

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation, As an artist

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 people have an astonishing cultural history that continues to this day, and the arts of all kinds have huge benefits for mental and physical wellbeing, social engagement and school engagement amongst other things. It's also important to set up and sustain pathways for craft and skills development in the performing arts for First Nations artists including writers, performers, directors, designers and dramaturgs so that our arts companies and institutions can reflect the rich diversity of First Nations experience.

A Place for Every Story

Young Australians have had an incredibly tough time over the last two and a half years with the impact of covid. At the same time, the arts have been devalued in so many ways over the last decade, including being defunded to the point of being endangered. Research is unequivocal that participation in the arts has a huge impact on the wellbeing of young people, and plays a vital role in social and academic success, connection to community, as well as health.

Strong Institutions

Youth Arts companies have been decimated by funding cuts over the last decade, and yet these are the companies which serve the core communities of our young people. What could be more important than providing excellent programs and opportunities in the arts to young people, when they are a societal group under unprecedented pressures and with unprecedented levels of mental ill-health, and when the benefits of the arts are so clear and well-known? We need to urgently strengthen Australian companies that specialise in connecting professional artists and creative practice with young people.

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:

A Place for Every Story

As someone who works with young people and writing in my role as Resident Dramaturg at ATYP (Australian Theatre for Young People), I have seen first hand on countless occasions the benefits that being involved in writing stories (plays) and engaging with these stories and experiences as performers and/or audience has on young people. Our young writers (aged between 18-26) consistently report increased sense of mental health and a sense of self-worth after engaging in our programs. They often describe the experiences as 'transformative'. The stories of young Australians

are ones we should be listening to and valuing as essential – they are simply the foundation of our future.

Strong Institutions

I feel that my work with young writers at ATYP (Australian Theatre for Young People) is essential work – vital because valuing the voices and stories of young people helps create healthy, confident, empathetic individuals who contribute positively to our values and culture as a nation. These young people learn to think creatively, problem solve, work collaboratively and articulate feedback – these skills could not be more important as we face a future of enormous challenges on so many fronts.

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

1. Include “Young People's Engagement with the Arts” as a priority of the National Cultural Plan.
2. Establish an ongoing, dedicated funding stream for Young People's Engagement with the Arts for companies whose core business is young people's engagement, administered by the Australia Council for the Arts
3. Establish targeted, cross-department streams of funding for Young People's Engagement to work with Health and Mental Health, Employment, Youth Justice, Regional Youth and Education – co-managed by the Australia Council
4. Establish Advisory Boards that represent the diversity of young Australians, managed independently, as ongoing standing committees for the Australia Council for the Arts and the Minister for the Arts.