

National Cultural Policy Submission

GUTS Dance // Central Australia

Submitted: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation

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Type: Public Submission

August 2022

Who we are: GUTS Dance // Central Australia (GUTS) is a young Alice Springs/Mparntwe - based contemporary dance organisation and is the only platform for contemporary dance investigation, creation, training and performance within a 1500 km radius.

Founded in 2018 by dance artists Frankie Snowdon and Madeleine Krenek, GUTS aims to be recognised as a centre for artistic growth and excellence, championing bravery, risk, community and collaboration as tools for the development of great art, meaningful experiences and empowered societies. Situated in the unique environment of the Central Australian Desert, we also aim to promote work created and performed in regional and remote Australia by a diverse cross section of Independent movers, makers and thinkers to national and international audiences.

Co-directors Frankie and Madeleine have been creating and performing professional work together for 13 years, practising experimentation based in dance with a strong focus on collaboration, often presenting work in non-traditional performance spaces.

As performers, collaborators and independent makers, Frankie and Madeleine have worked extensively throughout Australia for companies including Chunky Move and Lucy Guerin Inc. and independent artists Jo Lloyd, Adam Wheeler and Carlee Mellow among others. Internationally, they have undertaken multiple residencies throughout Europe and worked with makers in New Zealand and the USA.

Since relocating their practice back to Frankie's hometown of Alice Springs/Mparntwe in 2015, GUTS have premiered four new works [The Perception Experiment](#) (2017), [The Lost Dance Project](#) (2018), [DANCE \(a short homage\)](#) (2020) and [Value for Money](#) (2021) with teams of award winning local and national collaborators. In 2019, *The Perception Experiment* toured to Dance Massive in Melbourne, Festival Cultural de Mayo in Guadalajara and the Darwin Festival achieving sell out shows across all programs before undertaking a national tour in 2020 of 7 regional venues in 5 different states and territories. In 2021 GUTS undertook their first partnership project with [Tasdance](#), helping to create and perform in *Collision* at the [Unconformity Festival](#), as well as creating and presenting a bespoke dance festival SPRING.LOADED.DANCE (2021) in Mparntwe.

Alongside long time collaborator Adam Wheeler, GUTS also founded the highly regarded [Alice Can Dance](#) education program in the Northern Territory, which now provides dance opportunities for over 250 young people in public schools in remote Australia each year, and this year will celebrate its 10th anniversary. For their work with young people in the Central Desert region, GUTS were awarded the 2021 NT Human Rights Commission Fitzgerald award for Diversity.

What we think: The creation of a new National Cultural Policy that responds to the current times and needs of the artistic sector is long overdue and welcomed by us and our peers in the dance industry and beyond. Along with the devastation of our sector due to the effects of COVID, it has been too long since the health and needs of our vast and important creative and cultural landscape were seen to be of importance and warrant thorough consideration and investment. A changing climate, rising cost of living, recognition of our First People's and a gradual decentralisation of where and by whom our art and artistic endeavours are being explored and produced are a few of the myriad changes we see as vital and worthy of recognition through this cultural policy.

We have been part of the the Nation Dance Managers submission facilitated by the Australia Council and a submission by the 4 key dance organisations in the Northern Territory, however would like to take this opportunity to

highlight a few specific areas which we feel are of most importance to us, given our expertise and the varied nature of the work we do here in remote Australia.

- Through our own experience of creating a new organisation from the ground up in one of the most isolated parts of the country, we know how important recognition of the particular challenges of working in varied and specific geographies is.

A new national cultural policy should take into consideration the difference between **urban, regional and remote**, particularly noting that there is a large difference between the latter two. A location such as Bendigo is regional yet is an hour train ride from metropolitan Melbourne. Alice Springs is often classed as regional and not remote, but the challenges we face when making work are specific and different to other “regional” locations. These include but are not limited to:

- a lack of local professional practitioners
 - exorbitant costs for travel and materials
 - a consideration of the climate and time of year it is possible or appropriate to be making certain types of work
 - the economic means of our general population and the barriers to accessing or maintaining an involvement in the making and enjoyment of art and culture
 - The time it may take an artist or organisation to contribute to and build on an arts ecology in places that have largely transient populations
- The continued elevation and specific resourcing of work created by, for and including First Nations Australians should be of utmost importance, with less barriers to access and more understanding of the nuances of how these communities make work. This includes relationship building and time and how these are intrinsic to process and eventual product.
 - The arts should be accessible to every young person in the country, with the same importance placed upon them as involvement in things as “Australian” as playing sport. We have created programs in Central Australia that as far as we know do not exist anywhere else in the country. They are free to access by every young person and span across all publicly funded schools, in youth detention centres, in our town camps and onto remote cattle stations. We SEE and FEEL the impact the right to creative expression has on these young people, and know through our research and partnerships how great an effect well resourced and supported arts programs can have on the transformation of trauma and ongoing empowerment of young people in our communities. STEAM needs to be the message in our schools - this will also help to ensure there are young people excited to move into artistic or creative endeavours as their careers and will help to continue the diverse and incredibly important job of mapping our cultural history through the creation of and involvement in artistic jobs of ANY medium.
 - Access to funding needs to be diversified, taking into consideration the barriers to access many people have, particularly those in regional and remote parts of the country. These people for whom English may be a 2nd or 3rd language, who may not have finished school, who do not have access to the internet or do not feel confident speaking to government agencies about how best to approach accessing funding, deserve to have their specific needs taken into consideration and more outreach and development done to ensure we are not perpetuating a mono-cultural, elitist model into the future.
 - The small to medium and independent sectors - which are the lifeblood and vanguard of our cultural history AND evolution - need to have resources allocated to them that recognise this prolific contribution, and enable us to have stability and programming of activities which allow for growth and commitment to practise and community.

We exist in a remote part of the country where people are hungry for creative experiences, however if there is no recognition via more stable funding and consideration of what, where and by whom some of our most important cultural and creative work is happening, S2M orgs and independent practitioners will continue to burn out and have no choice but to cease practising and contributing to a conversation they deserve to be a part of.