

National Cultural Policy Submission

Olivia Tornada

Protecting our independent Australian artists and musicians

Honourable Tony Burke MP

National Cultural Policy Committee

via: culturalpolicy@arts.gov.au

Dear Mr Burke and the Cultural Policy Committee,

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Australian Government's new National Cultural Policy.

As a young female, emerging musician and artist, I hold concern for our arts and music industry in Australia. Throughout my studies at Monash University and artistic career I have noted that there is a lack of government and national appreciation for the arts despite its cultural benefits and significance. Particularly there is a lack of support for smaller, independent artists and musicians in our country who provide forward facing and diverse art. This lack of support can be attributed to funding policy and distribution discrepancies along with a general lack of education and accountability surrounding the arts. Without changing the culture surrounding art policy and supporting the independent artist, the industry will continue to struggle and face financial instability. Additionally, Australia will not be able to produce our unique and high quality music and art that promotes diversity, inclusivity, and individuality.

Background

Art and music in our nation provides a melting pot of benefits including community engagement, a place to challenge society, and a way to express individualism. According to an arts participation survey conducted by the Australia Council for the Arts, 98% of Australians are engaging with art and there is an increased appreciation for how it positively impacts “wellbeing” and the “ability to

develop new ideas”¹. Additionally, the arts and entertainment industry have a large economic gain and contributed \$111.7 billion to Australia’s economy in 2016-17². Despite this, artists are still some of the lowest paid workers and experience job instability, short-term income sources, and informal contracts³. The average income for artists in 2015 was \$48,400, and for musicians \$45,000⁴, and the COVID-19 pandemic diminished this further⁵. For the arts industry to regain some form of stability, there needs to be an understanding that this is a low income despite the many benefits that the arts sector provides for Australia.

A place for every story

In 2016-17 there were over 48,000 artists⁶ and close to 12,000 businesses operating under the creative arts⁷. It was also observed that 62% of all arts funding in these years went towards only 28 Major Performing Arts companies (MPAs)⁸. These MPAs are exempt from artistic peer review, protected from funding cuts, and do not reflect a diverse range of art content to represent Australia⁹. The Living Music Report determined that of the music performed by nine of the orchestral MPAs, only 10% was composed by Australians, 4% composed by females and 1% composed by First Nation artists¹⁰. This indicates that 62% of all artistic government funding is going towards backward looking heritage music that does not represent the Australian population or allow

¹ Australia Council for the Arts, *Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*, (Canberra ACT, 2020), 41, <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Creating-Our-Future-Results-of-the-National-Arts-Participation-Survey-PDF.pdf>.

² Australian Industry and Skills Committee, *Arts, Culture, Entertainment and Design*, (2021), <https://nationalindustryinsights.aisc.net.au/industries/arts-culture-entertainment-and-design>.

³ Paul Crosby and Jordi McKenzie, “Survey evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on Australian musicians and implications for policy,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 28, no. 2 (April 2021): 166-186, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2021.1916004>.

⁴ David Throsby and Kataya Peteskaya, *Making Art Work: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*, (NSW: Australia Council for the Arts, 2017): 74, <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/making-art-work-throsby-report-5a05106d0bb69.pdf>.

⁵ Paul Crosby and Jordi McKenzie, “Survey evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on Australian musicians and implications for policy”, 166-186.

⁶ Throsby and Peteskaya, *Making Art Work: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*, 23.

⁷ *Arts, Culture, Entertainment and Design*.

⁸ Australia Council for the Arts, *Annual Report 2016-17*, (Canberra ACT, 2017), 22., <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/australia-council-for-the-arts-5a1b80d5da897.pdf>.

⁹ Jackie Bailey and Lance Richardson, “Meaningful measurement: a literature review and Australian and British case studies of arts organizations conducting “artistic self-assessment”,” *Cultural Trends* 19, no. 4, (2010): 291-306, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2010.515004>.

¹⁰ Ciaran Frame, *The Living Music Report 2020*, (Ciaran Frame, 2021), v, <https://livingmusic.report/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Living-Music-Report-2020.pdf>.

for diversity. Therefore, the majority of arts funding is not supporting the large number of artists and musicians and not allowing a place for every story.

A solution that could assist with this disparity is holding the MPAs accountable for what they are using their large funding sums via peer review, inclusivity evaluations, as well as audience and artistic measurement. Additionally, a shift in the distribution of government funding within the sector could be considered to allow for the other 11,972 arts businesses to flourish and to help provide a space for all artists and musicians to be represented in the industry.

The centrality of the artist

Australian artists and musicians are creators of diversity and culture. Despite this the income figures above demonstrate how our artists are not being financially supported and should have easier access to better support. More consideration should be placed into how the individual artist makes income and what the government can do to support these income sources. For performing musicians, changes in technology and streaming have resulted in a decreased ability to make income through selling music. Instead, artists are making more money from touring and selling merchandise over royalties and streaming numbers¹¹. This creates income instability for smaller independent artists who do not have permanent jobs or who are not connected to larger companies. It also indicates that there is a need for live music to be a more reliable income source. Aside from increased funding, a way to support this idea is to aid with the creation of the artist-audience relationship and support the touring aspect of musician income.

Reaching the audience

In 2016, 48% or 9.9 million Australians attended a live music event¹². There is a strong live music market in Australia which can be tapped into to benefit artists, venue owners, hospitality workers,

¹¹ Steven Campbell, "Australian Independent Music and the Experience Economy," *Music Business and the Experience Economy*, (March 2013): 41-57, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-27898-3_4.

¹² *Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*, 95.

and the audience. Additionally, it was determined that MPA's received nine times the funding than small to medium companies, despite smaller companies delivering audience sizes twice as large¹³. This indicates that there are large amounts of people frequenting live music and arts events in smaller venues run by smaller companies. Increased funding and consideration for smaller music venues could result in supporting independent artists as well as the hospitality industry. Creation of dedicated touring music venues for smaller artists would also be beneficial to boost artist-audience interaction and create more stable musical careers and permanent sound engineering and hospitality jobs. There is particularly great potential for this to occur in regional areas. A regional touring circuit could result in a higher circulation of tourists, audience members, and spenders in regional areas. Creative Victoria's '*On The Road Again*' is a great start to this and should be further promoted¹⁴.

Recommendations

To make the suggestions provided surrounding funding and support effective, there needs to be better communication and accountability of spending. Some of my suggestions are as follows:

- Improved promotion and communication of funding available to smaller companies and venues.
- Make the funding application process accessible and not overly complex.
- All venues and companies that receive funding should be required to quote data on how they support artists.
- Incorporate participation quotas to ensure diverse genders and cultures, inclusivity, and First Nation artists.
- People working in the arts should be paid appropriately and evidence of this should be obtained.

¹³ "Brandis is wrong: small arts orgs deliver much greater bang for govt buck," Crikey, September 2015, <https://www.crikey.com.au/2015/09/18/brandis-is-wrong-small-arts-orgs-deliver-much-greater-bang-for-govt-buck/>.

¹⁴ "On The Road Again Live Music Is Back All Over Victoria!," Victorian Music Development Office, 2022, <https://www.vmdo.com.au/ontheroadagain>.

I thank each committee member and Mr Burke for your time and for your important work in this crucial time of change in the arts.

Sincerely,

Olivia Tomada

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