

National Cultural Policy Submission

Wilurarra Creative

Submitted: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation

First Nations, a place for every story, Centrality of culture

Wilurarra Creative works with 16-30 year old Ngaanyatjarra people and their communities, and we are located in one of the most remote places in Australia. Arts and culture is central to existence for Ngaanyatjarra people. In our very remote, First Nations context, there is a tendency for government policies and programs to impose non-Ngaanyatjarra frameworks and ideas, that Ngaanyatjarra people are then expected to assimilate to. Wilurarra Creative advocates for a National Arts & Culture Policy that recognises diversity, lived-experience and cultural authority of First Nations people over their own lands, hearts, minds.

How do we ensure that Ngaanyatjarra knowledge and values are placed at the centre of what arts and culture looks like in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands? What are the real ways that self-determination will be embedded into “Recognise, respect and celebrate the centrality of First Nations cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identities.”? We need to interrogate how we currently centre non-First Nations

For Wilurarra Creative:

Recognition means: Recognising that culture/arts is central to Ngaanyatjarra life – it’s not an optional extra. Taking the time to understand that Ngaanyatjarra people have a unique perspective; and that this perspective is one of great value to other Australians. Recognition that investment in ‘arts & culture’ is a real, tangible investment in Ngaanyatjarra peoples individual and collective identities, community wellbeing, health, cohesion, empowerment, healing and active citizenship. As Ngaanyatjarra cultural leader (and Co-Director of Wilurarra Creative), Brett Jennings, said in 2018: *“Here we are building. We are climbing more and more onto better progress for young people. As you know, if you ever lived in Warburton, there is no suicidal problem with our young folks, because they found their place in Wilurarra.”*

Respect means: not pushing a non-Ngaanyatjarra framework or agenda onto Ngaanyatjarra people. Valuing the ‘ways’ and views of Ngaanyatjarra peoples; including genuinely putting Ngaanyatjarra ideas at the forefront – including Ngaanyatjarra ideas of: what is ‘valuable’; what is ‘arts & culture’; what is culture; and what does ‘success’ look like in a Ngaanyatjarra community context. Respecting that Ngaanyatjarra people, and their arts/culture organisations, know what is right for their own Ngaanyatjarra communities.

Celebrate means: Investment in Ngaanyatjarra people telling their own stories, in their own ways/language. Celebrating the diversity of Ngaanyatjarra voices. Celebrating and valuing contemporary Ngaanyatjarra culture - including younger Ngaanyatjarra artists/cultural leaders.

Strong Institutions

In Wilurarra Creatives very remote community setting, a long-term approach is critical. Under-resourcing, short-term funding, and onerous reporting requirements undermine the value that we are able to deliver to our community. Remote arts/culture organisations are vital, and often gap-fill

for other services that are missing from the community. Eg. On top of arts, design & music programming for Ngaanyatjarra young adults, Wilurarra Creative also provides:

- the only public internet and computers in the community,
- the only post-school age learning,
- engages a large proportion of participants experiencing trauma, violence and/or mental unwellness (as there is no counselling or mental health services in the community). Our closest regional service centre is approx. 1000km from us.

We advocate for longer term organisational funding that values the real role that remote 'arts' organisations play within a community. Perhaps consider an expansion of the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support (IVAIS) program, so that it can fund more arts/culture organisations (like Wilurarra Creative) that do not fit a commercial Aboriginal Art Centre business model?

Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

- Greater access and equity measures for remote, First Nations arts & culture organisations. Especially recognising:
 - the unique environments/culture and challenges faced by remote communities, eg: strong cultural practice, poverty, literacy, health, isolation
 - the significant additional costs in service delivery, travel, accessing arts materials and opportunities in a remote place.
- Consider some form of loading applied to funding for arts/culture in remote/regional areas, based on their remoteness classification. For example: when a house is built in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, builders will apply an 80% loading on top of what that same house would cost to build in a metro area, such as Perth. Consider applying a practical measure like this to help address the current inequity of funding/service to remote First Nations communities.