

## Submission to the National Cultural Policy – August 2022

MAV commends the Australian Government on their commitment to the development of a new *National Cultural Policy* and welcomes the opportunity to actively contribute to the shaping of a cultural policy for all Australians.

Australia is home to the world's oldest continuous cultures, as well as Australians who identify with more than 300 ancestries. More than half of all Australians are first or second-generation migrants: 48.2% of Australians have a parent born overseas; 27.6% were born outside Australia; and 5.5 million people (21% of the population) use a language other than English at home.<sup>1</sup>

Under the previous Labor Government, the *People of Australia* policy emphasised the strength of our cultural plurality and traditions. It aimed to strengthen social cohesion - acknowledging that government services and programs must be reflective of the needs of our culturally diverse communities. It committed to an access and equity framework with the onus on government to provide equitable services to Australians from all backgrounds.

In an increasingly diverse, yet simultaneously increasingly divided Australia, a National Cultural Policy, combined with a policy commitment to recognise our cultural diversity, offers us an opportunity to re-evaluate the way we incorporate arts and culture across a range of sectors in our society. It gives us a chance to boost our national self-esteem and put creativity at the centre of affairs.

A National Cultural Policy needs then, to ensure it broadly defines arts, culture and the creative industries to steer away from categorisations that reinforce elitism and silos. The Policy should be designed towards a culturally engaged society that encompasses grassroots community arts practice, heritage arts, hybrid practices, emerging technologies and the inherent cultural assets of our diverse communities.

MAV looks forward to being part of this conversation and to working with the Government to identify specific initiatives and resources in the forthcoming National Cultural Policy.

### About MAV

Established in 1983, Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV) is Victoria's peak arts organisation promoting cultural diversity in the arts.

MAV is a membership based organisation representing individuals, groups, communities across all art forms; channelling the artistic practices of culturally diverse artists and communities to create systems of cultural production and participation that uphold equity and self-determination.

#### **Our Values:**

**Diversity** - we privilege non-western ways of doing, knowing and being, to tell stories that illuminate our humanity and improve intercultural understanding;

**Equality** - we strive for cultural democracy, sharing our knowledge and skills with partners across the arts and cultural sector to build platforms for engagement and visibility;

**Trust** - diverse communities see themselves represented in and by us, in work that resonates with their truths, underpinned by shared values and dreams of new futures; and

**Courage** - we are outspoken in our support of cultural participation as a human right, from which we derive social, cultural and economic benefits for the development of individuals and society.

---

<sup>1</sup> ABS 2021

### **Our Goals:**

- To champion the development of artists and artform practices that speak to who we are as Australians, embedding pluralism and diversity as a fount of artistic and cultural innovation;
  - To build the case for diversity as one of our greatest cultural assets, through the generation of critical and compelling new work; and
  - To lead transformation in our sector, contesting the marginality of diverse artistic practices through the application of contemporary lenses and frameworks.
- 

## **Response to National Cultural Policy Goals**

MAV acknowledges that the original 5 goals of the *2013 Creative Australia National Cultural Policy* remain relevant:

1. *Recognise, respect and celebrate the centrality of First Nations cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity (First Nations)*
2. *Ensure that government support reflects the diversity of Australia (A Place for Every Story).*
3. *Support excellence and the special role of artists and their creative collaborators (Centrality of the Artist).*
4. *Strengthen the capacity of the cultural sector to contribute to national life, community wellbeing and the economy (Strong Institutions).*
5. *Ensure Australian creativity thrives here and abroad in the digitally enabled 21st century (Reaching the Audience).*

MAV agrees that the National Cultural Policy needs to place First Nations arts and culture at the heart as outlined in **NCP Goal 1**:

### ***Recognise, respect and celebrate the centrality of First Nations cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity. (First Nations)***

MAV acknowledges that we live, work and celebrate on unceded Aboriginal land. We thank all Elders, past and present, for their care, knowledge and generosity, as custodians of the world's oldest continuing culture. We pledge our support towards truth telling, reparation and decolonisation. We open our hearts and minds to deep listening, learning, sharing and connecting – in solidarity with First Peoples here in Australia and around the world.

Evidence is there on the countless diplomatic, cultural and economic benefits that arise from Australia's Indigenous cultures. All of us have profited from the growing global interest in our historical and contemporary First Nations' arts and cultural practices. We cannot expect full recognition of our First Nations until their voices are included in our constitution. What is critical into the future, if we are to project ourselves as a confident nation with an ancient history and an appreciation for dynamic contemporary arts, is that the integrity of First Nations cultural practice and material needs to be maintained and promoted along with the protection of the rights of the creators and custodians.

