



SUBMISSION NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY: RECOMMENDATIONS

“A democratic society seeks to unleash the creativity of all its citizens and to celebrate the extraordinary achievements of its most gifted and dedicated.” This bold, ambitious and equitable principle was part of *Creative Australia*’s articulation of the role of the artist. As we develop our next cultural policy, this is a principle that should continue to guide us.

Test Pattern welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important work. This submission offers a set of recommendations for policy inclusion, aligning with the five pillars outlined by Minister Burke, and re-endorsing key elements of *Creative Australia*. Three appendices follow: the first, on why a national cultural policy is so critical for Australia; the second, offering three key ideas as policy centrepieces; the third, providing context and contact details.

PILLAR NO. 1

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

Not just stories, but First Nations ways of working -

From *Creative Australia*

- A nationally-accredited training package, to enhance the knowledge, flexibility and skills-base of people working in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual arts industries
- A policy framework to respect and protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ Traditional Cultural Expressions

- **Self-determination:** Provide the conditions and the resources that foster Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and self-determination; continue with patience and respect the process to establish a national Indigenous arts and cultural body; in the meantime, resource leading Indigenous organisations to carry out the high-demand advocacy and sector development work expected of them
- **Values:** Take inspiration from the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Strategy for South Australia* whose starting point is “the creation of a culturally safe South Australian arts sector that is well informed and which honours and values Aboriginal arts and cultures both for its artistic and cultural merit, and in recognition of its position as the oldest living culture in the world”
- **Ways of working:** Resource projects that develop better understandings of First Nations ways of working to create organisational cultures that attract and keep First Nations talent, supporting career and sector development
- **Governance:** Ensure all organisations in receipt of public funding formalise diverse First Nations involvement on their boards and program development, ensuring they are paid for their time
- **Fake Art Harms Culture:** As well as legislating to protect traditional knowledge and cultural expressions, ensure Fake ‘Aboriginal style’ Art is banned and criminalised, with real consequences for offenders.

PILLAR NO. 2

*A Place for Every Story:
Reflecting the diversity of
our stories and the
contribution of all
Australians as the creators
of culture*

Not just diversity, but place -

From *Creative Australia*

- Government support reflects the diversity of Australia and everyone, wherever they live, whatever their background or circumstances, have a right to shape our cultural identity and its expression
- Strengthen the capacity of the cultural sector to contribute to national life, community wellbeing and the economy
- Culture is not created by government, but enabled by it. Culture is created by community.

- **Diversity is a property of groups:** Take a comprehensive approach to the cultural diversity of governance, staffing, program and audience development, ensuring that no unsophisticated “box-ticking” approach can be substituted for a truly diverse approach – for example, by requiring funded organisations to adopt policies as a result of board workshops such as those incorporated in Diversity Arts Australia’s *Creative Equity Toolkit*
- **Anti-racism, anti-discrimination:** Expect funded organisations to ensure that racism, ableism, sexism, misogyny, classism, homophobia and transphobia are actively redressed by centring First Peoples, people with disability, people of colour, LGBTQIA* people, and people experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, in decision-making and organisational policy development
- **Suburban and regional development:** Adopt a creative place focus by advocating at municipal and state levels for clustering a diversity of makers and presenters in precincts generating creative, social and economic activity
- **Regulatory frameworks:** Identify regulations operating at municipal and state level that impact on live music, performance, exhibition and all other artforms and practice modes, and target these for cross-portfolio advocacy – for example, by ensuring that regular meetings of cultural ministers include levels of government with remits spanning zoning and licensing; ensure that the National Cultural Policy is one that advocates for policy and regulatory change at other levels of government, and embeds mechanisms for achieving excellent cooperation
- **Investment equity:** Redress the imbalance of subsidies for foreign film productions with greater funds for Australian productions, investing confidently in diverse local stories
- **Screen quotas:** Set ambitious targets for free-to-air, subscription and other moving image providers to ensure Australian work is broadcast and streamed – including quotas on documentary and children’s programming
- **Emerging artists and artforms:** Restore specific program funding for young, emerging and experimental arts – without taking these together as one generic grouping
- **Diversifying culture:** Encourage the further diversification of artforms and audiences by actively encouraging cross-cultural, cross-generational and cross-artform projects and artist development.



