

firstdraft

National Cultural Policy Submission

August 2022

Submission Type

Not-for-profit arts organisation

About Firstdraft

Firstdraft is where the future of contemporary art emerges, through a program that is critical, ambitious and experimental.

Established in 1986, Firstdraft is Australia's longest-running independent artist-led initiative.

Located in Woolloomooloo, on the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, Firstdraft presents programs that further critical ideas and practices in contemporary art across exhibition-making, publishing, residencies, public programs, and First Peoples-led programs. Led by artists for artists, Firstdraft supports artistic experimentation at all levels — from early-career artists presenting their first exhibition, to more established practitioners testing new ideas and ways of working.

Firstdraft fosters ambitious practices and artistic excellence to champion risk and experimentation; and is actively invested in improving the livelihoods of artists through sector-leading advocacy and fundraising initiatives including the annual Firstdraft Auction, All Conference (co-convenors) and Contemporary Art Organisations Australia, CAOAA (active member). Firstdraft is supported by the New South Wales Government through Create NSW, the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, and the City of Sydney through its Accommodation Grant Program.

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillars most relevant to you?

1. First Nations

Make it affordable to support First Nations artists and cultural workers to take-up long-term roles and form deeper engagement with small to medium organisations:

- **Fund Cultural Workers & Make Consultancy Fees Tax Claimable:** Increase self-determined First Nations artistic expression and governance through subsidising artists, artworkers and consultants fees and wages (providing First Nations professionals with income, and taking the pressure off organisations to resource it)
- **Subsidise a National Support Network of Mentors and Advisory Artworkers to Embed First Nations Leaders in the Arts:** Enhance sustainability by creating a paid First Nations peer-cohort that can support the

13-17 riley street
woolloomooloo nsw 2011
+61 2 8970 2999

firstdraft.org

2. A Place for Every Story

inclusion of culturally safe spaces within artist-run or small organisations

Celebrate 'art is for everyone' by improving the economic barriers incurred by intersectional diversity in making, participating in, and viewing art:

- **Fund the Cost of Taking Part in Arts Activities:** Create incentives through rebates or funded tickets/entrance fees to support low income earners to attend exhibitions, events and activities
- **Subsidise Community and Artist-Run Arts Venues to Further Reach Diverse and Local Audiences:** Recognise that these organisations are best placed to reach diverse audiences, by offering initiatives and directly subsidising small to medium organisations for the cost of presenting art events to reach these target audiences

3. The Centrality of the Artist

Make art a viable career for artists and arts workers by reshaping the gig economy:

- **Pay Artists a Universal Basic Income:** Sustain and grow the careers of artists by paying artists guaranteed stipends or wages to invest in their careers
- **Super Guarantee & Long Service Leave:** Create a scheme for artists and arts workers e.g. professional registration and earning credits, to enable artists to build long service leave (this creates a long and durable career, and a space for creative and skills based development)
- **Provide Clear Tax Incentives for Artists as Professional Workers:** Legislate a wider and higher range of claims to support the expenses of self-employed artists for work related claims (enable artists to claim full costs and make it easy and viable to do so with the ATO)
- **Increase and/or Isolate the Tax Threshold for Artists:** Enable artists to earn more as a form of investing in the sustainability and growth of their careers by raising and isolating combined taxable income
- **Invest in Direct Creative Skills Development:** Fund clear incentives and provide subsidies for artists to self-manage and invest in research and development (through direct and increased funding and support for artist studios/workspaces and professional development periods)
- **Invest in Diversification of Education & Career Pathways:** Fund artists to work while they learn and

4. Strong Institutions

gain new skills by supporting an apprenticeship model (pay artists to upskill, instead of gaining and bearing the weight of debt at elite learning institutions)

- **Increase & Create New Direct Pathways for Artists to Access Funding:** Put more money into the hands of artists by increasing direct and simplified avenues of accessing funding to support costs associated with the development and production of new work; and action a greater number of opportunities across quick response grants, fellowships and projects to reflect the large pool of visual arts talent
- **Create and Invest in Artists Studios:** Develop initiatives, partnerships and incentives to encourage business, corporations and development projects to utilise and convert disused spaces into short to long term artists studio space. Invest in the development of long-term artist studio space across cities.