---

### **POLICY OPPORTUNITIES**

1. Establish a Voice to Parliament as a body enshrined in the Constitution that would enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide advice to the Parliament on policies and projects that impact their lives.
2. Prioritise investment in First Nations arts and culture and peer-to-peer creative projects to further intercultural collaborations and cultural tourism.

3. *Promote First Nations cultural educational programs across all ages and states (inc. Indigenous languages).*
  4. *Centre First Nations voices to ensure First Nations centred arts and culture projects are led by First Nations creatives.*
- 

Regarding **NCP Goal 2:**

***Ensure that government support reflects the diversity of Australia.***

***(A Place for Every Story)***

*“Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations.”<sup>2</sup>*

**Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity - Article 1 - Cultural diversity: the common heritage of humanity**

Cultural diversity is central to our nation. We are a multicultural nation – it’s not an idea, it’s a fact – our pre-colonisation history and our history of migration stories being considered. The Federal Government is obliged to recognise our diversity, in the spirit and intent of the *Declaration of Universal Human Rights* and the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*. The deserved recognition of this cultural diversity will play a critical role in the future development our nation, capable of responding to the changing global landscape.

MAV, therefore looks to the Australian government to take a rights-based approach to the creation and implementation of a National Cultural Policy: An approach that safeguards the cultural rights of everyone; that is meaningful for everyone and acknowledges everyone; that entitles everyone to enjoy, participate in and form part of the culture of society; where everyone has a stake in it that allows them to listen and be heard, and to be involved in developing a rich cultural life; and that is flexible, responsive and excludes no one.

Arts and cultural engagement plays an integral role in citizens’ participation in society and it is critical that our arts and creative industries reflect the culturally diversity of our country. Engaging more Australians in cultural and creative endeavour poses a set of access and participation challenges. A National Cultural Policy needs to courageously address the complexities of our society and by embracing complexity, strengthen our society through culture and better position ourselves internationally.

The Australian Government will need to find better ways to meaningfully connect with communities around culture. Currently, the majority of individuals from recently arrived communities do not even see arts funding as an option. Funding needs to be devolved via an equity framework that challenges the prevailing structures of power and privilege. One-off schemes to engage do little to challenge systems, behaviours and attitudes that exclude many from engaging in the arts. Raising unrealistic expectations, satisfying short-term political gain over long-term community benefit, or devising codified and impenetrable funding frameworks that admit only the initiated, are just some of the challenges to be considered.

Longer-term policy action is needed to drive change in Australia. Our diverse communities are our greatest human asset. To create real opportunities for everyone, we need to open up new possibilities and more opportunities for lasting engagement across the population. Creative New Zealand, for example puts ‘stronger arts communities’ at the very top of its Strategic Intent document. There is a way to go before governments in Australia reach a deeper understanding of the cultural values of our diverse communities, how these communities function and how best we can support them.

---

<sup>2</sup> United Nations

Therefore, to ensure that Federal support reflects the diversity of Australia, MAV calls on the Australian Government to embrace diversity centrally in the National Cultural Policy with strategic intention; through effective engagement; and with requisite resources, in recognition of the following overarching *Moral, Legal, Social, Economic, International and Creative* contexts:

### **The Moral Context**

Australia is a signatory to the *United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, recognising that, in accordance with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy their economic, social and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights.

The UNESCO Constitution affirms that: *‘the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern.’*<sup>3</sup>

Through expression of all diverse cultural expressions, we enable people to feel connected, represented and to learn about others in a creative way that contributes to the identity of Australia as a Diverse nation.

Australia also became a party to the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* in 2009. There are a number of obligations that are incumbent on the Parties, which are called upon to:

1. *endeavour to promote in their territory the creation of an environment which encourages individuals and social groups to create, produce, disseminate, distribute, and have access to their cultural expressions, paying attention to the special circumstances and needs of women and social groups, including persons belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to have access to diverse cultural expressions within their territory and from other countries of the world;*
2. *ensure information sharing and transparency by providing appropriate information in their reports to UNESCO every four years on measures taken to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions;*
3. *foster the public’s understanding of the importance of the diversity of cultural expressions through educational and public-awareness programmes;*
4. *acknowledge the fundamental role of civil society in protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions by encouraging the active participation of civil society in efforts by Parties to achieve the objectives of the Convention;*
5. *incorporate culture into sustainable development and strengthen international cooperation in support of developing countries by several means, for instance, by strengthening their cultural industries, building their capacities to develop and implement cultural policies, technology transfer, financial support and preferential treatment for their artists and other cultural professionals and for their cultural goods and services.*

---

### **POLICY OPPORTUNITIES**

1. *Recognise and report on our United Nations commitments through the National Cultural Policy.*
- 

### **The Legal Context**

*“All people in Australia – no matter what their national, cultural or religious background – have a right to feel safe, respected and part of the community in which they live. This is the way to ensuring a stronger Australia as a whole.”*  
**Australian Human Rights Commission.**

---

<sup>3</sup> [UNESCO](#)

Article 27 of the UN's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* reads:

1. *Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.*
2. *Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.*

In UNESCO's Declaration of Cultural Diversity 2001, the United Nations stated its commitment to the full implementation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other universally recognized legal instruments, such as the two International Covenants of 1966 relating respectively to civil and political rights and to economic, social and cultural rights.

