

National Cultural Policy Submission

Four Winds

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:

First Nations

Challenges: Social, cultural and educational Indigenous creative programs which are embedded in community, such as the ones Four Winds conducts, are not supported by governments at any level except in an ad hoc, hand-to-mouth way. These programs take time, we need to build trust, share leadership, and evaluate the best approaches for engagement. Short-term project-based funding is not a suitable approach and needs re-thinking. All levels of government, across several portfolios need to focus on this area, with particular attention paid to the regions.

Opportunities: Continued growth of existing Four Winds programs and further embedding Indigenous Cultural Practice in our systems and approach.

A Place for Every Story

Challenges: The challenge mentioned in the First Nations topic above, equally applies to all cultural practice based in community. However, such essential community-based programs receive little recognition, funding or status. The arts are more than the exhilaration of a great performance. Social and cultural impacts occur mostly at community level.

Opportunities: To more broadly and diversely represent the communities we serve, in turn strengthening reach, relevance and social licence to justify an essential place in serving society. There are significant, very positive health and wellbeing outcomes from using the arts to help communities process pivotal events, say from the recent bushfires that ravaged our region. There is supporting evidence that the arts can (and we do) encourage the expression of feelings/emotions that are not released in other ways.

Ideas: Four Winds has a major, highly collaborative community singing program ready to implement across our region, including First Nations and non-Indigenous communities and including people of all ages and across occupations.. It is a major project responding to the Black Summer bushfires, with high impact social outcomes. The only piece missing is the necessary financial support. This approach is easily transferrable to other settings.

The Centrality of the Artist

Challenges: Shift the perception (through employment structures and support) so that working in the arts is seen as an essential service to community and that the arts as a pleasure pursuit is only one ingredient..

Opportunities: There are opportunities, particularly in the regions, to expand the role of visiting artists, so they are not simply 'fly-in-fly-out', but they stay longer to conduct master classes for high school students, or they perform in local schools or libraries, or they mentor or coach budding artists. As travel and accommodation make up a significant portion of the costs, it's a very cost-

effective approach and has inspirational effects on local communities. The artists find this a time also of intense learning, particularly for emerging artists.

Ideas: Four Winds has examples to share for how this works in practice.

Strong Institutions

Challenges: To breakdown the existing stratification of arts companies, or at the very least, create more cohesion between large and small, metro and regional so they cohabit and support each other in a way that cultivates reciprocity and a more blended arts ecology.

Opportunities: There are big opportunities for far greater collaboration across portfolios and across all three levels of government so that large and small arts and cultural 'institutions' can positively impact much more broadly.

Reaching the Audience

Challenges: Lack of suitable digital Infrastructure is crippling for any attempt to reach wider audiences using digital media. Four Winds used to live-stream programs for schools from the Sydney Opera House. This is no longer possible because of decline in the NBN service.

Opportunities: Please fix the NBN

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

IDEA: Four Winds has a long history of partnership with our local Yuin community (since 1991) including high-profile Indigenous artists visiting, performing, teaching and song-writing with the local mob. Since 2019 acclaimed Indigenous Artist Cheryl Davison has been Four Winds Aboriginal Creative Producer, leading a major increase in our Indigenous programs, including Djinama Yilaga Choir involving Dr Lou Bennett AO to tell important Yuin stories through songs written and sung in the retrieved Dhurga language. This process has been piloted and expanded (from Bermagui to Nowra and Ulladulla) and children in our local schools are now being taught songs in Dhurga language through a methodology that empowers Indigenous children. Importantly the Indigenous children are taught the songs and stories first, so they can be proud of their culture when the other children learn this material. Four Winds is of the view that this is ground-breaking work which could be greatly expanded as part of this national cultural policy.

A Place for Every Story

Four Winds is also using the arts to tell non-indigenous stories. We commission new works inspired by our place, and our artists-in-residence programs have profound impact on those artists who use this place regularly for inspiration conceiving projects that tell local stories through the arts. **IDEA:** The 'Bermagui Project' has been an innovative program in which Four Winds invites local and visiting artists from all artforms to come to our 'place', and to make art. A major element has been to adapt the Field Studies Methodology developed by ANU Emeritus Professor John Reid. Three field studies were conducted with three cohorts of artists who were in residence. There were artist co-ordinators for support and 'knowledge sharers': eg Indigenous elders, biologists,

environmentalists, farmers and all exchanged opinions about issues as diverse as the impacts of climate change, discovery of new species, and the power of Indigenous care and knowledge of this land. There can be no doubting the role of the arts to communicate these issues in fresh ways that challenge, educate and delight through visual art exhibitions and live performances. The significant impact of such storytelling within communities was clearly demonstrated through evaluation.

The Centrality of the Artist

Four Winds brings internationally and nationally acclaimed artists to Four Winds to ensure that audiences in our region are not disadvantaged by our location. Our approach has a 'cradle to grave' emphasis on participation in artistic practice, instilling the joy of singing and percussion in primary students, supporting high school musicians culminating in a Youth Music Festival, residencies for budding professional musicians, as well as the chance to perform alongside the very best at the annual Festival at Easter. As part of this journey, Four Winds emphasises the importance for artists of gaining community arts experience and embedding the lessons into their own arts practice. Four Winds provides a home for music-making where the creation and performance of music and other art forms, fires the imagination, enriches lives and encourages active participation'.

Strong Institutions

Four Winds is a vibrant, highly respected arts organisation that seeks to bring the joy of live performances to local and regional audiences, and in addition to conduct programs that have significant social and economic impact. We would like to see more government recognition and support for this kind of 'institution' to bolster the strength of organisations such as ours in regional Australia.

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

Four Winds encourages the Government in the next National Cultural Policy to take up the call from the 2013 policy to strongly reinforce, and advocate for, the centrality of arts and culture to the health, prosperity and wellbeing of our national life.