



## Submission for ‘A new National Cultural Policy’

### Who we are:

The Evatt Foundation was established in 1979 as a memorial to Dr Herbert Vere Evatt with the aim of advancing the highest ideals of the labour movement: social justice, equality, democracy and human rights. The Foundation seeks to do this through research, publications, conferences, seminars, public discussion and debate.

The Evatt Foundation also has an established track record in advancing issues of cultural policy and engaging in cultural endeavours. Throughout 2022 the Evatt Foundation is conducting active work in the space of soft power, first nations foreign policy and advocacy of the importance of action on climate change as it relates to Australia’s place in the world.

The Evatt Foundation approaches its submission to this process in terms of the integral component nature of Cultural Policy to Australia’s soft power in the region and globally.

### A new National Cultural Policy:

The Evatt Foundation believes that this process should not shy away from bold and visionary ideas. Labor Governments are at their best when they are as brave and ambitious as the people whose hopes and courage they represent.

As suggested by the review process template, find below a number of general comments on the ‘five pillars’ enunciated. This submission also includes five ‘big ideas’; specific proposals for consideration.

<b>1. First Nations</b>	<p>This is a critical component to the vision of the Albanese Government in presenting a First Nations Foreign Policy.</p> <p>Our cultural institutions have made great advances already in the field of recognition, respect and symbolic change.</p>
<b>2. A Place for Every Story</b>	<p>Support for diversity should be meaningfully incorporated at all levels of cultural output and training. Respect for diverse institutional foundations such as TAFE in NSW, is an important starting point. Therefore, a <i>national</i> Cultural Policy must incorporate a consciously <i>federated</i> approach.</p>
<b>3. The Centrality of the Artist</b>	<p>Whilst artistic authors are central to the creation of cultural products, the delivery of that communication is an industry-wide endeavour. The creative industries are mass-employers and key stakeholders in the furthering of civic spirit and way of life in our cities and regions. Work should be done to clarify definitions of cultural sector workers in conjunction with trade unions and independent employers in the sector.</p>



<p><b>4. Strong Institutions</b></p>	<p>An emphasis on institutions is welcome, with a cohesive vision for the cultural output of a whole country and its diverse voices. However, these institutions represented by the Federal Government, the fabric of Australia’s cultural infrastructure should be reimagined. The Australia Council for the Arts is an organisation that requires constant reassessment and clarification as to its role and purpose. The National Gallery and other Federally funded and governed bodies should be subject to a review. It is submitted that with the great expenditure of capital on the maintenance and growth of these organisations, it is incumbent upon a new government to implement a major assessment of their strengths, weaknesses and missed opportunities. This includes a structured and honest review not just of the Federal departmental body overseeing the cultural affairs of the nation, but in consultation, a review of the State and Territory bodies. At the heart of this process should be a federalist approach to culture which balances the objective of a cohesive national arts strategy alongside efficient State bodies and their important grassroots networks.</p>
<p><b>5. Reaching the Audience</b></p>	<p>Australia sold <i>Bluey</i> to the BBC. Australia has a poor track record in the cohesive communication of its culture in relation to our own society and the world. We need to redefine this relationship between creators, cultural gatekeepers and patrons to further include all; the nation as a whole on their day off or in their 8 hours of relaxation.</p> <p>It is submitted that much work must be done by the Minister and the Department to determine this question first. To whom do we communicate?</p> <p>It is to our children? Is the audience for Australian culture also our neighbours and cultural peers?</p> <p>Australian culture will form its history.</p> <p>Our cultural output is the embodiment of the Australia we wish to become based on the experiences we have shared as a people.</p>

### Five Big Ideas:

Beyond these general responses to the pillars, as suggested by this Policy Review process, the Evatt Foundation submits the following policy proposals for consideration.