The *Racial Discrimination Act*, Australia's first Federal anti-discrimination law, formalised our commitment to the United Nation's *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, which enshrines the right to participate in cultural activity without racial discrimination.

MAV agrees with the national peak organisation, *Diversity Arts Australia (DARTS)* that the arts and creative industries are well placed to be leaders in enacting the Australian Human Rights Commission's National Anti-Racism Framework through the creative industries.<sup>4</sup>

---

#### **POLICY OPPORTUNITIES**

1. *Equity-test public funding: embedding equity principles into funded activities. (i.e. 39% target of funding as representative of the Australian population).*
  2. *Embed 'cultural safety' standards in publicly funded projects and organisations.*
  3. *Account for diversity, equity and inclusion: All recipients of public funding be accountable for diversity measures across all funded areas.*
  4. *invest in and promote organisations that are leading by example in diversifying programming and organisational make-up and broadening and diversifying their Australian audience base.*
  5. *Enhance support for industry service organisations to provide cultural equity training.*
  6. *Enhance Arts Law Centre of Australia to provide subsidised support to the sector – emphasising First Nations and culturally diverse creatives.*
- 

#### **The Social Context**

*"The pandemic has exposed disparities which if not addressed may progressively erode social cohesion. They include technological disparities, language barriers not only among new arrivals but other sections of the population and widening socio-economic gaps."*

**Mapping Social Cohesion: Scanlon Foundation Surveys 2021.**

On the back of a global pandemic, wars and the impacts of climate change on communities around the world, there is strong evidence of a lack of confidence in the future and a lack of faith in institutions to provide a positive way forward. Concerns about inequality, employment and the cost of living are exacerbating the divisions in society which echo through polarising social media channels. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has highlighted the need for change - sparking public conversations about systemic racism and a lack of cultural equity across the cultural sector.

According to the Mapping Social Cohesion surveys (Scanlon), alongside the large majority endorsement of cultural diversity, the contribution of immigrants to Australian society, and the policy of multiculturalism, there is a long-standing hierarchy of ethnic and racial preference that seems in a large part resistant to change<sup>5</sup>. In past Scanlon Foundation surveys, the highest level of discrimination was reported by

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/race-discrimination/projects/national-anti-racism-framework>

<sup>5</sup> *Mapping Social Cohesion: Scanlon Foundation survey (2021).*

Australians of non-English speaking background - this worrying finding remains a feature of the 2021 findings, particularly with respondents born in Asia.

Highlighting the richness our cultural plurality as central to our national identity, unites the constituent cultures that make up the Australian community. Arts, culture and the creative industries hold enormous potential to build a more inclusive and cohesive cultural identity for Australia. Arts can provide vital space and opportunity to navigate multiple viewpoints and perspectives, and to engage with complex and challenging ideas from a safe space. Arts and artists provide invaluable conduits to help rebuild trust in our institutions and in each other. They enable a plurality of voices to be heard, including those who feel they are being left behind by rapid social change. The results of the National Arts Participation Survey show an increasing proportion of Australians feel that the arts enable us to connect with others (53%, up 15 percentage points from 38% in 2016); understand perspectives that are different to our own (71%, up from 60% in 2016); and that the arts impact our understanding of other people and cultures (60%, up from 52% in 2016). The arts help us understand and live with our fellow citizens, guarding against social divisions and threats - building a healthy society.<sup>6</sup>

Social cohesion is important from three perspectives: *relationships*; *sense of belonging*; and *safety*. At an individual level, strong friendships and relationships are critical for people's social and emotional development. Conversely, being a victim of crime can negatively impact on a range of individual outcomes, including health, wellbeing, education and attainment. At a societal level, social cohesion has an important role to play in having a strong and effective community and social support system. There is a plethora of evidence of how art and culture strengthens social cohesion – removing communication barriers and finding mutual understanding. Creative expression springs from human imagination – underlying beliefs and values – which are representations of self, characterised by indirect and non-verbal expression. The process of making connections through creative expression builds confidence within individuals and groups; engenders empathy and social awareness which in turn, strengthens relations across communities.<sup>7</sup>

---

#### **POLICY OPPORTUNITIES**

1. *Create cross-sectoral / cross-government / cross-agency collaborations to meet social objectives through arts and culture.*
  2. *Investigate and implement models for delivery of social and well-being programs (i.e. Vichealth).*
  3. *Target investment to geographically and socioeconomically marginalised areas towards socially determined objectives.*
  4. *Provide support to ensure the work of A New Approach continues.*<sup>8</sup>
- 

