

# National Cultural Policy Submission

Andrew Cribb, 3Space

## Introduction

I believe a place-based approach is needed as part of a new National Cultural Policy.

12 years ago I co-founded [3Space](#), a charity which provides spaces for public good in London UK. We set up 3Space as response to the increasing number of vacant buildings on the high street brought about by the financial crash and changes in the way we work and shop. We believed then as we do now that there is an opportunity for commercial buildings to work for the communities that house them and to make places more equitable, green and interesting.

In our workspace model commercial uses cross-subsidise the types of activities and organisations who can make a unique and fundamental contribution to local, social and economic wellbeing. Affordable enterprise space is an integral component, but our aim is to support a broader set of outcomes. Youth enterprise, culture, opportunities for underrepresented communities, and uses that promote social inclusion are given an equal billing to commercial activity and provided with dedicated space at a scale that allows for agglomeration of civic, creative and social sector uses.

The best example of our approach is [International House](#), London's largest affordable space in Brixton London. Brixton is one of London's most diverse and socially dynamic areas, like Harlem in New York. Today it has become one of London's most rapidly gentrifying areas, with spiralling property prices and rents putting the existing community under pressure. Australian cities, face a similar problem: as population and wealth increase commercial rents rise and as a result, the community and activities that were once integral to the city's success are priced out. These activities are the lifeblood of cities, making them innovative, diverse and attractive to outsiders in the first place.

The International House project shows the potential for scalable approach to development and growth which could become central to a cultural strategy for Australia - to be led federally and delivered locally. Using existing property assets to introduce more opportunities and investment in creative industries, whilst providing a home for and supporting local culture and creativity.

Our consultancy [REDO](#) provides policy guidance and operational support to UK regional and local government on how to use their property assets (and influence development) to provide affordable space for creative industries and disadvantaged groups. I am now based in Melbourne and interested in bringing the work we do at 3Space and REDO to Australia.

## The challenges and opportunities for the five pillars

In the UK there is recognition from the government that more affordable low-cost space is needed, and in return this will support more jobs, new businesses, diversity, and sustainable economic growth. Furthermore, that targeting sectors that are at risk of displacement from cities or regions such as artist studios and cultural space is important. In Australia this recognition or awareness doesn't appear to be as strong, and a new national cultural policy could provide the action needed to embed this principle.

At the same time CBDs across Australia are grappling with how to diversify their offer post pandemic and encourage office workers to return. Regional cities are benefiting from growth but lack the creative infrastructure that is found in cities. A place-based solution and rebalance of access to property can bring both jobs, community infrastructure, and interest to these places – something which everyone can benefit from.

### **What would I like to see in national cultural policy?**

A place-based approach would directly respond to the five pillars by:

- **First nations.** Enable more support via more community ownership of assets in the right places.
- **A place for every story.** Provide greater access for everyone to artists by opening more and a greater variety of places where they can experience their work.
- **Centrality of the artist.** Provide affordable low-cost space to support artists to grow and develop, positioning them at the centre of community-led economic growth.
- **Strong institutions.** Support more grassroots activity via lots of smaller interventions, such as creative enterprise zones, which collectively act as a feeder to larger arts institutions.
- **Reaching audience.** Bringing more affordable artist and creative spaces to underutilised CBD offices, retail centres, and ground floor housing developments will raise the profile of the location but also embed cultural within the community.

To do this there are several actions which a new policy could take:

- **Audit of government owned property.** Undertake an audit of Federal, State and Local government owned or influenced buildings to identify buildings surplus to operational requirements or sitting idle awaiting development.
- **Capital works funding.** Offer funding for the refurbishment and improvement of existing buildings in areas of strategic and regeneration need, starting with those identified by the government audit. Funding could be distributed by state or local government. A good example of this is the £70m Good Growth regeneration fund provided by the Greater London Authority.
- **Increase the supply of affordable and artist studio operators.** The funding mentioned above would increase the supply of artist studio, community and creative industry operators who would come to market in response to the funding.
- **Climate Change and a National Cultural Policy** The guardian recently called demolition [‘an act of violence’](#). The greenest building is the building that already exists but also the one most suited to creative, culture and affordable uses. A new cultural policy that champions repurposing buildings over new build will also help the government achieve its climate reduction targets.
- **Influence the development industry via the planning system.** Use planning powers to protect existing creative assets and provide more affordable space in new development. The new policy could also influence state governments to make changes to the planning system. In the UK 10% of all new commercial development

must provide affordable space at discounted rents for cultural, social or economic uses.

- **Introduce Creative Enterprise Zones.** These designated areas would act as a signpost and strategic driver for local policy decisions on place. A good example of this are London Creative Enterprise Zones which are designated in locations across the city.
- **Use the five pillars as a base to establish social, cultural and economic targets.** Including job growth, disadvantage groups into work, new creative business starts and embodied carbon reduction.