

National Cultural Policy Submission

Bakehouse Studios

Submitted: On behalf of a for-profit arts business

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:

A Place for Every Story

Challenge:

Like many Artist-built and led spaces, we set up in an old building, (in our case well over 100 years old) and had to retrofit for our practice, accessibility for artists and audiences living with disability has been an obstacle to their participation. Although we were fundraising before the pandemic for major infrastructure works ie a lift to our first floor, the lockdowns exhausted our funds.

Accessibility should be for all, without support for smaller organizations and artist led spaces to retrofit where possible, accessibility will become the domain of major performing art centres and smaller, unique and intimate experiences will be lost to diverse communities of mixed ability.

Opportunity:

- Funding rounds to support accessibility audits and infrastructure retrofit

The Centrality of the Artist

Challenge:

The attrition of artists from the sector due to financial hardship, job insecurity, well-being and mental health challenges has been severely impacted by the pandemic and poses a devastating setback to our National Identity, storytelling and the music ecology.

Opportunity:

- By providing stability for artists, the govt has an opportunity to underpin the entire sector
- Centrelink and job provider status for artists needs an overhaul, redefine 'Artist' as a job
- 'Artist' to appear in drop down menus on govt forms, applications, Census and the ABS
- Partner with financial institutions to assist artists in accessing basic loans for business and housing, destigmatize artists as sole traders in dealings with banks
- Stable affordable housing for Artists as key workers
- Superannuation as a basic right for artists
- Partner with studios and purchase blocks of time to support more vulnerable artists in their immediate practice (please see our Women's/GNC bursary program)
- Encourage fellowships that don't require outcomes and provide life-changing opportunities
- More quick response grant funding

Strong Institutions

Challenge:

Traditional models of music performance have been tied to alcohol sales and ‘bums on seats’, sometimes resulting in poor community and safety outcomes. The pandemic brought out the flaws in a system that wasn’t always beneficial to the artist and close audience proximity posed a Covid risk

Opportunity:

- Create safer workplaces for artists by ‘decoupling’ events from alcohol sales, take artists out of harm’s way by favouring and funding gigs and initiatives that are alcohol free
- Encourage community all ages gigs
- Take the teachings and data from the pandemic to improve airflow and venue safety

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

- We support First Nations First, echoing and deferring to the wisdom of First Nation’s Elders and Orgs in our sector
- We support Self-determined, First Nations led policy and stand alone funding.
- We have a close relationship with the Archie Roach Foundation, The Barpiridhila Foundation and Songlines, the impact of the pandemic saw these treasured orgs redirect resources to directly support artists. Momentum was lost for our proposed joint programs, creating a buffer for these orgs will cushion them from future unexpected events and fallout from then current pandemic.

The Centrality of the Artist

- Bakehouse is dependent on the health and strength of artists.
- Nearly all our income is derived directly from artists and their practice
- During the lockdowns, artists left their practice and went into survival mode, grieved the loss of their community, their access to the artform and career interruptions, they were the first to experience hardship. The loudest voices and those with the most traditional power in the music sector also went into survival and fight mode, unfortunately, this not only drowned out strong advocacy for an exhausted artistic community, but made sure that the majority of relief funding went to organizations first above individual or independent artists. Trade associations, venue collectives, NGO’s, commercial players, and relatively more powerful groups made strong and compelling arguments for their own survival and assumed trickle down to artists if successful. We believe, this skewed the balance of the music ecosystem and artists were left with very little funding both federally and on state levels.

- As a key supply and pipeline organization that primarily exists for content creation and development of musicians and other artists, we urge the govt to consider the impact of the pandemic on artists their professional and emotional well-being and quarantined funding for individual and independent artists.

Strong Institutions

- As a place-based institution, our strength and longevity relies on the artistic eco-system, however, the pandemic amplified how beholden we were to our landlords, local councils, heritage and planning.
- A scheme that partners with state and local govt to buy back cultural institutions from private ownership could ensure much loved venues and studios, community halls and other spaces survive for future generations.