

National Cultural Policy Submission

Astra Chamber Music Inc

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

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:

The Centrality of the Artist

Our primary creators - visual artists, playwrights, composers, authors, poets, actors, musicians – are central to Australia's culture, and yet they are often the poorest paid and the least 'understood' by society as a whole. Creation is a fundamental human impulse and 'making' is an essential human activity. Our policy-makers should value creativity for not just its instrumental value (i.e. its economic, educational or even entertainment or touristic value) but for its intrinsic value, a creative 'substance' that needs to be understood and supported. This understanding must be central to decision making. Culture may well underpin an economy but should not be determined by it.

Strong Institutions

Culture should have its own Ministry and not be tacked on to 'infrastructure' or 'transport'. Without a dedicated team of people who understand the full gamut of the impulses that make up Australia's creative ecology, and who can therefore advocate for the fundamental importance of the culture industries, we will continue to have ongoing cuts to arts budgets.

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:

A Place for Every Story

In the music world, funding musical diversity is as relevant as funding social diversity. Both provide a diverse voice or lens or perspective on communities that make up Australia.

The Centrality of the Artist

Artists are specialists in their fields. They have often trained for years, many to PhD level, and have accumulated specialist knowledge that is rooted in historical practice, is skills-based, procedural and imaginative. Each art-form is specialist by nature and has its own processes and aesthetic. In music, where there are many diverse genres, a New Music practitioner may not understand the relevance or importance of a jazz work, and vice versa. Each genre should be assessed by 'panels' or groups with an understanding of the particular creative endeavours, as opposed to generic decision-making.

Strong Institutions

Over the past few decades, smaller organisations have been decimated financially and yet it's within these smaller organisations that most of the artistic risks are taken. Risk-taking is essential to art-making. Experimental work, with small audiences, can have a lasting impact on the development of Australian culture. Innovative art music doesn't necessarily have a large reach but it can be an incubator for new ideas or new ways of thinking about our culture and have a disproportionate impact on cultural development.

New work can generate transformative moments or ideas and deserves to be supported more than it currently is.