#### **The Economic Context**

*'In an age of accelerating globalisation, a multicultural Australia is the Australia most likely to succeed in the world. The world is multicultural: a multicultural Australia necessarily has more ties to that world. These ties are more than cultural and promote more than cultural knowledge and understanding. They include commercial ties; a successful multicultural Australia is better placed for trade and investment with the countries of our region and beyond and is likely to have more global influence, more respect and more bargaining power.'*

**The People of Australia Policy.**

Migrants make an enormous contribution to Australia's economy. Our rich, cultural diversity is our greatest strength as it is central to our national identity and to the success of our economy.

---

<sup>6</sup> [Creating Our Future Results of the National Arts Participation Survey August 2020](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Cultural Infusion](#)

<sup>8</sup> [A New Approach](#)

There is considerable evidence pointing to the role of migrants in sustaining or fostering strong economic growth over the longer term.<sup>9</sup>

MAV understands the creative economy to be a long-range focus of a National Cultural Policy – encouraging creative employment and supply-chain relationships in the wider economy. Australia is uniquely placed to take economic advantage of its cultural diversity.

To effect real positive change, the delivery of arts and culture in economic terms needs to also consider the agency and opportunities available to individuals to participate in a creative society and employ comprehensive place-based strategies, with social justice factors underpinning our economic aspirations. In order to further opportunities for culturally diverse creatives to contribute to the economy, larger industry bodies, businesses, organisations and government departments should be encouraged to work alongside smaller entities with grass-roots connections. The greater participation of culturally diverse communities in the creative economy will result in a more globalised society - capitalising on the experience, knowledge, relationships and nuanced understanding of our inherent population - which in return gives our creative companies a competitive edge.

---

#### **POLICY OPPORTUNITIES**

1. *Recognise the creative industries sector as an interdependent ecological system.*
  2. *Develop an overarching partnership between government and peak creative industry bodies focused on long term sector recovery and growth.*
  3. *Extend the role of government agencies to broker partnerships between business, government, larger cultural institutions and small community-led organisations.*
  4. *Invest in career development opportunities for under-represented creatives and the local level.*
  5. *Provide creative industry mentoring opportunities.*
  6. *Prioritise investment in cross-sectoral creative projects to further business opportunities.*
- 

#### **The International Context**

*‘Arts and culture is a latent soft power asset that has yet to be effectively tapped to its full potential in pursuit of Australia’s foreign policy priorities, cultural diplomacy objectives, long-term cultural engagement and economic development.’<sup>10</sup>*

**Australia Council for the Arts**

In order to understand Australia’s position in the world, we must first understand the world within Australia. The arts are an important instrument in forming and strengthening international/intercultural relations. They are a medium through which we derive greater understanding of unfamiliar cultures – resulting in closer ties. The arts are also a non-aligned platform for creative collaboration across diaspora communities – inviting innovation and new markets. The previous Labor Government, for example recognised the importance of cultural links as a key component and contributor to developing the capabilities and connections with Asia<sup>11</sup>.

The attainment of soft power benefits delivered by our creative sector, requires an appropriately resourced arts sector. Many of our diverse creatives have significant peer-to-peer networks with potential to create quality content across national borders. Greater Federal investment is required to develop a roadmap for the cultural sector to increase global visibility; build international platforms, distribution channels and digital markets; and integrate arts and culture with other soft power assets and structures. This will also ensure our creative expressions are more reflective of our diverse population and will attract diverse global audiences.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> <https://cdn.tspace.gov.au/uploads/sites/107/2018/04/Shaping-a-Nation.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Australia Council for the Arts Submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs Soft Power Review

<sup>11</sup> *White Paper on Australia in the Asian Century*

<sup>12</sup> [Australia Council for the Arts Submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs Soft Power Review](#)

International education plays a significant role in the Australian economy with students, particularly from Asian countries, increasingly choosing to study in Australia. Until the pandemic, which has devastated this sector, international education was Australia's third largest export, behind iron ore and coal, and was the largest services export. From 2006 to 2019, international student numbers have grown by an estimated 167%, with students from 199 countries around the world studying in Australia.<sup>13</sup> While the promise of a quality education in a culturally diverse society is an attractive proposition, the life overseas many of these students had imagined often doesn't match up with the reality. Research has shown that international students are at increased risk of experiencing anxiety and other mental illnesses compared to local students.<sup>14</sup> MAV is currently working to engage these students in a cultural platform: *Ahead of the Curve* to respond creatively to social challenges and to build an online creative network.

