

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Making diversity of cultural expression the cultural goal for Australian cultural policy.

Cultural diversity should be a key goal for the new national cultural policy. Being Asian working in the field of cultural policy can present many barriers. I often felt that my voices are marginalised, and my views based on contextualised knowledge of cultural policies in Asia are treated as an afterthought, rather than as feasible models for the cultural policy problems we face here in Australia. But it shouldn't be if we are truly cherishing cultural diversity as a desirable Australian cultural identity.

Australia has an enviable record in attracting and accommodating creative talents from around the world. But very few from non-Anglo background has been able to influence cultural policy making in this country. This is in stark contrast to best practices of global cultural policy peak bodies such as UNESCO. When I was appointed by UNESCO as an expert working under the 2005 Convention for the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expression, I found out that all 42 experts are from different countries and of which more than 80% do not speak English as our first language. I feel empowered to speak my view on global cultural policy concerns by the carefully designed policy making process. On occasions, I have presented examples from within Australia to this international circle of experts.

Working with cultural policy making has made me more aware of the issue of cultural diversity across the cultural and creative industries. Stats from the UK and Australia show that cultural and creative Industries are the opposite of diversity: class division, gender inequality and racial inequality are significant obstacles for the cultural labour market. Part of the challenge for addressing such issue is how to empower those disadvantaged to become change makers.

That is, to make policy rather than being an object of policy making. To want to contribute new narratives for Australian cultural policy discourse. And to have their ideas to be taken seriously. I want to see more people and cultural agents from diverse cultural background to be involved in making decisions about cultural policy – not only to provide knowledge and information but also to be empowered to shape Australian future cultural landscape.

I hope the new Australian cultural policy will take cultural diversity to a new level by implementing training programs for people from diverse cultural background to learn about cultural policy making and to provide real opportunities for participation in cultural policy at organisational, local and state government level.