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NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY SUBMISSION TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

Congratulations on moving so quickly to restore the arts to the national agenda and to invite comment on a long overdue National Cultural Policy.

A FEDERAL PERCENT FOR ART POLICY

Visual artists are often the most vulnerable of our artists. However, a number of very positive initiatives can assist.

PERCENT FOR ART

I propose that the Government introduce a federal Percent for Art Policy. These exist in many parts of the world-in Europe, the USA and a number of Scandinavian countries, delivering very real benefits to both artists and the broader community. Closer to home, Western Australia has had a highly successful scheme of this kind for thirty years. It is a national exemplar and a model to draw upon in establishing a national scheme. (Note that the WA Scheme was initiated by a Labor Government but has continued to thrive under a succession of governments, both Liberal and Labor). It continues to very well received by the general public, whilst delivering very real economic benefits to artists, fabricators and suppliers. In some instances, it has led to industry developing new products and processes from collaboration with 'lateral thinking' artists.

HOW PERCENT FOR ART WORKS

Schemes of this kind are tied to government capital works programs with a small percentage of the construction budget, usually 1-2 percent, being allocated to the commissioning of an artwork/s for a public building. This may be for a stand- alone artwork or be integrated into the fabric of the building or its landscaped surrounds. The artist works closely with the design team (architect, landscape designer, client department, project manager etc) to achieve a successful outcome. Buildings include schools, TAFE colleges, hospitals, courthouses, police and fire stations, cultural, child and aged care facilities and more.

Benefits include:

- Lively, more interesting and accessible public buildings
- Income and stimulating, free-lance employment for artists (free of the arts grants)
- Opportunities for Australia's visual artist to work at a larger scale
- Access of the Australian public to contemporary Australian art in the places they work and live
- Collaboration between visual artists and the design and construction industry

- Opportunities for First Nations/Indigenous artists
- Spin offs for industry -fabricators and suppliers
- Private sector/developer engagement of artists
- Kudos for government

ANCILLARY BENEFITS TO THE ARTS & THE ARTS MINISTER

As the percentage comes out of the overall construction budget for each building, it is not a line item that the Arts Minister has to justify, when competing with other portfolios at the 'Budget Table!'. Rather, it is a program and a way of designing public buildings and adding to the quality of these, achieved through a partnership and 'across/whole of government' approach. Note that all building budgets encompass a certain amount for aesthetic treatments and finishes. A commissioned artwork becomes one of these aesthetic finishes.

Note that in Western Australia, Indigenous artists have been significant beneficiaries, there work becomes more visible and meaningful to the wider community.

INDIGENOUS CULTURAL CENTRES-MORE RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE GREATER RETURNS

Indigenous Cultural Centres are grossly underfunded, yet are some of the longest lasting and most stable Indigenous organisations- including their artist boards, in this country. They are not only facilitators of a vast array of opportunities and support systems for Indigenous artists, they are trainers and employers. Also these centres are often the social glue that helps Indigenous communities heal and hold together, whilst at the same time delivering real and sustainable economic benefits. Their staff often burn out because of the lack of resources to employ the number of people actually needed, for them to maximise opportunities and run effectively. Whilst good governance is essential, the constant grind for these organisations of having to prepare annual grant applications for much of their funding is wasteful of energy and precious human resources. As many are located in the more remote parts of the country, there are additional challenges related to this.

Increase there funding and release them from annual grind. Mainstream their role and move them to a longer lasting funding cycle.

INVESTMENT IN THE VISUAL ARTS SECTOR RE SUPERANNUATION HOLDINGS

Revisit the scheme where superannuation investment via the purchase of artworks was seen as a viable investment. Artists and galleries (critical markets for artists) were severely impacted by this decision. Reintroduce it. There are ways that this can be achieved constructively and rationally, to benefit the visual arts sector. Also avoid the ludicrous requirement where if you did invest in Australian art you were required to house this art in a building other than your primary dwelling/home. Note, that nobody is required to house their share certificates in a building away from their home! This rule itself was a disincentive to the small and medium investor.