

National Cultural Policy Submission

Moorambilla Voices

Submitted: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation

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:

1. First Nations

First Nations culture should be central to cultural policy in Australia. First nations language, spirituality, philosophy, and cultural practices could be better incorporated into the Australian vernacular, in addition to first nations music, dance and arts which are more widely recognised and celebrated.

2. A Place for Every Story

Our first nations artists, elders and communities should be supported to share their stories with cultural organisations and those organisations should be encouraged to seek them. Also, people with ethnicities originating from other countries and living in regional areas should be encouraged to share their stories and weave these into the narrative of a diverse, multicultural Australia.

3. The Centrality of the Artist

Individual artists and small, medium and major arts companies should be encouraged to partner with regional organisations so that high quality performances and education opportunities are made available to those from rural and remote areas who are traditionally underserved. These artists should be properly remunerated, accommodated and involved in the process of the art making wherever possible.

4. Strong Institutions

A cultural policy needs to ensure music education opportunities are available to all people - with a particular emphasis on those in rural and regional areas, who have limited access to cultural experiences. This will lead to the development of more artists and increased audiences and build capability and exposure to other artistic forms. Involvement in and experience of Arts provides a window to other worlds and an opportunity for greater understanding of other cultures and chance for self-realisation. We need to employ tertiary qualified educators, teaching artists in regional areas teamed with regional community networks, Australia Council, regional conservatoriums partnered with peak education and arts institutions and companies.

In our experience, schools are the starting point for cultural education and experiences for our children. Schools, particularly those in regional and rural areas, need to be better equipped to provide children with a cultural and artistic education. Schools should have access to visiting programs and organisations who can provide specialist cultural opportunities.

5. Reaching the Audience

A cultural policy needs to ensure cultural opportunities are available across Australia, particularly rural and regional areas, which are traditionally underserved.

A cultural policy that encourages artistic pursuits in the regions will also stimulate economic activity and improve community wellbeing.

Engagement in arts education improves competency and self-confidence, esteem and efficacy and provides a firm foundation and life skills to be successful in today's world.

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:

1. First Nations

[Moorambilla Voices](#) is a long standing, multi awarded regional Arts organisation with a strong connection to the indigenous people, communities and culture of North West NSW in which we operate. We make every effort to honour this cultural tradition through the use of language and connection. For example, we:

- Have a cultural compact which outlines our commitment to shared cultural understanding
- Work closely with indigenous elders and leaders from regional communities. Artists then weave the elders' stories and themes through our performing arts program
- Create artworks which use indigenous languages.

2. A Place for Every Story

[Moorambilla Voices](#) is committed to ensuring there is a place for every story. We have selected and told a different story of the landscape and country in which we operate every year for the last 17 years since inception in 2006.

We also work closely with children and young people. We offer them the opportunity to connect with artists of the highest calibre, and together the artists and children co-create outstanding works for performance that tell their stories, and the stories of the land on which they live. This means we provide a unique chance for young people in remote and regional communities to share their creative selves in an environment that celebrates their capacity.

3. The Centrality of the Artist

Since 2006 [Moorambiila Voices](#) has engaged the highest calibre of artists to work with our students. Our program supports a mentoring framework across all our associated art forms. In addition, each year our Artistic Director invites collaborating artists (including composers, photographers, choreographers, Taiko drumming and other associated artists) to attend a cultural immersion tour. The aim of this week-long activity is for the artists to meet 'on country' and to experience the culturally significant sites, the towns and the environment that have been identified as the key location for the annual program reference. This has successfully proven to inspire and inform their artistic response and their interaction with the students in the co-creation of works for performance.

4. Strong Institutions

[Moorambilla Voices](#) partners with a variety of education, arts and community organisations. Everyone goes better on a rising tide and we work to support the organisations and institutions with whom we partner to be the best they can be.

We see schools as a key institution for a strong cultural sector. Our program starts with skills development workshops in schools where we introduce and/or support local teachers with music literacy principles and greater confidence in musical activities in the classroom. Talented students are identified and invited to participate in our camps where they co-create a performance repertoire and prepare for an annual public concert.

5. Reaching the Audience

Apart from the two-year hiatus with covid, [Moorambilla Voices](#) has performed yearly Gala concerts for large audiences in western NSW and toured ensembles to major events and cities around Australia.

During COVID-19, we developed a series of high-quality, online modules that covered a variety of arts areas, aligned with current curricula. We developed these in order to give our artists employment and to create a way of engaging with our students and their communities during the COVID-19 lockdown period. We received public and national acknowledgment towards the work and love that goes into the Moorambilla region and its communities.

Moorambilla strongly believes that everyone in a regional or remote part of Australia should not be limited by education, aspirations or belief in their capacity to live a life rich in opportunities. By ensuring that Moorambilla Voices has a well-developed and focused, planned approach to its program delivery, Moorambilla continues to contribute to a brighter and more inclusive future for our regional communities and the wider Australian arts ecology.

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

We believe in the importance of good quality, accessible arts education in developing a cultural policy. If we encourage arts learning and practice in young people in our schools and education institutions, we provide the basis for both artists and audiences of the future.

Existing evidence also tells us about the clear benefits of music and artistic education programs in breaking children free of disadvantage. Many recent studies confirm the significant value of carefully planned and well taught music/arts programs in educational environments and their developmental advantages for young people; a reference list is provided at Annex A.

We support well qualified teaching artists being employed in all schools, but particularly in regional schools, where they should be properly remunerated and supported through accommodation. These teaching artists could also work in the community to create a town band, choir, dance ensemble, drama group or visual arts hub.

We would like to see an expansion of the [National Music Teacher Mentoring Program](#) to include every school in Australia and to be extended to include other arts areas.

Regional Conservatoriums should be encouraged and staffed to teach more than just contemporary music and should be supported to be engaged in schools and local community.

We would like to see more opportunities and support for the development high quality teaching artists, more collaboration between the education and arts government ministries at State/Territory and Federal levels and more opportunities for the catalysts for community and cultural consultations, that is to support the implementation of community consultation best practice.

Annex A: Reference list

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