Champion, sustain and grow artist-run and small organisations as being the most dynamic and innovative pillar of the arts sector:

- **Recognise the Role of Small Organisations & Invest in the Career Development of Artists & Arts Workers:** Greatly increase funding aimed at supporting the overheads and project costs for artist-run-initiatives and small to medium organisations (these organisations provide the first opportunities and career steps for the cultural sector)
- **Subsidise Wages Benchmarked In-line with Government & Corporate Agencies:** Enable arts workers to stay long-term in arts jobs and to achieve job growth and stability by subsidising wages to better reflect the earning power across industry
- **Greater Rent Relief & Strengthened Stability for Rental Tenancies:** Require Councils to designate and implement further provisions and ongoing long-term support for studio and presentation spaces
- **Instate a Direct Artist Voice to Government:** Create a rotating and open application process for an artist-peer panel to represent the needs of artists and assess and inform on the impact of policy

5. Reaching the Audience

Champion accessibility and diversity inclusion by providing a resourced and available national plan of action:

- **Create a Targeted Toolkit & Provide Funding to Take Action on Accessibility & Diversity Inclusion:** Fund the production and distribution of a national plan

of accessible exhibition design, and directly fund artist-run and small organisations to implement tangible outcomes through the purchase of equipment or services

Raise the profile of Australian artists so that their professional profile is comparable to international counterparts and scenes:

- **Action \$100 million Strategic Investment for Artists to Have Agency Over Their Careers:** Inject large scale funding for artists to support the growth of their careers through enhanced visibility and profile (making professional support for marketing and PR viable)
- **Invest in Collecting Art:** Invest in startup organisations whose remit is to innovate, disrupt, or redistribute the wealth of collecting institutions by make collecting and profiting from the sale of art democratic e.g. Arts Money, Arts Pay
- **Guarantee Artists Resale Royalties:** Embed artist resale rights to ensure artists share in the continuing profit of their work, and to encourage an active and lively secondary market for art

Acknowledge creative technologists in the arts sector and start-up industries as the experts who should lead and advise on digital infrastructure and digital arts ecologies:

- **Fund Artists and Creative Technologists to Create & Devise New Work & New Forums:** Provide direct funds and investment to artists working at the forefront of next generation technology in art-adjacent fields
- **Invest in New Infrastructures Being Built Around Artistic Practices Engaging with Advanced Technologies:** Fund self-led creative collaborations across industry to undertake research and development

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

1. **Recognise and strengthen the role of artist-run and small organisations as essential to the development and growth of the arts sector.**

Example: Firstdraft has a long history of supporting artists to present their first art exhibitions – and these artists then progress to have their work shown and collected by key national institutions.

2. **Empower artists with the agency to directly access funds, and to have an ongoing place in informing on policies which directly affect their wellbeing and career.**

Comment: Arts funding was dramatically cut in 2015 and never restored – which continues to

firstdraft

push artists to abandon arts careers and leave the sector in favour of more secure and unrelated forms of income, thereby creating a drain on the creative workforce and size of the arts sector. Restore and greatly increase investment now to address this shortfall.

- 3. Enable participation and influence in digital infrastructure and the digital arts economy by directly investing in new arts ecologies that are critical and relevant to future makers and audiences:**

Reasoning: The development and rollout of digital technology and infrastructure without the participation of informed creative and artistic voices creates a shortfall and misunderstanding of the capabilities and culture – as seen in how Australia continues to fall behind international digital arts scenes. Drive critical and creative digital infrastructure with greater investment in creative technologists and emergent digital artists as the next generation leaders.

We may use some of your words as part of the National Cultural Policy Report. If we do, how would you like us to attribute your words?

Permission to make public and publish granted by:

Name: Sally Golding, General Manager

Organisation: Firstdraft

Contact: [REDACTED]

**13-17 riley street
woolloomooloo nsw 2011
+61 2 8970 2999**

firstdraft.org