



## Alysha Herrmann

### National Cultural Policy Submission August 2022

#### 1. Are you submitting this submission (select all that apply):

X as an artist

X as an individual

#### About me:

I am a proud parent, daughter of regional Australia, writer, performance maker, creative producer and community organiser. I make performances, installations, experiences, presentations, poetry, essays, digital exchanges, and small moments of connection in public places. Once upon a time I was a disconnected and very angry high-school dropout & teenage parent who thought the arts was a waste of time and money: <https://griffithreview.com/articles/not-for-me/>

My work is grounded in Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) practice, and I am dedicated to nurturing opportunities for regional communities and emerging artists to connect, create and experiment. Because my work is with community and often with young people, it is most often thrown into the boxes labelled “engagement” or “audiences”, as though these words are somehow big enough to contain the raw and raging capacity of the arts to imagine and build new futures.

I work in the regions where arts infrastructure is patchy or non-existent, where reputation and the relationships we build are everything and where city companies frequently parachute in to bring us what they think we need, with no consideration for our own artistic voices, courage, needs, or vision. Where sport is often king and where public transport is so lacking that I bought a KIA Grand Carnival in 2010 to make sure I always had spare seats to transport artists, young people, and community safely home.

I am the mother of two children, an 8year old and a 19year old. They are my collaborators and co-conspirators and future cultural and community leaders. They, along with all the young people I collaborate with every year, shape the futures I want to build.

Regional Australia is my home, my heart, my art, my future. Young people teach me more than I ever teach them. My community(ies) deserves the best of me, and the best of a National Cultural Policy of vision and commitment.

#### 2. 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:** Too many First Nations artists are being asked to be all things to all people without proper and fair remuneration. The unpaid labour contributed by First Nations artists, often while simultaneously navigating hostile and unsafe institutions, has to be a



consideration in any future planning. We need to demand more from any organisations with ongoing funding. Watered down quotas are not enough. Tokenistic Reconciliation Plans are not enough. We need paid leadership roles and paid and long-term collaborations that prioritise First Nations expertise.

**A Place for Every Story:** A place for every story must include children \*and\* young people as artists and creators, not merely audiences (or content for adult artists to exploit). Children and young people also need to be recognised as distinct from one another in their creative needs and expectations, rather than being constantly lumped together as a single category. This conversation also cannot be separate from the challenges faced by our education systems. In regional contexts in South Australia, senior drama, music, and art classes are largely disappearing, this will shape the future stories we might not get to tell. Advocacy for arts education at every level is critical. Alongside this, a robust youth arts framework that is enabled by dedicated (quarantined) youth arts funding is necessary for the future of artists like me, who thought the arts was a waste of time and money until I accidentally stumbled into a youth arts project for teen mums.

**Centrality of the Artist:** Art is work and artists are workers. Our work should be valued with fair pay and working conditions, including sick pay, holiday pay and super and I echo the sentiments of Theatre Network of Australia's National Cultural Policy Submission in this area. Greater security and support for freelance/independent artists who are taking (most of) the risks in our ecosystem.

**Strong Institutions:** Have succession plans that pro-actively build courage, creative risk-taking and imagine new futures (not just replicate the status-quo). Cycles of death and rebirth are normal, but the decimation of so many organisations, without the support structures to nurture new ones (including funding streams appropriate to this) weakens all of us.

**Reaching the Audience:** Invest in a Young People and Culture Framework, this should be a central theme of any National Cultural Policy (and deserves its own pillar). Even for companies who do not create work for children and young people, without an arts engaged next generation, we risk not developing artists or audiences for the future.

**3. 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:** We all live and work on unceded land. How can we all pay the rent and consider our interconnected impacts together?

**A Place for Every Story:** Regional artists face a cocktail of additional barriers to accessing funding, capacity building, networks, mentors, training and opportunities. Our needs are different and the responses to our needs also need to be different. I want to see more regional work produced in, by, from regional Australia (we are not just your audience).

**Centrality of the Artist:** Basic income scheme for artists and arts workers. Incentives for arts and non-arts organisations to have artists on the payroll working *as* artists. Art prizes,



fellowships, grants etc to be tax exempt. Australia Council funds restored back to 2013 levels as a baseline and adjusted for inflation at a minimum. These actions will provide opportunities for me as an artist, and a future for the young artists I work with and nurture.

**Strong Institutions:** Reimagining formal structures (in particular incorporated associations and companies limited by guarantee with volunteer boards) to better enable flexibility and artistic leadership. I want to see more regional organisations *based in* regional locations with their leadership teams living and working from the regions (in the same way I want to see First Nations organisations led by First Nations people).

**Reaching the Audience:** The projects I have seen which have the biggest impacts were not always the ones with the largest audiences. How can our funding models/frameworks shift away from a “bums on seats” mentality/pressure to recognise a broader understanding of impact and audience development (especially in regional communities where the number of people we can reach is already smaller). Arts + health + work + life + community + regions + education = it’s all connected, and we need to think and operate in interconnected ways.

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

As a regional artist, the consideration of [digital access](#) is critical to me. This means education and building digital literacy, improved infrastructure, incentives for city-based organisations to collaborate with and embed regional artists as staff and collaborators.

The consideration of climate change, and the real effects this will have on how we live and work and make art over the coming decade.

Artist in residence models embedded into non-arts organisations, in particular local councils and schools.

DID I SAY A ROBUST AND RESOURCED YOUTH ARTS FRAMEWORK? I just want to be really, really clear this belongs everywhere, under every pillar, threaded into how we imagine and build the future. What is our 200year vision?

#### **5. How would you like us to attribute your words?**

I give permission for this submission to be published and attributed to me, Alysha Herrmann.

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