

# National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: As a worker/professional in an industry who uses arts; As an artist

I believe that a comprehensive Young People and Culture framework is essential to maintaining and growing the youth arts sector in Australia; providing opportunities for young people for training, performance and pathways. With many of our national youth arts companies being defunded by the Australia council in the last 10 years, youth arts companies need a separate funding stream and framework to grow, thrive and provide opportunities and training for young people across Australia.

The purpose of youth arts companies in Australia are to allow young people to:

- engage in training in Theatre, Dance, Visual Arts and Music
- 'find their tribe', belong and connect with like minded young people, forming friendships and connections which in turn enhances positivity and wellbeing
- engage in training with Industry professionals in their field and form connections, allowing them to be exposed to possible pathways, training and careers after school
- experience the production process for young people interested in the performing arts including rehearsals and performing for an audience
- create audiences of the future

As Head of Learning at Australian Theatre for Young People and as a secondary drama teacher, I have witnessed how drama and theatre can change young peoples lives giving them skills, connections, belonging and purpose. Additionally, through involvement in drama workshops and productions young people gain interpersonal and soft skills including confidence, communication, collaboration and empathy.

The second proposed pillar of the cultural policy is: A Place for every story: reflecting the diversity of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture.

Young people need a place to tell their diverse and unique stories as well as opportunities for training, skills development and mentorship to learn styles and ways to tell their stories through theatre, dance, song, music and visual arts. By providing an arts framework for young people and a Youth Arts funding stream the Youth Arts companies across Australia can continue to provide a place where young people can connect, learn and belong.

In terms of arts learning in education, the Arts has been removed as a focus of secondary education, replaced at the expense of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.

"It is now widely documented in the United States of America, Canada and Europe, including the United Kingdom, that those young people whose learning is embedded in the Arts achieve better grades and overall test scores, are less likely to leave school early, rarely report boredom and have a more positive self-concept than those that are deprived of arts experiences. In addition, interestingly, they are more likely to become involved in community service." (Professor Robyn Ewing – Australian Education Review).

Through the proposed Cultural policy and the five pillars, there is now a unique an opportunity to embed the arts in the lives of all young Australians by making Youth Engagement a priority of the National Cultural Policy.

The evidence for the beneficial impacts of participation in Youth Arts is unequivocal. This includes the preventative benefits against mental illness, a vital intervention considering half of serious mental health issues begin before the age of 14.

Data research specialists Patternmakers conducted a study of over 1,200 people in 2017 to investigate whether or not participating in the performing arts had any impact on the mental health and wellbeing of young Australians, and if so, was it positive or negative? The results found:

- 91% said it had a positive impact on their wellbeing
- 89% identified a positive impact on their self-confidence
- 85% were more likely to empathise with another person's perspective
- 52% said it helped reduce their general level of anxiety