

To Whom It May Concern,

RE: Moogahlin Performing Arts Submission to the National Cultural Policy

Moogahlin Performing Arts is a not-for-profit arts organisation. Moogahlin Performing Arts was formed on Gadigal country in Redfern N.S.W in November 2007, by a group of First Peoples performance artists, educators and community workers. Bunuba man Frederick Copperwaite, Murrawarri woman Lily Shearer, and Biripay woman Liza-Mare Syron established the company at the request of the late Kevin Smith who wished to bring performing arts back to the community of Redfern, in honour of the founding members of the National Black Theatre. We are a resident company of Carriageworks in Eveleigh, a Company in Residence with Blacktown Arts, and have a regional office in Brewarrina, Far-West NSW.

Alongside a joint submission made with other First Peoples Performing Arts Companies – Bangarra Dance Theatre, Ilbjerri Theatre, Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company, Marrugeku Dance Theatre, NAISDA Dance College, and BlakDance Australia – below are Moogahlin’s responses to the challenges and opportunities we see within some of the pillars of the proposed National Cultural Policy:

First Nations

- We request that the First Nations pillar of the policy be strengthened: we must move beyond “recognise and celebrate” to “invest, implement, and sustain”
- Self-determination must be an embedded principle in all First Nations programs and initiatives. [“We must consider every hand that touches a creative work. Until it’s a Blak hand it’s not really self-determined.” Daniel Riley, ADT]
- First Nations performing arts organisations should be funded further to incubate early-career talent and emerging companies and produce independents. To achieve the goal of producing and presenting more First Nations performance work we must strengthen the First Nations performing arts organisation to deliver this critical role.
- Enhance First Nations cultural expression as central to the identity of Australia.
- Strengthen First Nations arts and culture through sustainable investment and strategic goals.
- Strengthen First Nations performing arts organisations and independent artists to deliver NCP strategic directions.
- Create a dedicated First Nations Performing Arts Commissioning Fund for First Nations performing artists and orgs.
- Make adherence to cultural protocols, ICIP management, and community consultation an explicit and eligible expense in project grant budgets.

A Place for Every Story

- Assist First Nations companies to obtain/create and manage their own Arts venues, as dedicated places for First Nations work
- Provide a special fund towards a place for First Nations arts companies to manage and deliver arts, skills based, and development programs.
- Acknowledge that Country is also a place for every story.

The Centrality of the Artist

- Encourage philanthropic investment in First Nations artists and cultural practitioners.

Strong Institutions

- Develop and deliver a First Nations Performing Arts Skills & Workforce Capacity Building strategy for the next decade and beyond, including identifying and developing regionally based programs.
- Ensure sustainable investment in training for First Nations arts and cultural workers.
- Pilot program to identify and develop regionally based, and on Country, First Nations producers and presenters
- Create pathways and resources (including bridging funding) to prepare emerging companies for multi-year funding
- Acknowledge and remunerate the work of small-to-medium organisations in contributing to advocacy for the sector beyond their limited resources
- Adjust data and reporting requirements for small-to-medium organisations to reflect their disproportionate staffing capacity to meet current requirements, compared to large and major organisations
- Portable long service leave for arts workers
- Support for working parents, especially re-entry of primary carers into the workforce after parental leave
- Universally accessible Employee Assistance Programs and Mental Health Support for artists and arts workers, regardless of employment status

Reaching the Audience

- Assist First Nations companies to obtain/create and manage their own Arts venues, as dedicated places for First Nations audiences to feel welcome and accepted
- Develop a shared language and terms of reference for marketing First Nations work that is informed by and embedded in the self-determination principles of First Nations practitioners