

National Cultural Policy Submission

National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE)

Submitted: On behalf of an arts peak body; On behalf of an organisation with arts-components (e.g. community organisation, tourism, venue, health, education etc)

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:

First Nations

NAAE is pleased to see First Nations as the first pillar of the National Cultural Policy.

Arts education provides an opportunity for children and young people (learners), and arts educators, to connect with First Nations artists and artworks and develop an understanding and appreciation of First Nations culture, protocols, and processes.

The National Cultural Policy should invest in First Nations-led education, training, mentorship, and skills development programs to support First Nations employment and representation in the full breadth of arts and arts education jobs, including teaching artists, leadership roles, boards, and First Nations advisory groups.

Australian Curriculum: The Arts (which includes five discrete subjects of Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music, and Visual Arts), and many other Arts curriculums and syllabi include a strong and positive focus on meaningfully and authentically including First Nations content and concepts. To support the implementation and access of authentic learning experiences, appropriate resources must be developed.

There needs to be more skills training programs to support First Nations people to become arts educators and teaching artists. This will have a positive impact in terms of creating culturally safe training and pathways for First Nations practitioners, as well as enriching arts education in Australian schools. In addition, this initiative will also support cultural competency for non-First Nations entering the arts and education industries.

A Place for Every Story

There are identified gaps in opportunities at present for quality arts education to be experienced in all schools, communities, and centres, especially out of major metropolitan centres.

There have been huge cutbacks to arts programs at schools, and at universities, and other training providers. A National Cultural Policy needs to ensure there is a range of pathways for the next generation of artists, arts workers, and arts educators so everyone's story can be told and shared.

This pillar also includes the challenges around geography and access that children, young people, and arts educators face in accessing artists and artworks.

The Centrality of the Artist

The centrality of the artist provides an opportunity for the National Cultural Policy to also consider children, young people, and teachers as artists. Within Australian education, children and young people are viewed as artists, and their teachers as co-artists as they create, present/perform and respond to their own art and the artwork of others.

Artists in schools programs have long provided opportunities for artists to provide vital connections with creative processes, increase the value of the arts, and provide insights for young people about pathways to creative careers.

NAAE advocates that the National Cultural Policy should be extended to include Arts education in early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Strong Institutions

Strong Institutions should also include Australian schools, tertiary education providers, and Arts Education Professional Teacher Associations, Peak Bodies, and Service Organisations.

School Education

Arts education in Australian schools has been devalued and under-resourced, and the National Cultural Policy can contribute to ensuring that Australian students have access to high quality Arts education and Arts experiences at school through the delivery of a rigorous curriculum that supports and resources teachers at all levels and in all arts disciplines.

Universities

Within Initial Teacher Education courses at universities, time allocation to The Arts has been reduced significantly leaving many teachers entering the profession feeling under-prepared to adequately teach The Arts. This is especially true in Primary Teacher Education courses. NAAE advocates for The Arts to be an area of specialisation within Initial Teacher Education for Primary Teaching courses. The National Cultural Policy should also undo the former Commonwealth Government's university fee increase to Creative Arts courses. NAAE calls for an equitable tertiary education system that does not target Humanities and Creative Arts degrees with increased fees on the false basis that this area of study does not lead to employment.

Arts and Cultural Institutions

Many Australian Arts and Cultural Institutions play an important role in the ecology of Arts education through their education and community outreach programs. However, NAAE advocates that increased funding needs to be provided to those institutions that actively support quality education programs and that this should be a KPI for government-funded Arts and Cultural Institutions. The programs these organisations deliver often enrich the learning and teaching, and appreciation and access to The Arts. They provide resources, teacher professional learning programs, and student learning programs that are highly valued by the education sector.

Professional Teaching Associations in The Arts, Peak Bodies, and Service Organisations

The Arts Professional Teaching Associations, Peak Bodies, and Service Organisations play a vital role in the sector and will play a significant role in realising and supporting the implementation of a National Cultural Policy. However, most of these organisations have either been de-funded or never received Commonwealth funding to support their valuable work. NAAE calls on the government to reinstate funding to Peak Bodies and Service Organisations, and extend this funding to Professional Teaching Associations in The Arts, as the Keating Government did as part of Creative Nation.

Reaching the Audience

Too often, children and young people are not considered the audiences of today, but rather the audience of tomorrow. This misconception fails to recognise that children and young people are artists, audience members, and consumers of art products themselves, and they too should have access to arts and cultural experiences that are appropriate to them, their development and learning.

Arts educators play a central role in facilitating this access. Professional Teaching Associations in The Arts develop meaningful relationships between artists and arts organisations with schools and teachers through professional learning programs, conferences, projects and publications. By including children, young people and educators in the National Cultural Policy, the policy will have a stronger alignment with the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts* and other Arts curricula and syllabi across Australia.

Schools often employ artists or teaching artists to collaborate on creative learning programs or to provide workshops and learning experiences for students. There are clear economic benefits to practising artists and arts organisations through the inclusion of Arts Education within the National Cultural Policy as part of a whole-of-government approach.

