

National Cultural Policy Submission

Name: **Dr Roanna Gonsalves**

Submitted: **As an artist**

About me

I am a writer, educator and the award-winning author of *The Permanent Resident* (UWAP) published in India and South Asia as *Sunita De Souza Goes To Sydney* (Speaking Tiger). I am a recipient of the Prime Minister's Australia Asia Endeavour Award and many other literary honours. I have been teaching, supervising and mentoring emerging prose writers and screenwriters within communities, schools, literary organizations and institutions in Australia and overseas. I serve on the Board of Writing NSW. I work as a Lecturer in Creative Writing at UNSW, Sydney. I am making this submission as an individual artist (writer).

As a vision for the decade ahead, I would like to propose the following:

1. The "One Child One Artist" program

Art and artists have been central to our survival as a species in the past, the present and will be into the future. This is because it is through art (the oral tradition, literature, the visual and performing arts) that we give and receive pleasure and delight, we enchant, we pass on stories and knowledge, we change perceptions, we illuminate our experiences with and of each other and the world, we chronicle our presence, we bear witness, we express ourselves. It is important that every child have access to the joy, the power and the satisfaction of making art in any media.

I would like to propose "One Child One Artist" for every school-aged Australian child from kindergarten to Year 12. This is linked to the centrality of **First Nations** culture and knowledge and to the **centrality of the artist** in our cultures. This means we would have artists (writers, visual and performing artists) in schools where each child will be mentored one-on-one at least once a week right from the first year of school by an individual artist, depending on the child's interest in a particular art form. Mentoring would include reading age-appropriate and interest-appropriate stories to each child and/or making art or music with a child, progressing to mentoring around writing stories / poetry and making art. This access to the magic of storytelling, reading and art-making, so crucial to the development of children and of our species, will have immense individual and social benefits in so many ways, as evidenced by research from the UK and globally.

2. I believe in the importance of literature and of skills development in creative writing and their immense benefits to individuals and communities. I would like to support the recommendations made by Writing NSW, as below:

- A doubling of funding to the Australia Council, along with a requirement that at least 10% of total arts funding delivered by the organisation must go to the literature sector
- Expansion of fellowships and other initiatives designed to offer writers a living wage
- Expansion of multi-year federal funding opportunities for key organisations, including significant state-based service organisations such as writers' centres
- Streamlining of application and other process for arts funding across all levels of government
- Creation of a National Literature Framework, including an embedded funding guarantee for the literature sector, on similar lines to those already in existence for other artforms, to be completed in consultation with the sector and in collaboration with states and territories
- Expansion of the ELR/PLR scheme to cover digital lending, including ebooks and audiobooks
- Reversal of the decision to increase university fees for arts and humanities courses

3. **I call for increased support to artists with disabilities to help “develop and sustain professional careers in the arts and have equitable access to arts and culture”, as noted by Accessible Arts NSW**
4. **I add my voice to the call by many Australians for a Universal Basic Income for artists**
5. **I call for a strengthening of the peer review process in the allocation of funding by the Australia Council for the Arts and the Australian Research Council through iron-clad safeguarding against ministerial intervention in the peer-review process.¹**
6. **I support all recommendations made by the Association for the Study of Australian Literature and the Australian Society of Authors.**
7. **I support all the recommendations made by Diversity Arts Australia, as below:**

First Nations

- **Self-determination for First Nations initiatives:** Self-determination must be an embedded principle in all First Nations programs and initiatives.
- **Targeted investment in First Nations arts sectors:** The First Nations pillar of the policy must move beyond “recognise and celebrate” to “invest, implement and sustain”. Funding must be increased for self-determined First Nations arts organisations.

