



Second Echo Ensemble (SEE) National Cultural Policy Submission

About Second Echo Ensemble

Second Echo Ensemble [SEE] is an arts organization based in nipaluna/Hobart.

Formed in 2005 SEE has toured nationally and internationally and is a leading creative force in Tasmania. We employ and deliver creative opportunities for those living with mental illness, chronic pain, disability, neuro-diversity, and long-term under-employment. Our mission is to redefine expectations of possibility; to challenge assumptions we hold about ourselves and others. We make performance to shake up stereotypes and give voice to untold stories that result in real social change. We passionately believe that everyone, everywhere, has the right to thrive, to be seen, to be heard and to be a part of our community.

Our services include training, community workshops, mentoring, performances and advocacy. We mentor & employ disabled and marginalised people to work as professional artists. Our innovative programs address the barriers which prevent them from realising their ambitions and finding employment within the creative industries.

**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:**

1. First Nations

1.1. We refer to and endorse the submission from the First Nations performing arts sector represented by: Marrugeku, Ilbijerri, Yirra Yaakin, Moogahlin, BlakDance and NAISDA. In particular we endorse the key priorities of:

- a Skills and Workforce capacity building plan;
- a dedicated First Nations performing arts commissioning fund; and
- funding for the cost of cultural processes. We also support the representatives recommended programs and initiatives.

1.2. We refer to and endorse the 2020 plan by the Australia Council to support the development of a peak body or service organisation for First Nations arts – originally called NIACA (but since re-thought after feedback from First Nations people).

A [body] would provide a much needed central peak body for the Indigenous arts and cultural sector, providing First Nations artists and cultural organisations with a national voice across all areas of practice. The body would promote social, cultural and economic development, including important leadership on matters such as the upholding of Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Traditional Cultural expression (TCE) and their cultural and intellectual property; arts practice priorities; and emerging issues and opportunities to increase economic returns for First Nations communities through increased participation in the creative industries. (NIACA.com.au website accessed 10/2020)

1.3. We look forward to the outcomes of the upcoming Purrumpa First Nations arts and culture gathering on Kaurna country in 2022. (<https://australiacouncil.gov.au/advocacy-and-research/events/purrumpa/>)

2. A Place for Every Story

2.1. We call for the centring of First Nations artists, Deaf and disabled artists, and artists of colour in every pillar and sub-strategy of the policy, with a dedicated, funded and measurable action plan to address the under-representation of these artists in decision making and leadership roles, including at the Australia Council.

2.2. 'A place for every story' must include children and young people, who deserve opportunities to tell their stories and see themselves reflected in our culture. We need stronger youth arts institutions to support children and young people as artists and creators of culture, to create work that engages and appeals to them as audiences, and to improve mental wellbeing.

2.3. A Federal grants program to allow schools to engage artists and arts organisations (using the Sporting Schools model) could include strategies to resource youth arts organisations to connect with schools to provide quality arts programs and professional learning for staff.

Under the Australian Curriculum, students from Foundation to Year 6 are expected to engage with five artforms. However, schools and their staff, particularly those in regional and remote areas, often lack the skills, capacity and/or resources to deliver on the curriculum.

3. The Centrality of the Artist

3.1. We call for the arts to be recognised as a profession by government, including by Centrelink, and that Centrelink and the ATO harmonize income averaging arrangements. There is also an opportunity to encourage employers to put artists onto payroll instead of contracting them, as this ensures artists receive superannuation and are covered under WorkCover. This could be a requirement or a target for funded organisations to meet.

3.2. Long-term, stable funding for independent artists has shown to increase productivity and reduce the desire to set up burdensome incorporations or companies. Creative Victoria's Creative Ventures Program and Creators Fund are relevant models that could be expanded, as are artist fellowships (e.g. Australia Council, Myer Foundation).

3.3. Raise the cap on project grants – projects of scale can be made by independents as much as by companies. This will help artists continue as independents and not be forced to set up as a company, just to access bigger grants.

