

National Cultural Policy Submission

Professor Emeritus Barbara van Ernst AM

SUBMISSION TO CULTURAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT (May be made public)

At a recent Town Hall meeting in Melbourne, the Minister mentioned that the training colleges are at breaking point. In reality many of these program were previously strong in Universities, but the funding model does not cater for the necessarily smaller groups required for practical arts classes and often the equipment needed for the practice. I am concerned that as a result, many tertiary institutions, Universities and TAFE colleges, have discontinued many of their arts programs. There are some broad programs including painting, dance, drama, but many of the smaller areas such as ceramics, jewellery, glass work and printmaking have almost disappeared. This has serious implications for artists having access to the learning and training they need, but there are also very serious consequences for the teaching of all art forms in schools. Teachers in schools now need to have discipline as well as teacher education qualifications. Without qualified teachers with arts skills how will art be taught in schools?

Many artists acknowledge that their passion for their art form came from a good experience in school, primary and secondary. That is because they have been fortunate to have a good art teacher or in some cases a teacher from another discipline who also love the arts and communicated their passion.

It is interesting to observe the rise of some quite professional arts “schools” in the community. For example, in Melbourne we see Slow Clay and Clay Talk offering fee for service programs in ceramics and these are very successful in attracting students from beginner to advanced levels. The Tapestry Workshop teaches tapestry weaving at all levels. The National Theatre holds classes in dance and drama. This is repeated across other art forms.

SUGGESTION

The Cultural Policy might address the following.

- Adjusting the tertiary institution funding for arts programs to recognise the real cost
- Monitoring the offerings from institutions to ensure that there is good coverage of ALL art forms
- Reintroducing the idea of “Artists in Schools”, and encouraging the building of partnerships with strong private arts schools to ensure access to expertise and specialist equipment and also to provide some employment of artists by teaching.
- Fostering the idea of schools forming partnerships with local artists/private schools with a view to their visiting the school or the students visiting studios. This would require:
 - Consideration of the issues of OHS, working with children, etc.
 - Exploration of the idea of several schools forming clusters to support and share a studio artist(s)
 - Acknowledging learning outside the school for educational credentials.

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