---

#### *POLICY OPPORTUNITIES*

- 1. Integrate investment in Australian arts and culture within a whole of government approach to amplify our soft power and support Australia's interests internationally, and particularly in our region.*
  - 2. Australia's soft power capabilities be increased through scaling up existing programs and strategies.*
  - 3. Invest in global audiences and transnational connections recognising that diverse communities and creatives have the capacity to connect with and attract global and diasporic markets.*
  - 4. Work with tertiary providers and other stakeholders to establish a cultural platform for international students residing in Victoria that encourages sustainable creative networks and opportunities to improve well-being.*
  - 5. Prioritise investment in First Nations arts and culture and peer-to-peer creative projects to further intercultural collaborations and cultural tourism.*
  - 6. Develop an overarching partnership between government and industry that is focused on long term soft power development through arts and culture.*
- 

#### **The Creative Context**

The principle driver of MAV's artistic rationale is the self-determination of artists and communities. To that end, the artistic motivations behind our work do not reflect the creative visions of one individual, but many. We deliberately have no artistic director, instead enabling all participants to direct their engagement with our organisation in a way that reflects their aspirations and needs. Through self-determined practices, we underpin a human-rights based framework, which posits cultural practice as essential to the wellbeing and sustainability of individuals and society.

Within this framework, we reject the reductive dichotomies of *professional* versus *community*, *arts* versus *culture* and *traditional* versus *contemporary*. We draw our models from deep engagement with artists and communities whose cultural practices are inextricably embedded in notions of identity, citizenship and belonging. Arts and culture are not an optional extra in these communities, as markers of affluence and status. They are an expression of solidarity and indicators of collective identity.

These cultural practices are in constant evolution. They exist within complex systems of cultural production, dissemination and consumption. They may reflect traditional cultural practices or re-emerge in contemporary manifestations that challenge and redefine culture. Cultural practices provide vehicles for the exploration of our past, present and future. They do not exist in isolation, but are expansive, allowing artists to work interculturally, interjectionally and intergenerationally to evolve new forms, methods and impacts.

---

<sup>13</sup> [New Approach Insight Report 5](#)

<sup>14</sup> Apart from homesickness, the aspect of cultural stress that provokes the strongest reaction from students concerns the feeling of belonging. Risk factors including social and cultural isolation in a new country, high expectations and performance pressures, financial stress, language barriers and adjusting to a new academic system can place them at greater risk of mental ill-health ([Orygen 2020](#))



Deriving from this ethos, our work is multidisciplinary, cross-artform and experimental. We encourage interrogation of artform and cultural practices that enable artists and communities to lead their engagements with us. Our work is of its time, reflecting contemporaneous dialogues, practices and frameworks. At the same time, it is future focused, as the work of today creates the pathways for artists of tomorrow.

Through our work, we seek to privilege non-western ways of doing, knowing and being. Beginning with respect for the role of First Nations cultures in redefining our fundamental conceptions of art and culture, we seek to understand and re-imagine the place of migration and settlement by the application of decolonising frameworks to our work, inviting engagement of First Nations artists across our programs as cultural leaders and collaborators.

Our artistic rationale is driven by our profound commitment to arts and artists shaping the narratives that define who we are as a multicultural nation. We make art as a visceral response to the forces of bigotry and intolerance, which seek to undermine the hard-fought battle for pluralism. We make art to understand who we are as migrants on Indigenous land. We make art to draw attention to the work that is still needed to future proof our identity as a society that deeply values its diversity.

---

#### *POLICY OPPORTUNITIES*

1. *Invite diverse creatives and communities into policy discussions at the national level.*
  2. *Boost project support for diverse creatives and groups to explore new avenues.*
  3. *Engage key agencies to provide capacity building support for diverse creatives and groups to obtain support and new markets.*
- 

Regarding **NCP Goal 3:**

### **Support excellence and the special role of artists and their creative collaborators.** *(Centrality of the Artist)*

*‘The arts must also consciously question the status quo. This has always been the role of the arts: to challenge, to disrupt, to speak truth to power; to empower and to inspire; to compel viewers, listeners and audiences to confront injustices and to contemplate change.’*

***Dr Tim Soutphommasane, Race Discrimination Commissioner (2013-18)***

‘Excellence’ is a problematic term unless the definition is porous and the question asked ‘by whose standard is excellence defined?’ The continual interrogation of ‘excellence’ must occur in order for a complex and diverse range of Australian narratives to emerge. Internationally, while First Nations cultures are gradually becoming more prominent, Australia is still perceived as a mono-culture of Western heritage. Diversity in Australian art will be key to affect change and bring about a recognition of our diversity.

