

National Cultural Policy Submission

Kassandra Bossell, sculptor

Myrtle St Studios, Marrickville

Submitted: as an artist

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

The recognition of the centrality of First Nations peoples to Australia's national identity is essential to our integrity as a nation.

A Place for Every Story

Our rich diversity of national, racial and experiential stories need equal weighting when it comes to government support and promotion. We need to decolonialise our cultural values in order to evolve the meaningful creativity of this richness. It is precisely a pride in all these stories that we need to engender whilst creating and listening to these stories.

The Centrality of the Artist

Coming from the LNP government where there was not even an Arts portfolio, the Arts was defunded to the max and artists were left out of every COVID rescue package, etc, etc, we really need to rebuild this sector. I think we should be guaranteed a minimum wage, which would seed a flourishing of artists nationally. I don't think this creates a danger by attracting 'bludgers' because few can comfortably live on so little. Artists can live on little when they are passionate and can augment this income with sales/ commissions.

Inventive thinking is contagious; spawning creativity by supporting the arts will 'infect' other industries by means of conceptual inspiration. Inspired people are happier and the trickle-down effect to any arts consumer, or participant in enlivening discourse will lift the engagement and the spirits of the general public.

Strong Institutions

Free discourse in our truth telling media (ABC, SBS) and the Australia Council, not to mention Screen Australia has been oppressed by the previous government to the point of extinction. We need to save these endangered species! We need to refund them substantially so they can regain robust operations: the health of our minds depends on it. The classic right-wing tactic of dumbing down public awareness by financially starving education, media and new arts has left us mentally crippled as a nation. I think we should continue to fund traditional institutions such as the Australian Opera and the Australian Ballet, but only to the same extent as other arts organisations and allocate smaller scale companies funds to develop into larger ones.

We also need to refund both universities and independent art schools, so they are not dependent on international students.

Reaching the Audience

Unless an artist's works are being sold for a large sum, it is financially unviable to be represented by a gallery because they take 40-60% of the sales of works. Therefore, many artists choose to stay independent and need free exhibition space as well as a minimum wage. These conditions will help us to reach our audience.

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

Many of my colleagues are first nations artists and need to be recognised and respected for their heritage and their contemporary contributions. This will help to heal the inherited social and identity-based trauma to which they have been inflicted since colonial takeover and direct colonial genocide, racism, abuse and then neglect.

A Place for Every Story

Through western traditions, history is automatically recorded and celebrated. We need to go out of our way to record and celebrate herstory and those stories of non colonial, western or dominant narratives so as to honestly understand ourselves as a nation.

The Centrality of the Artist

In my experience as an artist for practicing for 32 years, we need to raise the cultural respect profile for artists in Australia. Compared to other countries, us artists are severely undernourished and disregarded, though the arts industry is extremely lucrative for the economy. Creative thinkers evolve today's issues into tomorrow's culture: science and art have forever been the fields of reflection, problem solving knowledge building and self-reflection. We need to nurture the experimentation and discovery involved in these fields through cultural and financial support. Art funding could mirror science funding.

In terms of the centrality of the artist, we need to make sure the artists are well resourced, as well as or more than arts administration or galleries. At present artists are way worse off than these two.

Strong Institutions

In order to finance my art practice, I have worked with museums, festivals, events companies, theatre companies, film, TV and advertising as a sculptor/ mould maker / props maker. Raising their budgets will help artists to fund their own practices. Smaller arts institutions could benefit from further funding which could subsequently trickle down to artists to improve their capabilities.

Reaching the Audience

In order to reach my audience as a visual artist, I would like to see more free exhibition spaces made available to artists. Chrissie Cotter Gallery run by Inner West Council is one great example. After paying the costs of studio rent, art materials, and self-financing the time required to make the art, the last thing we need is to pay for an exhibition space.

