

National Cultural Policy Submission

Tasmanian Government

Submitted: On behalf of government or government body

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:

First Nations

The Tasmanian Government welcomes a renewed and fresh perspective on the way in which Indigenous culture is present across all dimensions of contemporary Australia. In the Tasmanian Government's *Cultural and Creative Industries Recovery Strategy: 2020 and Beyond*, we recognise the importance of Aboriginal cultural practices and opportunities for Tasmanian Aboriginal communities to drive decision-making in those aspects of the arts and culture that engage with Tasmanian Aboriginal practice.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to new ways of working in partnership with Tasmanian Aboriginal people; building the capacity of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations; and transforming government and established practices to advance Aboriginal self-determination. In relation to cultural policy, this commitment includes developing a new Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act that seeks to include contemporary best practice regarding what constitutes Aboriginal cultural heritage; repatriation processes; permits; protection of cultural landscapes, and intangible Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The cost of borrowing objects from overseas is prohibitively high. Recent Tasmanian experience demonstrates that the cost of returning to Tasmania a single Tasmanian Aboriginal object from Europe is more than \$90 000. This is clearly beyond the capacity of any single art gallery or museum, completely out of reach for any community enterprise, and makes it entirely impossible for a community to borrow several objects at once (or even more than one every five to 10 years). A funded whole-of-government scheme to facilitate the return of cultural objects that are not currently repatriable, from overseas institutions to their original communities, led by Aboriginal people, will be critical to Australia's new cultural strategy.

The Tasmanian Government recognises the critical importance for all levels of government to continue to support capacity building and development opportunities for the Tasmanian Aboriginal creative community. Capacity building, including leadership and social enterprise within Tasmanian Aboriginal communities is critical to ensuring cultural leadership in Tasmania is diverse, effective and strong, and would benefit from meaningful national development opportunities.

A Place for Every Story

All Australian institutions are critical in enabling and sharing stories.

There already exists a range of institutions that can play a role in celebrating and sharing uniquely Australian stories and cultural content. Libraries, museums, schools, and public spaces are often the shaping nodes of delivery of culture. They play an important role in sharing stories, enabling storytellers, and connecting audiences with stories of their communities.

This pillar provides an interesting opportunity to consider the depth of intent of ‘every story’. Cultural value is not necessarily indicated by the size of the audience. We must support and make space for the telling of multiple stories that better reflect our diverse Australian community.

The central role that stories play in our education system, in our libraries and in our museums requires a commensurate commitment to providing access to the cultural wealth that is intrinsic to all Australian stories. Processes and programs that focus on the digitisation of collections, the telling and interpretation of stories in diverse locations, and inter-jurisdictional collaborations between schools and early childhood centres, cultural institutions, libraries, migrant resource centres, Aboriginal centres, health and aged care facilities, would deliver significant enhancement to community health and wellbeing, and quality of life.

A renewed focus on the activation of public and community space through the provision of opportunity for large scale, relevant and aspirational public art has significant implications in the cultural visitation market. Evidence shows repeatedly that public art is a drawcard for visitors to a region, whilst stimulating narrative perspectives on stories and histories relevant to an area. A national program that works in partnership with state and territory agencies to deliver works of scale across Australia provides opportunities not only to the cultural industries, but also to the communities within which they are placed, stimulating and activating conversations that have the capacity to evolve the multi-layered nature of Australian identity.

As a geographically isolated population, Tasmania is often left out of national discussions of importance when it comes to matters of arts and culture. For Tasmanian stories, ideas and artists to have the best opportunity at finding a place in the national discourse and to play a role in shaping Australian identity, it is important to make space for Tasmanian and regional voices and perspectives at the national level – through representation on national boards, panels and organisations – to better address the Australian tyranny of distance and the underrepresentation of remote and regional populations, and to encourage greater understanding of the nuance and uniqueness of the regional experience.

The Tasmanian Government is focused on continuing to support and tell local stories through the arts, but sees a very particular opportunity to share the Tasmanian experience of place through the screen. Maintaining the current momentum, capitalising on the interest shown from producers around the world, and continuing to support Tasmanian stories and landscape to be portrayed on the screen are all priorities for the Tasmanian Government. Despite starting from a very small base only recently, the Tasmanian production industry has grown very quickly, developing its capacity rapidly. However, there is a limiting factor here driven by the relative infrequency of production, and that is limited infrastructure investment, which is only heightened by the inherent barrier of Bass Strait. There is strong interest and support from the local screen sector for investment in new infrastructure, as the next step to progressing a sustainable and impactful local screen industry.