#### ***Excellence through equity***

Arts as a career option remains the domain of the white middle-class. Nearly 50% of us were born overseas or have a parent who was born overseas and yet artists from non-English speaking backgrounds comprise only 10% of professional artists in the country and draw significantly less income from their practice than their peers from English-speaking backgrounds. Artists with disability earn less than half that of other artists.<sup>15</sup>

The bulk of arts funding goes, uncontested, to the major performing arts organisations, whose audiences are in the main affluent and white. How cultural funding is devolved needs an accompanying equity framework that challenges the ‘closed loop’ of professional and content development that currently dominates the sector. Most individuals from diverse communities do not see our publicly funded arts institutions as relevant to their lives.

---

<sup>15</sup> Arts Nation - Australia Council

Even before the effects of Covid-19, the arts were not a viable career path. Our diverse creatives and communities in particular are profoundly underrepresented in the sector and encounter many barriers to entry in the industry, or recognition for their practice<sup>16</sup>. Research by the *Centre for Future Work*<sup>17</sup>, has revealed the ongoing, devastating impact of COVID-19 on Australia's arts and entertainment sector. The report highlights the devastating impact of the pandemic;<sup>18</sup> and lack of government strategy or resources for long-term recovery compared to other industries and international examples.

Diversity Arts Australia's (DARTS) *Lost Work 2.0 Report: The impacts of the pandemic on creatives of colour and First Nations creatives* found that 79.1% of respondents had lost or expect to lose income as a result of COVID-19. While *JobKeeper* or *JobSeeker* provided some support, income loss due to restrictions has had far-reaching implications for diverse creatives, with many citing worsening precarity, job cancellations and problems keeping up with payments. Additionally, mental health challenges, and an increased focus on racism in the wake of Covid-19 remains of concern.<sup>19</sup>

The industrial conditions for artists do not match those for the general population. Most artists have to subsidise their practice by taking on unrelated work. If the career pathway for those who have talent is too onerous, the cultural life of the community suffers.<sup>20</sup>

Critical future-proofing in this policy is a strategic commitment to education and training combined with improved workforce conditions. As NAVA has previously pointed out:

*'for students to reasonably contemplate life as a professional artist, there need to be changes to working conditions which make it more viable for them to be able to achieve sustainable careers. The rights of professional artists are still lagging behind those of other working people. While there have been some wins (like the regulations covering copyright, moral rights, resale royalties, income tax claim conditions, etc), these hard-won rights are precarious and there is still a lack of industrial fairness in other areas including the necessity for recognition that a range of professional activities by artists deserve to be paid for.'*

Despite the stated contribution of creative careers to our society in many forms, changes to fee structures for tertiary arts courses, introduced by the previous Federal government (as part of its Job-ready Graduates Package) recently sent a clear symbolic message that the arts are not a viable career - a further barrier to entry for an industry that is haemorrhaging its workforce.

In line with the *Centre for Future Work* report, MAV recommends a public-led reboot of the arts & cultural sector that lays the groundwork for a sustainable, vibrant future for the arts and culture, built through ambitious public investment and planning across many sectors of our cultural economy. In particular, Federal Government administration needs to connect more meaningfully with diverse creatives around careers. One-off schemes to improve the situation prove tokenistic, unfairly raise expectation and do little to challenge systems, behaviours and attitudes that ultimately result in creatives giving up in frustration.

Unlike the US, we cannot rely on the private sector or philanthropy for enduring support in this area. Yet, there is significant potential in partnering with longer-term with business, the States, the broader education and training sector, peak arts organisations and industry stakeholder's to ensure a creative career path is viable in our society.

---

## POLICY OPPORTUNITIES

1. *Locate and invest in underrepresented creatives in conjunction with peak and industry service organisations.*

---

<sup>16</sup> [Creatives of Colour](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Research by the Centre for Future Work](#): Creativity in Crisis: Rebooting Australia's Arts and Entertainment Sector After COVID (Pennington and Eltham) 2021

<sup>18</sup> *Labour market data for the Arts and Recreation Services industry (ABS) indicates that the pandemic has had a significant negative impact.<sup>6</sup> with employment falling by 872,000 people between March and May 2020.*

<sup>19</sup> [Lost Work 2.0 Report: The impacts of the pandemic on creatives of colour and First Nations creatives](#)

<sup>20</sup> [NAVA](#)

2. *Invest in professional development for underrepresented creatives in conjunction with peak and industry service organisations.*
  3. *Protect artist rights and prevent creative exploitation by developing a national policy on artist award rates (for all art forms) and payments for a range of creative activities (including but not limited to artwork loans, artwork commissions, performances, public talks, teaching and workshops, independent curating, and other forms of creative labour).*
  4. *Partner with relevant private and public agencies to ensure equitable and targeted youth arts investment including engaging with youth communities that have been historically underrepresented in arts industries*
  5. *Engage key agencies to provide capacity building support for diverse creatives and groups to obtain new markets.*
  6. *Provide multi-year investment in localised, state-based and small-medium diversity-led creative organisations that supports ongoing programming and staff development.*
  7. *Support multi-year investment in fellowships and job programs that allow for long-term employment and job security for individual artists.*
  8. *Look at initiatives such as Creative New Zealand’s ‘Remuneration Policy for Artists and Arts Practitioners’ and Ireland’s ‘Basic Income for the Arts’ to advance sustainable creative careers.*
  9. *Work with State counterparts to:*
    - *engage the TAFE network in training future artists*
    - *Strengthen socially-engaged arts practice in tertiary institutions<sup>21</sup>*
    - *extend artist residency programs across all primary and secondary schools*
- 

