

FutureNow.

FutureNow submission on the proposed National Cultural Policy

About FutureNow

FutureNow is the West Australian industry skills advisory body for the creative, leisure and technology sectors www.futurenow.org.au. It is a not-for-profit organisation whose purpose is to provide independent, industry informed advice to influence workforce development solutions across its sectors. FutureNow was originally established in 1990 as the West Australian Arts Industry Training Council. In subsequent years sport, recreation, racing, tourism, hospitality, visual communication and technology were added to its coverage. FutureNow's broad and diverse cross sectoral remit provides underpinning contextual knowledge of issues within the Australian workforce including the impact of evolving work typologies and emerging occupations and the skills required to support them.

Creative industries representation

The creative disciplines that FutureNow engages with include visual arts and craft, the performing arts, screen and media, writing and publishing, creative technologies, the galleries, libraries and museums sector and design. FutureNow's CEO has been a member (since 2016) of the National Industry Reference Committee for the Creative Arts and Culture (CUA) training package and was the National President of the Design Institute of Australia (DIA) from 2014-17. Industry Reference Committees (IRCs) are the formal channel for considering industry skills requirements in the development and review of the training packages which form the basis of Vocational education programs. The DIA is a peak body that amongst other activities provides strategic workforce development programs for its membership.

It is within the context of workforce development that this submission refers to the National cultural policy pillars of *'the centrality of the artist'* which is addressed through comment about the creative industries workforce and *'strong institutions'* which are seen through the lens of Higher and Vocational education and training institutions.

The creative workforce, current and future capacity

This submission supports capacity building for a sector that has been significantly impacted by the current historic level of public and private under investment in Australia's creative life. For the purpose of this submission the creative workforce is taken to include specialist creative practitioners and generators of creative projects, embedded creatives who work across other sectors and the critically important support workers who perform technical and administrative functions. It could logically also extend to the peak bodies who provide professional development and mentoring programs and to creative industries boards who require specific skills and knowledge to support both large and small arts organisations.

Prior to the COVID19 pandemic creative practitioners were struggling to survive and operate in the context of contracted government funding and intense competition for limited philanthropic support.

Equal recognition of artistic working models and strategic workforce planning.

The pandemic revealed the vulnerability of a sector where work is often, by its nature, project driven, professional freelance practitioners who generate and implement new work. The insecurity of freelance working models, which was amplified by the *Jobkeeper* scheme drives reactive, short term survival business practices and puts at risk any opportunity for strategic workforce planning. FutureNow argues that Australia has an opportunity to develop a cultural policy that elevates *long term*, intergenerational considerations of the current and future needs of its highly skilled creative workforce whether they operate within metropolitan or regional Australia.

Creative peak bodies identify and anticipate emerging occupations, workforce trends and business and audience engagement models. They are frequently volunteer based organisations that support and nurture creative activity and informal learning with limited resources. Peak bodies would benefit from investment that allowed them to develop discipline specific strategic workforce plans that include attraction, education and training, ongoing professional development and succession planning. This could include reference to the range of current or future roles that exist over a working life including specialist, support or embedded creative occupations.

Financial policy settings

In a sector where robust human capital is both the essence of creativity and the predictor of success there need to be long term investment models and partnerships that recognise the validity of the work typologies that comprise creative arts practice rather than discriminating against them.

FutureNow endorses the position put by the Media Entertainment Arts Alliance (MEAA) and others that argue for a more sophisticated way of measuring the value of Australia's artistic output beyond its economic contribution. The positive contribution made to social cohesion and the cultural landscape is frequently cited but not always backed up at a political and public investment level. It follows that there is an opportunity for a new cultural policy to consider policies that positively assist practitioners and their organisations and institutions.

FutureNow supports the initiatives put forward by various arts bodies including exploration of a universal basic income, superannuation reform, tax exemptions for fellowships and scholarships and the reclassification of ANSCO criteria so that arts practice is recognised as a professional activity by agencies such as Centrelink. FutureNow encourages protection of copyright in the form of the unique expression of an artist's ideas as the foundation of the creative economy and a potential form of income generation.

Digital transformation and innovation

Australia's creative workforce are contributing to its digital transformation both conceptually and through the various digital modes of expression which are increasingly driving cultural production and consumption. There is an opportunity for Australia's cultural policy to prioritise investment that accelerates digital capacity within the creative workforce thus contributing to broader social and economic innovation. Barriers to digital participation whether they derive from skills deficit, demography or geographical factors need to be addressed to enable this potential to be realised.

Strong institutions, education and training.

FutureNow argues that the capacity of Australia's creative workforce derives from rigorous professional education and training. This requires an investment in creative educators, relevant curriculum, infrastructure and critically, the provision of adequate time for learners at all levels to learn, experiment, make mistakes practice and rehearse. The arts education system needs to reflect the diversity of Australia's community and be accessible to the wide range of young people who are drawn to creative occupations. Ideally creative education and training should be delivered in a broad cross sectoral way and foster divergent thinking through interaction with science, the humanities, technology, manufacturing, business and construction. The University sector which has been so seriously impacted by the pandemic is critical to the research capacity of the creative sector and also frequently provides sessional lecturing work to practicing creative practitioners.

A linear pathway to a defined occupation is not always the measure of a successful creative education. In addition to imagination, creative problem solving, and strong technical skills graduates need education in professional practice and entrepreneurship to negotiate the complexity of a 'portfolio' career.

There is an opportunity for a National cultural policy to repatriate creative education funding in both the Vocational and Higher Education sectors and remove barriers to participation through funding policies for course fees and student loan schemes. There is also an opportunity to reverse Ministerial discretion over research funding grant decisions.

Vocational Education and Training (VET), Creative Arts and Culture (CUA) training package.

The VET sector has a current, well designed industry informed training package which is the cornerstone for creative teaching in vocational settings. It has been developed over many years and is a thoughtful document that balances creative, conceptual content with applied technical units. Design thinking, professional practice, digital skills and intellectual property are included in the qualifications. The CUA training package is used in secondary schools and public and private training institutions. Its qualifications provide the basis for a range of creative traineeships.

Long term development and review arrangements for the training package are unclear with the introduction of industry cluster models in January 2023. There is disquiet about the lack of detail for representation of creative sector in an industry cluster that will include retail, personal services, floristry, tourism, hospitality, sport and recreation. FutureNow recommends that the National cultural policy ensures that the CUA training package continue to be maintained with sufficient sector representation.

Certificate IV qualifications and VET student loans.

Vocational student loans do not currently extend to Certificate IV qualifications. These foundational level qualifications form the basis of creative and technical skills development to an Advanced Diploma or industry level outcome. This situation is a barrier to participation for many students and to training providers.

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