

National Cultural Policy Submission

Anonymous

Submitted: As an artist

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

First Nations

The stories of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders are central part of our unique culture.

In supporting the Uluru Statement of the Heart we will endeavour to give First Nations people truth and self-determination in their storytelling by creating stories giving voice; to empower our first sovereign Nations to take their rightful place in their own country so they can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood. Stories of their culture is a gift to their country and should not be owned by off-shore interests.

It is also important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children to see their stories on our screens. Without specific regulations for this, child audiences are being neglected.

To help us see more of their stories on our screens, we ask for specific investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island stories to support their development, production and distribution.

We also need to ensure that the expression of our First Nations stories are able to be owned and retained by our people and not taken offshore by global businesses. Stories of their culture is a gift to their country and should be retained here in Australia. This requires a careful balance of cultural and business interests.

A Place for Every Story

It is important to me to see Australian stories in every place, including our screens. We deserve and expect access to a diversity of quality stories on all platforms including drama, documentary and children's programs.

It is a concern that we are seeing less and less Australian stories on our screens and it is important for a National Cultural Policy to address this. Our screen stories are an important part of our national cultural heritage.

Governments provide valuable financial support to the screen sector through important incentives and tax offsets and this should largely benefit the production of more Australian stories.

I believe we should require all screen platforms: our free-to-air broadcasters and our streaming platforms to ensure they are reflecting our own culture by investing in new Australian stories for us all to see.

In particular, regulation to require major streaming platforms like Netflix and Disney+ to make a reasonable and fair contribution to telling Australian stories is long overdue and requires urgent action to address.

That's why I want to see a requirement for an investment of 20% of major streamers Australian revenue, earned from Australian subscriptions, be spent on newly commissioned Australian stories in our National Cultural Policy.

In addition, the deregulation of Australian free-to-air requirements for special genres of children and adult drama has led to a sharp drop in these stories and this should be addressed.

It is important that all Australians can see their own stories both in front of paywalls on free-to-air or on their free online channels, as well as behind them on streaming platforms.

Through Australian screen stories, it is important that we reflect the diversity of our community and ensure that we encourage inclusion and a sense of identify for everyone.

The Centrality of the Artist

Screen stories are the expression of Australian culture and stories that has the broadest reach both across the nation and internationally.

The screen industry supports a diverse range of occupations, creative and technical – all equally important as part of a creative team that bring Australian stories to our screens.

It is important to ensure that our screen industry practitioners operate within an economic framework that enables them to create, participate and prosper within the sector.

Screen production deals done with all platforms should be based on a fair negotiation of contracts to ensure our screen businesses and that those they employ are all able to operate sustainably and are not disadvantaged by cost pressures from global corporate interests.

Screen practitioners – from new entrants to those at all stages of their careers - rely on strong public institutions and a pipeline of private investment to support their careers. This investment and government funding should also include a commitment from government that the programs it funds deliver fair wages and conditions for all creatives as a condition of funding.

Strong Institutions

The Australian screen industry needs strong, stable and well-funded institutions to enable the sector to support the creation of Australian stories and support a diversity of stories and creators.

It is important to ensure that our screen agencies and institutions are fit for purpose to enable them to achieve the best outcomes for the sector.

Funding cuts to the ABC and SBS have had a detrimental effect on screen stories and the training of new entrants to the industry and more secure funding of them to deliver Australian stories for all audiences is a high priority.

Our insitutions need to be led by diverse and robust boards drawn from industry. Our boards should represent creatives practitioners from across their respective areas of practice, and a balance must be struck to ensure these boards are representative of the creative industries they are part of.

Our specialist tertiary training insitutions and progams should be funded and nurtured to ensure a skills pipeline towards sustainable jobs with fair wages.

Reaching the Audience

Australian audiences must be able to discover and locate Australian stories on all platforms, including streaming.

Child audiences are being overlooked with no current requirement specific requirement for children’s programs on free-to-air or streaming platforms. They are missing out on Australian history and culture as a result.

As with European regulation, we should ensure algorithmic prominence on streaming platforms to ensure Australian audiences see Australian content.

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

It is imperative that our First Nations People and their stories are reflected on our screens whether that be on TV or at the cinema. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children need to see themselves reflected in stories of Australia and our very unique cultural status. It enriches all the lives of all Australians.

A Place for Every Story

Over my lifetime, I have witnessed a diminishing of our culture on all screen formats. Our ABC has become our BBC, with abundant overseas dramas and documentaries on free to air with less and less Australian content to view. We have amazing stories rich in history or just simply telling the day to day stories of all our people which reflect us as the diverse society we have become. More funding needs to be put back into these art forms. Also make streaming platforms increase their quota of "our cultural stories".

The Centrality of the Artist

The screen industry supports a huge and diverse range of artists, from performing, technical or creative areas. Support needs to come from government to keep all these workers fully employed telling our stories not American and where all profits made go off shore.

Strong Institutions

The institutions that nurture new talent in all creative professions need to be supported and adequately funded. Restore funding to the ABC and SBS so we can see our stories.

Reaching the Audience

All Australians need to see our culture reflected on our screens. Children need to be able to identify themselves by observing film and television that either gives them inspiration or simply an understanding of their place in our society and who they are as Australians or perhaps, just simply, what they might want to be when they grow up. Of course, there are also role models.

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

Overall, a boosting of our cultural identity on all screen platforms which would include all diverse backgrounds which have come together in our wonderful homogenous society. Make streaming companies accountable to reflect our stories and pay for that privilege.