

# National Cultural Policy Submission

**Peter Vadiveloo**

Submitted: As an artist

**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**

This is an important pillar. First Nations voices have been crushed and silenced for most of the past 200 years – it is imperative they are given the support, encouragement, structure and funding to be heard.

## **A Place for Every Story**

Diversity is also an important pillar. In our country, for the past 200 years the voices heard are mostly those of males with white skin. Other voices have not only not been heard, but have been actively silenced, actively excluded, or systemically excluded (systemic racism/sexism), eg, people with brown skin, First Nations people, people of non-anglo background, women, people with disabilities.

So, support for the arts must target these under-represented groups.

## **The Centrality of the Artist**

People love the arts. Art gives life a soul.

If this is the case, then we need strong support for those who make art – the artists!

There is such little support for artists it is soul-destroying.

## **Strong Institutions**

Artists can benefit greatly from a career structure, and institutions can help with that.

## **Reaching the Audience**

There is so much great art out there, but much of it never gets presented to the public due to lack of enough appropriate avenues, such as music venues, art galleries, theatres, TV programs, radio programs.

**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:**

## **A Place for Every Story**

As a culturally diverse artist (musician) with brown skin, I am often very aware that I am often the only such artist on stages I perform upon; the vast majority of musicians on stage have white skin. I think there is a structural, passive racism at play such that venues/bookers book artists that look like them.

The people on our stages and on our TV screens are NOT the same mix of ethnicities as one sees when going to the average shopping centre in Australia. Therefore, ethnic/racial discrimination is alive and well in the arts.

## **The Centrality of the Artist**

I am a singer-songwriter who writes original songs about topical social issues.

Even though I spend most of my working week on my career as a singer-songwriter, I cannot survive on my musician income.

Most artists cannot survive on the proceeds of their art, therefore the government MUST step in. Otherwise artists will stop being artists and just take on mainstream jobs to pay the bills. Every time this happens, Australia loses an artist, and art; and the art that was lost may well be art that might have helped shape our nation.

I ask that the government provide a basic income (like the dole) for artists. I understand France does something like this. Then artists can afford to be artists, and in that way hopefully enrich the lives of all Australians.

For musicians, the government must either financially support artists so that they can play at venues for low or no fee, OR the government must support the venues such that they pay artists properly, eg \$250 minimum fee proposed by the Musicians Australia union.

If a small venue wants to book a 4-piece band, they then have to pay \$1000. But lots of small venues do not make enough to pay that. So, the government should step in to support venues so they can book original Australian bands/musicians (not covers bands!).

Alternatively, as mentioned, the government could directly pay artists so they can survive, in which case they would not be so dependent upon venues paying a minimum \$250.

I prefer the latter approach as the money goes straight to the artist without any possibility of it being 'diluted out' via venues.

### **Reaching the Audience**

In order to reach a greater audience, I need more venues to play at, and that those venues pay a proper fee, eg the \$250 minimum proposed by the Musicians Australia union.

There are too few venues booking original musicians and paying them properly.

Similarly, we need more TV and radio stations playing original music by Australian artists. This will increase an artist's fan base.