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:

First Nations

Learning about First Nations artists, artworks, and cultures has been identified as an area of great need and interest across arts education communities. Teachers are keen to learn and implement quality programs that are culturally appropriate and respectful. There is a huge need for professional development, resources, and training in the areas of First Nations content and concepts within Australian schools.

Recommendation:

Funding is allocated to support First Nations artists, arts workers and arts educators to develop arts and cultural education programs to support teaching and learning in a rich, meaningful and culturally appropriate way.

A Place for Every Story

A Place for Every Story is an important pillar of the National Cultural Policy, particularly as a tool for ensuring that art developed by, with, and for children and young people is included in this pillar. As the Minister has suggested, this pillar also indicates the importance of geography and enabling all

Australians, no matter their geographic location and cultural backgrounds, to have access to arts and cultural experiences to tell and share stories that enrich our national culture.

Recommendations:

The policy explicitly acknowledges that art is developed by, with, and for children and young people. Organisations that meet this recommendation should receive additional funding to support this work.

The policy should ensure that access to arts and cultural learning experiences is not deterred by geographic location or cultural or socioeconomic background. The arts should be experienced by all Australians, including children, young people, and educators.

The policy outlines a minimum requirement for Australian content appropriate for children and young people in the media and TV industries, on our stages, and in our galleries and museums.

The Commonwealth Government also allocates specific funding to support youth arts companies, many of which were de-funded by the Australia Council for The Arts. Many of the small to medium arts organisations that lost federal funding are now struggling to rebound following the COVID lockdowns.

The Centrality of the Artist

A National Cultural Policy should support programs that celebrate and enrich arts learning, and acknowledge that children, young people, and arts educators are artists and artmakers.

Recommendations:

The policy ensures increased access (perhaps via a national Teaching Artist Program) to help schools and communities work with artists and teaching artists.

The policy provides opportunities and funding for teacher professional learning programs in The Arts. There is a range of existing teacher professional learning models involving teaching artists working alongside teachers to increase teacher knowledge and confidence in The Arts. An example of this is the National Music Teacher Mentoring Program (established by Richard Gill and implemented through the Australian Youth Orchestra). This program needs to be adequately funded and could be used as a model to create similar programs for the other four arts subjects (Dance, Drama, Media Arts, and Visual Arts),

Strong Institutions

It is imperative that quality arts training programs, courses, and opportunities are accessible and affordable.

Recommendations:

Halt the erosion of arts education training in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and increase curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment course allocation time for The Arts. This includes promoting The Arts as a specialist training area for early childhood and primary education courses to ensure teachers are well equipped to teach at least one Arts subject in depth and are confident in their understanding of the intent of all of The Arts in the Australian Curriculum.

Undo the previous government's fee increase to Creative Arts university courses. We call for an equitable tertiary education system that does not target Creative Arts degrees with increased fees on the false basis that this area of study does not lead to employment.

Recognise and provide training to fill the skills shortages in the Creative Industries, which are not currently represented in the National Skills Commission Skills Priority List 2021 particularly shortages in areas of company, event, and stage management, technical staff and crew plus production and customer services/front of house roles.

Fund Arts Professional Teaching Associations, Peak Bodies, and Service Organisations to help realise the National Cultural Policy and contribute to the ecology of the arts and cultural sector.

Reaching the Audience

Many of the programs that have supported arts touring to regional Australia and schools have been reduced in recent years (e.g. in Queensland, since the demise of Qld Arts Council/Artslink and now Artour, there is nobody to support, schedule, advise or assist with schools and regional touring). Subsidies, cultural 'passports' and 'officers' that can advise and support artists in the promotion and dissemination of their work will help ensure artists reach wider audiences, especially in remote and regional areas with their work.

Recommendation:

Allocate specific funding to arts and cultural institutions and organisations that create work and resources for, with, and by children and young people and support teacher professional learning.

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

We advocate for the inclusion of a 6th pillar of Arts Education, which should be embedded in each of the original 5 pillars. Arts Education is imperative for the ecology of the Arts sector, but it is often overlooked in Arts and Cultural policy.

Australian culture is represented in and through the arts. To have flourishing arts communities across Australia, we need to invest in arts education. This ensures the ecology will be robust, resilient, and continue to grow. Arts Education cannot be the sole responsibility of the Arts Ministry or the Education Ministry, but is a responsibility that must be shared and nurtured across both ministries.

NAAE advocates for every Australian student in primary and secondary schools to have access to quality Arts Education across the five arts subjects: Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music, and Visual Arts. The Australian Curriculum suggests that all Australian students should be taught the five Arts subjects from Foundation to Year 8, and be able to specialise in arts subjects beyond Year 9. We recommend this is a central principle in a National Cultural policy, and that adequate resources are allocated to support this being realised.

Supporting Arts Education also means that a National Cultural Policy should support the implementation of arts curriculums across The Arts in each state and territory in Australia, and provide targeted professional learning, training, and education programs to support teachers and students.

NAAE also advocates for the important role of arts learning and training programs to be available post-schooling, across the country and to support arts learning across the life span.