

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: On behalf of many of the attendees at the WA State performing arts conference and arts market, WA Showcase. CircuitWest is a not-for-profit service organisation. It convened a workshop at the conference with all 200 delegates to achieve a broader level response for this research. This submission is a collation of the responses that were most common

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:

First Nations

- First Nations art needs to be a pathway to recognition and respect and provide the opportunity to build a national cultural identity.
- There are concerns that 'touring' work will take the biggest share of the funding.
- First Nations people said they wanted to see consideration for all aspects of arts such as youth programs, discovering language and telling 60,000 years of stories.
- It is important that focus is on First Nations work for all the things it can achieve beyond white venues often inaccessible to many First Nations people.
- First Nations people and not mainstream audiences need to be the focus.
- This requires a First Nation led decision making approach to how this strategy will be implemented

A Place for Every Story

- It is important that the institutions exist to capture cross sector diversity and that the net is cast well beyond capital cities.
- There is a poverty of access for diverse stories and this pillar needs to consider how this place is created and what access looks like.
- State based organisations have tended towards making and touring work. This favours the organisations and artists who understand the process.
- What does the strategic place for 'every story' look like? where people can share their stories? who will be responsible for making this a real focus?
- Currently access to funding and performing spaces are barriers to diverse stories

The Centrality of the Artist

- The word in this overall pillar that stood out and was most controversial was 'support'.
- It was a big conversation for the group to define support. Is this about creative grants, or is this about wages/employment, mental and physical health, and creative spaces.
- All of these factors are badly lacking right now.
- Can we move towards the centrality that is rethinks where we are – major companies funded for the middle classes but artists still living from one contract or work to another
- To achieve this needs a long term wholistic strategy that considers the existing challenges of poverty, poor mental health, lack of opportunities, and a tendency towards supporting people who can complete funding applications.
- Considerations for strategies like
 - a basic living wage
 - more permanency in employment

Strong Institutions

- There was a broadly negative response to some institutions because of the tendency of the biggest investment going to some major companies producing traditional arts forms
- The tradition institutions are also said to had huge investment in non creative' expenditure (the example given was the organisational teams funded during venue shut-downs in COVID despite there being a black hole for artists and audiences.)
- There was a strong need to justify institutions and not simply fund major companies with artforms that can become a kind of middle-class welfare
- There is a need for institutions that are measured on their contribution to a truly accessible performing arts ecology that is available across the country, where diversity and reach are essential measures
- It was considered that this could be led by the state-based Government institution or an NFP but there was a need to transform million-dollar investments from institutions that are subsidised to compete with commercial entertainment to those that are truly committed to a thriving, diverse funded sector
- New institutions need to be representative of all Australians and seeks better pathways for artists and communities.

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

There were two main issues the group raised

How do we manage arts in a disaster, fire, flood, pandemic, climate change emergency, as there has never been a strategy for this and the previous approach, which was to let the industry flounder, was poor. There are many possibilities for consideration such as income support, insurance etc. Short term funding programs, whilst helpful, were not effective and really meant that many in the industry entered a lottery of funding to see if they could get a contract and pay for food. The casual nature of the industry throws up many challenges but there must be a better solution that ensures security for the industry when arts to stop suddenly.

A whole of industry focus is needed. The industry is diverse and requires many people to make it work, such as technical teams, front of house, designers, etc and the last 2 years have seen those parts of the workforce disappear in droves. The industry needs to recover, and this means thought into incomes and training for the huge number of people who make art happen alongside artists and funded companies.