

17 August 2022

To the National Cultural Policy Consultative Panel,

Submission the National Cultural Policy

The following submission is being made on behalf of Victoria's outer metropolitan growth area local government areas. This is an officer's submission on behalf of Cardinia Shire Council, Hume City Council, Melton City Council and Wyndham City Council, though reflects broader network conversations between the Outer Metro Growth Areas of Melbourne.

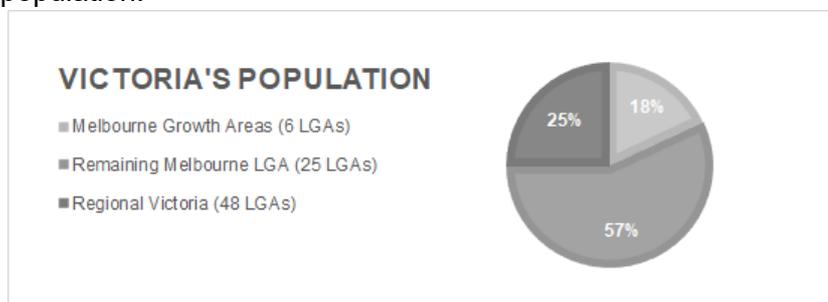
We would like to thank the Minister and the Ministry for the Communications and the Arts for the opportunity to contribute to the National Cultural Policy and acknowledge the importance of a Federal vision, leadership, long term strategy and appropriate funding programs needed to implement this policy.

Context - Victorian Outer Metro Growth Areas

Victoria's growth areas have higher proportions of low socio-economic conditions, limited local job opportunities, social isolation, disproportionate negative impacts of COVID, inflation and cost of living impacts. The communities have a higher proportion of children and families and cultural diversity compared to the rest of metropolitan Melbourne.

High and rapid population growth

Victoria's six outer metropolitan growth area local government communities (Cardinia, Casey, Hume, Melton, Whittlesea and Wyndham) have a combined population of 1.217 million people and account for 24.5% of Melbourne's population. Residents of these six outer metropolitan growth LGAs are 18% of Victoria's population. By comparison, Victoria's regional population accounts for 26% of state population.



Conditions of Victoria's outer metropolitan growth communities

These communities are the current and potential audiences and participants for arts and culture and experience. The following conditions are reported across all our communities:

- High levels of engagement with arts and culture but low levels of access to local cultural experiences.
- Low socio-economic conditions.
- Limited local job opportunities and long commute times leading to time poor individuals and families.
- High proportions of new culturally diverse communities and refugee communities.
- High proportions of children and young people.
- Disproportionate negative impacts of COVID-19.
- Issues of accessibility and social connectedness.
- Physical disconnect between the outer metropolitan growth areas with other parts of Melbourne and access to critical infrastructure, resulting in relative disadvantage.

Rapid population growth has led to underdeveloped cultural ecosystems in Victoria's outer metropolitan growth areas. Local governments are funding the vast majority of arts and cultural activity. The challenges of rapid growth require that Federal and State governments partner with Local government to provide targeted investment for growth and equality of access.

First Nations

We collectively support foregrounding First Nation's First principles into the National Cultural policy. Many of our LGAs have significant and higher than state average populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Many of the Traditional Owners are represented by small organisations who service large areas and are not necessarily experienced in working in arts production, similarly our organisations are under-skilled in cultural knowledge and practices of our local communities. Many of our newly arrived families demonstrate a strong want to understand and know stories and practices of the Traditional Owners of the lands on which they now live.

Opportunities: Support the holistic development of a strong and self-determined First Nations arts ecology allowing for First Nation's stories, arts practices and leadership to be a central voice in the cultural landscape of our communities.

Consider partnering with local government in our growth areas to invest in First Nations arts ecology initiatives through: seeding new First Nations presentation companies in residence at outer-urban arts venues, supporting initiatives which share arts practices to diverse communities, support pathways for study and training initiatives for artists and arts workers and review funding programs to support long-term partnership models between artists and communities.

A Place for Every Story

Younger generations in CALD communities (who are a significant cohort in Victoria's outer metropolitan growth areas) strongly value opportunities to engage with their cultural background or community by attending arts events. They particularly benefit from spending time with family and/or with friends (44% of CALD respondents aged 15–34 years who attend), getting to know people in the community (39% of CALD respondents aged 15–34 years who attend) and improved health and wellbeing

(34% of CALD respondents aged 15–34 years who attend). (National Arts Participation Survey, Australia Council for the Arts, August 2020)

At the heart of this pillar, we see immense opportunity to create and present works from a new generation of storytellers and with it bring a revitalised audience for the arts that authentically reflects our communities. Australia’s Audience Outlook Monitor survey (September 2020) found that there is a desire to support more local events and venues, a desire for the ‘homegrown’ and grassroots events which has been reflected in recent audience numbers to events, festivals and performances.

