

Name: Joanne Kee

Submission:

A NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY - Towards a national cultural policy
Submission to the Federal Minister for the Arts, the Hon. Peter Garrett MP, by
Joanne Kee, Director Sound Travellers and Ceres Solutions January 31, 2010

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Recommendations:

- Increased investment in infrastructure support for the small to medium sector of the performing arts to facilitate their growth.
- Encourage higher profile in the media, with an aim to increasing community engagement through focussing on events which are currently attracting interest and high audience numbers such as free performances and Tropfest in the domain, Sydney or the recently televised Sydney Festival Bollywood event.
- Encouraging economic growth within the arts through increasing market opportunities.

Background notes:

1. With regards to the discussion framework it would be useful to clarify if the policy is focussed on all culture or is more specifically aimed at culture and its relation to the arts.

2. Many activities which currently take place within the context of “the arts” are seemingly limited in their capacity to reach and engage with a wider community due to their lack of prominence in above the line media. If the arts was as accessible as sport with respect to the media, this would increase their visibility and participation by people in the general community and also sponsorship potential.

The empty seats at many televised sporting events and the huge crowds that are attracted to performances of live music, and/or Tropfest in the Domain in Sydney, or the Adelaide Fringe Festival demonstrates that there are many Australians willing to engage and embrace in arts and culture, but this is not always supported or reflected in our media.

3. “powering the young” is admirable, but this should not be done at the expense of other artists and arts workers. The reality is that throughout their careers different challenges arise and assistance can be useful at all stages. This might be basic marketing and performance advice at the start of a career, through to advice on forming companies and/or collaborations or showing mid career artists how to fundraise. For more established artists it could be assistance in new

technologies or practises that might not even have existed as an option at the start of their careers.

4. Culture has the capacity to economically contribute to the country. A study of the economic contribution of the Newtown Precinct to the local area in 2004 estimated that a spend of \$2.85 million per annum is generated in the local area through arts events. In the UK the Arts Council Theatre Study of 2004 estimated a £2.6bn per annum spend on theatre alone.

Arts organisations with higher budgets and more resources and infrastructure are obviously better able to contribute and capitalise on revenue and growth opportunities. However the small to medium sector also has the capacity to contribute economically and of course also nurtures the main stage artists of the future. Currently there is limited infrastructure in this sector which limits growth potential. There is a valid case to provide operational and business support to artists and organisations in this sector.

In areas where there is a demonstrated capacity for economic growth, which is currently hampered by lack of infrastructure, investment should be undertaken. Examples of international successes in the contemporary music industry include artists such as Nick Cave, the Presets and The Necks. The diversity of successful music demonstrates that as well as supporting popular streams that niche areas of music such as jazz, indigenous and more experimental music should be supported. Currently artists achieving breakthrough are those with unique Australian voices.

There are a significant number of excellent musicians who have made inroads into national and international markets but have been unable to capitalise on their success due to financial constraints. Australia are disadvantaged as their flexibility on performance dates is limited by the tyranny of distance both nationally and abroad.

Another example of an artform with wider potential markets is physical theatre and contemporary circus. Australia was at the international forefront of contemporary circus, yet fell behind Cirque du Soleil in terms of economic and potential artistic growth. Cirque benefited from strong initial Canadian Government support.

Today companies such as Erth , the Tom Tom crew and bands such as Misinterprotato , have the potential to extend their reach and economic capacity to global markets and would greatly benefit from Government support.

Background

I have worked in the performing arts in Australia and the UK for the past 14 years in organisations ranging from the Arts Council of England, Sydney Opera House, the Song Company and Carnivale. Currently I run Sound Travellers, (a three

year Australia council initiative with Performing Lines) which facilitates and promotes the national touring of sound art/electonica, improvised jazz and contemporary classical music. Over the past three years we have been nurturing touring circuits, artists and audiences and creating resources for the future of this incredibly creative and diverse sector. The intention of Sound Travellers is to provide more performance opportunities to a larger audience nationwide, at the same time securing assistance for existing artists across the country to further develop their practice. Over 48 tours will have been supported by the end of 2010. www.soundtravellers.com.au

Ceres Solutions works with small to medium sized organisations providing knowledge, networks and strategies.
www.ceressolutions.com.au

Appendices

Appendix A – Contemporary Music Infrastructure Paper, Ceres Solutions 2009
Appendix B - Economic impact study of UK theatre, 2004, Commissioned by the Arts Council of England, Dominic Shellard
Appendix C - pdf of the enclosed submission above

Attachment:

<http://nationalculturalpolicy.com.au/submission/download/60>