

# National Cultural Policy Submission

**Dr. Margaret Mayhew**

Submitted: As a worker/professional in an industry who uses arts (e.g. art therapist, tour guide); As an artist; 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**

<I absolutely agree with the 'First Nations First' approach to cultural practice. I have worked with First Nations colleagues and allies in promoting inclusive arts practice. One of the key challenges I have found is that arts organisations and institutions silo categories of difference. They regard a Reconciliation Action Plan as separate from a Disability Action Plan, and don't act with awareness of the fact that First Nations communities live with double the rates of Disability than non-Indigenous communities, and to plan for First Nations inclusion requires proactive planning for Disabled access.>

## **A Place for Every Story**

<Diversity and Inclusion is a large and complex field of intersecting and occasionally conflicting interests. It is almost meaningless to discuss diversity without acknowledging power and the structural (dis)advantages and barriers that allow some stories to be circulated and others to be ignored. >

## **The Centrality of the Artist**

<Australian creative practitioners are doing it really tough. Many of us work in precarious occupations and live in poverty and housing stress. Most grant/funding schemes are inaccessible or extremely honourous to complete. A universal basic income, or some form of recognition of creative practice as a legitimate workforce contribution would make this a lot easier. Otherwise we risk losing a generation of

creative talent. Disabled artists need targeted funding and pathways for support, like the Richard Llewellyn grants in South Australia.>

## **Strong Institutions**

<Strong institutions are diverse, flexible and inclusive. They consult with and respond to needs of Diverse and under-represented communities. They seek to change the sector and use culture as a means of obtaining justice and equity. I have seen some outstanding work in this area, which is best supported by proactive government policy. >

## **Reaching the Audience**

<Arts organisations have a long way to go to know how to engage culturally diverse audiences. Even where they produce or support diverse work, it is usually for a narrow group of urban, white, middle class spectators. Reaching audiences is based on constant, proactive engagement and partnerships. Government policy needs to support organisations to learn how to do this better.>

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:

## **First Nations**

<I am not First Nations, but healthy, vibrant First Nations cultural practice is central to how I position myself and my creative practice as an 'unsettled settler'. First Nations artists and advocates are incredibly generous with their insights about power and justice and inclusion, which supports all artists working in this area. The vibrancy and diversity of contemporary First Nations culture makes me proud to be Australian.>

## **A Place for Every Story**

< Exciting creative practice is often something that lies outside of 'stories' and clear narratives; it is creating the impossible or unimaginable. This is why it is absolutely critical that 'under-represented' communities are able to participate in cultural expression, in order that Australia's culture is not moribund. Cultural Diversity is not just about inclusion, or superficial presentations of difference, but needs to identify, address and change the systems of exclusion that exist socially that enforce structural

disadvantage. The Arts has a role in identifying change that needs to happen, and in facilitating that change, but also benefiting from improved social justice.>

### **The Centrality of the Artist**

< I am a Disabled, LGBTIQA+ visual artist who has been practicing for over 25 years and working in Diversity and Inclusion advocacy more consistently for the past 5 years. When I received JobKeeper during the Pandemic, I was able to develop an innovative and accessible arts practice for the LGBTIQA+ community and allies, that is delivered in community centres and online. Financial support is absolutely critical as a key enabler of creative practice, especially for artists from low SES backgrounds, Disabled artists and women artists. However the current systems of competitive piecemeal grants does not allow this. >

### **Strong Institutions**

< Cultural institutions need to be open to consulting, engaging, employing and being led by the very people we do not see on the Boards or Executive teams of arts organisations. This is what will keep them relevant in the future. >

### **Reaching the Audience**

<Arts organisations tend to have tired, exclusive and passive approaches to marketing, and only reach limited audiences. Effective audience engagement needs to link marketing to programming and community engagement, and pathways for community members to participate in arts organisations.>

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

<Recognition of creative practice as a legitimate form of employment that is supported with a basic income. More research on and support for Disabled artists. More accessible grants and opportunities.>