

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Providing a road map for Australia's cultural life into the future provides an opportunity to strengthen and revitalise the arts and cultural ecology at a time of uncertainty and disruption. It recognises the significant role that culture plays in Australia's vitality including in building social well-being, harnessing economic development, fostering environmental sustainability and nurturing cultural creativity.

This is the Commonwealth Government's Policy and, based on consultation and analysis; it should reflect the priorities of the Commonwealth Government in supporting inclusion, resilience and sustainability in arts and cultural activities in all its scope and for all Australians. It should provide a framework for collaboration and cooperation in cultural matters across all spheres of government and with the non-government and business sectors.

This review of the 2013 Policy is a refresh based on Five Pillars or principles identified at that time. The preparation of a national cultural policy will establish the decision making framework for the roadmap, setting out the key priority areas for the next 10 years and beyond.

The following comments in relation to the Five Pillars are provided based on decades of working across the cultural sector as a planner and management consultant to the three tiers of government, to the not for profit cultural sector and the commercial cultural sectors.

Pillar 1: First Nations First

First Nations culture is much more than stories. With more than 75,000 years of cultural knowledge and creative expression to build on, the Policy needs to:

- Reflect resourcing that supports self-determination to strengthen deep connections to place, to community and to cultural identity.
- Connect to the progress of the strategies outlined in the Voice and
- Integrate specific cultural outcomes identified in the Closing the Gap framework.

Pillar 2: A Place for every story

Recognising and celebrating the diversity of Australia as a cultural asset presents opportunities to build a cultural ecosystem where participation in arts and culture is inclusive and accessible to all Australians. Places for participation (online and in person) that result in a diversity of creative stories also foster local economies and community wellbeing. The Policy should

- Support strategies that foster and resource collaboration and cooperation between the three tiers of government including with local government.
- Strengthen local content quotas on Australian radio, broadcast TV and streaming platforms in order to encourage the creation and dissemination of unique Australian stories.

Pillar 3: The Centrality of the artist

Artists and creative practice impact across the creative sector and into the broad Australian economy. Artists are central to our national identity, to our confidence as a nation and to our encouragement of risk, the development of new ideas, innovation and to survival into the future. Yet artists' average incomes are below the poverty line, and as has been obvious during Covid, their day to day survival has been precarious.

Artists and their creative work rely on an interdisciplinary ecosystem of diverse modes of creation, community engagement, distribution, innovation and relationships. A thriving cultural sector includes individual artists, not for profit and commercial organisations and businesses, spaces and places for practice and participation with all working in collaboration and cooperation to enable sustainability into the future.

To achieve resilience and sustainability

- Increasing the level of investment in the individual artist needs to be a top priority
- Research into best practice models that strengthen artists' rights and conditions is a matter of urgency.

Arts education should be recognized as a key aspect of career development as well as lifelong learning, leading to independent living. This should be a key principle of the revised Policy and would include

- Increased resourcing of pathways for education and training in the arts
- Fostering inter - generational training and awareness and competencies in creative literacy skills including digital and visual literacy.

Pillar 4 Strong institutions

A thriving cultural ecology needs more than strong institutions to be sustainable into the future. It needs to be supported by dynamic networks of cultural relationships that recognise and respect independence whilst fostering interdependence and mutual support.

The following strategies would strengthen cultural institutions:

- Establishing a Department of the Arts and Culture as an acknowledged Commonwealth Department with status that encourages intergovernmental influence
- Maintaining the principle of arms-length funding that is based on peer assessment and objective decision making that instils confidence
- Arts grants/funding that is delivered across multi-years in order to establish long term programs rather than short term projects.
- Funding applications that require applicants to demonstrate good governance, transparency and celebration of diversity
- Establishing a new funding program that recognizes the role that public libraries play in building and supporting education, lifelong learning, community cohesion and essential literacies including digital literacy.

The value and benefits of arts and culture to community wellbeing are well documented and the updated Policy should actively require a whole of government approach that embeds arts and culture in policy making and program delivery. It is timely, post pandemic, for this strategy to be enforced in order to realise multiple benefits in e.g. health, education, First Nations, multicultural policy, regional development, environment, foreign affairs etc.

Pillar 5: Reaching the audience

Identifying, responding to and delivering relevant Australian stories via the arts and through cultural development programmes to a diversity of audiences across Australia and internationally, requires an integrated network of productive creative industries. These industries have the potential to leverage significant benefits to individuals, to communities, to business and the economy and to our identity internationally.

Audiences are critical to delivering cultural and economic benefit to the nation but to meet and exceed potential, the following strategies are proposed:

- Increased investment in research and development including cultural impact assessment research
- Increased leverage and resourcing of arts touring,
- Establishing an event disruption insurance scheme
- Increased resourcing of cultural diplomacy including to Asia,
- Increased funds to our cultural broadcasting agencies (ABC, SBS and NITV) and to broadcasting reach to Asia, and

- Support and encouragement for increased collaboration between creative sectors including the commercial and not for profit sectors.

Summary

The forthcoming revised national Cultural Policy provides a timely opportunity to establish a critical policy framework for Commonwealth decisions related to arts and culture. This has the potential to be a driver for positive change in a post-Covid recovery period, especially for the creative sector but for the nation generally. In this way, arts and culture can move in **'from the margins'** to take their place as a 21st century building block for a sustainable future.

