

# National Cultural Policy Submission

**To Tony Burke – Honorable minister for the arts (at last!)**

We appreciate the opportunity to have an input into the cultural policy and welcome the fact that there is now a government that is taking artists and cultural policy seriously after such a long nine year hiatus under the former government whereby artists' worth was seriously challenged by both the pandemic and the attitude of the Liberals to the arts.

Some of the criticisms and frustrations we have experienced include the short term nature of funding, the way in which grants are procured, the number of hoops required to jump through in order to get them, the staggering difficulty in doing so and the crumbs on offer in most cases, if successful.

**As the situation stands – most of the large grants available are for building/s, infrastructure and the high end arts institutions. Very little funding goes directly to actual artists or the myriad of small arts organizations that produce the bulk of the arts.**

These core groups include the promoters, facilitators, venues, galleries, vectors, propagators, workshops, call them what you will, they all foster engagement by, with, for artists, practitioners and supporters alike. They are nearly all run voluntarily. They are all cash strapped and receive little or no funding.

In Central Victoria – Castlemaine and surrounds - these include the Castlemaine Fringe Festival, Lot 19, Arts Open, The Newstead Arts Hub, Red Shed Arts, C Doc, The Jazz festival, The Newstead Folk Festival, Caspa, Artpuff, The Cascade Gallery, The Edge Gallery, Castlemaine Press, Castlemaine Clay, and Mainfm- among others.

They are all linchpin organizations which generate broad cultural and social outcomes. At the grassroots level, organizations like these are the foundation and incubators of the arts industry.

They create all sorts of community benefits well beyond the services which they provide directly. Economic spin offs for small business, tourism, as well as numerous cultural, educational and health benefits, particularly mental health benefits etc. and are the very reason Central Victoria is considered an arts hub- with all the political cache that it brings to the district and its political representatives .

**One of the major problems the sector faces is the employment opportunities for artists and artist venues.** Many groups would be employing artists directly or indirectly through art projects, concerts, performances etc, if the funding was available. In a cohort that generally struggles financially, opportunities like these are rare. But in communities - such as Mt Alexander Shire which prides itself and indeed sells itself as a cultural heartland, it should not be rare.

But it is not simply a matter of more money being allocated to the arts. **The funding model needs to change.**

**That means long term, sizable grants** which would allow for some stability, longer term planning and the alleviation of the constant turnover of members of volunteer committees due to burnout. The arts, and other community groups for that matter, are not happy being treated like mendicants who should be grateful for a handout. **Arts funding needs to reflect the strength, economic significance and potential of the arts industry**, especially in Central Victoria.

**Funding to directly or indirectly employ artists or applicable positions should be a big part of the available grant monies, particularly for positions such as arts administrators** within these groups, whose employment is crucial to day to day efficient and effective running of such organizations. A large part of their role is to help promote and market the organization and help in securing funding for them. **These positions are essential to enable arts organizations drive towards self sufficiency and long term viability.** Finding and keeping volunteers to do the less glamorous but essential work is extremely difficult, so this vital work is not done and volunteers leave in frustration and projects die on the vine.

**There needs to be a significant redistribution of grants towards grass roots arts funding and not just prioritizing high end art product, be that buildings or institutions.**

**In summary- the artists should get a bigger share of the pie! The process of applying for these grants needs to be kinder, smoother, easier, simpler.** At present they are a minefield, designed specifically to put obstacles in the way of applicants in order to minimize the number applying. They require an elite who have the skills, time and experience to do it (arts administrators for example).

Giving wages to actual creators would also help with the massive housing crisis we face here as many of the people who are staring down the barrel of having to leave, are the very heart and soul of the arts community. They are the people doing it very hard and if they leave they take their creative input with them and we are left all the poorer.

The arts aren't just about bringing tourists to town, although it is a major factor in why Mt Alexander is so attractive as a destination. The arts are not just there to bring money to small business and the accommodation industry – it's about the primary producers- the artists themselves- who are always on the bottom of the ladder when it comes to funding.

So, Minister Burke, if you are keen to see a revolution in the arts – please consider the above and the results will be transformational. The arts community have always been strong supporters of Labor as a progressive party. Now it's time to redress the balance. We promise you the money will be greatly appreciated and the entire community will blossom.

Signed

Suzanne Donisthorpe –  
Mainfm, C Doc, Lot 19, RedShed Arts  
Bob Clutterbuck- RedShed Arts  
Sam Hudson- RedShed arts  
Stephanie Riddle- Mainfm  
Mark Anstey – Lot 19  
Tobias Richardson – Lot 19  
Jane Goodrich- Lot 19  
Jacqueline Brodie Hahns and Doug Falconer –  
Shedshaker brewery and Castlemaine Fringe  
Azzy Jay- Castlemaine Fringe  
Mary Anne Verbene – Castlemaine Documentary Festival ( C Doc)  
Claire Jager – C Doc  
Chris Johnson – Newstead Arts Hub  
Elizabeth Geddes- Graphic designer  
Frank Veldze- Northern Arts Hotel – artist  
Tracey Naughton- artist  
Sir Leslie Thornton – artist  
Zoe Amour – artist  
Carmel Bird – author  
Peter Bodin- musician  
Dr Bridget Haylock – Performer, writer, creative writing academic  
Dale Cox – artist  
Meg Corson – singer and musician  
Lis Johnston – Sculptor  
Dr Bill Sampson – artist  
Elly Varrenti- writer and performer  
Brodie Ellis – artist  
Cameron Robbins- artist  
Melissa Scott artist

Jan Palthorpe- artist

Luca Royal- broadcaster and photographer

Jo Lane- artist and Climarte

Samantha Bews- writer and performer

Michael Woolfe - Arts Open

Dr Helen Bodycomb- artist and Lot 19

Rich Moffat- Mainfm and Groove in the Moo

Jennifer Barnett- artist

Nic Lyons- musician

Lena Mitchell- singer and teacher

Annabel Nowlan – artist

Steve Charman- broadcaster and musician

Dr Jacqueline Millner- Lecturer La Trobe University

Eliza Jane Gilchrist – artist

Eliza Tree- artist

Paloma White – artist

Leonie Van Eyk- film maker

Kavisha Mazzella – musician

Madelaine Hudson – performer

Alex Kelly –artist and film maker

Aimee Chapman – musician and producer