

National Cultural Policy Submission

ILBIJERRI Theatre Company

Submitted: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation; On behalf of an arts peak body; As an artist

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:

First Nations

Cultural Sovereignty and Self-determination

I applaud the focus on First Peoples first. Central to this, is recognition of the **sovereignty**, and the **self-determination** of the First Peoples of Australia across all aspects of cultural activity including dedicated funding streams, dedicated education and training organisations, touring and engagement policies, and evaluation.

There needs to be a recognition of the chasm of difference between Eurocentric arts practice and hierarchical sector structure and approach, versus First Peoples methodology which is founded on Cultural Protocols of reciprocity and collaboration, and grounded in Country, Community and Culture. First Peoples performance is a continuation of Culture and Ceremony and gives full respect to elders and story holders across the diversity of First Peoples communities. Deep listening, consultation, consent and consensus are central to the approach. Trust, and **truth-telling** are integral.

Cultural sovereignty and self-determination is therefore critical for First Peoples to be able thrive within the broader Australian cultural ecology.

Unique Contribution

There needs to be recognition of the special place of First People arts and cultural practice within the Australian cultural landscape. This practice showcases the living, evolving culture of one of the oldest cultures on earth, **unique** to Australia. There is an increasing, and currently unmet, interest in this work from audiences nationally and internationally.

First Peoples art works play a key role in advocating for Australia's position internationally as a progressive, open, and innovative country, with a strong standing on human rights. They also play a pivotal role in truth-telling and Makarrata at home.

Funding

Recognition of the value of this work needs to be seen in **dedicated funding** streams which are at least comparable to the younger Eurocentric heritage artforms such Opera and ballet.

There are still very few National Performing Arts Partnership Framework funded First Peoples arts organisations, and despite their deeply invested process taking substantially more time and financial resources to undertake than Western methodologies, none of them come close to receiving **comparable funding**.

Opera Australia receive \$22,424,700, Sydney Symphony Orchestra receive \$12,173,505, while the largest funded First Peoples company, Bangara, only receive \$6,400,876.

Current funding clearly values arts practices which represent the belief system, philosophy and ethical values of the colonising Western Christian culture over the cultural practices that are embedded in, and evolved from this landscape, and which are unique to Australia.

Policy

Despite the sector's best intentions, interacting with non-First Peoples organisations is fraught and rarely **culturally safe**.

- An enforceable, sector wide cultural protocol for non-First Peoples training institutions, companies, festivals, and presenters needs to be developed and implemented to provide guidance on creating culturally safe environments for First People Artists and companies.
- Adherence to cultural protocols, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property management and community consultation should be an explicit and eligible expense in project grant budgets.
- Adherence to these protocols should be a requirement of all funding agreements.

Education and Training

The inability of national education organisations to provide a culturally safe environment means that First Peoples performing arts organisations carry the burden of advocacy and training alongside community consultation and arts production.

- Until dedicated, self-determined First Peoples training organisations can be established, First Nations performing arts organisation need to be strengthened to deliver the critical role of incubating early-career talent and emerging companies.
- Develop a First Peoples Performing Arts Skills & Workforce Capacity Building Plan for the next decade and beyond.
- Develop a Pilot program to identify and develop regionally based, and on Country, First Peoples producers and presenters.
- Create pathways and resources (including bridging funding) to prepare emerging companies for multi-year funding.