

National Cultural Policy Submission

Anonymous

Submitted: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation; As an artist; As an individual

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

1. First Nations

Education & Funding

2. A Place for Every Story

Education & Funding

3. The Centrality of the Artist

Education & Funding

4. Strong Institutions

Education & Funding

5. Reaching the Audience

Education & Funding

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

1. First Nations

First Nations people need both education of the general community and directed funding to achieve adequate participation & recognition in the arts. Some have succeeded (e.g. Cheetham, Roach, Bangarra,), but they may be viewed as a product of their particular history. It is important that we embrace, as part of our nation's heritage and history, arts practices of our First Nations people. That will require education and funding of and for mainstream Australia as well as building & supporting practitioners in the aboriginal community.

2. A Place for Every Story

The arts have been the subject of physical subjugation at most levels plus a systematic reduction of, or, complete lack of funding, except for flagship organisations.

The arts continue to exist because of the passion of persons practising one or more of the disciplines, but not because of dissembling funding (especially noticed in the guidelines for compliance, which exist in the main without any regard for content or quality but equate value equated by decisions based on economic or tourism factors) & a failure to provide broad proper education in the arts, either for tuition, performance or appreciation, at all education levels.

What available funding fails to recognise is that arts organisations have administration requirements. This attitude ignores admin & looks to funding the artists, not the organisation(s). Whilst this gives light to the artists & presumably a warm fuzzy to funding bodies, it does not help run a complex organisation.

The overall situation will be such that in 10 years, as funding and access continue to reduce, the lack of true specialised tuition and performance opportunities will force many aspiring artists to move overseas to gain even a reasonable standard and/or exposure.

Funding for proper education in the arts, and then for the advancement of a vibrant arts community has been systematically cut or reduced over many years, yet the community (in its uneducated state) expects that arts practitioners do it for love – the artist starving in the garret syndrome.

For these reasons the space available for creation of stories is limited. There are only small places working very hard on meagre budgets, and often with many volunteers helping out.

To create a vibrant space and place for stories requires education and funding.

3. The Centrality of the Artist

Please refer to the above for starters.

Yes, the artist and arts creators are the focus of what the public & the governments like to recognise & applaud, but the organisations that allow the artist to produce, display, perform or create, are not adequately recognised or funded, except for flagship bodies.

Backgrounding this, in general the public education system at all levels has been and is systematically destroying arts credibility, practice and appreciation, so we are left with the private sector to fill the vacuum, & of course, that relies on private money to sustain the facilities needed for the arts. That has limited scope.

We are indeed fortunate to produce many artists of superb quality, but they often fail to gain recognition in this country, and move overseas. In any event, their successes overseas are ignored in our media, except for a couple of very specialised magazines. They often gain greater credibility in overseas media than in Australia.

Compare the media frenzy over the latest transgression by a footballer, or the extensive programming given over to indifferent sport, mindless so-called 'reality' shows, & very poor drama & comedy (much of which is imported).

Most of our persons who have succeeded in the arts have achieved in spite of a failure of adequate support in this country. This is very evident at Opera Australia which imports most of its "lead" performers. Again, we have a failure to educate, encourage and support our "own" or even enough of our own, to create a truly resident ensemble company at the OA. And because we have so failed, the OA remains very limited in its offerings, with infinitesimal Australian offerings and creations.

4. Strong Institutions

We have very few strong institutions serving or even offering quality arts in the public system.

Those that do exist in the public recognition are our flagship companies, but those less publicly recognised are often more innovative, more experimental or more focused on broadening their patrons' experiences. However, many of these lesser organisations do not "fit" the predetermined funding model of equating monetary return with quality.

██████████ teaches music at a couple of private schools ██████████ – one of those schools has eleven (repeat – 11) choirs, none of which are allowed to sing rubbish.

There is nothing equivalent in the public sector known to me.

Thanks to funding cuts, universities are 'getting out' of the arts in many cases. Newcastle University, which had a wonderful Conservatorium & one of the best concert/recital halls in Australia, has now trashed a vibrant music institution (IMHO), and caused cultural vandalism in converting the aforesaid concert hall into a lecture theatre for business & law students (it may be available for hire on weekends when not used for lectures). An irony is that for a recent Uni graduation ceremony, the Newcastle Youth Orchestra was asked to play – reportedly there is not one student in that orchestra being taught at the Con. The same Uni also rid itself of a quality drama department and destroyed the building(s) used to stage student and some community performances.

Reportedly Wollongong, Canberra & Sydney Universities have reduced or even abandoned many of their arts offerings.

Many Uni may state that reduced Federal funding has caused their "requirement" to save costs, and the arts, most often requiring one-to-one tuition, is comparatively expensive, but expendable, as the community has been made to believe the arts are for the elite, the effete, and a past-time for dilettantes & hobbyists.

There is a general failure to relate to the human and financial benefits available by participating in one form or another in the arts, and that can include as an arts practitioner, observer, or audience.

Public schools, in the main, do not engage properly qualified teachers in arts subjects, but often allocate teaching of some arts subjects to teachers with limited experience and knowledge in the arts area being taught. I am very aware of this from my own experience, [REDACTED].

5. Reaching the Audience

Reaching an audience requires media exposure.

Media exposure requires marketing & promotion (in turn requiring funds). That marketing & promotion may assist to educate that the arts are not to be the construct of a few, but available to all, that they are enjoyable, thought provoking, emotionally involving & require a certain intellectual application (this last might be a turn-off for many). And that exposure does not cost the earth. In fact, many events are free or cost less than a dinner out, or attendance at a rock concert or football game.

It is just the way the media & politicians have portrayed the arts in general.

Media & politicians in this country have been brainwashed (or alternatively, have themselves brainwashed much of the populace) into believing that size, not quality, is the defining value. Ergo, funding goes to the organisation attracting the greatest number of people (??? therefore of votes).

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

Less of an attitude that the community needs only beer & skittles, & more that the arts are an experience to elevate our interests in the world, its people, & the environments in which we live.