

National Cultural Policy Submission

Tess Allas

Submitting: As a worker/professional in an industry who uses arts (e.g. art therapist, tour guide), as an artist and as an individual

1. 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

I think this should remain as Pillar 1. But the practice of ignoring the living conditions, incarceration rates and even ignoring the 'tourist' art claiming to be Indigenous art but imported tatt needs to be addressed and addressed seriously.

A Place for Every Story

Every place does have a story. Multiple stories. Investment into the variety of stories should be elevated.

The Centrality of the Artist

I believe this is key yet as we were shown during the lockdowns and border closures, this was not respected. Indeed, the government of the day proved that the centrality of the artist and by extension, the arts, meant nothing to their idea of Australian society. Unless of course, if the art was created by extremely wealthy and powerful people.

Strong Institutions

Regional Galleries require so much more than the pittance they are afforded. From their local councils to state and federal governments. They should not just be used as a venue for council revenue earning but to be centered within their communities as a cultural institution of high value.

I think local councils should and could place more value on the galleries in their remit. Staff them with all the essential staff required to run a gallery to its best capabilities.

All too often I see overworked gallery staff taking on roles that are not of their job description only because there is no other staff attached to the specific demands. For instance, every regional gallery should have a Gallery Manager, a Collection Manager, an Exhibitions Manager and not leave it to the curator to take on these roles as well as their own role of curating.

Deliberate understaffing is strong evidence of a lack of interest, care or understanding of the value we should place in the arts. How does this lack of infrastructure support 'center the artist'?

I would also love to see the establishment of a 'Regional Galleries Acquisition Fund' from which regional galleries can draw to strengthen their collection. The notion that some regional galleries can't afford to collect even local artist's works let alone artworks of national significance is appalling and should not be accepted as the norm.

Reaching the Audience

Make the regional galleries stronger and more valued and you will build an audience that corresponds to that new value.

2. 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

I am a FN curator, arts writer, educator and sometimes artist.

A Place for Every Story

See above

The Centrality of the Artist

See above

Strong Institutions

See above. And also, can we have major institutions that don't just claim they are risk takers or claim inclusivity when in reality they not only not practice it but actively engage in ignoring racism, sexism, ageism etc.

Reaching the Audience

See above

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

Action rather than mission statements.