

# National Cultural Policy Submission

## Moreland City Council

Submitted: On behalf of government or government body

Moreland City Council is situated in Melbourne's North and is recognised for as a creative hub for Melbourne due to its significant creative population, festivals of all scales, visual arts spaces and design studios. In 2018/2019 over 9,000 residents worked in the creative and cultural industries, representing 8.8% of Moreland's population, significantly higher than the Greater Melbourne average of 6.5%.

At the coalface with community, we are responding to the significant challenges facing our creative community, many of which were in existence pre-COVID, and have now been exacerbated through the ongoing effects of the pandemic on the creative industries. We believe strongly in an all of government approach to supporting our creative industries to grow and thrive into the future.

**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

Moreland has recently instituted a First Nations Creative Consultation group consisting of professional Moreland-based artists, representing multiple artforms, to lead a small First Nations program. There is incredible value for Council and our community in connecting with our local First Nations community in this way, stepping back and being led by their expertise, preferred process and methods and outcomes and effectively decolonising the decision-making processes. Federal support for localised initiatives such as this would enable this type of meaningful, First Nations-led consultation to become much wider spread.

To truly place First Nations arts and culture at the centre of a National Cultural Policy, it is vital that barriers to gaining funding are discussed and dissolved. Our Creative Consultation group is currently advocating for First Nations only arts grants, and Council has a strong commitment to simplifying grant processes to ensure they are not onerous and can be accessible by all artists, but particularly those who are facing additional barriers.

We also believe that leadership and employment pathways into the arts are also supported and encouraged at all levels of government.

### A Place for Every Story

The participation of both diverse artists and audiences in arts and cultural activity is central to Moreland's role as both a supporter and producer. We provide significant support for grass roots and community-centred arts practice, and prioritise work created by First Nations, CALD and LGBTIQ+ artists and communities.

In 2021, A New Approach found in its report 'Sharing Arts and Culture: Initial observations from Australia's 2019-2020 Cultural Funding by Government data' that local governments account for, on average, 15.9% of arts funding. The importance of discovering, supporting, making and funding art at a local level must be emphasised, particularly as a vehicle for promoting diversity and accessibility within the sector.

The removal of barriers to gaining grants at all levels of government is vitally important to ensure the diversity of stories and creators. We would also propose that dissemination of federal grants through local government channels could provide significant benefits to communities across the country as we see and respond to the daily needs of community.

### **The Centrality of the Artist**

It is vital that the National Cultural Policy has a whole of eco-system approach, with the artist at the centre. Investments need to be artist and process led, rather than a continuing focus on outcomes and increases in audience. While these are also important, we regularly hear from artists who need more support for the development of work, connecting with community and building relationships. Fostering these processes will in turn provide better outcomes for both artists through enabling sustainable creative practice and audiences through the creation of deeper, more engaged work.

Supporting artists, arts organisations and the creative industries as the pandemic continues is also vitally important, recognising the severe impact on income generation, sense of purpose and mental health of the sector. Funding at all levels of government also needs to be increased to ensure that the creative industries can rebuild and flourish into the future.

Moreland artists, along with those in many other inner urban Councils are facing the effects of gentrification. Access to affordable spaces within our municipality is rapidly declining leaving artists without development and presentation spaces. Support from all levels of government to address access to arts infrastructure is urgently required, ensuring that artists and audiences across the nation can easily participate in arts and cultural activity.

### **Strong Institutions**

Increased multi-year support to institutions, and most importantly the small-medium sector, is vitally important to artists in Moreland. For many artists, these are the organisations that support the development of their career and provide early to mid-career opportunities for presentation.

Increased support to organisations that wish to be based outside capital city CBDs would benefit more Australians through increasing the diversity of offer, providing opportunities for arts experiences and workplaces close to home, provide significant economic development impact for suburban municipalities.

It is vital to recognise the role that libraries play in the arts and culture sector. The Australia Council for the Arts National Arts Participation Survey 2020 found that 'the majority of Australians' are reading for pleasure, and Australians are increasingly connecting through book and literary events. In addition to providing essential and free access to literacy and literature, public libraries support creative expression and arts-making and attendance through workshops, public programs, access to equipment and Maker Spaces.

### **Reaching the Audience**

Moreland strongly advocates for removing barriers for audiences, through ensuring the venues that we program are accessible, advocating for reduced ticket prices where possible, working across the municipality to ensure that there are localised arts experiences and working with schools, community organisations and community members to ensure inclusivity and accessibility. Federal funding for accessibility upgrades and audience development initiatives would be incredibly beneficial.

Returning to a nationalised arts curriculum in schools would ensure we are working to not only encourage people to consider a career in the arts, but also to build audiences for our creative output in the future.

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

We hope that the new National Cultural Policy will lead and foster cross-government collaboration in infrastructure, policy and delivery and acknowledge and value both the commercial and community wellbeing impacts of cultural activity.