

# National Cultural Policy Submission

## Anonymous

Submitted: On behalf of an organisation with arts-components (e.g. community organisation, tourism, venue, health, education etc); As an artist; As an individual

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

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

## First Nations

I am not First Nations but believe our unique Australian identity is in part shaped by First Nations stories, voices and culture. It should be central to and supported in new arts policy, but it should not be the only thing we hold up as worthwhile. We can be proud of all creative people as well as First Nations artists. We all have a unique story to tell...

## A Place for Every Story

Diversity is important. Alongside our unique First Nations culture, we have a unique blend of nationalities, cultures, natural environments and stories that make up our stunning country. All should be listened to and nurtured equally because we are all part of this land now. To form a national cultural identity going forward we must learn to unite rather than divide. Respect and connect. No one group should be considered more important than the other. That applies to gender, race and ability. See and value everyone with the respect they and their story deserves and intentionally seek out voices that have been denied a platform historically.

My own niche area is art music and I think we urgently need to prioritise commissioning female composers, who although 51% of the population are only represented in token numbers in all genres of music, to write for our state-funded ensembles and orchestras, and also offer targeted support to gender-diverse composers, and culturally-diverse composers.

## The Centrality of the Artist

The work artists do is hard to put a price tag on. For years before we earn our first dollar we have been training, practising and perfecting our craft. Artists deserve more respect and awareness from Australian society at large. We should be celebrated for our industriousness, the huge contribution we make, and supported in our right to do what we do. We deserve to do our creative work, not as an indulgence or privilege, but as our worker's right. Artists are the same as any worker, but usually more highly qualified, and more hard-working. We do years of unpaid work. We readily support others in need and offer opportunities to other workers when we can. We are hugely resourceful. We collectively sustain a huge creative economy that benefits the rest of society. We give form where there is none, create things from nothing, give shape to unspoken ideas. Perhaps it is this magic we do that makes us mysterious and misunderstood, but rather than view the artist with scepticism, it would be so refreshing if others could view us with pride, respect and understanding. Understand the processes behind our work that others consume without thinking how it is made, publicise our contributions, learn about the skill that goes into it, uphold our craft and our creations, show us respect as contributors to culture and our country. We deserve this much.

## Strong Institutions

I am currently on an artist residency in France. This morning we were driving through a coal-mining town, full of working-class citizens, a town without the high-brow buildings and institutions one

might expect from a cultural centre such as Paris. Passing the central garden in this town however, we noticed a pillar that was a memorial to composers and displayed the names of several prominent French composers engraved into it. With humour and resignation, we compared the situation to Australia, incredulously imagining that in an equivalent town, say a Lithgow, one might find the names of Australian composers etched into a pillar in the local park! Football players perhaps, but never composers; the vision feels ludicrous. The 'great sons' of Australia are usually sporting heroes. I would love to see a space open up for artists in the national consciousness where we are acknowledged, revered, celebrated and championed as much as our sporting heroes. Nightly reports on arts and culture in the ABC news in the vein of our sports reports would be a start. Names on pillars in parks, statues, streets, buildings, benches. Bring us out from the theatres and concert halls and into the public spaces people who are not artists or arts patrons share. Give our names currency among the general population. Celebrate us!

This needs to happen alongside a sustained, generous, and ongoing funding program for new art to be developed. The small to medium arts sector is where the new ideas grow. Only funding the major performing arts orgs will only ensure old music by dead European guys is performed again and again. Paying groups that develop and commission new work brings forth new identities, ideas, and nurtures new talent. Fund more orchestras and ensembles. Fund them to commission more new Australian work. Fund orchestral development programs so composers are supported to learn and upskill without having to put in weeks of unpaid labour in writing a score on spec in order to qualify; fund these opportunities equitably across gender and race. The music sector urgently needs more funding, more small to medium venues, more ensembles, and programs to commission new works. Let's be bold in our vision of making music in Australia look and sound like the country in which we live today, not like some relic of the past. With female composers still only represented in orchestral repertoire at around 3-4%, and with virtually no operas composed by women ever performed by mainstream companies, we still have SO FAR to go. I think for me, this is the most urgent problem my area of the arts faces (new music composition) and we are so tired of waiting for change...

