

# National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: As an individual

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

The scope of First Nations first in the cultural sector sits as an important piece of a much larger societal shift, 'First Nation Knowledge and History' must be at the core of our new shared Australian identity. This shift will come from the idea of First Nations first across all aspects of government, not just the cultural policy. But the ongoing role of the arts as a platform for shared cultural celebration, truth telling and collective pride is essential. Concepts so vast and profound as being the home and custodians of the oldest culture on earth requires the full spectrum of art and artists to help us grapple with the immensity of the journey we are on and the challenges we must solve to ensure that we arrive in the future united and strong.

To this end, we must be careful with the use of 'Multicultural' when shaping our national cultural identity. Not only does the implied equity of multiculturalism displace Australian First Nations culture from the heart of our national identity, but it can also at its worst, build structures that squash cultural diversity into cultural homogeneity. A new Cultural Policy must not only place First Nations Knowledge and History at its core but ensure that it supports the decolonising old structures and embolden new ones that celebrate our cultural diversity in harmony with a collective pride and respect for our core First Nations identity.

The new cultural policy will:

- Place First Nations First.
- Advocate across portfolios for the development of a new Australian identity with First Nations knowledge and history at its core.
- Support artists that make work that helps Australian grapple with big ideas intrinsic in matters such as truth telling, treaty negotiations, and First Nations voices to parliament. Artist will help us all better understand each other and this new world we are building together.
- Support arts organisations to decolonise their systems and structures.

## **A Place for Every Story**

Counterurbanisation and its impact on the artistic life of regional Australia over the past few years has been profound. Artists have always found ways to support and nourish their practice, and the shading of city lives by artists, and working Australians in general, over the past number of years requires a seismic shift in how we consider our regional arts policy. For far too long our policies and funding structures have assumed that regional art practices are second tier, and for some reason less deserving of the 'excellence' required in major cities.

The new cultural policy will:

- Support our regional artists and audiences by improving digital connectivity and digital literacy for both artists and audiences.
- Set KPIs that prioritise the growth of support structures and arts organisations of excellence that are located regionally. This will include a larger number of regional organisations supported at all levels including a larger representation of regional organisations in the National Performing Arts Framework. This may include incentivising organisations that already primarily service regional areas to move their headquarters out of major cities.
- Support regional organisations and artists continue to provide access to artistic excellence in regional communities that is environmentally sustainable. The carbon footprint of touring to regional Australia could jeopardise the access regional communities have to art if companies need to reduce their annual footprint, regional touring could be reduced or cut to avoid exceeding carbon quotas.

## **The Centrality of the Artist**

The new Cultural policy must focus on advocating and supporting a National approach to sustainable practices for artists. The policy must consider the diversity and health of the arts ecology and how it can sustain a range of practices and careers. This is not about more money for arts orgs or project funds, but a holistic approach to the design of the arts ecology that respects those that choose to be a professional artist, but also provides an environment that makes earning a living wage reasonably achievable.

## **Strong Institutions**

The strength of our institutions will be underpinned by their relevance. Are our major institutions fit for purpose? Generally, we have outdated, colonial inspired, slow moving cultural institutions with patriarchal boards and executives. We must rethink our institutional priorities through the lens of our new national identity and the future we wish to build together. The five pillars are not well reflected in our current suite of major institutions. Where are our major National First Nations Galleries, Museum and Theatre Companies? What would a First Nations led orchestra or opera company look like and what repertoire would it focus on? How are our national collections reaching new audiences? Why do we have large collections in stores in cities rather than the development of regional museums and galleries of national significance that can share the housing of our national collection and drive regional tourism. This is not about touring exhibitions from the city, but developing regional institutions that are sister galleries of equivalent importance and ambition.

Australian cultural institution must not be allowed to simply respond to the cultural policy with mere initiatives bolted onto their outdated governance structure. They need to be reconsidered their purpose from the ground up, fundamentally reconsider their role in shaping our new national identity. This will require the Federal and State Governments to revisit the acts of parliament, charters and deeds provided to these institutes and require them to reconsider their purpose and priorities in line with our shared aspirations for a new Australian cultural landscape that best serves a future focused nation.

## **Reaching the Audience**

While improving digital access and digital literacy is important, we must avoid digital as the central solution from improving access and reaching more audiences. The importance of coming together for a shared cultural experience is, and will always be, central to our ability to build strong healthy communities. Active citizenship and participation requires an exchange in shared space, digital access can support this, but we have failed our audiences in the past by assuming that online access was equivalent and sufficient. So it is important that digital is given a supporting rather than central role in the area of reaching audiences. At the heart of our policy for reaching audience is relevance. How does contemporary Australia see themselves reflected in, and at time challenged by, the artistic dialogue of our communities. How are our cultural institutes responding to our new communities, where they live, how they live, and what they want to see Australia become.

Supporting artists and institutes that reflect contemporary Australia, as well as supporting regional practices and respecting the sophistication and artistic literacy of regional audiences are key to reaching audiences.

Finally, working with state governments to ensure young people have access to high quality arts experiences. The policy must advocate for a national approach to arts in education and the lives of young people.