

# National Cultural Policy Submission

**Ciaran Frame**

**Submitted:** 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:**

## **A Place for Every Story**

Australians are proud of a rich cultural history, 60,000 years of continuous First Nations culture, and a society where 27.6 per cent of the population is born overseas. Art gives us the chance to express and share in this Australian story, holding a mirror to our vibrant society and asking new questions of who we are and what we want to see in the future.

Yet, in 2020, Bach, Beethoven, Brahms and Mozart all featured more times in Australia's orchestras than all female composers combined. The same year, orchestras performed 11 composers named Johann, but only 3 First Nations composers (Living Music Report, 2021). Australia's larger cultural institutions are facing a crisis of relevance, raising pressing questions about what it is we want from publicly funded institutions that perpetuate a largely non-Australian canon from centuries past.

We don't need every art form and every place to enable every story, but we do need strong policy that preferences accountability and transparency, creating space for new art to breathe. Points-based systems for content quotas are already implemented in free to air broadcasting and could be built on to implement broader quotas for the arts, with a particular focus on areas such as First Nations' art.

National Performing Arts organisations present a unique opportunity to pilot these content quotas. The multi-year funding these organisations receive could be viewed as a mandate for the production and presentation of homegrown stories, supported by their ability to deliver and report on more complex KPIs.

Strong policy action with content quotas and accountability at its core will send a surge of life into Australian culture, supporting vibrant stories and questions we can all share in, reaching into and reflecting on the lives of all Australians.

## **The Centrality of the Artist**

As an artist who has received government funding, I am privileged to speak to the immense value of time and resources afforded by strong funding programs. However, I often reflect on whether these funding bodies have evolved to preference the "centrality of the artist who writes excellent funding applications" or perhaps the "centrality of the artist who creates financially attractive products".

Increased scrutiny and more complex funding frameworks and arrangements have led to a scenario in which it is largely up to the individual artist to prove their worth and centrality in our cultural

landscape. A similar burden is shared by small-to-medium arts organisations, who centre more work by living artists and reach more audiences (Eltham and Verhoeven, 2020) despite receiving less government funding.

We can build on our strong funding institutions by looking beyond the pages of a grant application to areas like professional development and targeted pathways that build on the work of successful programs like the Arts and Disability funding initiative from the Australia Council for the Arts. By lowering barriers to entry for artists, we can ensure the artist and the work they do remains at the heart of Australian culture.