

National Cultural Policy Submission

Name: Collingwood Yards

Submission: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you?

First Nations

Collingwood Yards is located in an inner-city suburb with strong cultural significance for First Nations people. The precinct was founded with a commitment to ensure strong First Nations governance and connection to local Elders and leaders in the community. The tenant mix contains leading First Nations organisations Ilbijerri, Songlines, this mob, Typecast as well as several independent First Nations artists such as Uncle Jack Charles. The precinct has a regular turnover of spaces and has previously hosted additional First Nations led creative organisations and fields enquiries from others as vacancies arise.

We are subsidising our First Nations tenants at our maximum subsidy rate, including one studio entirely without cost. Our experience is that First Nations prospective tenants seek a high rate of subsidy that the financial model of the precinct cannot support. Our recommendation is that there is a scheme to support First Nation creative organisations and artists that both subsidises their rental spaces for creation in the inner-city suburbs, and also adds a layer of programming that supports their autonomous entrepreneurial activity.

We notice in particular a desire for our resident tenants to expand and bring other First Nations creatives into the precinct. A scheme to support First Nations fashion and design has been discussed at length with partners such as Kinaway, Agency and City of Yarra. A program to support First Nations film making has been discussed with Typecast, AFTRS and independent First Nations film makers. A project to support First Nations public art has been discussed with this mob and several studio artists.

There are ample opportunities for Collingwood Yards to serve as a First Nations creative centre of excellence across a range of disciplines and we see an advantage in the concentration of leadership in our tenant mix, that would embed sovereignty into the distribution of resources and ensure good governance and connection to community.

A Place for Every Story

The diversity of our 50 tenants and their associated communities ensures that all stories are contained in the creative production that takes place at Collingwood Yards. There is a broad diversity of story-telling that includes young people based in the regions who work with The Push, refugee and migrant people undertaking degrees in fashion and design at The Social Studio, non-binary film-making collectives working with composite and the broad diversity of studio artists as some examples.

There is an opportunity to build more connection between these groups of story-tellers through resources that stimulate collaboration and projects that support participation and social engagement. Collingwood Yards does not receive programming support, however as a facilitator of collaboration between tenants and their communities, there is great interest in receiving funds to invest in collaborative projects to take place at the precinct.

The Centrality of the Artist

Collingwood Yards is a place for creativity and as such positions the artist at the centre of the activity. The model of cross-subsidy that we are developing, where for profit creative businesses pay just above market rent and thus subsidise not for profit arts organisations and artists is part of our work to create greater sustainability of practice for artists. The cost of studio space is prohibitive for many

artists and many are excluded from practice by their socio-economic backgrounds. We seek to address this through subsidising a free First Nations space and by prioritising artists from diverse cultural and class backgrounds.

An opportunity to support the voice of the artist in national cultural life is to support sustainable practice through investment in spaces for artists to work. Collingwood Yards receives no federal support and could offer an enhanced scheme that secures a greater proportion of the space for individual artists, through subsidy that is additional to for-profit rent payers.

Strong Institutions

Collingwood Yards as a creative precinct sits within an ecology of institutions that support the creative industries. The breadth of practice here means that we connect to institutions of tertiary education, galleries and museums, performing arts venues and arts centres where audiences of all kinds are serviced.

There is an opportunity to strengthen the ecology of creative institutions in this country by ensuring that the pipeline of makers entering into the system remains sufficiently broad and open. This involves supporting grass roots institutions like studio precincts such as Collingwood Yards, that sit close to individuals, small to medium organisations and their audiences.

A program that delivers operational funding to a broad range of institutions across the nation will ensure that diversity, which is the key to sustainability, remains a part of the offer for all audiences and artists.

Reaching the Audience

Collingwood Yards is a precinct with a diversity of shared spaces that are available to tenants and their communities at low cost and low production requirements. This leads to community and artist led presentations that appeal to alternative audiences than those able to travel out of their suburb or purchase tickets.

The opportunity to service audiences where they are, involving people who look and sound like them, with the lowest of barriers to entry is an excellent way to ensure that all audiences participate in the arts.

There is an opportunity to support space providers like Collingwood Yards with programming funds that can be devolved to tenants and communities to ensure grass-roots community led programming of a distinctly different nature to that provided in arts centres, festivals and galleries.

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why.

First Nations

First Nations is at the heart of all we do here at Collingwood Yards. We have a First Nations Reference Group led by a Traditional Owner Board member that ensures autonomy of decision making amongst First Nations tenants and their communities.

A Place for Every Story

As a place governed by our tenants and our surrounding communities we prioritise a diversity of stories here and make space for people of all backgrounds to find their voice and their audience.

The Centrality of the Artist

The model of sustainable creative community that we are developing here is driven by a wish to support arts practice through connection to business, philanthropy and all possible stakeholders.

Strong Institutions

Collingwood Yards sits within an ecology of institutions, feeding creatives and ideas into a pipeline of new work for audiences locally, nationally and internationally.

Reaching the Audience

The galleries, presentation spaces and community partnerships that Collingwood Yards hosts all speak to discreet audiences, that then mingle and meet in our shared spaces. The connection to the wider arts community ensures that the work made here is shown widely across the nation and adds a component of innovation that other more singular creative spaces are not able to stimulate.

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

There is no strategy for connecting our creative precincts to international partners. This feels like a missed opportunity given the range of excellent models available across the nation. A network for international creative precincts that receives policy development support and resources for connection and development would be an excellent addition to the important work of connecting artists and audiences internationally.