



BACKBONE YOUTH ARTS

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Backbone Youth Arts National Cultural Policy Submission

1. Are you submitting this submission (tick all that apply):

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation
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2. What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you?

Backbone sees each of the 5 Pillars as deeply important, and indeed interconnected. We see the main opportunity in these pillars as: to view them as an ecosystem of goals that form the foundation of a future-focussed arts sector that we are all working towards, rather than siloed ideas. The Pillars and their goals need to work together and inform one another.

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

THE CENTRALITY OF THE ARTIST: The independent arts sector is not a step on the path towards a company role, it is a life-time career for tens of thousands of artists. We refer to Theatre Network Australia's submission, calling for the following:

- We call for the arts to be recognised as a profession by government. This entails changes to what is recognised by Centrelink as 'seeking employment', and the adoption of an annual averaging process for artists' fluctuating income as is done by the ATO. There is also an opportunity to encourage employers to put artists onto payroll instead of contracts, as this ensures artists receive superannuation and are covered under WorkCover. This could be a requirement or a target for funded organisations to meet.
- Long-term, stable funding for independent artists has shown to increase productivity and reduce the desire to set up burdensome incorporations or companies. Creative Victoria's Creative Ventures Program and Creators Fund are relevant models that could be expanded, as are artist fellowships (e.g. Australia Council, Myer Foundation).
- Raise the cap on project grants – projects of scale can be made by independents as much as by companies. This will help artists continue as independents and not be forced to set up as a company, just to access bigger grants.
- Increase the pool of funding available to independent artists through the Australia Council's grants program. Where new funding programs such as RISE become available for individuals to apply to, ensure that the communication about that is crystal clear.

STRONG INSTITUTIONS: The Australian Arts ecosystem needs to be supported from the ground up. We call on the Australian Government to invest in dedicated funding for the independent and small-to-medium arts sector in order to rebuild the crucial infrastructure of the arts and cultural industry. Small-to-medium arts organisations are integral to the stability of the national arts and cultural industry, they are targeted and clear in their visions and goals and are experts at responding directly and quickly to industry needs.

4. What other things would you like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

Backbone sees a glaring oversight within the pillars presented, [Young People's Engagement](#).

Young people are a widely diverse group. By empowering young people through a targeted approach in the National Cultural Policy, we will be enhancing all 5 pillars currently suggested. Moreover, the gap between 'young emerging artist' and 'professional artist' grows wider and wider. [The National Cultural Policy needs to address this by including people 30 and under in their definition of youth](#) to address the ongoing systemic challenges faced by young australians.

Backbone calls for the following to be addressed in the National Cultural Policy:

1. Include "Young People's Engagement" as a priority of the National Cultural Policy

Young people are the most active contributors to the arts in the country. The Australia Council's 2021 report [Towards Equity](#) showed that 40% of young people give time and money to the arts, compared with the national average of 26%. Young people are powerful contributors to their communities, and the arts is a vital function for them to utilise their powerful voices. Young people deserve to see themselves represented and reflected through Australian culture.

According to ANA's report [Next Generation of voters: Young Middle Australians talk Arts, Culture and Creativity](#),

1. Young people see the arts as 'embedded in and inseparable from everyday life', and 'Any approach that treats arts and culture as separate, or 'add-ons' to daily life, will not make sense to this cohort.'
 2. Young people engage with a wide range of arts experiences ' as long as those experiences are accessible and the stories they tell feel relevant.'
 3. Young people are a diverse group within themselves, and they want to see this reflected in their arts and cultural experiences. They believe 'arts and culture help deepen Australians' understanding of different people and perspectives, and also help tell Australia's diverse range of stories to international audiences.'
 4. They understand the importance and power of the Arts in bringing together communities and people, saying 'Arts and culture are community-building tools that help mitigate loneliness and social isolation' and they believe governments play a critical role in supporting the creative industries
 5. They see interaction with the arts from childhood as positive for people's creative thinking abilities in adulthood, however they see the need for the arts to be more effectively funded and embedded into Australian society and institutions such as schools.
- ##### **2. Establish an ongoing funding stream for Young People's Arts and investment in companies whose core business is young people's engagement, to be administered by the Australia Council for the Arts**



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Backbone Youth Arts is a part of a cohort of outstanding organisations built to represent, advocate and create artistic and cultural work with, by and for young people. This network of organisations have been systematically defunded over the past decade or more, impacting young people's employment, training and opportunities to engage in the arts. Backbone endorses the call for an ongoing funding stream for organisations whose core business is young people's engagement in arts and culture. Moreover, with the current generation of young people being the first generation worse off than the generation before them, opportunities for training and employment outside of institutionalised systems such as universities or schools needs to be immediately addressed. Providing targeted funding to organisations who are already doing the work to create meaningful pathways for training and employment will re-energise the entire Arts Sector.

3. Establish a cross-department investment of funding for Young People's engagement and participation in the Arts, guided by the development of a Young People and Culture Framework

A cross-department investment combining Arts, Health, Regional Development, Social Services, Emergency Management and Education has the capacity to deliver outcomes across portfolios. A Young People and Culture Framework would provide the guiding principles, the structure, and the mechanisms to facilitate impactful cross-portfolio collaboration.

Investment in a Young People and Culture Framework would:

- Directly support the creative expression, mental health and resilience of young Australians;
- Deliver programs that strengthen communities and build community cohesion;
- Prioritise and increase access and inclusion for underrepresented and disadvantaged young people;
- Support contractors and small businesses most affected by the COVID shutdown;
- Build community projects that foster confidence and community connection;
- Provide young people an active voice in their community's disaster recovery;
- Generate creative thinkers, arts consumers and audiences from the grass roots.

We believe that a Young People and Culture Framework should be its own pillar. This would be a way to achieve some of the multi-portfolio outcomes needed and allow the arts sector to remember how to be ambitious and think long term.

4. Establish Young People's Advisory Committees that reflect the diversity of young Australians, managed independently, as an ongoing standing committee for the Australia Council for the Arts and the Minister for the Arts.

5. How would you like us to attribute your words?

Organisation: Backbone Youth Arts

