearly \$3 billion. And yet, many secondary schools barely acknowledge tertiary education and professional career pathways in arts related disciplines. Our western education system is not designed to nurture the innate creative impulses of children and young people. It rather trivializes artistic pursuit.

A paradigm shift is required. Schools need to change their perspective and promote cultural and creative pathways with the same enthusiasm as any other. Young people should be made aware from an early age that these are legitimate choices that can lead to a rewarding career and a rich fulfilling life. These are 'proper jobs.'

Universities must be allowed to offer Bachelor of Arts degrees on a level playing field with other courses. The recent federal government decision to more than double the cost of studying humanities was misguided, sending all the wrong signals. Reversing this decision should be a priority.

Cultural enrichment enhances perspective and develops competitive advantage. New perspectives spark creativity and drive innovation. This National Cultural Policy must encourage a shift in the way society - and governments - view arts and culture. This will enable:

- Our creative economy to grow
- Australia to be more competitive internationally
- Our communities to be heard and better represented
- The development of new policies and initiatives
- Our cultural institutions to be strong and resilient
- A healthier way to measure our nations success beyond just GDP
- Australia's collective imagination to be unleashed

The arts nourish our soul on so many levels, in multiple ways. Film, television, music, books, theatre, dance, visual arts and, yes of course, circus. All of us engage every day with the work of artists and storytellers, but many don't make the connection.

The Flying Fruit Fly Circus supports the development of this new National Cultural Policy as an important moment to begin telling our own story better, inspiring a more informed and visionary conversation. We hope it encourages bold thinking. Imagination drives the vision to create a better world, so let's dream big. Unlocking our nation's full creative potential will benefit every Australian.