

18 August 2022

Strong institutions: providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture.

“The only unique contribution we will ever make in this world, will be born of creativity.”
Brene Brown

NESPA is an emerging program, located in regional Victoria, that exists as a way to create true visibility in the arts. Students need to “see it, before they can be it.” In the recent past, creativity and employment in the arts industry has been marketed as a vocation for a “select and special” few. Dispelling these myths by re-writing the narrative over the lives of educators, careers teams and the young people themselves is a difficult but worthwhile journey. The North East School of Performance and Art uses vulnerability and connection to forge pathways that have not existed before.

We are all wired for connection. Recent educational research is suggesting “you have to Maslow before you can Bloom” and NESPA believes that connection is the first step towards creating the love and belonging needed for young people to feel safe enough to self-actualise. Therefore, we see NESPA as not only a strong institution but one that is vital in supporting the creative and emotional growth of the individual. Creative young people need to find their tribe. Excellence in the Arts will reveal passions and create the next change makers, storytellers and industry specialists.

Find your tribe – Find your passion – Find your true purpose

In life, your tribe takes you from exclusion to inclusion. It motivates, creates a support network, a crash mat for the hard days and an audience for your creative ideas on your good days. This network of inclusivity fosters resilience and worthiness. In a world where 70% of people accessing Self Esteem test in Australia say that they are not good enough for anyone. We owe it to future generations to do what we can to take risks, make bold choices and create that change we want to see in the world.

Most young people know what they are passionate about – despite them telling you they do not. There are many reasons for a young person to ignore their passions. Put simply, they are told from early on that they will not make money in the arts, that creative employment equals lifelong starvation. They are deterred on a daily basis by outdated perceptions. NESPA exists to re-write the wrong. It dares to suggest to students that the benefits of following your passion will actually outweigh the cost. It grabs the hands of young people to carve that pathway. NESPA will change the lens. We meet young people where they are, doing what they love. It holds them accountable to their passions, encourage focus and in turn, boosts productivity. This support will educate all but for some, will actually save their lives.

Simply put, NESPA is a specialty arts program broken into 4 disciplines - theatre, music, art and dance. We encourage a focus in two of them. Once a young person goes through year 7 trying all the arts offered, they begin the journey of following that artistic calling through to year 12 graduation. This produces a generation of young people dedicated to the process of creative expression. They become the injection of creativity we need in a post pandemic world.

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NESPA strongly encourages students to participate in anchored in industry. This extracurricular activity supports students to work alongside industry professionals. We have partnered with the careers team at Wodonga Senior Secondary College to engage students and support them in their chosen creative directions by putting them in touch with specialists that will mentor them. These Industry stakeholders create opportunities to develop hands-on skills in event management, hospitality, theatre tech, gallery curation, live performance – we are only limited by our imaginations. Our first round of students have gone through inductions at our major local venues showing confidence and dedication because “When you see it, you can be it.”

All students with an interest in the arts are invited to be part of our revolution, All students will be given a seat at the table, a chance to be part of the tribe. Our guidance through the creation of “Gold standard pathways” will navigate them through tough curriculum choices. By following these suggestions, students will have access to the best that VCE and VET education have to offer. Secondly, connection with staff and the tribe will foster engagement, worthiness, creativity and lifelong learning.

The national focus on STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) rather than STEAM (including Arts) is stifling Australia’s future. Schools must embed creativity in the teaching of all subjects. The arts should be elevated to an equal footing with so-called core subjects, not just considered a soft option or an extra-curricular activity. They are the key to our future success as a nation. After the plague, comes the Renaissance.

Are we ready for it?

A paradigm shift is required. Programs like NESPA need to be supported and funded to create this shift. Perspectives need to be altered so we can truly promote cultural and creative pathways with the same enthusiasm as any other. Young people should be made aware from an early age that these are legitimate choices that can lead to a rewarding career and a rich fulfilling life. These are ‘proper jobs.’

These bold choices will spark creativity and drive innovation. This National Cultural Policy must encourage a shift in the way society - and governments - view arts and culture. This will enable:

- The creation of a generation that can think out of the box
- People who don’t shy away from innovation
- A workforce to support the coming Renaissance
- Empathy
- A future generation who have skills steeped in vulnerability and connection
- Compassion over commerce
- Further development of our Australian identity
- Improved international visibility for the arts

We need strong, funded frameworks that will support us to focus on furthering the arts in rural and regional communities. NESPA is creating something that will change the lives of so many people. A National Cultural Policy that recognises the vital work schools are doing to protect not only young people but their passions, needs to be officially recognised and supported.