

National Cultural Policy Submission

Anonymous

Submitted: as an artist, 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:

The Centrality of the Artist

I have worked in the Arts for nearly 30 years. Performing Arts is my area expertise, though over the last 7 years I have moved into film, VR and interdisciplinary artforms. I have worked across all levels of the sector – as a freelance artist, with collectives, in small to medium companies, for major orgs and at peak bodies. The positions I have held include Artistic Director, Executive Director, Producer, Manager, Director and Teaching Artist. I have been working as a freelance artist since 2019.

Without Artists, there is no Arts sector. It is absurd that I even need to write that statement but it appears I do; particularly when you consider that Artists are the lowest paid people in the Arts. The current system is so broken that it allocates more funding to infrastructure and buildings than it does to Artists. There are more full time, paid positions in the Arts for managers, accountants, marketing people, fundraisers, administrators etc than there are for Artists. Very few companies have Artists on full time wages, and when Artists are in full time positions, they are so consumed by administration that making Art becomes secondary. This is particularly true for theatre companies and galleries. Why? Why aren't all funded companies mandated to hire Artists in full time roles as Artists?

The majority of Artists live on or below the poverty line. We are one of the most casualised, project based workforces in the country. Job and financial security is mostly non-existent. Under previous regulations, we often didn't earn enough to be paid super, so long term security is a major concern. Recent changes to super will definitely help the next generation, but it is too little, too late for mid to late career Artists like myself who simply do not have enough super for later in life.

Imagine the incredible work that would emerge if Artists had financial and job security. Full time salaries and/or a living wage are tangible ways to change the system and build a more sustainable, rich sector.

Artists are dreamers and visionaries. We offer new ways of seeing, provoke discussion, and bring about change in the world. As we move into the post pandemic world, there is real opportunity to better support Artists and build a more creative, inclusive nation. The Cultural Policy must champion Artists. It must recognise the importance of our work to the sector and the broader community. Because without Artists there is no Arts sector.

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

First Nations first. There is no other way to say it. The heart and soul of the Cultural Policy, and the country, has to be Australia's First People.

A Place for Every Story

Inclusion and diversity is central to my practice. I strongly believe in the importance of creating space for people who do not have a voice on our mainstages... and subsequently in our wider community. Telling stories is fundamental to my practice and I love finding ways to bring exciting, new stories to new audiences.

The Centrality of the Artist

First Nations First. Artists second. Everything else flows from these two pillars.

Strong Institutions

It is important that our cultural institutions and companies are strong and well supported. I absolutely recognise how vital strong institutions are. I also believe however that Institutions would be stronger if they had full time positions for Artists.

Reaching the Audience

There is a perception that people would rather go to the footy than the theatre but it is simply wrong. The data has shown time and time again that Australians spend more money on cultural events than on all the footy codes combined. Let's celebrate that. Let's acknowledge how much we love the Arts and let's talk about how we can continue to grow, develop and support our audiences.

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

As we move into the post pandemic world, there is real opportunity to build a better, more sustainable and more inclusive Arts sector. I hope the Cultural Policy can be pathway to a better future by offer tangible solutions to the issues the Arts face AND with a truly wonderful vision for the Arts and Cultural industries. Be brave. Be bold.