



22<sup>nd</sup> August 2022

**Submitted: On behalf of a for-profit arts business**

### Cultural Policy Submission

I am the Artistic Director of The Queanbeyan Performing Arts Centre, a regional PAC. Through the pandemic we have struggled to stay open, with cancellations and postponements and low ticket sales. This is an ongoing problem, and the effects of this pandemic will take years to resolve. Venues must be supported so that we can continue to program local, diverse, work, and continue to grow audiences. Large scale touring works that are coming out of our major cities are great, but for most regional venues, the risk in programming these works is huge. They are expensive, both the purchase cost as well as the venue costs. It simply isn't possible to make our money back from a few shows.

One solution to this is for venues to produce their own work. This provides vital opportunities for local artists at all stages of their careers and contributes to the ecology of the arts in our regions. Unfortunately, with the competitive nature of funding in Australia, there is limited assistance available to regional venues to assist with costs associated with staging work, including paying artists. It is essential that we make it possible for artists to remain in the regions so that they can mentor and support early career artists to develop skills.

The last few years have been very hard on the whole industry, but the impact on venues has been huge. It is essential that funding and policies are put in place to support small to medium sized venues to ensure the ongoing health and growth of the sector. There is a disconnect between the work that is funded and the work that will sell, and this creates huge issues for venues. We purchase work that covers the costs for the artists and the companies, but unless there is an audience for it the venues end up losing money. More support for venue is essential.

While it is essential to promote the creation of diverse work and to centre first nations artists, there is a lot of work that needs to be done to make sure that we have an audience for the work being supported, and that venues are not taken on a disproportionate percentage of risk.

Part of this comes from putting a value on creativity, culture and the arts, something which has been eroded over time by governments that couldn't see the huge benefits, both social and economic, of making the arts and culture a cornerstone of our education system. We are not teaching people that the arts are for everyone. It is seen as elite, which it isn't. It is



storytelling, in all its' forms, whether dance, music, visual arts, theatre circus- any of the multitude of ways we make art, and storytelling is accessible, and it's for everyone.

Until we can create a society where the arts are valued, we will continue to face dwindling audience numbers, requiring ongoing subsidies to survive.

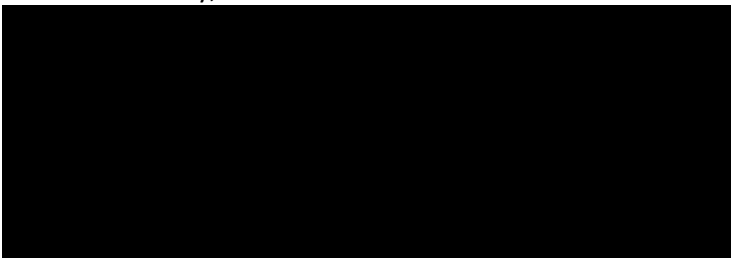
Participation in the arts as children teaches you how to work as a team- and the goal isn't to win, it's to work together to create. This is as important, if not more, than participation in sports, because the arts are inclusive. As the mother of a disabled child, the number of sports programs offered by his primary school that he couldn't participate in was depressing. Where are the programs involving children in music, and art, and drama? These programs aren't just for kids wanting a career in the arts, any more than the cricket clinics are only for future professional cricket players.

Having a healthy children's theatre sector is vital to the ongoing growth of the arts in our country and giving children and families access to affordable theatre is essential.

Theatre is a fantastic way to educate kids, but it must be more than that, because what it teaches is more than what is contained within the story. It teaches focus, and respect, it is a way to learn about empathy and how to use your imagination.

Introducing diverse and first nations theatre experiences for children will ensure the future of audiences, and subsequently venues, in Australia.

Yours sincerely,



Jordan Best

Artistic Director/Program Manager

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