

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: As an artist

To Whom It May Concern:

The fact that I do not have the capacity to complete a full submission to the National Cultural Policy is ironically illustrative of the life of a working artist.

As such the submission that follows draws on the wisdom of Diversity Arts Australia and the template they have generated for artists such as me.

I do want to underscore a few key points in this cover letter and these are;

- A National Cultural Policy must center First Nations art, culture and knowledge systems and not in a simplistic or performative way.
- The Arts need to be supported not just through an economically rationalist perspective because they are good for the economy
- Nor should the arts be valued simply in a utilitarian way in the sense that the arts are just there to work as a tool like some kind of product of cultural diplomacy
- The arts are critically important in an age of ever more perplexing collapse and disruption
- Artists need a living wage
- The National Cultural policy should trial a living artists wage program

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

In line with the importance of self-determination for First Nations people, I support the recommendations made by First Nations artists, creative workers and organisations in advocating for their needs. Following this:

- **Self-determination for First Nations initiatives:** Self-determination must be an embedded principle in all First Nations programs and initiatives.
- **Targeted investment in First Nations arts sectors:** The First Nations pillar of the policy must move beyond “recognise and celebrate” to “invest, implement and sustain”. Funding must be increased for self-determined First Nations arts organisations.

A Place for Every Story

Cultural diversity and racial equity must be promoted and safeguarded in the sector, and among all five pillars of the policy. There is an urgent need for **an industry-led anti-racism strategy** that is holistic and overarching to rectify inequitable outcomes for First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD)¹ people. This includes support for new and existing networks, organisations and infrastructure for culturally diverse creatives and communities. I would like to see:

- **Equity-tested public funding:** Public funding opportunities should be distributed equitably, with designated support for underrepresented communities. There must be an understanding in the National Cultural Policy of intersectionality, where some artists and creative workers are excluded on the basis of intersecting identities. For example, people from culturally diverse backgrounds with a disability.
- **Embedded diversity standards in publicly-funded creative work/programs:** Creative work must have accountability mechanisms for diversity which should be measured annually and publicly, as is the case in Britain.²
- **Targeted employment and material support for underrepresented people:** Culturally and racially marginalised people must be given opportunities to be in decision-making positions, and be provided employment pathways across all levels and career stages. Therefore, the Cultural Policy must support internships, traineeships, professional development and leadership programs for these communities.
- **Accountability for diversity, equity and inclusion:** Accountability mechanisms, such as regular public reporting against diversity data, should be embedded in public funding agreements to ensure racial equity, diversity and inclusion within their workforce; and stronger measures and accountabilities for large institutions to ensure their relevance and strengthen their sustainability.
- **Improving access for people who don't have English as a first language:** People whose first language is not English need to be catered for so that they can access work in the sector. For example, through embedded translation and interpreter services.
- **Self-determined research and language:** Research led by communities on the experiences of CaLD artists and creative workers must be supported. The use of the terminology “culturally and linguistically diverse” to capture migrant experiences should be replaced by more relevant, self-determined ways of identifying our communities.

The Centrality of the Artist

The COVID-19 health crisis exacerbated many challenges for the arts and creative sectors, but for artists and creative workers from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds, this exclusion has been an ongoing, historical experience.³ To ensure that the CaLD arts sector can recover from the crisis I propose:

- **Targeted investment in underrepresented artists:** A sector-wide anti-racism strategy which is complemented by significant investment in longer term creative projects for racially marginalised communities.
- **Targeted investment in professional development:** Addressing the underrepresentation of CaLD artists and creative workers with targeted investment initiatives such as paid internships, mentorships and capacity-building programs. These should be targeted to the most underrepresented CaLD creative workers, particularly young people, newly arrived migrant and refugee communities and adult migrant creatives who find it difficult to access work in the sector. These should also be led by those with lived experience of cultural diversity and leadership.

- **Equitable youth arts investment:** The youth arts sector needs to urgently be rebuilt, with diversity and equity at its core in terms of investment. This sector is an important gateway for CaLD young people and their livelihoods in the sector.
- **Investment in localised, state-based and small-medium CaLD-led arts, screen and creative organisations:** Such organisations provide brokerage, connection, support, and pathways to employment and skills development for CaLD artists and creative workers.

Strong Institutions

I believe that strong institutions are inclusive ones, and respect the importance of a healthy arts ecology, where grassroots, independent and small-medium entities work alongside larger bodies and institutions. Publicly funded cultural institutions have a significant responsibility to artists, creative workers and communities. I propose:

- **Cultural safety:** Work conditions in institutions must be made culturally safe with cultural safety principles and practices embedded into policies, practices and governance.
- **Education and capacity building:** Cultural organisations and institutions must be supported nationally through ongoing education in anti-racism, equity and inclusion, and cultural safety specific to the cultural sector.
- **Brokering partnerships:** Meaningful collaboration and consultation between business, government and small community-led organisations must be supported.
- **Targeting support to CaLD-led organisations/companies:** Noting that there aren't any CaLD-led companies within the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework, support for autonomous CaLD-led organisations, companies and institutions is sorely needed.
- **Cross-sector engagement:** Policy must recognise the arts, screen and creative sectors impact the whole Australian economy and society. It's imperative that there are opportunities for cross-sectoral collaborations with other government portfolios and agencies.

Reaching the Audience

CaLD people are more engaged as audiences and consumers in the arts, screen and creative sectors, however they are underrepresented when it comes to most mainstream and publicly-funded cultural and arts organisations.⁴

This provides opportunities to bolster the sector in the following ways:

- **Targeted investment in geographically and socioeconomically marginalised areas:** Policy must address the *place* of audiences and artists, with support targeted towards artists and small organisations in locations with higher underrepresented CaLD and migrant populations.
- **Invest in global audiences, markets and transnational networks:** People from CaLD and migrant backgrounds and connections to other countries have the capacity to connect with and attract audiences and investment from global

and diasporic markets. Therefore the National Cultural Policy has an opportunity to target initiatives and invest in these highly networked communities.

- **Measuring and reporting on the diversity of audiences:** It should be a requirement that those who receive funding from government, in particular major organisations and cultural institutions, measure and report on the diversity of their audiences annually. This data should be made publicly available, as is done in the UK by bodies like Arts Council England.⁵

¹ The use of the term “culturally and linguistically diverse” is inclusive of people who are first, second or third generation migrants or members of ethnic communities. This includes Australia-born people who may self-identify or engage with the languages, customs or cultural specificities of ancestral heritages that differ from those of Anglo-Australians. This also includes people from refugee backgrounds. However I understand the limitations of this term, including that people tend not to identify as “culturally and linguistically diverse” (CaLD). I use CaLD while acknowledging that the term can’t capture the nuance and lived experience of different people based on culture, ethnicity, residential status, language, class, gender and sexuality. At times I refer to CaLD people as people, communities and creatives of colour to further emphasise that non-Anglo-Celtic communities experience the sector through the framework of race and of being racialised people. I also at times refer to “culturally and racially marginalised” people, communities and artists.

² British Film Institute, *BFI Diversity Standards*, www.bfi.org.uk/inclusion-film-industry/bfi-diversity-standards

³ Diversity Arts Australia, *Lost Work 2.0 Survey* (2022), diversityarts.org.au/tools-resources/read-lost-work-for-creatives-of-colour-and-organisations-2-0/

⁴ Australia Council for the Arts, *Towards Equity: A research overview of diversity in Australia’s arts and cultural sector* (2021) <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Towards-Equity-Report.pdf>

⁵ Arts Council England, *Diversity Data*, <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-data/diversity-data>