Outer metro growth areas work within a federal arts policy and investment gap. We are not regional and we are not urban. A vision to provide equity of access to the arts has been a central point of the nation’s arts investment policy for many decades, with the establishment of the Regional Arts Fund and the state bodies that administer these support programs. However, the nature of our cities growth and urban planning has created significant issues around access and equity of access to the arts that our growth areas are impacted by. This is for both active participation and for passive presentation opportunities. Growth area infrastructure funding pools are limited and competing with critical and basic community infrastructure. This results in arts and cultural infrastructure investment requiring highly dedicated and developed funding strategies to be viable in growth areas.

Councils are struggling to keep up with their inner-city peers and communities who receive roughly more than six times the funding through grants. “As with other areas of government expenditure that don’t keep up with population growth, we risk a decline in the relevance and accessibility of cultural opportunities for people right across the country.” Kate Fielding, The New Approach quoted in The Conservation, 2019.

Local Government has increased its funding for the arts at the same time as federal funding has declined. According to The New Approach, Commonwealth funding has fallen by 19% per person since 2007-08 to 2019 and Local Government has increased funding per capita by 11% during the same period.

Geographic location	Sum of Amount Funded	Population	Per capita
Regional	\$15,347,812	4,499,741	\$3
Growth Areas	\$21,156,385	6,493,444	\$3
Rural	\$54,464,935	2,545,457	\$21
Inner Metro	\$240,420,370	11,826,929	\$20

Source: Australia council via <https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/funding/awarded-grants/> 2016-2020

Opportunities: In the growing communities and cities within which we work we see immense opportunities to provide platforms and participation opportunities for new Australian stories to emerge. Develop long term and partnership-based funding programs to invest in holistic arts ecologies in growth areas. Develop funding

programs to address the funding discrepancies. Our communities include immense cultural diversity and experiences, perspectives and stories that have rarely been presented within our nation's context. Investment in the next generation of stories and storytellers needs to foster a pathway from participation and access of arts activities through the professionalisation of arts practice and presentation. With new stories and new artists, we can change and grow the diversity of arts audiences to reflect our diverse communities.

The Centrality of the Artist

Opportunities: With housing affordability being a major driver of population growth in our areas, we are uniquely placed to build suburbs where artists can live and work. We urge the federal government to partner with local government to support initiatives to support attraction strategies for artists and arts organisations to our cities. This would create local ecologies to develop with intention and have immense impacts on developing secondary and primary economic impacts associated with the creative industries. In addition, we urge the federal government to start dedicated support programs to invest in arts infrastructure and investment in training opportunities in the outer-metro growth areas.

Strong Institutions

Funding is already disproportionately distributed to major arts organisations located in CBDs. For example, funding for the major arts companies, such as Opera Australia and the Australian Ballet, made up 62 per cent of grants funding from the Australia Council in 2015–16 (Jolly, 2018). Ideally let's move our conversation from fighting over limited budgets and reinstate funding budgets to adequate levels to deliver on the recommendations of this policy and extensive consultation.

Opportunities: There is an opportunity to ensure that our next generation of organisations are given the support to develop and build audiences from a grass roots level. This contrasts starkly with audience development funding programs which target major organisations to grow their share. In our emerging arts ecologies, we see very little share of federal or state funding. We urge the panel to consider how it defines institutions to reflect the need to our arts ecologies to be supported by a sustainable community of artists and small to medium organisations.

Reaching the Audience

Lack of infrastructure has broadly made the arts inaccessible for our growing communities coupled with limitations in public transport and access to basic arts infrastructure due to distance. Programming offerings that are tour ready are often suited to traditional audiences and do not resonate with our diverse communities.

Opportunities: We urge the revision and implementation of touring reforms to support works to tour that don't necessarily require mainstage technical needs. We urge for support to ensure that over time, our infrastructure needs can support the access to arts for the majority of Australians without considerable travel time and commutes. We urge major companies and touring parties to consider what authentic audience development can look like in our growth areas, a conversation and partnership we offer to broker.

We are calling for greater public investment in our country's creative future through targeted, ongoing, sustainable support for outer metropolitan growth areas where populations are changing rapidly, and where the need to kick-start new cultural economies is high.

We trust that the information provided will assist in the development of a meaningful National Cultural Policy and look forward to seeing the draft policy. In regards to attribution please feel free to attribute any portion of this submission from officers from the joint organisations.

If you require any further information, please

Yours sincerely

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