

National Cultural Policy Submission

Dr Geoff Hogg

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:

The Centrality of the Artist

During COVID the role of the Arts showed its importance in peoples' daily lives in ways that had not been previously articulated. These new insights provide an opportunity to gain community acceptance for concrete action to support the economic life of creative workers. Notable steps have been made in recognizing the performing arts however visual artists and craftspeople are amongst the lowest paid workers in our society as demonstrated by the work of Professor David Throsby, [making-art-work-throsby-report-5a05106d0bb69.pdf](#). The current system for supporting visual artists and craftspeople through grants is welcome, however it doesn't provide economic security for practitioners. Grants are few and hard to come by so other means need to be explored. I suggest the following areas for consideration;

1. Artists in Community Residencies lasting for no less than six months providing an income for artists and helping build a community constituency for the visual arts and crafts. Resident Artists could be located with existing community groups, trade unions, non-government agencies and, where appropriate, small businesses. This would both provide necessary income for artists and help expand a community constituency for the arts and creative practice.
2. Support for the expansion of Art in Public Space programs, whereby commissions would be made available through appropriate authorities and community groups for public art projects, both permanent and ephemeral, exploring all media and scale.
3. Consideration be given to a Living Wage for Artists, for example the Irish Basic Income for Artists proposal launched earlier in 2022. This concept is supported in various forms in a number of countries including Denmark and France. If such a program is developed it would be important to link it to practical community engagement and audience expansion through a program of exhibitions, workshops and public projects in both metropolitan and regional areas. Such a program would maximise mutual benefit both for the practitioner in the struggle to find a stable income and audience and the community through an expanded opportunity to enjoy, view and participate in the visual arts and crafts in their many forms.

Reaching the Audience

1. Expand support for gallery and museum-based education programs in the arts and crafts whereby young people, in particular, are encouraged to learn about, and interact with, the Arts in and beyond the institutional setting through active and participatory programs making use of all available media. This should further encourage strong networks between schools – particularly in marginalised and disadvantaged communities. This will continue to expand and consolidate this priority in museum and gallery education.

2. Build stronger links between creative practitioners and community organisations through such programs as the very successful Art and Working life Program, whereby artists and creative practitioners were supported to engage with working people and their families through existing trade union structures. This program would also encourage extended participation in the arts, expand the constituency for creative workers, create new sites for artistic practice and make visible new content, telling stories of Australian life in its diversity.

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

This is fundamental to any Australian cultural policy through its unique and foundational experience.

A Place for Every Story

As a diverse society, expanded community engagement and participation in the arts is a continuing story as new content and experience always emerges and finds expression in changing ways; meaning when we think about a place for every story we must also consider the changing and often surprising modes of expression that sometimes contrast with artistic forms and venues with which we are familiar. This will sometimes challenge our existing institutions and ideas of what constitutes valid artistic expression. It is important that we are open to these changes and provide support for ongoing education within our institutional frameworks at all levels from major national institutions through to community programs supported by local government.

The Centrality of the Artist

As above

Strong Institutions

Strong flexible institutions, sensitive to community engagement, which ensure gender equity and diversity in their employment arrangements help to provide stability and a sense of history towards progress and engagement in the arts. Subsequently, it is critical that major art institutions, in particular, are engaged with a diversity of community organisations so as to avoid the appearance – and the reality – that these institutions are solely responsive to the wealthier segment of society as represented through the conventional donor base. For example, diverse representation on institutional boards to reflect contemporary Australian society in its fullness. Sustainable funding for our established arts and cultural institutions, particularly the small and medium sector, is vitally important and these institutions should be celebrated for their national value and contribution. However, institutional support should not be seen as a substitute for supporting and recognizing creative workers in the daily process of producing artistic outcomes upon which the institutions rely for their content and relevance. It is important not to see the two interests in a binary or exclusive

context, but rather mutually supportive; this will be easier when creative artists have greater economic sustainability.

Reaching the Audience

Although some one-off activities can be highly beneficial, for example performing arts visits to regional centres, exhibitions and concerts, this kind of activity should be augmented by substantial developmental work that enables the building of rapport and relationships between artists and communities. Short term projects in community settings can sometimes undermine capacity to engage and expand audiences as they are often seen as tokenistic. Building a sustainable economic life for the artists in a variety of settings is substantially linked to meaningful audience engagement.

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

<All the five Pillars in the National Cultural Policy are well identified and relevant – in particular the primacy of First Nations artistic engagement. On the basis of my experience, I would like to emphasize two linked points. The first, is building economic sustainability for artists and creative workers. The second, is expanding the community constituency for the arts thus making new insights possible as creative workers are more deeply embedded and supported in the communities within which they live. In this context, I would particularly like to emphasize engaging with trade unions as an important community for expanding creative engagement and exploring new artistic opportunities. Trade Unions have a unique, embedded cultural history in Australia representing cultural practices, object making, architecture and design. However, this has been under-recognised and supported through national funding bodies, despite a period during the 1980's when change appeared possible. No Australian cultural policy could be complete without recognizing the role and potential of trade unions in our community life.