

National Cultural Policy Submission

Caroline Baum

I am submitting as an artist

The challenges and opportunities that are most relevant to me as The Centrality of the Artist

My main concern is the financial situation of individual artists, particularly writers, many of whom subsist close to the poverty line unless supported by a partner or family.

In an ideal world, in which the government were not carrying such heavy debt, and we were a more culturally enlightened nation that considered art essential rather than an indulgence, I would be arguing in favor of a living wage for artists such as exists in other countries of similar wealth.

However, that is a long term goal and there are more pressing needs that can be relieved with immediate policy resets.

One of the quickest fixes would be to make all prizes, and awards to artists tax free. Sports prizes are tax free, arts prizes are not. The disparity is unjustifiable. While only a small percentage of artists win such awards, it would be a symbolic gesture as well as a practical one. To extend it to all government funded grants to artists would be even more positive and have significant impact.

I am very concerned about the protection and development of Australian screen content. To that end I would like to see the government adopt a scheme similar to the French one where a percentage of box office ticket and sales/rental/subscription revenue for all foreign films/streaming services goes into a fund to create original local content.

Admittedly French films are already better supported by both government and by audiences, so that the base is strong and secure, but again, this would be a real vote of confidence for local industries.

There is a great deal of confusion among artists and organisation about the boundaries between regional and metropolitan when it comes to sources of funding in an area such as the one where I live. Wollongong suffers from not being within the catchment of regional funding because it is considered part of the Sydney basin. Our proximity to Sydney is a handicap to securing necessary funds to grow a vibrant local cultural eco system. This needs a rethink especially as the population post COVID grows in these areas, without being adequately supported by cultural infrastructure and programs.

I would like to see priority given to music education in schools as per the vision of the great music teacher and leader Richard Gill. Music education promotes increased wellbeing way beyond performance, builds confidence, collaborative skills, and is a really meaningful investment in future audiences and artists. If a country like Venezuela can come up with a radical initiative like El Sistema as a social music program, why not adopt it here in a modified form?

Thank you for your attention.

Caroline Baum