3.4. Increase the pool of funding available to independent artists through the Australia Council's grants program. Where new funding programs such as RISE become available for individuals to apply to, ensure that the communication about that is crystal clear. (TNA surveyed independent artists and close to half of those who didn't apply to RISE thought they weren't eligible.)

4. Strong Institutions and Ecosystems of all sizes, creating jobs

4.1 A National Portfolio approach to organisational funding of all sizes is urgently needed, including an additional investment through the Australia Council, to rebuild the crucial infrastructure of the arts and cultural industry.

With the changes to the NPAF, there is an opportunity to invest in organisations of all sizes

within the same framework, reducing administration, assessment costs, and creating a sector which sees itself as a whole.

4.2 Rebuild the crucial infrastructure of the arts industry. There is currently no pathway for emerging companies, with the Four-Year Funding cohort reducing in size every cycle. There were 67 companies short-listed (top third) in 2019 but not funded - these companies would be largely ready to grow with federal investment, and would create new part-time and full-time jobs. Theatre Network Australia's 2019 Company Salary Survey shows that companies employ an average of 7.8 core positions, both full and part-time. Investing in growth of this sector could create between 350 and 520 new permanent jobs and hundreds of casual and freelance roles.

4.3 To address the under-representation of First Nations people, people of colour and Deaf and Disabled people in leadership roles in the arts, we need a proactive approach. Paid leadership succession such as funded on the job CEO transitions over 6-12 months could result in tangible diversification of arts leadership in a sustainable way.

5. Reaching the Audience

Children and young people make up almost a third of Australia's population, and young people's engagement in arts and culture requires a government framework to support long-term investment and outcomes.

Young Australians are highly engaged – four in five attend arts events (83%), including live music (66%) and festivals (61%). One in two young Australians connect with their culture and community through arts and creativity (53%) and two in three creatively participate in the arts (66%). (Australia Council 2020 National Arts Participation survey).

There is an opportunity for a key pillar of this policy to address the cultural, social, health, and educational needs of our younger generations through existing assets, skills and knowledge within the arts and cultural sectors.

5.1 Invest in a Young People and Culture Framework

A cross-portfolio investment combining Arts, Health, Regional Development, Social Services, Emergency Management and Education has the capacity to deliver outcomes across portfolios. The youth arts and arts for young audiences sector employs professional artists to engage with communities. These are fiscally lean organisations with minimal overheads whose principal expenses are wages for contract and permanent staff.

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:

Have KPIs and strategies for achieving First Nations First and Every Story under all five pillars

SEE strongly supports the development of a National Cultural Policy, and commends the government on taking an urgent approach to developing the policy. However we are concerned that the five pillars structure to the policy.

To appropriately reflect Australian society, we believe that the policy needs to take an intersectional approach. The values and goals underpinning 'First Nations First (pillar 1) and 'diversity of Australia' (pillar 2) should be included within the other pillars, not just siloed within their own 'other' pillars. If the pillars remain, this could be achieved with strategies and KPIS addressing First Nations First and Every Story under all five pillars.

Create a Young People and Culture Framework as a new pillar or focus area.

SEE wants to see a major focus on the legacy we are leaving future generations.

There is an urgent need to rebuild morale and wellbeing within the arts industry. The past three years have caused us to curtail our ambitions, to retreat to survival mode, to plan only for six months ahead. We believe that a Young People and Culture Framework should be a central theme or even its own pillar. This would be a way to achieve some of the multi-portfolio outcomes needed and allow the arts sector to remember how to be ambitious and think long term.

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

We believe that the Policy should guide the more comprehensive development of a ten-year National Cultural Plan which will work cross-portfolio to leverage and invest in the civic benefits of arts and cultural programs.

Using some of the ideas from A New Approach's work, ensure that real mechanisms are designed to broker cross-portfolio connections, not just at a Ministerial level, but at a bureaucratic level (e.g. roundtables), across peak organisations from different areas (lead by the arts), and across sector organisations and individuals (e.g. through summits on particular topics such as young people's wellbeing).

How would you like us to attribute your words?

	<p>Name: Organisation (if applicable): Second Echo Ensemble [drafted from Theatre Network Australia] Contact (email or phone): hello@secondechoensemble.org</p>
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