

State Theatre Company South Australia

National Cultural Policy review submission

Summary

- We align with the CAST submission to the policy review and the priorities and opportunities it articulates.
- This submission reiterates the opportunities we see through our place in our local ecology in relation to the five established policy pillars.
- Now is a time to think big about the range and scale of stories that are told and the ways they are told; the collaborations we can make; and the impact we can have.
- This requires an expansive vision for the arts, backed by investment in the short and long term.
- A strong arts sector is a national asset – to social cohesion and inclusive, active, and connected communities; mental and physical health and personal development; economic diversity and resilience; and international relations.
- We support the adoption of the 2013 policy framework to fast-track the sector's recovery, but believe a whole of population, long term vision like Sport 2030, the Australian Government's sports plan for Australia, is required to redefine the place of the Arts in Australian life. Over the long term, the sustained flourishing of the arts will depend on the degree it is ingrained broadly in daily life.

First Nations

- Work by First Nations artists are and should be highlights on South Australia's professional main stages, including increasing numbers of South Australian First Nations stories and works fuelled by investments in:
 - Emerging artist and new work development programs – the opportunity for companies in South Australia to enable development of First Nations artists and work, established through co-designed processes and emphasising self-determination of First Nations artists in respect of the creation of their works.
 - Producer training and development – dedicated opportunities for the professional development of emerging First Nations producers, as part of a broader and long-term plan for employment of First Nations artists and arts workers in the sector's producing companies.
 - Large-scale work – we support the establishment of a commissioning fund dedicated to the creation of First Nations work, including for investment in large-scale work.

A Place for Every Story

- Provide greater resourcing for creative development of work that requires long-term investment in burgeoning artistic voices and communities.
- Create opportunities for innovation and R&D at the intersection of CACD and professional practice, oriented to establishing pathways for stories and artists.
- Provide resourcing for producing companies to intersect with external programs – making companies more eligible for project funding where strong sector development can be demonstrated, e.g., craft-based skill and knowledge development and sharing with external organisations and programs; creative developments of works seeded through external programs; producing and presenting capability to enter co-productions with smaller organisations.

- This includes the ability to engage with programs for script assessment and development. Writers from all backgrounds and geographic areas should be able to have a script read and the potential to engage in playwright development programs. This is best done through Australian Plays Transform, with mechanisms for producing companies to engage in that process.
- Resourcing appropriate and meaningful community consultation and engagement in creative development processes.
- Producing traineeships – establish dedicated programs for the professional development of producers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and producers with lived experience of disability.
- Specific consideration of diversity and inclusion in a new long-term plan for the South Australian live performance workforce.
- Infrastructure must be fit for purpose for the development of diverse work. Producing companies in South Australia must have the capacity to invite diverse communities onsite, to build openness and familiarity with our companies and to enable skill and development workshops and host community engagement events and programs.

Centrality of the Artist

- Greater overall resourcing of NPAPF producing companies will help address:
 - Growing cast sizes – the ability to invest in productions of new Australian work with larger casts will improve their competitiveness in the marketplace; provide more employment for Australian performers; expand the range of stories that can be told.
 - Providing opportunities for emerging and mid-career creatives – resident artists within larger producing companies like State Theatre Company South Australia can enhance the careers of directors and designers through the development of craft across a range of projects and familiarisation with company processes.
 - Further investment in South Australian playwrights and plays – commissioning and presenting South Australian work is a core part of our mission; greater resourcing would expand the scale of investment in new South Australian work in development and presentation, supplemented by enhanced programs for identifying and developing new plays and talent through broader or external programs and collaborations.
- In smaller states like South Australia, it is particularly important that funding is restored to programs including:
 - Project funding – enabling more South Australian artists to seed ideas and developments under their own initiative, that can then attract co-investment with companies.
 - Artist career development and skills maintenance - in smaller states in particular, artists need opportunities to sustain their practice through funded residencies (locally and beyond), regular skill development workshops and other opportunities.

Strong Institutions

- A healthy ecology should offer opportunity at various levels of practice: from flourishing independent and emerging programs and venues to try new work and get a start; project-based activity by small companies and collectives; flexible mid-sized producing entities; and large-scale companies and festivals that maintain essential producing and presenting infrastructure and ensure broad artform exposure.
- Venues – in South Australia there needs to be further consideration given, and action taken, around venue access and cost for local companies, including making and working spaces for producers of various sizes and types.

- Tertiary institutions – the connection between tertiary training and education programs and the sector should be reinvigorated and specifically considered in a broad and long-term plan for the live performance sector workforce. WIL programs should occur in any vocational discipline as part of considered, fair and sustainable artist career pathways.
- Support should be provided to ensure strong institutions are maintained at a business level, recognising that large companies carry out a diversity of business practices and processes: creative production, physical production with trades, marketing, administration, sponsorship and philanthropy and others. There must be capacity for companies to budget for adequate training and business process development, to invest in the people who help sustain the art. This should supplement central support programs and resources offered through the Australia Council.
- Programs to embed diversity in organisational leadership should be supported.
- Strong Education programs are key to the future of a flourishing arts ecology over the long-term. Federal programs should incentivise and strengthen arts education in state systems.

Reaching the Audience

- Playing Australia should be further expanded and incentivise and enable intra-state touring.
- Support should be provided for further R&D of digital access to productions and service delivery. This should add value to, and supplement, live performance.
- Strong Education programs are critical in reaching and building audiences for theatre, including through building greater diversity on our stages and in our audiences.
- Achieving diversity on our stages is the greatest investment we can make in reaching larger and more diverse audiences.
- Investments in technological innovation should not be limited to online streaming/broadcasting – technological innovation within the live performance experience will benefit audience development also.
- Companies should be supported to trial new ways of engaging with audiences; things like dynamic pricing, memberships, etc; the way people transact and engage is changing and the arts must keep pace.

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