

National Cultural Policy Submission Template

Anonymous

Submitted: As an individual

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

First Nations principles are crucial to the success of a national cultural policy and should underpin and be integrated across the entire 5 pillars instead of being separated – recognising the integral role of culture to wellbeing, community and Country.

First Nations contemporary art is being recognised by major art museums and biennials across the world. Access to strategic, quick response grant programs would enable artists to make the most of these opportunities.

There is a great need to develop career pathways for First Nations professionals, creatives and community leaders from the junior levels to sector leaders. This will only happen with long term, considered support. Appropriate remuneration of First Nations staff, with acknowledgment of the time commitment of community responsibilities is essential.

A Place for Every Story

Our national cultural history as currently documented is patchy and biased. For example, women artists remain under represented in our major collections, exhibitions and publications. We need to be seeing many more women artists in the 20th century rooms of our state and national art galleries, in our art history texts and in our school curricula, so that the next generation grows up with a more balanced picture of our national art history.

These issues of bias in our cultural institutions don't only affect women: they affect people of colour, First Nations artists, artists with a disability, and those who are non-binary.

In addition, there is no mention of heritage and history in the national cultural policy framing documents – historical work is now chronically underfunded across the sector, from large to small organisations, and many contributions are in danger of being forgotten – knowing and honour our past will help us formulate a better future.

The Centrality of the Artist

Arts education, from childhood to university, should be cherished and recognised as essential to a fully rounded life, as a fundamental right and a civic expectation. Universities and university art museums are vital to Australia's cultural ecology, uniquely positioned to bridge public, scholarly and creative spheres, while having oversight of significant cultural estate. They are creative laboratories for new research, creation, education, experimentation, innovation and professional development that can support a thriving arts and cultural sector. A mechanism for cross-portfolio approaches at a federal level between Arts and Education is essential.

The decline in real wages, and an increase in precarious employment conditions has been devastating for arts workers over the past few decades in particular. Fair pay and conditions are basic expectations that should result from this policy.

Strong Institutions

We need to reassert that culture holds a central place in contemporary life and contemporary democracy, as part of our national identity – with the arts as publicly funded and radically accessible, not simply just a private preference.

The Australia Council, and organisations like the ABC, need to be properly supported to do their jobs. Arms-length and peer review administration are crucial aspects of the Australia Council's activities. The punitive and nonsensical efficiency dividends that the national cultural institutions have been subjected to need to be eliminated so that these institutions can also do their jobs in preserving and presenting our nation's cultural history.

Reaching the Audience

The cultural sector can engage with a broad audience, without being simply populist.

Audience numbers are not the whole story of the engagement with art in this country, and the figures lock large institutions into unrealistic growth models. The most innovative and groundbreaking work inevitably happens in smaller spaces first, where ideas are tested and risks taken. We need to recognise and support both ends of the spectrum.

We need government at all levels to understand the role we can play in shaping national values and sentiment, and how important collective and democratic ideals are expressed in cultural forms.

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:

All five pillars are crucial to my practice.

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

New pillars on Education and History