

National Cultural Policy Submission

Drama Australia

Submitted: On behalf of an arts peak body, On behalf of an organisation with arts-components (e.g. community organisation, tourism, venue, health, education etc)

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

Drama Australia supports a First Nations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) focus as the first pillar of the National Cultural Policy.

Drama education provides an opportunity for children and young people (learners), and arts educators, to connect with First Nations artists and artworks and develop an understanding and appreciation of First Nations culture, protocols, and processes. We affirm the importance of First Nations components being included in the curriculum for all) and the power of drama and theatrical texts and performances for conveying difficult material and truth-telling.

Drama Australia values the growth in curriculum and pedagogy work across the country which recognises First Nations peoples, histories and practices across the curriculum. Educators across the country still seek more practical advice and support in terms of resources, professional development and case studies of how to incorporate First Nations content and approaches in context-specific and appropriate ways.

Drama Australia also recognises the importance of targeted First Nations education and training programs in the performing arts and how such programs in the past have nurtured the careers of artists who are now leaders in the field.

A Place for Every Story

Drama is a curriculum area that humanises learning and enables people to share their stories in diverse locations across the country. Drama and theatre programs in formal and informal education settings supports participants to make meaning of their world and enables them to express and communicate ideas to others. Australian and international research has identified the significant positive impact Drama Education can have on increasing student literacies and creativity.

This pillar indicates the importance of geography and enabling all Australians, no matter their geographic location, to have access to quality arts and cultural experiences and forms of arts education..

There are identified gaps in opportunities at present for quality drama education to be experienced in all schools, communities, and centres, especially out of major metropolitan centres and less economically advanced areas.

The Centrality of the Artist

It is important that arts and cultural policies and programs value the role of artists, creators and artistry. However this can only occur within arts ecologies where the roles of artswokers and

educators area also highly valued. The National Cultural Policy should acknowledge the value and contribution of Drama Educators, Arts Educators and teaching artists as well as seeing children, young people and learners as artists as well.

Programs such as Creative Communities Partnerships (former Australia Council program) and Artist-in-Residence programs for schools and communities, provide excellent opportunities to promote artists and artistry not only for the artists but for educators and learners as well.

Strong Institutions

Strong Institutions are required at all different levels and across the arts and education spectrum. This includes strong arts education programs within Australian tertiary and vocational education providers, schools and other education entities. It also means recognition for the important roles played by Arts Education Professional Teacher Associations, and Service Organisations.

As artform specific training and professional development programs have been reduced and eliminated in universities, education authorities Arts education professional associations have played an increased role in providing professional development and support for arts educators. This work often relies on the work of volunteers, without adequate support and recognition by arts or education authorities.

Reaching the Audience

Drama educators play important roles in facilitating opportunities for artists to connect with audiences in diverse communities. Professional associations often form partnerships and promote opportunities for artists to develop programs that are relevant to communities and curriculum. They also regularly engage artists to be part of professional learning programs, conferences, projects and publications.

Through promoting the importance of arts and cultural engagement for all (such as through programs such as 'cultural passport' programs), there are clear economic benefits to practising artists and arts organisations as well as for educators and learners.

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

Since the 1980s Drama Australia (then known as NADIE – the National Association for Drama In Education), committed to valuing and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in drama and theatre education. This work then informed the development of the first set of guidelines entitled: 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Studies: A Policy Statement and Guidelines for Drama Educators'. This 1995 document was written by Wesley Enoch, Susan Davis and John O'Toole, with input from Indigenous educators and theatre makers as well as member associations. The document included values and principles, objectives, key strategies, guidelines for engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander speakers and artists, Questions and answers, preferred language use and a resource list. This document was distributed to state and territory association members and informed association activities across the country. A new set of guidelines was created in 2007, recognising the shifts that had occurred across the education and drama fields. The organisation is currently in the process of rewriting these guidelines to be updated for the 2020s.

We advocate for the important role drama education and educators can play for providing pathways for Indigenous peoples, for sharing Indigenous stories and culture, for bearing witness, for healing, as well as for building understanding, reconciliation for all Australian students.

There is an ongoing need for professional development, resources, and training in the areas of First Nations content and concepts within Australian schools, education and arts organisations.

A Place for Every Story

A Place for Every Story is an important pillar of the National Cultural Policy, particularly as a tool for ensuring that art developed *by, with, and for* children and young people is included in this pillar.

This pillar also indicates the importance of geography and enabling all Australians, no matter their geographic location and cultural backgrounds, to have access to arts and cultural experiences to tell and share stories that enrich our national culture.

The policy should recognise the importance of drama education programs to be accessible for all students across the country and that quality drama and theatre experiences be accessible for all.

The policy should support arts touring and partnership programs supporting opportunities for children and young people across the country to be able to experience quality live performing arts experiences.

The Commonwealth Government should also review specific funding and programs to support youth arts companies, many of which were previously de-funded by the Australia Council for The Arts. Many of the small to medium arts organisations have long been the seedbed of development for many arts professionals. The loss of many of these has reduced opportunities for the sustainability of the performing arts industry.

The Centrality of the Artist

Drama educators in formal and informal learning contexts operate as artists and teaching artists, as well as working with others recognised as artists.

We affirm a focus on artists but also artistry, within the context of arts ecologies that include learning programs and purposes.

A National Cultural Policy should celebrate artistry and creativity, and programs that enrich arts learning, for learners, educators and artmakers.

The policy should support funding for teacher professional learning programs in drama and theatre, these can include co-artistry and mentor programs where teachers work alongside professional artists, with teacher artistry also valued alongside that of other artists.

Strong Institutions

It is imperative that quality arts training programs, courses, and opportunities are accessible and affordable within arts specific organisations but within educational organisations across the learning spectrum.

This includes:

Support for arts specific education programs (reversing the previous government's fee increase to Arts university courses)

Increased course allocation time for the arts in teacher education programs (including specialisations for primary and early childhood educators)

Fee support for a broader range of arts programs in TAFE and vocational training

Recognise and provide training to fill the skills shortages in the Creative Industries, which are not currently represented in the National Skills Commission Skills Priority List 2021 particularly shortages in areas of company, event, and stage management, technical staff and crew plus production and customer services/front of house roles.

Fund Arts Professional Teaching Associations, Peak Bodies, and Service Organisations to help realise the National Cultural Policy and contribute to the ecology of the arts and cultural sector.

Reaching the Audience

Many of the programs that have supported arts touring to regional Australia and schools have been reduced in recent years). Service organisations and professional associations can play a crucial role in advising and supporting artists in the promotion and dissemination of their work will help ensure artists reach wider audiences, especially in remote and regional areas with their work.

Ongoing research is required to understand the state of play regarding arts access, training and education across the spectrum. We therefore advocate for support from across the arts and education portfolios to provide federal funding for a Review of The Arts in Australian Schools, to investigate the current state of Arts education and learning in Australia to be able to target gaps and address these in the future.

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

We believe there should be a more specific and identifiable focus on Arts education, learning and training within the national policy. Arts Education is imperative for the ecology of the Arts sector, but it is often overlooked or taken for granted in Arts and Cultural policy. We support the National Advocates for Arts Education's (NAAE) submission which advocates for a 6th pillar of Arts Education to be included in the National Cultural Policy.

Over the past 10 years we have seen a gradual erosion of arts education learning programs and opportunities at all levels of education and across the country. The loss of programs, the loss of funding, and reductions to access for many communities impacting upon arts ecologies now and will impact upon the the nation's culture and future.To have flourishing communities across Australia, we need communities that are rich in arts, culture and learning opportunites, we need to invest in arts education and learning now for the arts and culture of tomorrow.