Regarding **NCP Goal 4:**

### **Strengthen the capacity of the cultural sector to contribute to national life, community wellbeing and the economy. (*Strong Institutions*)**

The new Federal Government, along with State and Local Government counterparts, must address the closed loop of professional and content development that currently dominates our sector and establish new spheres of engagement that recognise and promote new forms of cultural expression.

#### ***Supporting Diversity in Leadership***

Australia is widely celebrated as a multicultural triumph, yet according to the *Australian Human Rights Commission*, there remains significant under-representation of cultural diversity in the senior leadership of Australian organisations. Our society does not yet appear to be making the most of its diverse talents.<sup>22</sup>

Change necessitates that we have a conversation about leadership. Currently there are few leaders, managers and producers employed that hold the cultural knowledge necessary to drive this change. *Diversity Arts Australia’s (DARTS) ‘Shifting the Balance’* report outlines discrepancies between the high population of Australians who are from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background,<sup>23</sup> the high rates of CALD participation in the creative sector,<sup>24</sup> and the low levels of representation of CALD people in the Australian creative sector, including decision-makers.<sup>25</sup> Qualitative research conducted by DARTS (2018) indicates that many organisations within the creative sector are perceived as presenting a significant barrier to CALD artists seeking to access funding, mentorship and support for developing their new work<sup>26</sup>. Startlingly, approximately half (51%) of the major cultural organisations had no CALD

---

<sup>21</sup> i.e. support the RMIT Centre for Arts and Social Transformation (CAST) model and *re-establish the Centre for Cultural Partnerships (VCA) model*

<sup>22</sup> *Leading for Change: A Blueprint for Cultural Diversity and Inclusive Leadership Revisited* (2018)

<sup>23</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016

<sup>24</sup> (Australia Council for the Arts, 2017)

<sup>25</sup> (Kim Ho, 2017; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2016; Screen Australia, 2016)

<sup>26</sup> *Diversity Arts Australia’s (DARTS) ‘Shifting the Balance’* 2019

representation at the leadership level; only 9% of the 1,980 leaders of our major cultural institutions are CALD Australians; and Non-CALD Australians are nine times more likely to occupy cultural leadership roles than CALD Australians.<sup>27</sup>

What's needed is the provision of structured opportunities for our diverse artists and cultural leaders to improve creative capacity over time. If the Federal Government is committed to strengthening the cultural sector, advancement of cultural equity and full participation towards a creative, healthy and prosperous society, it should not shy away from this challenge and not skimp on the resources required to make this change.

### ***Supporting Grass-roots Multicultural festivals***

The contribution of Australia's multicultural festivals and events are fundamental to building a robust and healthy multicultural society. Directly and indirectly, they engage hundreds of thousands of people and deliver a wide range of cultural, social, educational economic outcomes and are an important entry point for careers in creative sector - building a society that respects and celebrates our diversity as our greatest asset .

MAV plays a key role in supporting and auspicing diverse community groups for support to run festivals and events across Victoria. Communities dedicate countless volunteer hours over many years to keep their respective events running on dwindling funds. After many failed attempts to secure funds and navigate complex application processes, many groups have simply given up trying.

MAV believes that governments at all levels are not placing enough value on the role of these festivals and events in building community capacity, promoting social cohesion, community harmony and addressing racism.

MAV calls for a full cross-government commitment to recognise the values of our diverse communities, their diasporic relationships and begin a long-range effort to build the cultural vitality of our communities. We encourage the Federal Government to work with State counterparts and key bodies, such as MAV and ethnic communities councils, to build strategic partnerships that can more efficiently deliver sustainable community development programs to attain clear social, economic, and environmental objectives.

### ***Adopting a Multi-Agency Commitment***

Politicians of many persuasions and portfolios refer to the instrumental benefits of the arts, though their respective budgets rarely go anywhere near to matching their apparent level of conviction. Collaborative partnerships with other agencies and areas of government towards social issues need to be encouraged, but if the goal is real positive change in our society, social change initiatives can't afford to tinker at the margins of entrenched issues and become cultural Band-Aid solutions.

