

## THOUGHTS FOR A NEW NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY

From Annie Edney (with 40 years creative practice, see <https://www.annieedney.org/past>)

I am happy for my contribution to be acknowledged, and I give permission for this submission to be published online:

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

### **First Nations**

Having worked from the mid 1990's, for 30+ years, on festivals etc and organised the inclusion of a Welcome to Country from the local Indigenous people, starting when it was not a common thing to do, I celebrate the prevalence of recognition and the incredible presence our Indigenous cultures now have, specially given that they represent such a small percentage of our population.

I have been fortunate enough to work closely with many Aboriginal people in the course of developing my work in a way that is culturally acceptable to the Indigenous people on whose lands I work. My life is greatly enriched by those experiences, and the longer term relationships I have with Indigenous people.

My concern is about the authenticity and levels of understanding of the different cultural practices of our many Indigenous groups. It's so sad when names/words are mispronounced. Is there sufficient authentic consultation?

I believe there needs to be comprehensive education, in the broader community, about the value of our remarkable and unique Indigenous cultures, for people who left the education system more than a decade ago, and who may have no understanding beyond the words of Acknowledgement uttered so frequently.

### **A Place for Every Story**

I have worked across multiple artforms in a range of capacities, making work that delivers story, for over thirty years. As Community Cultural Development (CCD) Artist and Director; with community groups, as visual artist working in the contemporary art world, and in the 1980-90's as a fashion designer and proprietor of my own fashion label. Everything has a story. We are story making creatures

To give ordinary members of our community, who do not consider themselves artists, access to artists who can help facilitate the stories they want to tell, has been some of my most potently rewarding working experiences. We need art that binds, stretches, and challenges contemporary society. Stories can be told in many ways, and by giving artists opportunities to make stories in their many ways we give our whole nation diverse ways to understand each other and themselves.

## **The Centrality of the Artist**

Acceptance of the role of artists in our community has evolved substantially in the decades of my working life. Starting in the Hawke-Keating years, I began CCD work in a world that understood the value and importance of artists and the projects they instigated. There was adequate to generous funding to support projects with a wide, deep reach into the community. And the community, broadly speaking, had an understanding of the role of the artist, and the value of their work.

I believe we need to work on building a contemporary version of this understanding, to generously celebrate our multifarious culture via the arts, with the inclusion of artists at all levels of the work.

Culture was once seen as a public good, but has been hollowed out. Let's put some flesh back on the bones of our Australian culture.

## **Strong Institutions**

A Federal Ministry of Culture (FMC) with integrity and authenticity is a starting point to repairing the tragic legacy of the past twenty years, and honouring the collective value of knowledge and governance that rightly needs to be held within our institutions, eg the ABC, our Universities.

These institutions form the backbone of our culture, and naturally inform the way every organisation with any semblance of cultural process or practice can proceed.

We need to respectfully give back some tenure to those who have hung on in our institutions and whose humanity has been stretched beyond endurance. And give those coming into positions of cultural responsibility something to look forward to, to plan for.

## **Reaching the Audience**

This is the job of specialists, and should not be delegated to artists, who's task has been stretched so far beyond the practice of their particular art form over the past twenty years.

I think it would be great if the people studying the arts were encouraged to do so with a number of different options, and could work together developing their understandings eg practising artist with artists management. The relationships that develop would underpin a substantially stronger cultural fabric.

Hopefully you are inundated by submissions like this, many much more articulate than mine. Should you want any further detail on anything I have said, or might say, please feel free to contact me. I understand the duration of my creative practice in itself is a thing of value! My phone number is [REDACTED].