The Centrality of the Artist

Each jurisdiction has a significant program of arts and cultural activity that places the artist at the centre of the cultural exchange. In Tasmania, many of these opportunities are delivered through Arts Tasmania and Screen Tasmania. They are aligned with the *Cultural and Creative Industries Recovery Strategy: 2020 and Beyond* and are authorised under the terms of the *Cultural and Creative Industries Act 2017*.

Schools, libraries, museums and galleries, and community and recreation organisations also play a vital role in supporting and facilitating artistic and cultural endeavour. The considerable investment of local government across Australia in artistic opportunities and cultural infrastructure is also critically important. It is clear that all levels of government and their collective institutions have an increasing role to play in the provision of artistic and cultural opportunities of benefit to the community.

For the artist, the employment conditions that are associated with these opportunities might be described as vulnerable. Short-term contracts and suppressed rates of pay have led to a 'sweat equity' economy that provides neither stability nor reasonable remuneration for many artists. The underlying employment conditions that saw many arts and cultural workers excluded from Australian Government COVID-19 emergency highlighted this issue. In Australia's dislocated cultural economy, the benefits of artistic and creative endeavour are generally welcomed but wages are suppressed and employment conditions precarious.

Australian Government workplace reform in this sector is overdue and critical. The cultural and creative industries are, like other industries in the Australian economy, significant contributors to the national balance sheet. To that end, it should be treated like other industries with the same broad industrial structures and protections that other industries enjoy. The highly casualised nature and low remuneration of the Australian cultural industry workforce, the co-ordinated provision of 'pipeline' capacity development programs and workforce planning for artists, crew and other arts workers, and the prioritising of artistic, cultural and creative education at all levels of education all need to be addressed.

This is a key area where broad investment in data and evaluation would be of great benefit, to assist in better understanding, articulating and quantifying the social impact of the arts, the contribution artists make to community, health and mental wellbeing, as well as to the economy, and to shift the narrative around perceptions of value for arts and culture, and emphasise the importance of investment.

In Tasmania, Arts Tasmania and the Tasmanian Department of Education have collaborated to deliver an Education Residencies program to place more artists into schools. This successful partnership should be investigated as model for national delivery to provide further opportunities for artists across all art forms, and further stimulate creative engagement in formal school settings.

The centrality of the Australian artist is important in discussions about national screen policy. The Tasmanian Government has been unwavering in advocating for screen quotas to support Australian content on streaming services paid for by Australian audiences – as is the

case in other regions of the world. The easing of quotas on free to air and subscription television and continued delays in imposing quotas on streaming services has had a severe and detrimental impact for Tasmanian creatives and producers who no longer have certainty around commissions and are competing against significantly cheaper product from overseas. The highly talented Australian creative artists working in the sector are threatened by an increasingly limited number of commissioning entities and potential commissions.

Further, since quotas have eased and streaming services' impact on the market have grown significantly, there is a residual and realistic concern that the Australian audience – particularly Australian children – are not seeing their own stories, faces, accents and culture reflected on-screen. The Tasmanian Government is emphatic in our support for a strengthening of quotas on free-to-air and subscription television, and of seeing revenue derived from Australian streaming services contributing to Australian businesses and content providers. It is notable that particular formats of programming face particular challenges – notably children's content, documentaries and high-end scripted drama. A robust and platform-agnostic quota system would truly reflect centring Australian artists in the context of broadcasting regulation, rather than favouring international content.

Strong Institutions

Australian institutions in the cultural ecology are strong in many ways. Institutions are well recognised and respected by the community, are active internationally in providing avenues for cultural exchange and diplomacy, stimulate in-community discourse about possible futures, and provide an Australian face to the world and more locally attuned personalities to its communities. Our cultural institutions work together providing opportunities to all Australians to access collections wherever they might be.

One way this is done is through the agency of sector leaders that play a role in helping to consolidate data and perspectives from the industry. This helps to inform matters of policy at all levels of government. Whilst it is recognised of course that different levels of government in different jurisdictions will choose to pursue different policy agendas there is a place for enhanced co-operation across government.