If a National Cultural Policy is to be a relevant and effective national framework, it needs to be central to the encouragement, collaboration and maximisation of our collective cultural, social and economic potential. Such an ambition, cognisant of all the necessary working parts that comprise our cultural ecosystem (capacity-building, creative development and presentation, communities of practice, audiences, education and training, career development, organisation development, markets) requires a big heart and a set of relationships that the Office for the Arts only partially has or, has taken for granted.

An effective National Cultural Policy will need inter-departmental, inter-government, and inter-agency commitment at the highest level, long-range strategic planning, deep consultation and realistic multi-year funding. Initiatives such as the *South West Creative Industries Strategy* and *Sustaining Creative Workers* in Victoria are demonstrative of the impact of government, the community and arts bodies working together. The Arts portfolios and agencies can also learn a great deal from organisations such as *VicHealth* which have activated action plans that focus on building health through arts and new media to improve social connection and participation.

### ***Engaging three tiers of government***

With local government being the grass-roots tier, holding a large percentage of cultural infrastructure, a National Cultural Policy needs to recognise the role of Councils as integral to the increase of creative

---

<sup>27</sup> Diversity Arts Australia's (DARTS) 'Shifting the Balance' 2019

capacity and improved diversity across the Country. Rarely are resources applied sufficiently by municipalities to deeply engage with their respective diverse communities.

Currently, at the local level, there is a real risk of the current model of content development and distribution atrophying. A glance at the touring products currently on offer, or how our local performing arts centres, public galleries and council arts programs are structured and staffed will give you an indication of how much further we need to go to attain content and participation levels that reflect our diversity.

A 3-tiered strategic approach (local, state and federal) is needed to address this longstanding gap by providing longer-term and reliable resources in order to enable cultural organisations to increase engagement, capacity and content in collaboration with our many diverse communities across the country.

---

#### *POLICY OPPORTUNITIES*

- 1. Increase creative leadership programs across the sector with incentives for organisations of varying scale and type to participate.*
  - 2. Support Initiatives to support diverse arts leaders across government portfolios particularly but not limited to DFAT, AusTrade, Education, Home Affairs, Social Services, Communications and the Arts, the Australia Council.*
  - 3. Accountability for diversity, equity and inclusion: All recipients of public funding be accountable for diversity measures across all funded areas including governance*
  - 4. Work with Business and Education to train leaders of the future.*
  - 5. Work with State and Local Government to strategic support local festivals and events (inc. multi-year programs of support).*
  - 6. Form Interdepartmental Working Groups across government to meet a range of instrumental objectives through arts and culture.*
  - 7. Establish a set of new Cultural Diversity Liaison roles at the local government level in partnership with State and Local government.*
  - 8. Work with States and tertiary institutions to strengthen socially-engaged arts practice.<sup>28</sup>*
  - 9. Invest in longitudinal research to gather data and analyses on the impact and role of arts and cultural practice across a range of social indicators.*
- 

Regarding **NCP Goal 5**:

### **Ensure Australian creativity thrives here and abroad in the digitally enabled 21st century. (*Reaching the Audience*)**

Without neglecting the importance of gathering in physical spaces to engage in culture, MAV recognises the increasing role of emerging technologies in innovation and in building community in physical and virtual spaces. Technology is a means rather than an end. Access to technology and related knowledge must go hand in hand with democratisation of culture – increased access and participation in the arts and culture.

In response to the restrictions, there was some capacity for creatives and organisations to move online to try and maintaining a career (delivering workshops, livestream performance, presenting new digital content). MAV's online programs such as *Distance Between Us*, *Shelter*, and *Ahead of the Curve* allowed creatives to fund new platforms to support their practice – in some cases, these new artforms engaged new cohorts of creatives who previously had not been able to audiences for their work. However, many were less able to transition, with a range of barriers experienced including lack of access to digital

---

<sup>28</sup> i.e. support the RMIT Centre for Arts and Social Transformation (CAST) model and *re-establish the Centre for Cultural Partnerships (VCA) model*

connectivity, lack of resourcing to create or move content to the digital space, lack of suitability of the medium of art to the digital space, and issues regarding access by the audience.<sup>29</sup>

The challenge is that Innovation needs to acknowledge everyone has an entitlement to participate in the culture of society and to contribute to the development of the nation's rich cultural life. Any policy development around creative innovation, and in particular emerging technologies, must consider how it will be relevant and accessible to all Australians. Again, the question of who may be excluded is critical.

---

*POLICY OPPORTUNITIES*

1. Invest in digital technology capacity building at the grass-roots community level to improve content development and distribution.
  2. Invest in access and capacity building when investing in emerging technologies and program models such as *Distance Between Us*, *Shelter*, and *Ahead of the Curve*.
- 

Submitted by MAV Co-CEOs:

**Andy Miller:** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Zii Nzira:** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

---

<sup>29</sup> [Parliament of Australia - The Impact of COVID-19 on the Arts](#)