

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: As a worker/professional in an industry who uses arts (e.g. art therapist, tour guide)

I'll tell you a story, I was at my art opening at an Artist Run Initiative. I was talking to a politician, one that is supposedly on the left/environmental side of politics. We talked about some publicly owned parkland that had buildings in it in our locality. I said how it would be great to have that space made available to artists, so that they could make art, and engage with the community users in the park. "ah he says, but you'll have to pay to use it because nothing comes for free" as he stands in the gallery with his free glass of wine in his hand. Wine that I have paid for. The absolute ignorance, he could not see the value of anything in front of him, not even the glass of wine.

I had paid for the wine that he is drinking, and the cheese that he is eating. I paid rent for the gallery space that we are standing in. I paid for the materials that I have made my work from. I have spent my labour, weeks, months in putting an exhibition together and often the labour of others to make the work. I have paid the rent on my studio. I have spent years failing and succeeding to create work to perfect what is seen. I have spent years studying in my own time, and I have spent money and years in formal education. To get to this point where this politician sees no value in what is in front of him, no value in me, except what he can make from me.

Moral of the story, as with many submissions you will read is about value, we are looking for Australia to value our culture, our arts. But value is more complicated.

This politician boasts on his website about how much he has raised in funding for community sports, and I'm all for investment in sports. Do you know why Australia created the Australian Institute of Sport, we didn't win one gold medal in the 1976 Olympics, not one, that's hard to imagine now. The reports, the studies, the realisation that investment in sport had community benefits for health and wellbeing (and associated costs). They realised that investment in elite sport brings in even more money. Sponsorship, tourism, and reputation, yep fair to say we have an amazing reputation for sports right. But we have an appalling reputation for culture despite everything that we already have. We already have a head start in this particular race. The politician from my story has raised so much for community sports, and only 1% of that for arts. There is currently an institutional lack of recognition of the value of Art and Culture for our health and wellbeing, for foreign investment, sponsorship, for our international reputation. Our value starts with you, we need you to see how important we are to **your** success, otherwise you're just another politician drinking my wine, and not seeing the art in front of you.

Let's look at the economic value. Back to my story, the gallery space I rented belongs to an artist's group, so my rent supports them, ensures the continued existence, it is in trust as a superfund for one of the artists, she gets a long-term benefit. It is in a less popular area, but as we know the cool follows the artists, surrounding rents and land value rises.

The materials I use, locally sourced, and I've paid GST. Some things will have been reused, or salvaged, great for the environment, but also another cost saving for the you.

My labour, as with all workers should be valued, a Universal Basic Income, would be welcome, is tried and tested in other countries, it should be a given. As with almost every artist I do other things. There are unpaid carers, low paid carers, people in hospitality, the minimum wage so they can work

in the studio. Our teachers, from primary to higher education try to maintain a practice while contributing to society. I know people who work in all kinds of industries, self employed, just so they can practice art, put their work up for people to see while they're drinking the free wine. What will happen if we get a "handout". Will we buy luxury yachts from overseas, and never pay tax in the country again, will we explode through the countryside and ancient sites, just to claim bankruptcy and leave environmental destruction. Nup. We're going to reinvest, we'll still pay rent and buy our cheese right here, get the wine in for the opening. It just means that more people, those that are at the very edge now, those that have the least will have a chance to tell their stories too. And those are the stories we need to hear, the most valuable.

But we bring the money in, as above, we bring the cool, which brings the money. Vivid is a massive boost for Sydney, getting people out and spending money when they want to be at home under a blanket. This is a given now. But how much are we bringing in, and how little that is appreciated, and then there is still so much more that is untapped. We have the movie and music stars coming back and putting in investment of their own. This results in jobs, technology, innovation, which just produces more talent. There are still so many more in the visual arts, especially, who we don't celebrate as Australian but make a huge impact internationally. Imagine if other countries respected us for our intelligence as well as our prowess in the pool, because sure we do swim well, but we are also smart, talented and wonderful. There is value in the elite arts and community arts. Real dollar value.

There is also the less tangible value. Value of understanding, of compassion, of critical thought that comes with the agile creative industries. The value of the third spaces, the libraries where everyone has access to technology and knowledge. The galleries where everyone can come and experience the art, and talk about it with the creatives (and drink the wine). The museums where we can keep learning all our life long. We need more third spaces, ones that are more accessible, and inclusive. Where the incentive is to be community, not spending. Spaces to share our stories for our mental, emotional fulfilment. The value of health and wellbeing.

There will be a lot of talk about how important it is to share our stories, Indigenous, Intersectional and Immigrants, all of us. Mine and yours. The value of stories is to learn, please learn not to be one of the stories, the politician, standing in a gallery drinking the "free" wine