The recent process, led by the Australia Council for the Arts (the Australia Council), around the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework (NPAPF) is a very good example where Australian Government and Tasmanian Government priorities were built into the process of program design and defining Key Performance Indicators. The process ensured that the strategic remit of all funding partners was central to the decision-making process. It ensured long-term in-jurisdiction strategic funding and support decisions were not undermined by an Australian Government agency or unit acting unilaterally. This has long been an issue, and progress made under the NPAPF is welcomed. We would hope this model of iterative, informed and collaborative decision-making might be applied to other programs of Australia Council support, especially in regard to organisation funding.

The importance of the NPAPF for a regional jurisdiction like Tasmania cannot be overstated. As an opportunity to promote sustainability, certainty and growth for organisations with an integral role in the State's creative ecology, and indeed in the national

ecology, the NPAPF has been critical, and the repercussions and benefits across Tasmania, particularly for engagement in the regions, have been immense.

Additionally, the role of education as a place of cultural transmission should be recognised. There should be mapping of the way education intersects with arts institutions, artists in schools, and arts programs. Art education should be part of the National Cultural Policy, exploring the many models of effective delivery with benefits across all areas of the curriculum, in addition to the core benefits of cultural awareness, artistic and creative endeavour, and a recognition of the artistic and professional skills of art teachers (across the five National Curriculum artform areas plus writing / literature, experimental arts, community arts and Aboriginal culture).

The Tasmanian Government remains focused on ensuring a sustainable future for the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG), as custodian of the State collection and a critical centre of education, research and discovery. A new strategic vision for TMAG is currently in development, to provide a roadmap for the role TMAG will continue to play and the infrastructure required to secure this crucial State institution into the future.

Reaching the Audience

Tasmania is at a significant geographic disadvantage when it comes to participating in the national cultural economy. The ‘double hop’ is the two steps that the Tasmanian cultural and creative sector must take to access new national and international markets. This challenge poses a significant cost barrier to the Tasmanian sector exporting cultural activity, and is a significant hurdle for touring cultural product to access Tasmanian markets from interstate.

While this is addressed further below (in ‘other matters’) consideration of scale for eligibility under the Freight Equalisation Scheme would go significant way in remediating this disadvantage. Continued support to address the often prohibitive costs of touring to and from regional areas would also help more productions and performances to cross the Bass Strait – ensuring Tasmania becomes a more viable destination, rather than an afterthought, on the national touring circuit, and Tasmanian productions are able to more readily reach national audiences. Audience development initiatives aimed at strengthening partnerships and reaching new markets in the Asia Pacific region, through organisations like Asialink Arts, also have the potential to provide strong benefits for Tasmanian artists.

To deal with these known barriers, many cultural enterprises have an enhanced online presence. The Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums sector (GLAM), for one, has seen significant success with the National Library of Australia’s Trove platform, which provides local, national and international access to Australian collections. Online and interactive arts and cultural activities has also stimulated audience and community engagement.

Online engagement of this type is based on functional literacy. While not limited to Tasmania, low levels of functional adult literacy pose a significant barrier for people to engage with the substantial resources of multiple collections and the broader repertoire of cultural work. Tasmania’s public library network has been instrumental in delivering programs of support and development in this space. However, this is a matter of national concern and requires urgent attention.

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:

A Place for Every Story

Tasmania is an island of stories. The Tasmanian Archives and State Library Heritage collection holds over three million heritage documents and historical items, our museums steward and preserve collections of countless artefacts (each with a unique story), and our artists (re)imagine and present stories and experiences for contemporary audiences.

These stories require spaces for them to be told, heard, experienced and researched. The cultural ecology that includes libraries, artists and arts organisations, public spaces, and local government venues requires future planning regarding access (digitisation of collections, all abilities access to venues), funding support for infrastructure development, and investment in our storytellers across all artforms and all stages of career. Direct government-to-government partnerships are the most productive way for us to invest money, intelligence and good faith to support the activation of spaces across community for the telling of our stories.

The Centrality of the Artist

The centrality of creativity across the contemporary and future workforce is imperative for a competitive and entrepreneurially focussed knowledge economy. Whilst the arts do not have a monopoly on creative thought or process, creative skills developed in the arts can be applied across the economy.

