

Next Wave,

NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY SUBMISSION ON BEHALF OF NEXT WAVE FESTIVALS INC. TRADING AS NEXT WAVE

On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation

About Next Wave

Next Wave is an engine room for art making and experimentation, dreaming and doing, exchange and connection. We support artists from across this continent, amplifying ambitious ideas, experimental practice and critical storytelling that reflects the zeitgeist of our times. We present, advocate, develop and collaborate.

From a strong home-base in Melbourne at the Brunswick Mechanics, we are looking to outer-metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, and across the continent. We prioritise processes that start with elders, community and place.

Founded in 1985, we continue to support emerging artists through programs like Kickstart. We are building an intergenerational focus through an Artistic Directorate of experienced practitioners and commissions for mid-career artists. We foreground a collegiate approach, engaging artists as self-determined and equal partners, developing projects on terms that best serve each work.

Next Wave facilitates artists and their arts practices through relationship building and ideas exchange, creative and skill development, and the resources to support the research and presentation of work – across disciplines, art forms and generations.

Next Wave's values of Justice, Friendship and Care inform our activities. Every aspect of the organisation – including programming, partnerships, funding, curation, staffing, communications, and relationship-building – are guided by, grounded in, and expressions of, our values.

First Nations First

We endorse the government's intention to implement the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full – Voice, Treaty, Truth – from which will guide the nation's approach towards Justice and Truth-telling, and in which First Nations people and culture will be prioritised.

Self-determined First Nations led approaches that support and strengthen artists, organisations, communities and cultural practice must be upheld. This means investing in the capacity development of First Nations artists, organisations and practice through:

- Funded First Nations-led education, training, mentorship and skills development programs to support First Nations employment and leadership pathways
- Dedicated First Nations commissioning funds which includes the costs of cultural processes

Participation

A Place for Every Story Reaching the Audience

Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

- Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
- Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

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Nothing about us without us; We uphold self-determined approaches that centre the visions, aspirations and needs of all Australians – which must reflect the multiplicity and plurality of lived and cultural experiences. This is so that we practice with cultural integrity – by respecting and honouring varied cultural practices, complex stories, positionality, and connection to country, context and place, collaborating in ways that are non-extractive and non-appropriative.

We want to see the valuing of rigorous community engaged and placed based practices through resourcing the following:

- incentives for cross-sector organisations and artists to collaborate and extend opportunities beyond metropolitan areas to suburban, regional and rural communities nationally and internationally
- sophisticated digital strategy and infrastructure to facilitate connectivity and access to participation for regional and international engagement
- pathways to community participation, supporting the intersections between audience, amateur, community and professional artists and arts workers

Alongside these, there must be renewed expectations around cultural competency and safety, and commitments to genuine representation across all levels of the sector, especially in areas of governance and leadership.

Young people must be centred; the future of the arts and cultural sector is only as healthy as the young people of today. We want to see dedicated strategies that prioritises:

- creative programs that actively nurture the social wellbeing and connectedness amongst young people
- creative arts in education so that it facilitates early adoption and pathways towards community participation

The majority population of Australians as reflected in the recent census have cultural and/or familial ties internationally; global exchange especially with the Asia-Pacific region and collaboration must be fostered and strengthened.

A Robust Cultural Sector

The Centrality of the Artist Strong Institutions

The National Cultural Policy must uphold the dignity of the artist and the arts worker, value their expertise and labour and honour their contribution to the workforce.

Fairer wage is of paramount importance:

- We call for the arts to be recognised as a profession by government, including by Centrelink, and that Centrelink and the ATO harmonise income averaging arrangements.
- There is also an opportunity to encourage employers to put artists onto payroll instead of contracting them, as this ensures artists receive superannuation and are covered under WorkCover. However, organisations must be adequately resourced in order for this to be viable.
- Benchmarking of competitive wages that reflect national workforce industry standards and correspond to the average cost of living

We want to see a strengthening of ecology-wide pathways toward professional development so that people can forge viable careers in the arts. This includes:

- restoring higher education funding and reforms in the Arts and Humanities
- support for sector-driven professional and capacity development programs
- initiatives such as paid apprenticeships that include targeted incentives for regional and remote communities, and supported access to ensure participation from people from lower socio-economic backgrounds

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We support the Australia Council for the Arts, and call for additional investment to rebuild the crucial infrastructure of the arts and cultural sector – through which, we want to see:

- a National Portfolio approach towards investment in organisations of all sizes that unites the sector and streamlines administration
- job creation through an increase in funded organisations
- increase in funding towards arts grants for individuals, including fellowships for mid-career artists in order to facilitate sustained growth in practice

Legislation

A national cultural policy should withstand the swaying interests of individuals or party lines, and yet be responsive to broad long-term cultural changes. We want to see legislation that challenges successive governments to commit to the National Cultural Policy and its subsequent renewals at relevant time periods.

Cross-portfolio Collaboration

The arts and culture are a pillar of society that does not operate in a silo. Within the policy, there must be dynamic mechanisms for cross-portfolio connections and involvement in the development of subsequent frameworks, programs and initiatives.

Experimental Practice and the Advanced Technologies

While the heritage arts and conventional art forms continue to be nourished, experimental practice – and especially in the domain of the advanced technologies – offer a tangible avenue of modelling new ways of being in the world through modes of speculation, intervention and civic participation. The intersections of the arts with science and technology – fields which must also be nurtured and supported - are thrilling frontiers to meet and challenge, but there are significant barriers in access to the technology and the costs involved. Better frameworks for collaboration and a fundamental appetite for innovation as a nation must be supported.

Jamie Lewis
CEO/Executive Director

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