

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: As an artist

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

- This needs to be by, for & with First Nations
- opportunity for stories to be shared, reconciliation, closing the gap, tourism & international relations
- Opportunities for collaboration, for MANY emerging artists to be supported to fill this in-demand area & not lead to burn out of this sector.

A Place for Every Story

- This is a space to create empathy, allow people to feel seen and heard, fight all the -isms of our society
- This will lead to a happier and mentally healthier society
- Opportunity to embed this in our education curriculum

The Centrality of the Artist

Context: I work as an independent artist, mostly lead artists and producer to create work for adults and children. These have toured around Australia and we were just about to launch internationally before Covid. I create work that sits outside of theatres and call it "participatory social practice". I create work that connects audience, and provides space to think big and provide hope.

- A strong artist ecology = an innovative, problem-solving, connected, creative Australia
- The best performing arts work this country is seeing is not coming from institutions – it is coming from the independent sector. Imagine if it was funded sustainably?

Strong Institutions

We need a strong ECOLOGY not institutions.

Reaching the Audience

- Art and creativity to be valued in society: bring back a strong arts curriculum into our education system.
- Provide opportunities for artists to connect with communities, science, libraries, councils, businesses.

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:

A Place for Every Story

- At the moment, to create art you need to have a financial safety net. This means that many of the stories that are told are from privileged individuals.
- We need security and stability for artists to create diversity of stories.
- We need ways of training and supporting "new" voices that don't put them in the deep end – but support them to experiment & fail & find their own voice first.

We need to ensure the existing ecology doesn't shrink to make room – but opens up generously to offer this space and capacity. Currently we are too starved of resources to allow this to happen effectively.

The Centrality of the Artist

- Security and stability for a full artistic career path. Having jobseeker was the first time I had over \$700 per week guaranteed. I felt rich.
- I feel completely de-valued as member of society due to the jobkeeper/jobseeker allocation & the continual demise of support for our sector by previous government.
- Ability to exist as an artist without being employed by an organisation: we cross pollinate, innovate and find new opportunities. Ideal would be to have a UBI or some form of base line earnings that would allow us the capacity to create new relationships and opportunities. If I had a day a week "paid" for to produce my work – I would not be as overworked and burnt out every 3 years. I would be in schools, libraries, councils. I would be able to create opportunities not just for my employment, but for the artists I employ.
- As a freelancer, it is incredibly hard to hold onto creative relationships: as people have to take the work where it is offered first (usually by organisations). This makes EVERYTHING hard. Recently I had a 9 week residency, and only after those 9 weeks did I understand how the "host" organisation worked and how I could fit into it. When I work in arts institutions, those I would have days of "induction," permission to work slow and learn. As an artist, I am expected to deliver every day that I am paid.
- My mental health has been affected by working in this industry. I didn't realise how bad it was until Covid came and I realised how long I had been stressed, underpaid, and personally sacrificed for this career. And I was considered one of the "successful" ones.
- Investment in all stages of career. There is huge investment lost at mid-career level as artists see support disappear. How can you be an artist and have children? How can you be an artist and own a house? How can you be a touring artist and have a partner that is not with you on tour?
- A wish: I would love my own producer, or even to share one. This would allow us to work together to strategically create the future of my work. I currently wear too many hats, for barely 1 person's wage.

Strong Institutions

- Our arts industry is currently focused on institutions and organisations. It should be centred on artists – they are the beating heart of our industry. It has created a culture of "permission" to make and dis-empowering of artists voices.
- We need a strong ECOLOGY not institutions. At the moment, the institutions have more funding, stability and capacity than the very artists who make the work.
- Making the ecology stronger will create a healthier, thriving industry that innovates, works outside of its sector and is able to actually reach its potential.
- The freelancer nature of artists ensures that we never have a critical mass, we miss out on important sector conversations. It also means I have felt isolated and alone.

Reaching the Audience

- Art embedded in the school curriculums
- An artist in residence in each school
- Opportunities to connect beyond arts audiences in meaningful, long term, mentally healthy ways.

I know that if I and the artists I work with were properly funded and had security. I would have the capacity to scale my work to create meaningful impact. Just recently, I worked with 81 households to create a public art gallery in their street, fostering connection. I have created work where adults feel hope after a stranger child runs up to them with a thank you note (or guilt/responsibility if the

thank you note is for "looking after the world")

I had the kids in Roebourne connect with the mining staff at Woodside to talk about their hopes for the future & turn each other into super heroes to both help the world.

My work creates social impact. And would do good. But at the moment, it is, quite simply, just too hard.

Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

As a WA artist/artswoker I am concerned at the representation on the Ministers Panel, in particular:

- lack of WA representation
- lack of artists at differing stages of their career and artform

I would love to see diverse artists voices embedded in the cultural policy.