

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,  
Regional Development, Communication and the Arts  
Office for the Arts

## **The New Creative Australia**

To Whom It May Concern:

I appreciate the opportunity to submit a response to the Creative Australia National Cultural policy of 2013, and the five pillars it outlines.

As a 20-year-old musician, currently studying Jazz and Improvisation at Monash University, I am deeply invested in the outcome of this policy consultation, and the effects of the resulting policy on the performing arts sector in years to come.

### First Nations

The revised Creative Australia policy should continue to uphold the importance of recognising and respecting First Nations art, culture and stories, and should redress the current funding structure to ensure that it aligns with this goal. The policy should strive to increase self-determination in First Nations arts organisations by maintaining their absolute artistic license. There should be increased focus on educating non-indigenous Australians across all age groups on First Nations ways of working and culture. Additionally, the policy should require non-indigenous arts organisations to state the ways in which their arts projects aid in supporting First Nations artists, art and reconciliation more broadly.

A 2021 report by Ciaran Frame concluded that Australian government-funded orchestras are not contributing to the aforementioned goals; stating that Australian composers made up 10% “of every work performed around the country in 2020”, female composers made up 4%, and Indigenous composers 1%<sup>1</sup>

### A place for every story

In order to reflect the diversity of Australians, the new National Cultural Policy should ensure funding is distributed more evenly across a wider array of arts organisations.

The Australia Council’s National Arts Participation Survey found that 98% of Australians engage with the arts, and the top three priorities for public funding are “arts in the lives of young people, access to free or low-cost events and to support health and wellbeing”<sup>2</sup>. To achieve this, the National Cultural Policy should take a grassroots approach to arts funding, supporting arts engagement and diversity at the micro level.

### The centrality of the artist

The new National Cultural Policy should continue to celebrate the artist as a worker, and acknowledge their role as the creators of culture. Despite the performing arts sector contributing some 6.5% of Australia’s GDP<sup>3</sup>, artists remain a marginalised profession in Australian culture, and are, in my experience, often viewed as making an illegitimate contribution to society. A 2017 report from the Australia Council showed that artists are economically generative; for some 50,000 practicing artists, there are 600,000 artswokers<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ciaran Frame, “Do our arts reflect us? Not yet, says latest report,” *Limelight*, May 20, 2021, 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> “Creating Our Future: Results Of The National Arts Participation Survey”, Australia Council for the Arts, accessed August 21, 2022 <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/advocacy-and-research/creating-our-future/>

<sup>3</sup> *The economic value of cultural and creative activity* as at most recently available figures (2016-2017), Australian Government Bureau of Communications and Arts Research, accessed August 21, 2022, <https://www.communications.gov.au/departmental-news/economic-value-cultural-and-creative-activity>

<sup>4</sup> “Making Art Work: An Economic Study Of Professional Artists In Australia”, Australia Council for the Arts, accessed August 21, 2022 <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/advocacy-and-research/making-art-work/>

Australia should follow in the footsteps of Ireland, where a universal basic income for artists has just been introduced.

“Ireland’s three-year pilot program for artists will cost the government around €25 million (A\$37 million). With a population about a fifth of Australia’s, a similar scheme applied here using the same ratio could provide funding to 10,000 individual artists at a cost of A\$185 million over three years.”<sup>5</sup>

A similar scheme in Australia would be relatively inconsequential for the federal budget, but would change the lives of artists across the country, and have a positive impact on society as a whole.

Additionally, funding should be implemented to ensure that remuneration for freelance artists complies with industry standards. At present many music venues are unwilling or unable to pay artists accordingly. This devalues the artist’s work, and consequently has a negative impact on their future practice.

### Strong institutions

The new National Cultural Policy should continue to support arts institutions but should also recognise the interdependent nature of the arts network as an institution worth nurturing. Many artists do not have affiliations with government-funded arts organisations due to the lack of artistic diversity they present. At present, the majority of government funding for the arts goes to a small handful of organisations – whose actions (particularly the programming of the major orchestras) do not reflect the standards of diversity and equality that the National Cultural Policy should promote<sup>6</sup>. Arts funding under the new National Cultural

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<sup>5</sup> Jo Caust, “Australia Needs Universal Basic Income for Artists”, *The Conversation*, May 4, 2022

<sup>6</sup> Frame, “Do Our Arts Reflect Us? Not yet, says latest report”, 1-2

Policy should support all artists. The investment of public funds should remain ethical and transparent in order to maintain integrity.

Additionally, institutional policies must comply with national policy standards around workplace ethics, conduct diversity.

### Reaching the audience

Maintaining exposure of the public to the arts is of the utmost importance, for this is the pipeline through which inspiration reaches the next generation, and allows the most talented and dedicated individuals to be recognised. For this to occur, infrastructure is needed that will maintain the ability of artists to deliver their work around the country, and internationally. Australia has a wealth of artistic brilliance, and the support of the National Cultural Policy is needed to nurture it. By supporting community engagement and participation, a more robust and committed audience will be built, increasing the economic capacity of the arts sector.

As has been exaggerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the financial risk for artists regarding event cancellations is immense. The new National Cultural Policy should include an insurance scheme for event cancellations, as well as more funding opportunities for artists and arts organisations who wish to tour, both nationally and internationally.

Additionally, the new National Cultural Policy should support education and infrastructure that promotes digital broadcasting of the arts in order to increase accessibility.

I invite the Office for the Arts to take on board the policy recommendations made above, and I thank you for doing so.

Sincerely,

Oskar Moore | 