

Tertiary Dance Council of Australia

National Cultural Policy Submission (August 2022)

The Tertiary Dance Council of Australia (TDCA) is comprised of academic members from Australian higher educational institutions that offer programs in Dance and Dance Education. It is chaired by Associate Professor Peter Cook, Deputy Head of the School of Education at the University of Southern Queensland.

This national body is encouraged by the development of a national cultural policy that is inclusive of all art forms and highlights the significance of the arts through the five identified pillars *First Nations, A Place for Every Story, the Centrality of the Artist, Strong Institutions* and *Reaching the Audience*. The TDCA would expect that the development of a national cultural policy will demonstrate dance as pivotal in progressing a contemporary society with diversity and accessibility, highlighting the impact of arts education and training on the lives of all Australians, and most significantly the acknowledgment of the contribution of First Nations peoples to Dance, Arts and an inclusive progressive society.

First Nations

Identifying First Nations as the first pillar of a national cultural policy is incredibly fitting as the longest standing artists and arts educators within these unceded lands. The contribution of First Nations artists in the development of the contemporary cultural identity of all Australians is momentous, appropriate and inspirational. In recognition of the centrality of First Nations artists to a national cultural policy, TDCA members support their development by providing appropriate training, opportunities and support during the formative initial dance training years and are committed to providing ongoing support and mentoring throughout their careers. Furthermore, TDCA members would expect this pillar to encourage a continued commitment within tertiary institutions to re-examine current curriculum content and pedagogical approaches for greater inclusion of First Nations perspectives.

Strong Institutions

Tertiary dance programs undertake practical academic explorations, often involving performance and choreography, that are completely aligned with research principles in their planning, execution, and dissemination. They explore contemporary and cultural topics, develop theoretical positions, and engage methods and methodologies that work towards better understanding of, and knowledge about, the issues at hand.

The reinforcement of strong institutions as a pillar of the national cultural policy will provide greater sustainability for arts and cultural education and provide a calibration for dance education from early childhood, primary and secondary schools, tertiary institutions, community dance schools and youth dance practice. The policy needs to embrace the varied modes of delivery for dance education be they face-to-face, online or in hybrid form.

Inclusion of arts research projects and their interdisciplinary approaches within this pillar, clearly fits the paradigms from which society benefits. Research program funding engenders the unique contribution that arts research makes towards the aesthetic leadership and engagement of well-being, so required as we live through the pandemic world and its recovery.

A place for every story

In dance, the key medium of expression for storying is the body, possessing the capacity to communicate the history and futures of knowledge and experience. Dance as an artform and its interdisciplinary potential presents explorations of individual experiences along with community and cultural relationships. The technologising of the dance field, together with its diversification and partnerships across science, health, humanities and ecology, evidence how dance enhances lives across generations and within communities offering a place for every story while emphasising the centrality of the artist.

Centrality of the artist

Embodied knowledge and communication is core to the work of dance artists as they engage in physical artistry and highlight the body as pivotal to understanding the centrality of dance artists. During the recent pandemic lockdowns, society turned to artists, who pivoted their practice for online audiences, and for aesthetic and well-being contingencies. The arts need to be recognised and celebrated for their capacity to nurture, develop and reinvigorate research for the benefit of the wider society. Artists must be recognised as legitimate workers in our society, worthy of a place as industry leaders, of cultural innovators and as a source of inspiration and optimism.

Reaching audiences

The responsiveness and resilience of arts bodies has demonstrated the willingness and capacity of arts training organisations, companies and individual artists to reach audiences across multiple media platforms, from live performance to online classes, rehearsals and informative webinars that help audiences to access and understand the myriad dance forms that exist in multicultural Australia.

The TDCA would like to commend the federal government in commencing the process of developing a national cultural policy, but we feel strongly that a sixth pillar which covers the many facets of education identified in this submission. We also support and draw your attention to the Ausdance National submission, and that of its dance education subcommittee.

The TDCA looks forward to providing further feedback, advice and commentary.

TDCA members:

Academy of Music and Performing Arts, AC-Arts Adelaide, Australian Ballet School, Australian College of Physical Education, Deakin University, Monash University, NAISDA Dance College, Queensland University of Technology, University of South Australia, Victorian College of the Arts, Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, University of Southern Queensland, University of Tasmania.