PILLAR NO. 3

The Centrality of the Artist: Supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture

Not just central, but generative -

From *Creative Australia*

- A universal arts education for lifelong learning and to drive creativity and innovation
- Australian Curriculum: the Arts
- A review of national and elite training
- Facilitating closer engagement between funded organisations and national training bodies
- Establishing the Centre for Excellence in Public Sector Design, to develop the potential for design-led thinking within and across government
- Developing an Arts and Health Framework with state and territory governments

- **Recognising inequities:** Explicitly acknowledge that while artists' average incomes have remained below the poverty line since the 1980s, and while they work under few workplace protections, the work of Australia's artists generates extraordinary wealth for the nation and significant employment for other workers; this inequity cannot be permitted to remain the foundation for the success of Australia's arts and cultural industries
- **Who are Australia's artists?:** Introduce Census questions to capture paid and unpaid artistic practice; reinstate the ABS Cultural and Creative Satellite Accounts
- **Artists are workers:** Take inspiration from the ACT Government's new policy on *Remuneration Principles and Practices for Artists and Artworkers* to ensure fair pay and conditions; introduce portable leave schemes
- **Artistic practice is work:** Connect across departments to ensure this is understood - permanently harmonise income averaging arrangements between the ATO and Centrelink, both recognising creative practice as work
- **Artist fellowships:** Support the Australian Society of Authors' call for Commonwealth Fellowships for diverse writers from outer-metro, regional and remote areas, and fund 100 fellowships per year across all artforms
- **Basic income guarantee:** Taking inspiration from France's and other UBI models, introduce guaranteed annual income programs for artists and all essential workers
- **No tax on grants:** Untax all grants providing artist incomes
- **Workplace protections:** Require all funded organisations to have written policies on artist payment, making explicit reference to fee standards set by industry bodies, so that fair payment is upheld universally and consistently
- **Education:** Redress the alarming closure of art schools and decline of arts and humanities education at Australian universities via policies that ensure ambitious funding levels and equitable student fees
- **Artists in schools:** Emulate the successful Regional Arts Victoria *Creative Workers in Schools* program placing artists and artworkers in six-month residencies at government schools, including special schools
- **The future of work:** With creativity the leading skillset required for the future of work, ensure that the National Cultural Policy reaches across multiple portfolios to prepare Australian workers for those unknown futures.



PILLAR NO. 4

Strong Institutions:

Providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture

Not just institutions, but interdependencies –

- **Fostering the ecology:** Recognise that the complex interdependence of artists and institutions sustains our arts and culture; create the conditions where they thrive
- **Comprehensive sector development:** Overcome the inequities that provide policy attention and significant funding to some artforms and institutions and not others; introduce sector development strategies not just for the performing arts via NPAPF and visual arts via the outdated VACS, but also for literature, experimental arts etc.
- **Good governance:** Require all boards to adopt best practice governance policies as a condition of accepting public funding, incorporating the outcomes of Kate Larsen’s research; resource organisations to offer board members an appropriate honorarium, so that standards of behaviour are lifted by experienced arts leaders and community members alongside governance-qualified philanthropists and business leaders
- **Safe workplaces:** Adopt and champion the MEAA’s safe workplace principles
- **Policy cooperation:** Restore the Cultural Ministers Council; expand its scope to include all cultural ministers e.g. Indigenous Affairs, Education, Communications, Regional Development; embed local government’s inclusion
- **Australia Council:** Ensure a well-funded, independent Australia Council, with an office in every state and territory thanks to the Creative Partnerships merger, and staff who can offer direct support to artists and S2M organisations.
- **Accountability, security and creative risk:** Ensure transparent, peer-assessed funding; extend multi-year funding to six years to allow venturesome risk-taking
- **New infrastructure builds-in artist equity:** Match gallery, performing arts centre (etc.) investments with new, long-term investments in the creation of new work, avoiding the perverse consequence where major cultural infrastructure investment exacerbates existing inequities; instead, create the artist and audience opportunities that these new buildings exist to present
- **Funding boost:** Invest significantly in the arts, with great pride – triple the Australia Council and Regional Arts Fund contestable grants budgets to restore the destabilising cuts that followed the termination of the previous National Cultural Policy, make up for lost indexation, and improve the capacity to support ‘unfunded excellence’.

