

# **NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY SUBMISSION**

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Submitted: as an individual

Creative Australia is a visionary cultural policy, just as relevant nine years on. I agree with almost everything it says and look forward to seeing the impact it makes over the next few years.

There is one contribution I want to make, based on my work as a cultural leader in the UK, which is about the need for scale.

Australia has huge cultural influence. Its musicians, actors, film-makers, writers and visual artists are world famous. For some reason, there is inadequate recognition or pride about this in mainstream discourse. Those of us who are arts lovers represent a large community, but we are a minority nonetheless.

This occurs in other countries too, but nowhere is the gap between creative achievement and popular recognition greater than in Australia.

It's not surprising that when we look at the big events and moments that will bring the nation together over the next ten years, they are mostly sport. We cannot help but notice them, whether or not we care, because of the level of investment, organisation and publicity. The Brisbane Olympics is the biggie at the end of it all.

The greatest challenge for the arts in Australia is helping the disengaged majority take part by creating a cultural calendar filled with extraordinary events that cannot be ignored. If we can do this, our horizons expand: it doesn't become such a battle to keep arts in education, investors are drawn to what we do (as they are to sport), and we harness the creative potential of converts, young and old.

While living in the UK, I saw this happen on a handful of occasions. Danny Boyle turned the Opening Ceremony of the 2012 Olympics into a bizarre art happening watched by 900 million people worldwide; Jeremy Deller stopped the nation with the ghosts of one and a half thousand First World War soldiers; hundreds of volunteers installed 900,000 ceramic poppies in the moat of the Tower of London; and, as UK City of Culture, Hull achieved universal cultural engagement with its residents.

All of these moments were led by artists, supported by a network of organisations and investors who helped turn a seemingly impossible dream into reality. The result was a change in public awareness. When the pandemic happened it didn't feel odd that a Conservative government should present £2.5 billion in cultural recovery funding. Nor did it seem odd that the majority of the population should support the decision.

My proposal is that Australia's new cultural policy should support (but not control) the formation and activity of a creative alliance from across the cultural Industries focused exclusively on enabling artist-led projects of unprecedented scale and national participation.

This alliance should consist of organisational leaders and independent creators drawn from the performing arts, film, augmented reality, literature, design, visual arts, and broadcast. It should have a government mandate to deliver interventions in the national calendar that require the support of other sectors as well as the creative industry. Whatever it develops must be greater (far greater) than the sum of its parts. In order to do its work, it must be supported by the department and government investment, but – as with all events of this scale – depend also on commercial revenue.

This alliance is not a committee – it's a mechanism to enable artists to think and deliver cultural moments of unprecedented scale and impact that we can all share in.

Only by creating such moments can we shift the dial of cultural participation in Australia.

Jonty Claypole MBE

(This contribution is informed by the ten years I spent as Director of Arts for the BBC, Chair of a large multi genre arts centre in Manchester and on the advisory committees of the Booker Prize Foundation and Art UK. As arts leader for the national broadcaster, I worked closely on many of the events mentioned, amplifying the work of the extraordinary artists and creatives who conceived them. I saw from the evaluations and statistics how public participation and appreciation, which normally rumbles along at the same level, dramatically spiked at these moments – and I realised they were the key to creative enfranchisement.)