

National Cultural Policy Submission

Anonymous

Submitted: As an individual

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:

A Place for Every Story

I write as the mother of two neuro-diverse daughters, with additional learning needs, who have managed to get through the school system, but only with the help of additional (outside) tutors, since the age of 7/8 years, and a few exceptional teachers. As parents, we had to advocate for our children all the way through their schooling, trying to get them needs-based supports. Every year it was like starting with a blank piece of paper, having to go through everything again and again with teachers who hadn't "met" our children. It is exhausting, and expensive – children of poorer, and less literate parents don't stand a chance. I listen to people talking about the NDIA wanting "proof" that their child still has whatever established disease/syndrome, and I know that this is exactly the attitude we all endured too.

Then, knowing that the school system does not truly value the Arts, your child has to constantly meet standards for "the 3 R's", upon which their scores are to be the measure of them as students. No amount of amazing ability in Art will ever succeed in propelling their status as a student into anything about their below average ability in spelling or maths or whatever!

Our school system mirrors what happens in the wider world – people who don't fit the 'norm' are frequently ignored. Their opinions and experiences are often not sort, nor acted upon. The fact that they continue to want to be part of the arts culture in this country is testament to their determination, and an understanding of themselves, that this is what they are good at! They want it to be where their future's lie.

One of our daughters has completed a tertiary Diploma [REDACTED], but is not working in her field of choice, mainly because she doesn't interview well, and she graduated at the end of 2019! Bad timing!! An employer that can appreciate that

her quirks don't mean that she can't apply her artistic abilities is hard to find, because the world is hard-wired to reject people like her. The other is still working her way through an Assoc. Degree [REDACTED]. Who knows if she will ever make a career of it, but she wants to try, and I want her to try too.

The consequences of always feeling/knowing that (society) has deemed them to be 'second best' all their lives has had huge effects on their mental health. As parents, we are constantly aware of, and watching for cracks.

We need to change the status of the Arts in this country. The school system in this country needs to sow the seeds of change. We need to change societal views by valuing the Arts in the curriculum, and not have them just as side-line subjects that are just there for a few "arty types", or those who are no good at the "real subjects", and that they "don't help people get jobs"! Our society needs to value artists and all their different forms of artistic expression. Artists need to feel/know that they ARE the reason we enjoy our lives. Who can say they would happily do without books, without music, without the colour, interest and mood enhancement that EVERYTHING we see and do in our daily lives is the result of an artistic person doing what they do best?

This response covers a few of the Pillars, so I hope that you can read into it appropriately, and I thank you for this opportunity to express myself, on behalf of my two amazing, artistic daughters.