<u>**National Cultural Policy Submission**</u>

My name is Mish Grigor, I write to you as an artist and Co-Director of APHIDS.

APHIDS is a 27-year-old artist-led not-for-profit organisation based in Melbourne. We produce art works that are feminist, intersectional, angry and funny. Collaborative and future focused, APHIDS is led by co-directors Mish Grigor Lara Thoms, alongside executive director Anna Nalpantidis. APHIDS strives to find new ways to tell stories - creating experiences for audiences that are accessible yet rigorous in concept, content and form.

Past APHIDS works have been presented in major venues/events in every state and territory in Australia, from the Sydney Opera House to the Malthouse to the Adelaide Biennial. They have toured the world and more unexpected places —galleries, rice fields in Japan, churches in Finland, and on digital platforms.

APHIDS has a long and rich history making art that ranges from the intimate to the large-scale and tells the urgent stories of our time. Recently, this includes *Exit Strategies* (ArtsHouse), which responds to contemporary questions around borders and monuments; *The Director* (ArtsHouse, The Sydney Opera House, and tours to Europe and India), in collaboration with a funeral director; and *A Singular Phenomenon* (The Malthouse), which brought the entire 300-person audience onto the Merlyn stage to celebrate an Australian icon. In 2021, we created *Easy Riders* (RISING Festival)*,* presented in collaboration with Melbourne-based gig economy workers, and *DESTINY,* an accompanying video work that was exhibited at ACCA and in 2022-2025 will tour nationally through Artspace.

IN BRIEF:

We support a National Cultural Policy. We would like to see long-term commitments - multi-year funding initiatives and strategic, industry-specific programs that allow artists to dream big, to think deeply, and to respond to the urgent concerns of our time.

We write to respond to some of the NCP pillars:

The Centrality of the Artist

What happens when we don't support artists to have a long career is that they will stop making art. Without enough money for them to live, and enough work for them to stay passionate about contributing to a larger cultural conversation, artists will not be artists anymore In order to meet the cost of living they will defect to other industries. The cost of this for Australians is great - we never get to experience those works that were never created. Years or decades of career experience, art form knowledge, community building, audience development and high-quality offerings are lost.

In order to fight this, we need to support young artists with an excited brain, encouraging them to make the first fledging steps into art making. We must encourage mid career artists to keep pushing themselves to refine and enhance their practice. We must treasure our senior artists and protect their legacy.

There is a saying in theatre: 'the only way home is through the show' - meaning the work must be the centre of everything. The arts is a complex ecosystem of communities, organisations, attendees, institutions, festivals, individuals and venues. At the centre of all of this must be the artists. If we support artists through sustained funding, access to space in which to make their work, skills attainment and sharing, and community building, our country will hold on to the talent that lies in so many hands.

A few key points - fellowships can be life changing for senior artists. Multi-year projects allow independent artists security and longevity of thought. Quotas work to improve diversity. Young artists need help to come out of tertiary study and into professional practice - mentoring initiatives are strong and provide additional employment for their seniors.

Strong Institutions

The Australia Council, Screen Australia, the ABC and SBS have all suffered dramatic cuts and erosion of their independence under the LNP, and this must be reversed. Artists need to be supported to develop work, and then have a place to present it. A National Portfolio approach to organisational funding of all sizes is urgently needed, including an additional investment through the Australia Council, to rebuild the crucial infrastructure of the arts and cultural industry. When we speak to partner organisations, large and small institutions in Australia are in crisis - there is a palpable sense that institutions do not have the capacity for long-term planning because they are in survival mode. We believe that an investment in the existing institutions to sure up staffing, programming, and audience development will ensure jobs ands and infrastructure are safe.

Reaching the Audience

The main thing stopping people from enjoying more art is accessibility, including geographic and financial. We don't need better marketing campaigns or even more buildings, what we need is more art, and more affordable art - when events are free or reduced price, the audiences come in droves. The more that we can offer affordable high quality arts and cultural experiences, the more diverse audiences will come to see work.

It is through careful steering, good planning, local responsiveness and global orchestration that we can ensure that we are a nation of culturally expressive, philosophically fulfilled, and emotionally mature peoples. We want an Australia that is entertained, an Australia that debates its issues with respect and gusto, where people are welcomed together to dance and sing, or to sit in quiet contemplation

over a magnificent image. We want an Australia that shares its history, its ugly parts as well as its beautiful side. We want an Australis that vibrates around the globe with passion and aliveness. This future is possible

We may use some of your words as part of the National Cultural Policy Report. If we do, how would you like us to attribute your words? (tick your choice of attribution and complete the fields if applicable)

Please attribute this submission to: **Mish Grigor, APHIDS**

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