**1. The Office for the Arts should be reconstituted within a Department of Culture**

Nomenclature divides many theorists, changing letterheads for little reason is tiresome. In this submission, we propose a shift in the national conception of 'Culture' to one which is genuinely component to Australia's national image, projection of self and veritable soft power. Alongside this broad vision is the bold proposal that (aspects of) Communications, Sport and Tourism are in fact entwined with 'Culture' and should sit alongside the 'Arts' aspect to the broader portfolio for reasons associated with Australian history as well as the practical *realpolitik* of how the State Governments' tourism and 'destinations' strategies actually operate as well as political pragmatism at all levels of government. The Minister for Culture should be a Cabinet position.

**2. The Department of Culture should be implemented with a senior public servant as its Secretary.**

Adequate resources must be given to the policy implementation of Culture so that the full potential of Australia's soft power can be communicated. Interdepartmental cooperation between Treasury, Finance, DFAT, Energy, Environment, PM&C and the PMO - and all of their Ministers who will thus become (and in fact already are) stakeholders in Australia's soft power, requires adequate respect and scope of operation to be given to the bureaucracy that will further Australia's cultural interests.

**3. A National Cultural Policy Should be implemented through a genuinely federal governance structure.**

This submission proposes that a Federal Council for Culture should be instituted drawing in nominated stakeholders and departmental representatives from each state and territory (ostensibly constituted by the Premiers and Chief Ministers), Federal departmental representatives, Federal Ministerially-appointed stakeholders and critically: independently-nominated First Nations voices. It is not envisaged that such a body would supplant the Australia Council for the Arts, nor replace any meetings or summits of 'Arts Ministers'.

**4. A full Review of the Existing Federal Institutions Should Occur**

Regular review of national institutions is fundamental to their continued good governance, relative relevance and financial efficiency. A review should be implemented by the Department of Culture as an exercise in taking stock of what is delivered by our museums, Federal grant-giving bodies, their boards, their budgets, their burdens, and brilliance.

5. **The Australian Government should, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, institute a thematic Ambassador for Culture.**

In addition to the Albanese Government’s announcement of a new *Ambassador for First Nations* and in addition to the other special representatives and envoys that are already operational within DFAT, an Australian Ambassador for Culture would provide a central envoy to articulate a shared direction of multiple departments, the PMO, various State Governments, their departments and institutions, on behalf of Australia and its artists, throughout the region and the world.

There is an argument that *more* thematic Ambassadors is an unnecessary layering atop already positive Public Diplomacy (PD) actioned by DFAT, however that argument fails to note that the remit of the PD Branch is far broader than the promotion of cultural events; oftentimes ‘PD’ is intertwined with matters of ‘nation branding’, sports diplomacy, trade, and tourism, in collaboration with chambers of commerce in foreign nations. PD is only one component aspect of a nation’s soft power. DFAT currently organises offshore arts exhibitions, cultural performances, theatrical and literary exchanges. These are promoted by existing Embassies (oftentimes because of the intervention of specifically culturally inclined heads of mission); they occur with the best efforts of cohesion but without a defining strategic vision.

An Australian Ambassador for culture should be able to work closely with the Minister for Foreign Affairs as well as the Minister for the Arts (or Culture) and the Special Envoy for the Arts, as well as the State Premiers, tourism ministers, institutional directors, Agents General and trade commissioners, dovetailing with the form of federated cohesion envisaged by this submission.

### Responses to the Process

The Evatt Foundation supports bold reform. A once in a generation opportunity to forge a national cultural policy should go far. In the words of Paul Keating, drawn from his 1993 Evatt Foundation address:

*“You Need a passion for reform... a profound belief in Australia – in an uncompromised Australian identity, a sense of our own worth. Of the great story which has been lived out by people who have made this their home”*. He concluded that address: *“Our success in the world does depend on our strength as a nation, on our faith in ourselves and the way we represent that faith – the way we symbolise it.*

### Contact

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*This three-page document has incorporated a suggested table format and thus has been spaced to four pages to assist with the ease of reading.*