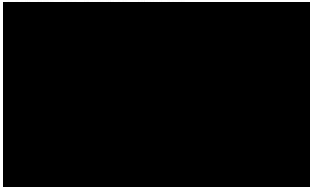




**Celebrating 50 years
of transforming young
lives through creativity**

Kaurna Country
11 Jeffcott Street
North Adelaide
South Australia 5006



National Cultural Policy Submission - August 2022

Prepared by Tricia Walton, Chief Executive, Carclew

Introduction to Carclew:

Carclew supports the development of a National Cultural Policy and commends the government for the initiative. Thank you for committing to genuine consultation and fast implementation.

Carclew is unique in structure, program and scope. It is the largest youth arts organisation in South Australia, offering children and young people outstanding creative experiences and learning across all art forms since 1972. (Yes, we celebrate 50 years this year.) We facilitate creative aspirations for makers and audience, and the critical early years of careers in all art forms. Our support for sustainable careers develops business skills and art making through employment, mentoring, and arts grants for projects and professional development. A philosophy of respect for children and young people as artists informs our work, supporting them to reach their creative and social potential.

Our vision is 'A curious, connected, creative world' and our mission is to 'Transform young lives through creativity'. This, and the following guiding principles, inform our submission to the National Cultural Plan:

1. Cultural expression is a human right.
2. Creative participation is essential to growth and development.
3. Creativity is vital to learning in schools and communities.
4. Investment in creativity benefits industries and careers.
5. Vibrant cultural diversity underpins a healthy inclusive society.

1. First Nations

Challenge:

'Intergenerational knowledge in Aboriginal communities is fundamental to the sustainability of culture, and Elders and children are vital in these cycles of cultural knowledge and relationality.' (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts strategy for South Australia). Further, 51.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia are under 25, (compared to 30.6% for the whole population) (ABS). The challenge is to provide sufficient culturally relevant support in communities to maintain and transfer cultural knowledge.

Opportunity: Support programs for children under instruction from Elders.

Youth arts organisations and their programs are key providers enabling intergenerational spaces and resources for cultural stories and authority to be shared and honoured appropriately.

Challenge:

Recruitment and retention of First Nations staff within the arts and cultural industries.

Opportunity: Support cultural obligations within non-First Nations organisations.

When arts funding prioritises quantifiable KPIs, outputs and deliverables over cultural considerations for First Nations workers, then work environments can be experienced as unwelcoming, over-demanding and inflexible. Arts organisations must be supported to develop organisational ways of working that are enabling not disabling, including flexibility for First Nations workers to meet their art making and cultural responsibilities, obligations and engagement. Adaptable duties, safe places of understanding and reflection, and



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structures that prioritise cultural responsibilities are essential. Incentives in operational funding agreements can require listening and learning, and work conditions that support employment options and pathways, improve retention, and ultimately grow our First Nations workforce.

2. A Place for Every Story

Challenge:

Young people are leading a global conversation about the role of our governments as power brokers in stewarding the future and yet young people are also experiencing the greatest pressures from contemporary life, with mental health impacted by the long tail of the global pandemic and associated uncertainties.

Opportunity: Include young people's engagement with the arts as a priority of the Cultural Policy to mitigate immediate obsolescence of the Policy and establish ongoing standing committees for the Australia Council and the Minister for the Arts that represent the diversity of young Australians.

Early career artists are digital natives, and thus nimble and connected in a way not experienced by other generations. They offer an attention to, and understanding of, individual experience in an increasingly connected but isolating world and have a very sophisticated understanding of the nature of inclusion and exclusion. Their work is often collaborative and challenges genre boundaries. Their voices highlight representation and intersectionality and they lead the way for our society to interrogate identity, leadership, representation and compassion. This National Cultural Plan needs their voices to be central in order to be relevant now and into the future.

Opportunity: Invest in the future by investing in the young and their stories and vision by establishing a dedicated funding stream within the Australia Council for companies whose core business is young people's engagement in the arts.

The United Nations' 'Convention of the Rights of the Child' (Article 31) names the right of every child to participate freely and fully in cultural life and the arts. The devaluing and deconstruction of the youth arts sector over the past 15 years has left a gap that must be filled with policy designed to focus on supporting and hearing the voices of children and young people to enrich, inform and construct the future in our communities and in our art making. This will ensure the arts and cultural industry has skilled and committed workers with an informed audience that is artistically and culturally literate.

