

## **Submission to the National Cultural Policy**

June Moorhouse

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the thinking about the National Cultural Policy. I attended the Town Hall meeting with Minister Burke in Perth and am familiar with the previous policies developed under both the Keating and Rudd Governments.

I have worked in the arts for over 40 years, having been attracted to the new wave of community arts that emerged in Australia in the 1970's. I grew up in a war service home in a quiet suburb of Perth where access to the arts was limited but the encouragement of our mother supported my sister and I to both enjoy the elements we could access. Reading, poetry, drawing and backyard theatre events were ever present and when I was 9, a great effort was made to provide a piano for me to learn to play because I so wanted to.

It's not an unusual story but in part explains why I feel so strongly about creative expression as a cornerstone of human experience, of community life and of a thriving national culture.

From those beginnings and with numerous twists and turns along the way, I have sustained a working life in the arts through those years, working across all art forms as a producer, animateur, senior manager and consultant. I've managed small to medium companies, state companies, worked in local government, created festivals, national conferences and events. It's been a rich, varied and hugely rewarding creative career surrounded by fellow travellers from all walks of life, who shared a passion for using the arts as a way of sharing stories, building connections between people and strengthening individuals and communities along the way.

The arts has given me a chance to dream big, to step out into a bigger world than the one that I known growing up. It's taken me on a life-long journey of self-discovery, learning with and alongside others how to work together, to listen, to lead, to step back, to encourage and all the time to contribute to creating a better life for myself and for those around me.

I can't imagine life without the arts. I can't imagine the worker I would have been in any other arena, or the mother I would have been to two creative souls, the grandmother I now am to two more, or the friend, neighbour and citizen that I have been throughout my life. I can't imagine how I would have bounced back without the arts when serious illness, marriage breakdown, grief, financial distress threatened my resilience. I can't imagine what pleasures I would find in reflecting on my life or going slower in older age if not for the continuing curiosity and creativity that keeps me engaged, connected and delighted by life each day, with many creative companions from so many different backgrounds and experiences, ages and interests.

Because I've worked in the arts, I've frequently earned less than colleagues in comparable positions in other sectors. I retire with minimal superannuation although I am very fortunate to own my own home. I have been accepted for a Commonwealth pension and supplement that with occasional consulting work. I continue to volunteer on arts boards, including the WA Chamber for Arts and Culture and to spend time with younger colleagues who value me as a sounding board as they navigate an increasingly difficult environment.

I know you will receive many submissions that provide the statistics and reports that substantiate the impact and value of the arts, both socially and economically. You will receive many requests to increase investment in the arts, to revitalise and rework the Australia Council and once again enshrine the principle of arm's length funding. To develop a broad cross-government framework that embeds the arts into all areas of policy where it can provide so much power.

I have chosen to offer a personal perspective of how the arts has made my life so rich and rewarding, both as an individual and as a worker; what it has contributed to every facet of my life, and how hard I have worked towards an Australia where this breadth of opportunity and trust in my own creative expression is available to all.

I support the five pillars of the framework. I was inspired by the Minister's sophisticated thinking as he spoke about the development of the policy. I thought about the years that I have watched (from 'inside' and outside the national sector) Western Australia be left out of debate and opportunities, regional communities in need of greater services, the remarkable rise and rise of First Nations truth telling through extraordinary art and the generosity of that sharing, the growing rhetoric of diversity and the challenges of achieving it.

I know all these things will be in the mix, plus many more vital factors.

My message is about how the arts offers transformation, to a single life, to a community, to a people and to Australia. I will honour any Government that can carry that forward to realise a better future for this nation.

Regards  
June Moorhouse



NOTE: My last permanent role, completed at the end of 2021, was six years as co-CEO of [Community Arts Network](#). This organisation represents so much of what I have been committed to for so many years and what I am talking about here.