

National Cultural Policy Submission

The Association of Eisteddfod Societies of Australia

Submitted: On behalf of an arts peak body

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

Encouraging the participation in projects that are all inclusive of all nationalities, including First Nation people. Many of our members offer the opportunities but seldom get a response despite putting the word out in the appropriate areas.

A Place for Every Story

I am representing the 100 plus members of the Eisteddfod Association and we are the grass roots of the performing arts and often overlooked. We offer many young and up and coming arts the opportunity to perform in public on stage, often the only opportunity they get. This is an important part of their development and helps them build a confidence that will take them forward. We also place a strong emphasis on the Educational critique they receive, ensuring that it is constructive and encouraging rather than an emphasis on winning.

The Centrality of the Artist

All Eisteddfods use highly qualified Adjudicators who can impart their extensive knowledge to the performers and often workshops are held in conjunction with the Competitions to allow further steps towards excellence.

Strong Institutions

Australia has a strong sporting history and many opportunities are there for youth to participate in their chosen sports. However, as a young person growing up who had absolutely no sporting prowess, I know how left out one can feel, especially as I grew up in an era where the teaching of music, dance etc was quite exclusive and very expensive. To give young people the opportunities they now have with the arts programme strong in many schools helps them feel better about themselves and proud of what they can achieve. For many also the confidence they can build while performing can carry over into their adult life even if they decide not to continue with a career in the arts.

Reaching the Audience

Reaching the audience is not always easy. During Covid times several Eisteddfod Societies turned to Zoom or online competitions but this did not seem to increase audience number, but actually decreased them. Modern lifestyles do get in the way, with so many young families with both parents in full time work and not enough time to spare.

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

Recognition of the arts and culture of the First Nations people is long overdue.

A Place for Every Story

The Eisteddfod movement has a strong place in the arts culture of this country despite often getting little support. It is the starting point for many a career. Often as the young ones get to teenage years, Adjudicators will recommend them on to profession schools where they can fully hone their skills.

The Centrality of the Artist

Like any job, where you want to make it to the top, the arts world is no exception, it highly competitive. Through competing at the Eisteddfod, young people learn how to win with humility and lose with grace, they learn that sometimes things do not always go the way you plan and that in the end hard work and practice often pays off.

Strong Institutions

Even if a competitor does not decide to go on to a career in the arts, the years of participating have given them a hobby that they have made friends through, and a sense of achievement and often have skill they can use in life for their own pleasure and entertainment.

Reaching the Audience

Not being able to attract a large audience is always a disappointment, as the level of skill that is demonstrated at many levels is worthy of far greater support.

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

A policy that takes into consideration all levels of society, those who are in low income brackets, new immigrants with English as a second language, grass roots arts (after all every one starts somewhere)