

National Cultural Policy Submission



ARTS AND HEALTH CENTRE

22 August 2022

Dear Committee Members,

Re: Inquiry into and report on Australia's creative and cultural industries and institutions

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry.

Hand Bent Banana Arts and Health Centre is small new cultural enterprise committed to delivering the transformative value of the arts. Hand Bent Banana's mission is to incubate arts, health and nature-based initiatives that contribute to human and environmental flourishing. As a social enterprise Hand Bent Banana (HBB) conducts its business for a socially beneficial outcome, which is to champion arts, health and nature-based initiatives that contribute to human and environmental flourishing. The Centre provides infrastructure, spaces, support, programs, and access to the natural environment for artists and cultural designers (curators, architects etc.) working in the field of arts and health. We aim to stimulate a distinctive approach to arts and health, through connection with the natural environment.

A place for every story

HBB was established in 2019 and during 2020/21 underwent a material change use to implement the use of farm infrastructure for community and creative purposes on a rural 20-acre property in the Gold Coast Hinterland. Despite aligning to the intent and purpose of Community Use as code assessable the imposition of conditions unreasonably restricted operation. Navigating planning policies and laws highlighted many inadequacies, controls and predispositions of place which do not support, sustain, or grow opportunities for creators of culture.

Artists need places to create, and everyday people are hungry for deeper connections to creativity, especially as a foundation of their health and wellbeing.

To fully achieve a place for every story, attention to policy levers at the national environmental, regulatory, and planning level are needed to ensure all activities and levels of government permit affordable and accessible places to create and participate in our arts and culture in the places we live.

HBB proactively advocates for fairer and favorable policies and regulation that streamline planning processes and foster creative economy and cultural infrastructure including in regional and rural settings.

Supporting the artist as worker across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture

The COVID-19 pandemic amplified existing issues, shaky conditions and presented new challenges within the cultural and creative sector as well as the community. Many artists and creative sector workers experienced extreme economic set-back as the gaps in tangible and secure employment conditions were further exposed. An estimated \$94m in income has

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Pioneering Imagination, Exploration, Creativity and Wellbeing

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been lost since July 2021.

At the same time, more than a quarter of Australians say their creativity increased during lockdowns (Australia Council for the Arts, 2021). Increased creative activity has not transpired in economic gains to Australian arts and cultural sector. Often and increasingly artists and arts workers are expected to work for free (the love of it) or at a minimal wage rate despite educational achievements, increasing issues of employability. During COVID-19 restrictions and the increasing workloads and eroding work conditions it was not uncommon to be told - "just be thankful you have a job."

Precarity is common and not conducive to maintaining skills, working conditions and career advancement, even in well-funded institutions.

Strengthen the capacity of the cultural sector to contribute to national life, community wellbeing and the economy.

Arts and culture are evident to contribute value across many sectors and aspects of life in Australia, including but not exclusive of health and welfare, education, housing, communication, aged care, childcare, sports, climate and crisis recovery, environment, science, and tourism. Across these many sectors artist as workers should be better supported through mandating roles such as artist in schools programs, arts-led health and social prescribing programs, and engaging art responders in emergency agencies following climate crisis. A percent input to the arts from agencies and departments such as health, tourism, construction, and sports would safeguard a diverse, vibrant and sustainable arts and cultural sector as well as entrench the value of the arts as the glue of Australian culture.

HBB supports a new cultural policy that maximises the value of the arts and culture sector's many contributions to society. We encourage the support of multiple pathways for tenable employment with rates comparable to other occupations in terms of training and experience.

We wish to thank the Inquiry for the opportunity to express the very real need to support arts and culture to build on and implement a coordinated approach to arts and culture development and greater collaboration between all level of Governments to ensure the financial viability of arts and culture for individual artists, arts organisations, and all Australians.

Yours sincerely,

HBB Director

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