3. The Centrality of the Artist

Challenge:

Being an artist is real work and yet financially precarious. Professional artists have chosen a job they love – as do farmers, swimming teachers and real estate salespeople, say. The fact that many people make art for recreation must not undervalue the professionalism of those who have chosen it as a career. The average income of an independent artist is below the poverty line, yet artists generously donate their time and talent to the public good – particularly in times of crisis. Who would ask the dentist who loves their work to do a favour and provide a crown free of charge, or the mechanic to do a free service because they love fixing cars?

Opportunity: The government must lead public discourse to value the artist and recognise that a creative career is work requiring industrial conditions and protection.

Develop policy and invest in tertiary education institutions to retain arts courses. Establish a universal basic income to provide security and dignity for artists (and many others) to contribute in a valued and meaningful way.

Opportunity: Government expenditure must include a budget to employ artists.

This includes infrastructure projects (public art, design, installations) and planning (documenters, facilitators, creative approaches to civic and social consultation). Artists in schools can work in collaboration with professional teachers at primary and secondary level to provide teaching and learning in the arts curriculum (dance, drama, media arts, music, visual arts) and the cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures. For example, recently in South Australia the Department of Innovation and Skills funded contemporary musicians to mentor secondary

music students. Further, artists are currently working alongside teachers in South Australian primary schools to teach non-arts subjects like mathematics.

4. Strong Institutions

Challenge:

Youth arts and the small to medium companies nation-wide, who provide entry-level work for creative practitioners and develop audiences, have suffered under past policy decisions of the Australia Council that prioritised excellence as a principal policy framework for arts funding. Unintended consequences resulted when youth arts and associated community-based activity had to actively compete with professional creative practice and the impact was devastating. In theory, 'excellence' within the broad ecosystem is funded by applying the relevant criteria in context. However, the impact on the youth arts sector proves that is not what has happened. Australia Council funding for member-based organisations that supported networks, advocacy and development within this sector also lost favour. The impact on the Community Arts Networks, Young People and the Arts Australia (YPAA) and Lowdown magazine meant that the most under-resourced sectors least able to advocate for their constituents lost their collective voice and capacity to network. In the 1980s Australia was a leader in youth arts, arts for young audiences, and community arts and cultural development. The past 10 to 20 years have seen this eroded significantly.

A network of small to medium visual arts organisations in the UK called Common Practice (<http://www.commonpractice.org.uk/>), in its report *Size Matters (2011)*, refers to the deferred value produced by small-scale institutions, as they support artists and curators at the beginning of their careers. They show that it is within the small scale arts sector that the values of supporting experimental and often non-commodifiable artistic practice is developed, promoted and sustained.

Opportunity: Invest in a robust small to medium sector and re-establish funding criteria that value the diversity of arts practice, including youth arts

A secure small to medium sector in all art forms is essential in a robust industry providing provide entry-level experience and employment for artists and arts workers on project and casual work between gigs with the major companies and festivals. Without a robust S-M sector, the larger companies struggle to find experienced people at the right time. The youth arts sector invests in experimentation, development of future artists and their practice, and audiences who understand, appreciate and are articulate about art and culture.

Opportunity: Re-establish the Cultural Ministers' Meetings

This strategic round table led by the federal Minister will support cohesive national policy development and oversight.

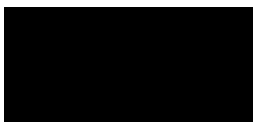
5. Reaching the Audience

Challenge:

More than an audience for audience sake, we need a national population that is culturally and creatively literate for individual and collective wellbeing, and social and moral rigor. A common language that fosters empathy and cohesion is essential in a civil society.

Opportunity: Ensure policy supports engagement of young people as decision makers, participants in, and creators of art. A strong and dynamic youth arts sector is the backbone of a culturally ambitious nation and the development of a National Cultural Policy is a critical opportunity to reposition this lifeblood of the arts and cultural identity of Australia.

Yours sincerely,



Tricia Walton,
Chief Executive, Carclew,