From *Creative Australia*

- A National Arts and Culture Accord
- All levels of government developing a three-year work plan
- Comprehensive survey of the screen and games sectors
- Audit programs run by the Australia Council and the Office for the Arts to ensure the Australia Council focuses on funding artistic excellence and the Office for the Arts focuses on cultural policy and programs supporting national priorities



PILLAR NO. 5

*Reaching the Audience:
Ensuring our stories reach
the right people at home
and abroad*

Not just audiences, but relationships -

- **Access equity:** Ensure everyone can access and participate in the arts, no matter where they live
- **Digital equity:** Ensure that arts experiences only made accessible for the first time during lockdown periods remain accessible for people with disability; protect Australians from data and IP theft by social media giants
- **Artform equity:** Ensure a consistent approach across all artforms to policy and funding that supports artist mobility as well as the touring of performances and exhibitions
- **Touring:** Provide meaningful opportunities for deep local community engagement within all funds supporting touring, fostering lifelong relationships with the arts
- **Insurance:** Introduce a robust national approach to event disruption insurance – not just during the pandemic, but for the new era of compound emergency that’s been brought on by the climate crisis – to ensure regional and remote audiences aren’t always the ones missing out
- **Self-managed super:** Restore artwork investment by adding an “exhibition” provision to SMSF legislation so that investment artworks can be seen, reinvigorating the commercial market and propelling artists’ livelihoods
- **Cultural diplomacy:** Involve artists on trade delegations; support bilateral and multilateral cultural exchanges; led by Artbank, ensure that all embassies and missions exhibit and celebrate the work of Australian artists (I often recall with deep disappointment an Australian High Commission visit only a decade ago: on the walls were poor-quality prints of colonial era landscape paintings, on the shelves were mass-produced objects, and the next consular event showed the then High Commissioner’s watercolours with a piano performance by her mother)
- **Learning through singing, writing, drawing, composing and making:** Foster artistic talent and nurture arts audiences by embedding arts curriculum as well as the arts *in* education across all subjects, ensuring teachers are competent in the creative techniques that inspire learning
- **Works of scale:** Introduce a substantial new competitive grants program to fund works of scale across all artforms; offer funding across 2-3 years, with milestones encouraging risk-taking by factoring in a mid-point review that can accommodate failure; require diversity indicators; require artist and sector development outcomes; uncouple major public works funding from state festivals.

From *Creative Australia*

- Build business models around reward for creative production accessed through digital platforms
- Build on the National Arts and Disability Strategy
- Revisit the *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper*
- Revamp the Australian International Cultural Council



APPENDIX 1 ART CREATES THE FUTURE

With the urgency of the world's focus on protecting our lives at a scale we have never known, while communities and economies risk perilous collapse, it can be difficult to put creative practice in perspective.

And yet there is nothing more grounding than the practices that compel us.

Art makes the laughter rise from our bellies, the tears well in our eyes, the courage fill our bodies.

Art draws on the oldest and richest traditions we have, rearticulating them through hands whose instincts craft new techniques, new objects.

Art expands our thinking.

Art reconfigures us into new spaces, new experiments, new galleries, new prospects, new publics.

Art searches our emotions and finds new depths, new intensities.

Art isolates us into curious, inspired beings - at the very same time as it connects us across a work, across a room, across the world.

Art opens our hearts.

Art reassembles our memories, enriching some, obscuring others - and then, all of a sudden, art rushes memory to the surface and overwhelms our every sense.

Art asks questions, and demands that we do the same.

Art imagines entire worlds - and then it makes them possible, situating us within their boundaries and then exploding those limits, unsettling what's real and dissolving it into what's not yet possible. Art makes that possible.

