

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: As an individual

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

The indigenous should be fully and widely supported. Missions should be legislated to prevent counterfeiting in order to protect the industry.

A Place for Every Story

The importance of regional and smaller organisations needs to be carefully considered. It is well known that artistic and art-based endeavours support Community and general well being of participants. Apart from return on dollars invested for more than adequate returns, artistic endeavours support better mental health of individuals and the community. The accumulated evidence for this is clear.

Community funding embedded in policy is necessary for continuing and supporting the well being and continuation of arts and cultural programs.

The Centrality of the Artist

It is noted that over the last few years university and other educational facilities have abandoned teaching of the arts in levels necessary to support the industry in future. Arts programs in schools are diminished. Single artists struggle for continued employment and supports to achieve even modest ambition. Highly trained and highly creative individuals often drop out of the industry through lack of support.

Emphasis needs to be given to cultural activities and organisations beyond the “high end of town”.

Strong Institutions

See above.

Reaching the Audience

Many grants for the arts do not support infrastructure. For small organisations managing to support their infrastructure is a constant battle. Without infrastructure report it is very difficult for smaller organisations to attract sustaining audiences. Policy should include recommendations that grants support infrastructure for organisation and project funding.

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars is important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:

A great deal of my personal experience with small organisations and the arts rests on voluntarily supporting The Dax Centre and The Cunningham Dax Collection (CDC). The CDC is a body of 16,000 works created by people with experience of mental illness or psychological trauma. The CDC is well one of four such collections in the world and is heritage-listed. (The only heritage-listed collection in Australia, we believe.) The use of the CDC represents a unique tool for educating people of all walks of life about the experience of mental illness. The education programs promote understanding and empathy with those who have been affected and thus, can be used as a preventative measure against much mental ill health. The recognition of such bodies of works would be of advantage to Australians and assist in promoting their mental well being.

The upkeep of significant collections is expensive and complicated yet support in policy with funding is available. Again return on investment is high.

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

My personal submission is made after working with arts based, not-for-profit organisations for over twenty years. The creative industries return in excess of any dollars invested.

Much of the support for creative industries rests on volunteer effort. Volunteer numbers have dropped off significantly against the backdrop of steadily decreasing financial support to arts organisations.

Perhaps worst of all, there has been a policy vacuum at the federal level to support the worth, value and financial merit of the arts and cultural organisations for many years.

New policy must lead Australians to support the creative organisations and cultural activities. Educational institutions for the arts must be expanded and supported. The cutting of funding to the arts has created an abysmal situation for many organisations and artists to the detriment of Australians.

The developing policy should also consider the effect of excessive use of digital/social media is having on thwarting cultural activities and development – especially in children. This is not to say that promotion of the arts and connection with arts organisations through digital means is not highly valuable.