

National Cultural Policy Submission

Ku Arts (Ananguku Arts and Cultural Aboriginal Corporation)

Submitted: On behalf of an arts peak body

**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

A rich industry, but not for most artists. More must be done to centre Aboriginal visual artists as the key economic beneficiaries of their arts and cultural practice.

Recommendations:

- Implement the recommendations of the [Fake Art Harms Culture campaign 20162020](#).
- Ban the sale of inauthentic art. According to data in the Productivity Commission's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts and Crafts Draft Report, July 2022 this will open a \$41-54 million economic opportunity to Aboriginal artists.
- Explore alternative industry models that increase economic return to Aboriginal artists and their communities. It has been reported in the aforementioned report that from sales of \$250 million in 2019-20, artists received only 10-15% of the total value of sales across all markets and that the average annual income earned by art centre artists in 2019-20 was just \$2,700 per annum.
- Greater business development support for Aboriginal entrepreneurs, including galleries, retailers, manufacturers, artists as sole traders and co-operatives.
- Strengthen the Indigenous Art Code, Arts Law, Artists' Resale Royalty Scheme and other sector agencies including peak service organisations to further educate, support and empower Aboriginal artists in their development and decision making.
- Introduce legislation that protects Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) and establish an appropriate regulatory framework.

Full operational funding for remote Aboriginal art centres to adequately support and value their work of cultural and artistic development and individual and community wellbeing.

Recommendations:

- Properly fund Aboriginal art centres in regional and remote communities so that they can be adequately and expertly staffed, have access to resources and be operationally sustainable as essential social and economic infrastructure for artists, their families and their communities. Artists should not have to fund these essential businesses with 40-50% of their earnings through artwork sales.

- Properly fund peak bodies and service organisations operating on behalf of Aboriginal artists (currently five visual arts peak bodies across central and northern Australia) so that they have the necessary staffing, resources and operational sustainability to continue to meet demand and grow their advocacy and delivery of services as the sector develops and expands.

Real access and support for independent artists. Hundreds of Aboriginal artists live and work in areas that are not receiving the level of direct support for their arts practice that can be provided by art centres.

Recommendations:

- Support the feasibility study and development of more regional and remote Aboriginal art centres, hubs and networks that are Aboriginal owned and governed and expertly managed to provide the requisite professional support for Aboriginal artists in their career development.
- Fully equip peak service delivery organisations such as Ku Arts to provide adequate assistance for independent Aboriginal artists. This vital artist support includes access to art materials, equipment, mentoring, prizes and awards, creative skills workshops, professional skills training, knowledge about the sector, and learning about how the arts market operates.

"After contacting Natalie to invite her to exhibit, the first issue was getting materials to her. It's a low socio-economic region and artists can't just go into the shop and buy quality materials. Ursula from Port Pirie Regional Gallery helped with some materials and Ku Arts came with more. Access to materials is an issue throughout the [Port Augusta] region, there are artists that have artworks they're ready to make, but they don't have access".

Quote from Marika Davies, emerging Wangkangurra curator in a recent catalogue essay for the exhibition *Natalie Austin: Memory of Water*, an initiative of Ku Arts and The Mill, Adelaide.

A Place for Every Story

Arts and cultural hubs in every place to provide appropriate access and support for artists practicing and engaging with the art sector in diverse ways.

Recommendations:

- Support the establishment of more government funded art centres that are owned and governed by Aboriginal artists, and not as an arm or subsidiary of a gallery, to ensure that artistic and cultural integrity is maintained, without undue commercial pressure
- As part of the development of new regional Aboriginal art centre infrastructure and strong governance, provide support for groups of artists to collaborate. Such initiatives require the backing of peak organisations, such as Ku Arts, to enable Aboriginal artists to access studio facilities as well as creative and professional development programs that will support their arts and cultural practice, and expand their career opportunities.
- Ensure there is a separation of responsibilities between art centres and art galleries so that artists are able to work with cultural integrity and not be pressured unnecessarily to produce work to meet commercial imperatives that can lead to a 'sweat shop' environment.

The Centrality of the Artist

Show artists we respect and value them by paying them

Recommendations:

- A minimum living wage for Aboriginal artists and cultural practitioners that takes into account the inflated cost of remote and regional living expenses. There should be no obligations attached to receiving the living wage, other than maintaining an artistic and/or cultural practice.

- This must be concurrent with raising unemployment benefits to a liveable standard to support strong families and strong communities.
- Factor into funding programs the cost of the time requirement of Aboriginal artists to engage in language, customs, ceremony, cultural practices, family commitments and learnings from their Elders.

Strong Institutions

Greater investment in Aboriginal governance

Recommendation:

- Support initiatives in transference of governance knowledge and skills to young artists as the future custodians of Aboriginal arts and cultural organisations.
- Provide culturally appropriate governance training for artists who are board directors of art centres and other cultural organisations, as well as CEOs and managers that work with Aboriginal boards.
- Recognise and promote the intrinsic values and beliefs that underpin effective Aboriginal governance models and practices as a means for advancing understanding within the mainstream community towards genuine reconciliation.

Aboriginal peoples, knowledge and stories embedded in our institutions, and respected and supported outside of them

Recommendations:

- Establish training and educational programs and courses, including work placements in Aboriginal corporations, that are designed to invest in knowledge and skills development for Aboriginal people. This is especially important for Aboriginal young people in the early phase of their career and as a means for growing the workforce in art centres, arts and cultural organisations, government and business entities.
- New initiatives to see more Aboriginal people employed within culturally safe institutions, utilising cluster hiring as a cultural safeguard for individuals, creating employment pathways, and providing professional and cultural development *at all levels* of institutions, including as managers and arts workers in remote art centres.
- Respect, recognise and compensate Aboriginal artists and cultural leaders for their work in interpreting, translating, speaking, training, advising that takes place within institutions and at a community level.

Reaching the Audience

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as audience

Recommendations:

- Greater access to the Arts for Aboriginal peoples across the country as audience members. This is especially true for those located in regional and remote areas of the country where often art is made before being exported to capital cities and overseas.
- Not to preference digital over live arts creation and experiences, as this alienates a disproportionate number of Aboriginal people who are without sufficient digital access and/or literacy and whose cultural traditions are oral and experiential. It is also well documented that live participation in the arts has positive impacts on mental health, wellbeing, social cohesion and satisfies a basic human need for connectedness.
- A review of major arts organisations- theatre, opera, music- and how they can become more cost effective to lessen the class divide regarding who can participate as an audience member.

As the peak body for Aboriginal artists and art centres in South Australia, Ku Arts uses the term 'Aboriginal' to encompass both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is not intended to exclude Torres Strait Islander people, nor those who preference identifying as First Nations or Indigenous.