

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: As an artist; As an individual

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:

1. First Nations	<p>As a white Australian composer and performer, my music education has lacked First Nations input from the very beginning. Even in my tertiary composition studies, I always had to seek out First Nations led projects to learn more about outside of class, and the only Australian music history involving First Nations music making seemed to involve white Australian composers at best being tokenistic in their acknowledgement of First Nations culture, and at worst, engaging in cultural theft.</p> <p>In my artistic practice I always want to be respectful to First Nations sovereignty, and if First Nations stories are valued at the centre of an Australian Cultural Policy, I hope that myself and more independent artists would have the chance to engage in meaningful, First Nations led collaborations.</p> <p>The Australia Council's research on Protocols for using First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property in the Arts should be included at all levels of music education: https://australiacouncil.gov.au/investment-and-development/protocols-and-resources/protocols-for-using-first-nations-cultural-and-intellectual-property-in-the-arts/</p>
2. A Place for Every Story	<p>In my area of 'classical' music making, we are continually dominated by privileged white men's art – mostly dead privileged white men's art. There is so much more out there to be explored, and we have to realise in all areas of the arts sector that it is unacceptable to be dominated by stories only communicated through this one, often unrelatable, lens. Art needs to reflect the diversity of Australian society, and the major organisations receiving government funding must broaden their programming as a matter of urgency.</p>
3. The Centrality of the Artist	<p>ART IS WORK, and it is absolutely exhausting as an independent artist having to continually justify this fact.</p>

	<p>I refer to an article I wrote in August 2019. The lack of support for independent artists who lost so much work (that was already precarious) during the pandemic has only compounded these issues: https://www.cutcommonmag.com/this-is-why-artists-need-access-to-free-mental-health-support/</p>
<p>4. Strong Institutions</p>	<p>I refer to a recent article by Anna Goldsworthy, published in July 2022 before she was announced as the Director of the Elder Conservatorium: https://musictrust.com.au/loudmouth/the-slow-fade-of-music-education-anna-goldsworthy/</p> <p>Simply put: “The benefits of music education are so well documented and so incontrovertible that it feels embarrassing even to mention them. Except that no one ever seems to listen, so you just have to keep saying it.”</p> <p>Yes, there certainly needs to be more investment into strong music institutions, but this needs to start from the very beginning – giving every single child equal opportunity for a quality music education, no matter their school, no matter their postcode.</p>
<p>5. Reaching the Audience</p>	<p>Particularly in the ‘classical music’ sphere, we have a perception problem. Our work is often perceived as ‘elitist’ or ‘stuffy’, where in fact it can be embraced and enjoyed by anyone. If quality music education began from early childhood, I am certain that this perception would change.</p>

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

I refer to an article by the brilliant Tiffany Lyndall-Knight, an actor based in Adelaide: <https://medium.com/the-equity-magazine/universal-basic-income-could-this-be-a-solution-816feb8d2ec3>

This article was released at the beginning of 2022, before the election, and after the ‘Reset: A New Public Agenda for the Arts’ conference. When I read the following paragraph in Tiffany’s article, I am filled with both validation and frustration:

“It seems to me that a lot of the policy we hear about concerns improving conditions at the organisational level: that if you give more money to companies, it will eventually trickle down to the artists. I don’t agree. One mainstage show, every two or three years, does not sustain a practice. Neither do the jobs you are forced to take as an independent contractor that don’t pay into superannuation, which are a feature of so many of the festival projects we see in South Australia. And juggling multiple day jobs to cobble together a living does not create conditions in which artists can develop and grow.”

The reason I am writing this submission at 9pm on the Monday night that it is due, is because I relate far too well to everything this article is talking about, although I live in relative privilege compared to some of my colleagues struggling on the Job Seeker payment, in insecure housing, with insecure work. This is because I have been juggling multiple 'day jobs' and arts jobs for the past ten years, and it is absolutely exhausting. The work I am most passionate about is often forced to the side – more so because of the ongoing challenges created by the pandemic – and a Universal Basic Income scheme would support SO MANY diverse arts practitioners. We don't want to live the lives of the stereotypical 'tortured artist', but the conditions which we are so often forced to work under is detrimental to our mental and physical health. We are shamed for asking for proper fees for our highly skilled work, and we are so often expected to accept being paid in 'exposure' rather than an actual living wage.

This National Cultural Policy must seriously consider the reality that artists are completely burnt out – we are exhausted by constantly being devalued, and by our meaningful contributions to society being erased. This has all been exacerbated by the pandemic.

A Universal Basic Income scheme could provide so much hope. It could provide some certainty and confidence to a diverse range of voices – particularly to those of us who cannot rely on privilege and family money while we build our artistic careers.