This is why arts education is so critically important. The role of arts education is not necessarily to create generations of artists (though undoubtedly, some will work in arts sectors), but to find a way to be in and to engage with the world and all aspects of life, both personal and professional.

The 'centrality of the artist' is the 'centrality of creativity'. It is creative endeavour, and the attendant skills of problem identification, communication, analysis, trial and error, reflection, problem solving and resolution that will provide Australia with the intellectual curiosity and rigour to face the challenges of our time and the future.

Strong Institutions

Strong institutions and their people require financial and employment stability and boards of governance that successfully blend creativity, arts and cultural experience, business acumen and the capacity to drive on-brand revenue generation.

Publicly funded institutions and organisations require clear strategic intersection with government, and interjurisdictional funding arrangements need a shared suite of strategic

priorities to deliver for all parties. Government to government partnerships can help to deliver this.

Reaching the Audience

As an island, access to cultural offerings can be complex. With a small comparative population and the cost barrier of Bass Strait, local audience development is critical, but the audience is also finite. The remediation of the cost barrier of cultural exporting would be a significant boon to the Tasmanian cultural industry, developing new audiences.

The important work of digitisation of collections provides important access points for audience. However, it is of itself labour and equipment intensive, expensive to deliver, and is not geared towards ready monetisation. The great digitisation project is an important national project that must be co-ordinated and funded for success.

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

The breadth of 'culture'

Despite the implied intention of a National Cultural Policy being broader than the arts, the pillars and their brief descriptions perhaps overlook the breadth of culture across the community. There is marginal applicability in the descriptors to community development, justice, and sport for example, and only tangential reference to cultural heritage, education, and health.

Culture, broadly, might be summed up as 'what we do, why we do it, and where we want to be'. This is crucial to all aspects of modern Australian life. Sequestering a discussion of culture to only the creative classes potentially diminishes its relevance. The notion that culture and creativity is broader than the arts alone must be embraced, and a true national cultural policy must deliver upon this expanded definition of culture.

Structural barriers

While a national approach to the matters considered in the pillars is welcomed, Tasmania suffers a range of structural barriers that, if addressed, would significantly benefit the cultural life of this state.

1. The application of a population-based funding formula is detrimental to Tasmania.
 - It does not allow for sustainable, targeted, and focussed practice when under these formulae, Tasmania may receive less than 3 per cent of the available population-based funding (this can apply in a range of areas, including the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy [VACS], and the Regional Arts Fund [RAF], for example).
 - Other jurisdictions including the ACT, the Northern Territory, Western Australia, and South Australia each receive less than 10 per cent of funding support based on this approach, with NSW, Victoria and Queensland receiving over 76 per cent between them (these figures are based on the recent mooted recalibration of VACS funding).
 - Providing funding support to jurisdictions at a subsistence level will hinder implementation of any national cultural policy and it is timely for blunt funding formulae to be reconsidered in terms of impact and need, sustainability and development, and partnership and progress.
2. Audience development is crucial for the Tasmanian cultural market.
 - Tasmania is hampered by cost barriers to fully and properly participate in the cultural life and markets of Australia and beyond.
 - Anecdotal evidence indicates it costs much the same to transport sculpture from Tasmania to Victoria as it does from Victoria to Singapore. A reframing of support for logistics and transport (under the Freight Equalisation Scheme, amongst other things) for the Tasmanian cultural sector exporting to the mainland, and for the mainland cultural sector importing into Tasmania, would significantly enhance Tasmania's capacity to compete on an equal footing in the Australian and international marketplace.

3. Government-to-government partnership development is the most agile, direct, and tangible way in which our governments can deliver upon shared priorities.
 - Shared priorities can be meaningfully addressed by developing inter-jurisdiction partnerships.
 - Negotiating these partnerships directly between the Australian Government and jurisdictions will provide program longevity, and an improved policy and strategy consistency across Australia.

4. Engagement with the national discourse is critical for Tasmanians to remain competitive and participate in shaping the national identity.
 - Tasmania is disadvantaged by a lack of meaningful engagement from national organisations, resulting in challenges in accessing information and services more readily available in other States, and an at times wanting collective knowledge base.
 - While Tasmania has an enviable State ecology particular to some artforms, across the board, it would be beneficial for Tasmanians to be more connected and included in the national discourse.