

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: As an artist, 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:

First Nations

I see the challenge that there is a history of speaking on behalf of First Nations peoples, whilst their voices should be legitimately heard and their land and stories truly respected and celebrated. Allyship (rather than tokenistic support) should be brought to the forefront of the conversation, where people from other cultures learn to support First Nations peoples from a place of respect and cultural humility.

A Place for Every Story

The diversity of people in Australia is incredible, so it is very important that all stories are invited, however I see a rise in online/digital content is a tokenistic way of doing so. We need real face to face places, venues, projects, opportunities to tell and listen each other stories. Every story can only be acknowledged when real people from diverse backgrounds meet in person. Presence and interpersonal experiences are more powerful than any online content. Besides, each individual lives in their own online bubble and may never get exposed to something that is different to their usual consumption traits. We need to stay real in and outside our communities

The Centrality of the Artist

The greatest challenge is how do we define what makes an artist an artist? One of the industry issues is that many artists are self-appointed individuals whose quality or knowledge or artistry varies in an expansive spectrum. This situation makes arts employment difficult to manage as some artists are true experts, others are crafty, some are great facilitators, others are good at making, etc. At the end of the day, lack of work opportunities makes artists say YES to project-based jobs just because we are desperate to build a portfolio, or need the money; unfortunately, there are not enough (well) paid jobs to keep us doing what we are best at.

Strong Institutions

Again, too many online tokenistic organisations and not enough real face-to-face outreach projects. For example, the Arts and Health Framework was developed in a way that seemed promising for arts in health practitioners, however the work opportunities we have nowadays are only a handful; besides, most of the businesses listed in the report were quickly outdated, and our work is still unknown by most industries and citizens. The framework should be updated and followed by actions and recommendations, in a way that becomes truly influential to our industry. It is absolutely appalling

how mental health is one of the greatest diseases of our time, yet we are not supporting the arts and health industry to emerge as a social tool for change and improvement of mental health.

Reaching the Audience

I understand it is difficult in a country with such low density of population, however we need to keep artists visible and real, rather than funding huge arts businesses that will only subcontract artists at a ridiculous hourly rate. We need to be taken seriously

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:

A Place for Every Story

I am a Spanish migrant, my husband was a refugee from Easter Europe, a both our children are born in Australia. We are a little intercultural family of artists and feel there are not enough opportunities to connect with other artists or communities in a grassroots way as there are too many policies around the use of public spaces (i.e. making small events without having to go through months of approvals and large sums of money). We feel there is a lot of possibilities for corporations and large businesses, but not enough for independent artists to be present and engaging in their communities.

The Centrality of the Artist

I have progressively abandoned my arts practice (performing arts) because it is nearly impossible to live from it... what kind of support can I have when I have small children as a sole trader??? There is such little security for us artists. We can't compete with the big blockbuster culture brought and supported by large institutions. I became a Creative Arts therapist instead and have been working hard to generate an income as an Arts in Health practitioner instead.

Strong Institutions

As mentioned above, I feel the Arts and Health Framework should be updated and integrated; this would begin a path of legitimisation of artists as instigators of wellbeing. For example, I use drama to improve cognition in people with dementia, however, most Aged Care Managers have no clue this is a thing, I am trotting a battle nearly by myself and I am burning out. I, as well as many colleagues in Australia, need to be supported in this crusade!

Reaching the Audience

I'd love to see a rise in street theatre and interactive (not-digital) social theatre; for this, I need funding and the availability of public spaces to support such practices outside of blockbuster festivals and events.

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

I would like to see new ways to legitimise artists as agents of change and wellbeing. We have somewhat gotten stereotyped to the point that society is no longer aware of our potential. We need to be out there, face to face, getting properly paid and thriving!