




National Cultural Policy Submission – Marrugeku Inc

About Us

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| Organisation: | Marrugeku Inc |
| Submission: | Made on behalf of Marrugeku's Board and Management Team |
| Contact details: |  |

Marrugeku is an unparalleled presence in Australia today, dedicated to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians working together to develop new dance languages that are restless, transformative and unwavering. Marrugeku builds bridges and breaks down walls between urban and remote dance communities, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and between local and global situations. Our works are created out of urgent and insurgent reciprocities, believing, on our watch, we face major change in Indigenous Australia and that telling stories together is one of the simplest and hardest things we can do.

Marrugeku is led by co-artistic directors: choreographer/dancer Dalisa Pigram and director/dramaturg Rachael Swain. Working together for 27 years, they co-conceive and facilitate Marrugeku's productions and research laboratories, introducing audiences to the unique and potent structures of Indigenous knowledge systems and the compelling experience of intercultural performance. Marrugeku's performers come from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, collaborating to co-create each production. Marrugeku's patron is Yawuru law man and national reconciliation advocate Patrick Dodson.

Working from our bicoastal operations in the remote town of Broome Western Australia and the urban Centre of Carriageworks, Sydney, Marrugeku harnesses the dynamic of performance exchange drawn from remote, urban, intercultural and trans-Indigenous approaches to expand the possibilities of contemporary dance. Our productions tour throughout urban and remote Australia, to other Indigenous contexts internationally and throughout the world.

Submission

PILLAR ONE: First Nations - Recognising and respecting the crucial place of these stories at the centre of our arts and culture.

- Strengthen the First Nations pillar of the policy to move beyond “recognise and celebrate” to “invest, implement and sustain”
- Self-determination must be an embedded principle in all First Nations programs and initiatives.
- First Nations performing arts organisations incubate early-career talent and emerging companies and produce independents. To achieve the goal of producing and presenting more First Nations performance work we must strengthen the First Nations performing arts organisations to deliver this critical role.
- Acknowledging the importance of the Voice to Parliament and that this must be given a cultural dimension to ensure it does not become another sterile legislative mechanism but becomes a living



and developing process reflective of all aspects of society.

- Ensure the widest possible opportunity for First Nations people to learn or re-learn the languages of their respective nations and where possible to extend that opportunity to all school children of every background in Australia today.
- A dedicated First Nations Performing Arts Commissioning Fund is created for First Nations performing artists and organisations.
- That formal and informal protocols of intellectual property (IICP) and the use of heritage material and objects are enshrined in all areas of cultural dealings with and by First Nations peoples.
- Pilot program to identify and develop regionally based, and on Country, First Nations producers and presenters.
- Create pathways and resources (including bridging funding) to prepare emerging companies for multi-year funding.

PILLAR TWO: A Place for Every Story - Create opportunities for all Australians to participate in and contribute to arts and culture.

- Policy must reflect our cultural complexity and give voice to all Australians from First Nations through settler European communities to more recent arrivals from other parts of the globe.
- Make clear distinction as to the use of the terms: arts and culture. What does it mean "participate in and contribute to culture?" To participate in and contribute to the arts is relatively clear. To participate in culture is rather like saying to participate in being human.
- Make clear what are the barriers for full participation?
- The development of the arts in regional Australia and the outlying suburbs of our cities should embody principles of equity and access to ensure the opportunity for Australians to participate in and enjoy the arts in communities is increased and sustained.
- Provide resources to establish, maintain, and deliver, comprehensive inclusion strategies and access services. Emphasis on access must include the development of effective opportunities to participate in the arts for Australians identifying as living with disabilities and Australians in disadvantaged circumstances.
- Special emphasis on the participation of young people in the arts and the development of arts of interest to young Australians, and in support and peer assessment processes.
- New works or reaching a new audience can be risky and expensive. Enable innovation, adaptation, and new market reach. Ensure there is support and investment available for art makers and presenters to take artistic, creative, and business risks to develop new works, practices, processes, platforms, and audiences. Support the development of artistic, creative, and business skills and capabilities, processes, and infrastructure to minimise and manage risk.

PILLAR THREE: The Centrality of the Artist - Support skilled, diverse ecologies of artists and organisations.

- National support of arts and heritage must be based on excellence and maximise the opportunities for Australians to fully develop their talent and to share it with other Australians and the world.
- Recognise the need to support experienced artists and develop strategies which make it possible for artists and arts workers enjoy sustainable living and working conditions equally in urban and regional and remote Australia.



- Formulate policy to maximise employment in arts and culture, including training for employment in these areas and support which enables talent to be developed into a career as well as the transition from education and training to work and programs for mentoring emerging artists.
- Emphasis to programs to facilitate the development of, and access to training and retraining options for artists and arts workers in mid-career.
- Recognise that artists and arts workers earn their living through a range of mechanisms in any year, from casual work to entrepreneurial activity and in the gig economy. A policy should support workers in the arts industry and protect and advance their individual rights, employment conditions and entitlements.