A Place for Every Story

- **Equity-tested public funding:** Public funding opportunities should be distributed equitably, with designated support for underrepresented communities. There must be an understanding in the National Cultural Policy of intersectionality, where some artists and creative workers are excluded on the basis of intersecting identities. For example, people from culturally diverse backgrounds with a disability.
- **Embedded diversity standards in publicly-funded creative work/programs:** Creative work must have accountability mechanisms for diversity which should be measured annually and publicly, as is the case in Britain.²
- **Targeted employment and material support for underrepresented people:** Culturally and racially marginalised people must be given opportunities to be in decision-making positions, and be provided employment pathways across all levels and career stages. Therefore, the Cultural Policy must support internships, traineeships, professional development and leadership programs for these communities.
- **Accountability for diversity, equity and inclusion:** Accountability mechanisms, such as regular public reporting against diversity data, should be embedded in public funding agreements to ensure racial equity, diversity and inclusion within their workforce; and stronger measures and accountabilities for large institutions to ensure their relevance and strengthen their sustainability.
- **Improving access for people who don’t have English as a first language:** People whose first language is not English need to be catered for so that they can access work in the sector. For example, through embedded translation and interpreter services.
- **Self-determined research and language:** Research led by communities on the experiences of CaLD artists and creative workers must be supported. The use of the terminology “culturally and linguistically diverse” to capture migrant experiences should be replaced by more relevant, self-determined ways of identifying our communities.

The Centrality of the Artist

- **Targeted investment in underrepresented artists:** A sector-wide anti-racism strategy which is complemented by significant investment in longer term creative projects for racially marginalised communities.

¹ <https://theconversation.com/ministerial-interference-is-an-attack-on-academic-freedom-and-australias-literary-culture-174329>

² British Film Institute, *BFI Diversity Standards*, www.bfi.org.uk/inclusion-film-industry/bfi-diversity-standards

- **Targeted investment in professional development:** Addressing the underrepresentation of CaLD artists and creative workers with targeted investment initiatives such as paid internships, mentorships and capacity-building programs. These should be targeted to the most underrepresented CaLD creative workers, particularly young people, newly arrived migrant and refugee communities and adult migrant creatives who find it difficult to access work in the sector. These should also be led by those with lived experience of cultural diversity and leadership.
- **Equitable youth arts investment:** The youth arts sector needs to urgently be rebuilt, with diversity and equity at its core in terms of investment. This sector is an important gateway for CaLD young people and their livelihoods in the sector.
- **Investment in localised, state-based and small-medium CaLD-led arts, screen and creative organisations:** Such organisations provide brokerage, connection, support, and pathways to employment and skills development for CaLD artists and creative workers.

Strong Institutions

- **Cultural safety:** Work conditions in institutions must be made culturally safe with cultural safety principles and practices embedded into policies, practices and governance.
- **Education and capacity building:** Cultural organisations and institutions must be supported nationally through ongoing education in anti-racism, equity and inclusion, and cultural safety specific to the cultural sector.
- **Brokering partnerships:** Meaningful collaboration and consultation between business, government and small community-led organisations must be supported.
- **Targeting support to CaLD-led organisations/companies:** Noting that there aren't any CaLD-led companies within the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework, support for autonomous CaLD-led organisations, companies and institutions is sorely needed.
- **Cross-sector engagement:** Policy must recognise the arts, screen and creative sectors impact the whole Australian economy and society. It's imperative that there are opportunities for cross-sectoral collaborations with other government portfolios and agencies.

Reaching the Audience

- **Targeted investment in geographically and socioeconomically marginalised areas:** Policy must address the *place* of audiences and artists, with support targeted towards artists and small organisations in locations with higher underrepresented CaLD and migrant populations.
- **Invest in global audiences, markets and transnational networks:** People from CaLD and migrant backgrounds and connections to other countries have the capacity to connect with and attract audiences and investment from global and diasporic markets. Therefore the National Cultural Policy has an opportunity to target initiatives and invest in these highly networked communities.
- **Measuring and reporting on the diversity of audiences:** It should be a requirement that those who receive funding from government, in particular major organisations and cultural institutions, measure and report on the diversity of their audiences annually. This data should be made publicly available, as is done in the UK by bodies like Arts Council England.³

We may use some of your words as part of the National Cultural Policy Report. If we do, how would you like us to attribute your words? (tick your choice of attribution and complete the fields if applicable)

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³ Arts Council England, *Diversity Data*, <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-data/diversity-data>