After civilisations rise and fall, after all else is lost or forgotten, art endures.

Art creates our future.

Esther Anatolitis

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Drawing on recommendations throughout this document, here are three ideas for centrepieces that can amplify the core values and impact of the National Cultural Policy:

First Nations Ways of Working

- A three-year national project to identify and document First Nations Ways of Working, aiming at attracting, developing and keeping the best First Nations talent
- Key issues might include understanding barriers to recruitment and retention; researching best practice; identifying opportunities to incorporate First Nations ways of working into Indigenous and non-Indigenous workplace cultures
- Key outcomes might include organisational culture handbooks, case studies, professional pathways, mentoring programs, and salary benchmarks, as well as proposals for arts, employment and education policy
- Having begun to scope what's needed, ILBIJERRI Theatre Company are well placed to lead this work in partnership with colleague organisations across all artforms.

"Ambitious, Provocative, Positive"

From Creative Australia's vision and Theme Three: Connect to national life for a social and economic dividend

- Think big: 100 well-funded fellowships; a guaranteed annual income scheme; a national Courageous Conversations program led by the Minister and Special Envoy, promoting artist respect and industry confidence that overcomes the sector's sense of crisis, and theming meetings in ways that actively welcome input on key national matters
- Give the policy a bold, constructive tone that explicitly welcomes the voice of the artist on the national agenda
- Reform charities regulation to welcome advocacy for the public good - towards a culture that welcomes expert, critical voices rather than criminalising them.

Ambition + Impact

- A flagship competitive grants program for works of scale across all artforms, funded for two to three years, and welcoming visual, spatial and experimental practices
- Two components with a mid-term review milestone: *Ambition*, focusing on diverse artist and project development work that encourages risk-taking by accommodating failure; and *Impact*, requiring a substantial public outcome at artwork and audience scale.



APPENDIX 3 ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This submission is made on Monday 22 August 2022:

- On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation
- On behalf of an arts peak body
- ✓ On behalf of a for-profit arts business
- On behalf of an organisation with arts components (e.g. community organisation, tourism, venue, health, education etc.)
- On behalf of government or government body
- ✓ As a worker/professional in an industry who uses arts (e.g. art therapist, tour guide)
- ✓ As an artist
- ✓ As an individual

ABOUT TEST PATTERN

Test Pattern develops the ideas, the platforms and the places where creative practices lead public agendas. Established in 1999, the practice works across diverse fields, with recent clients including ILBIJERRI Theatre Company, Diversity Arts Australia, the Australian Museums & Galleries Association, the Melbourne School of Design, and the ACT Government, for whom Test Pattern has recently completed the ten-year strategy for Kingston Arts Precinct.

Principal **Esther Anatolitis** is one of Australia's most influential advocates for the arts. Esther has held leadership roles with the National Association for the Visual Arts, Regional Arts Victoria, Melbourne Fringe, SYN Media, Craft Victoria, SBS, Express Media and the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council. She has held governance and committee roles with Contemporary Arts Precincts, ACMI, Melbourne Writers Festival, Musica Viva, Elbow Room Productions, Open Spectrum, NGV, Emerging Writers' Festival and the Arts Industry Council (Victoria). Esther has served policy committees including the inaugural Victorian Government Creative Industries Policy Expert Reference Group and the Arts Victoria Small-to-Medium Sector Review, and has been an independent panellist on university faculty and school reviews. She has taught in the fields of architecture, art, philosophy, media and professional practice. As a commentator and facilitator, Esther has contributed significantly to the national conversation on arts and cultural policy as the host of national leadership networks, on industry forums, as a policy columnist for *Meanjin* and *Arts Hub*, and via the media. Her critical, experimental and political writing has been published extensively, and her book *Place, Practice, Politics* (2022) is published by Spurbuchverlag as part of the international Art Architecture Design Research series. Esther is Honorary Associate Professor at RMIT School of Art.

ATTRIBUTION

This submission is made on the understanding that it will be made public. Please redact contact information prior to publication, and attribute any quotations to **Esther Anatolitis**.

CONTACT

Esther Anatolitis

testpattern.com.au