PILLAR FOUR: Strong Institutions - Strengthen the capacity of the creative sector to deliver benefits to Australians.

- A new cultural policy requires a revolution in the relationship between the three tiers of government in support of the arts and culture sectors. There is a need to eliminate competition in overlap and to develop genuine consultative processes and deliberative mechanisms among federal, state and local government to create a genuinely national spectrum of support.
- Enhance the overall level of investment in the sector and maintain it beyond the electoral cycle. This would allow for sustainable rebuilding of capability within the sector, the scaffold to support and nurture ongoing development of artists and artform, and an ability to deliver on commitments to inclusion, equity, accessibility, and diversity. This approach should include:
 - return federal funding to the arts, at a minimum, to reach pre-2012 levels, indexed to 2022
 - longer term funding arrangements across the sector to enable long-term strategic planning
 - pathways for smaller organisations to grow their level of support
 - an appreciation of the specific challenges in regional areas to attract, develop and retain workforces
 - the ability for multi-year funded organisations to seek project-based funding for strategic projects, developing and enhancing organisational capability with broad sector reach
 - funds for programs with long-term benefits for the sector (artists, participants, audiences) that extend past their premiere season or may not have any presentation outcome
 - supporting activities and contexts that allow for risk-taking to create space for innovation (art making is very exposing and vulnerable and requires specific contexts that are private and consistent)
 - a wide range of measures aimed at harnessing substantial private investment in the arts and cultural sectors.
- There needs to be a strong commitment to access, equity, education, excellence and innovation as foundation principles for cultural policy and that healthy arts and culture sectors are indicative of a healthy democracy.
- Develop policies that provide greater opportunity and capacity for the community to discover, create and enjoy the arts at the local, regional, state and national level.
- Continue to maintain an independent voice at national level in policy development, delivery of support for new and existing arts programs, act as an advocate for the arts and work closely with arts organisations and individual artists.
- There needs to be a thorough review of arts training across the tertiary education sector in order to determine what is really required in those areas and where

PILLAR FIVE: Reaching the Audience - Create and strengthen opportunities for all Australians to benefit from arts and culture

- Create a National Audience Development Strategy and implementation plan to:
 - provide organisations a framework to develop individual development plans.



- Develop an 'Audience Finder' online resource to access national insights and audience development tools
- Create Audience Development measurement tools that are not based on numbers alone.
- Through adequate ongoing support, empower a broad range of arts organisations and independent artists practitioners to continue their work providing a diverse offering of performance, immersion, education, celebration and participation within the broadest possible context of Australian communities.
- Resource arts organisations to have the infrastructure and skills to leverage new technologies effectively, efficiently, and safely. The power of digital tools to maximise connectivity with audiences, students and other participants in the arts sector was demonstrated throughout the pandemic. However, this is challenging to maintain, and requires investment and expertise. Support to collaborate with experts in the field, such as in the screen sector, as well as to manage risks such as cyber security, is critical to the ongoing exploration, development, and use of technology.
- Invest in existing cultural spaces and develop new, much needed performance venues which include specialist spaces to support the needs of individual communities. This should include a long-term commitment to programming investment to ensure their ongoing success and relevance.
- Provide ongoing, targeted support for a national, integrated and sustainable touring network that sees works of all scales performed across Australia, and particularly outside Melbourne and Sydney, including securing multiyear programming investment for venues managed through Local Government. These venues are critical to sustainable touring networks for companies of all sizes and enable the breadth of work created in Australia to be seen on stages locally, regionally and remotely.
- Invest and underwrite the export of Australian performance and artist exchange into international markets that have cultural and economic relevance. This expands the power of valuable soft diplomacy whilst recognising that there is demonstrable market demand and meaningful history with Europe and North America.

Conclusion: Creative economy - Build sustainable, networked and globally recognised creative industries

To develop a truly creative economy in Australia, the tax and welfare systems need to be responsive to the needs of students and workers in arts and cultural sector. They should reflect the varied nature of artists' income generation within years and over different years.

We must recognise that technological change is a powerful driver of content responsible for growing new media, art forms and new creative industries. Therefore it is vital to support new media forms which complement traditional ways of presenting our culture and art and will pursue opportunities to enlarge their presentation in digital media.

We seek to initiate a wide range of measures aimed at harnessing substantial private investment in the arts and heritage sectors.

Government of all stripes need to play a role in encouraging and coordinating the development of private and corporate patronage and sponsorship of arts and culture to maximise the social resources provided by this sector.

Finally, as society and the economy change and develop, the economic and employment significance of the arts and creative industries must be recognised. commit to developing industry and export assistance programs in ways which are appropriate for these industries.