## **Reaching the Audience**

I think when people see themselves better represented in the arts they will come in greater numbers. Making stories relevant and diverse, placing all kinds of artists in positions to make art in their medium, funding diverse artists intentionally, supporting artists through different stages of their evolving careers – all these are important sustainability measures for the arts in our country. Audiences want to see people like them on stage and on screen and in performances, they want to hear authentic stories rather than narratives concocted by only one demographic. This is why it is so important to empower those who have traditionally been silenced (e.g. First Nations people, women, trans ppl etc.) to lead in the creation of new work. Audiences will come when they perceive this authenticity behind the art.

Making more art free and affordable should also be a priority and will require more funding and support from government. Artists can't shoulder this themselves; we already work for too little money. I would love to see a country awash with public art that celebrates our fantastic country and culture and puts our unique position in the world forward as a shining light for the future. When we have defined the value of art firstly to ourselves, when we as a country know how truly special it is, audiences will grow regardless of the medium or format. It is not always about technology, or the digital age, it is simply about pride in what we do, pride in culture. Again, I am led to think of my time in France; there is so much free music on the streets, in the villages, in churches, in squares. France is justifiably proud of its art and artists and the contribution they have made to the entire world. Subsidised by governments at all levels, organised by communities who know the power of

music and art to connect people, reduce isolation, to sustain society, to inspire participation in the economy. We have much to learn from such simple methods. It's not rocket science. Fund music and art- lots of it - celebrate culture. If we want it to survive, if we want it to grow, it's like a garden – it needs effort, attention, resources, and nurture.

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

A Minister with a dedicated Arts Portfolio. A Ministry of the Arts and Culture. This would send a strong message that this core pillar of our economy and identity is taken seriously in this country.

Funding and security for grassroots art makers of all disciplines. These groups are the most active in nurturing and commissioning new work from living artists, especially from voices historically silenced, and they usually do it on a shoe string. Their future needs to be sustainable and supported through annual funding. They will be the ones to change the cultural landscape the fastest and for the better.

Targeted funding to address the huge deficits in professional female and gender-diverse composer numbers. This might include:

- Funding for female and gender-diverse composer commissioning programs – specifically to receive training in orchestral composition and admission to opera development programs.
- Support for mothers/primary carers to re-enter their arts practice (across all artforms) after breaking careers to raise children.
- More women being recruited into executive roles such as Board Chairs, Artistic Directors, CEOs, where programming, recruiting, and funding decisions get made.

I would like the fee hikes introduced by the Morrison government repealed, so that students pursuing careers in humanities and the creative arts are not penalised for following this path. The nation needs to attract the best and brightest art-makers into our study programs.

Acknowledgement of First Nations languages as a unique cultural legacy, their value affirmed, and their learning to younger First Nations generations as well as to the broader Australian community funded and assured across all language groups.

Funding for programs that facilitate cultural exchange and connection between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, to educate all Australians about the 'right way' to approach First Nations culture, and to facilitate dialogue and immersion for us all in this rich heritage.

Opening up spaces for dialogue, listening and understanding so no one who wants to learn about First Nations culture feels shut out. Lack of resources and mistrust are often barriers to fruitful exchange, and many more First Nations advisors and facilitators should be recruited, trained and paid well to facilitate this important work that so many of us are hungry to engage in, but is often so hard to access.

Increase the amount of arts funding for galleries, orchestras, smaller venues, theatres and workshops spaces/places to make art. Subsidise these until they are viable on their own. Bring more art to the community in both cities and regions, have regular community music and arts festivals and turn art into a source of pride, and a desirable career for our younger generation.

Identity needs to be nurtured and only once we nurture it, will we have an inclusive, representative, and vibrant culture that we can be 100% proud of as Australians.