



21 October, 2011

The Hon Simon Crean, MP
Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development & Local Government,
Minister for the Arts
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

The Australian Dance Council – Ausdance Inc. is pleased to submit this response to the National Cultural Policy discussion paper.

We strongly support the development of a National Cultural Policy and are keen to contribute to its development and implementation.

Ausdance has previously made a submission, and this response incorporates some of those points. Dance has particular issues to do with sustainability of careers, touring, diversity and the general level of investment in research and development. With ArtsPeak, we also want to see arts pathways strengthened in schools, the place of the arts in Indigenous communities, and a commitment to funding content development to strengthen the role of the National Broadband Network in meeting the NCP goals.

We hope these issues will be reflected in the new policy, and look forward to discussing them with you at an appropriate time.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Susan Street
National President

Julie Dyson
National Director

AUSTRALIAN DANCE COUNCIL – AUSDNACE INC.

Submission to the National Cultural Policy

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Do you agree to your submission being made publicly available on the www.culture.arts.gov.au website? Yes

1. About you or your organisation

Ausdance is a national network of dance service organisations which advocates for dance at all levels. Our programs support and sustain professional dance practice in Australia.

2. Do you support the development of a National Cultural Policy, and why?

- Ausdance strongly supports the development of a National Cultural Policy. It is important for all Australians to participate in, understand, value and acknowledge the role of culture in our lives, and to have an opportunity to enjoy the arts through access to universal arts education.
- The discussion paper has a heavy emphasis on the economic value of the arts (creative industries) rather than on the intrinsic value of the arts, creative industries and cultural heritage in our everyday lives.
- The discussion paper therefore appears to be an arts policy rather than a cultural framework that acknowledges the role and contribution of the arts within it.
- Within a broader cultural policy context, we support the goals for a strong, diverse and sustainable arts industry, and their place in the everyday lives of all Australians.

3. What are your views about each of the four goals?

GOAL 1: To ensure that what the Government supports — and how this support is provided — reflects the diversity of a 21st century Australia, and protects and supports Indigenous culture.

We particularly support the role of Indigenous culture in Australian society; however, we note that Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultures are themselves diverse, and suggest an overview statement (separated from goals) that acknowledges its separate and significant place in Australian culture.

We also suggest more emphasis on the contribution of the many other cultures that make up our communities, and that contribute so significantly to what it is to be Australian.

Strategies: How do we ensure ‘that what the Government supports – and how this support is provided’ reflects the diversity of a 21st century Australia...’? All the responsibility appears to be back on artists and organisations to identify and build audiences, broaden their activities and increase people’s engagement in the arts without any commitment by government to increase our capacity to ensure this goal is reached.

GOAL 2: To encourage the use of emerging technologies and new ideas that support the development of new artworks and the creative industries, and that enable more people to access and participate in arts and culture

Ausdance supports this goal, particularly the Feral Arts proposal for a ‘percent for arts content and capacity’ program to provide the sector with the necessary resources to properly implement the new policy. Strategies such as ‘growing creative content and services by driving creative innovation, powering intellectual property and copyright....’ etc. will need financial incentives and support.

GOAL 3: To support excellence and world-class endeavour, and strengthen the role that the arts play in telling Australian stories both here and overseas

Ausdance supports this goal, but notes that ‘to support excellence and world-class endeavour’ requires a commitment to further investment, particularly in the small to medium performing arts sector. This is – like the major performing arts sector – now in urgent need of a new review into its capacity to deliver on this goal, and to support risk taking and innovation in a climate of uncertainty and rising costs.

GOAL 4: To increase and strengthen the capacity of the arts to contribute to our society and economy.

While Ausdance supports this goal, we note the recent demise of SCOPE for Artists which had the express goal of increasing and strengthening ‘the capacity of the arts to contribute to our society and economy’. As we have previously noted, artists cannot (and do not) exist from making art alone. They also teach, make websites, speak at conferences, facilitate forums, write applications and reports, provide advice to community groups, serve as peers on funding bodies, etc. In effect, they run small businesses.

The program put Australia way ahead of the rest of the world in addressing the issue of artists’ sustainability, career development and self-management. The Minister will be aware that SCOPE was a partnership between the Australian Sports Commission and the Australia Council, initiated by Ausdance in 2005, to provide a sustainable solution for artists’ careers based on the AIS’s highly successful [National Athlete Career and Education](#) program. The program has now been wound up, but the model and the corporate knowledge still resides with Ausdance.

We strongly recommend that SCOPE for Artists be reinvented in order to ‘join the dots’ with this goal. With appropriate investment in the program, Ausdance would be in a position to revive its key strategies for the wider arts community.

4. What strategies do you think we could use to achieve each of the four goals?

JOINING THE DOTS

Whole-of-government commitment: We are not convinced that there is a ‘whole of government’ commitment to the goals outlined in the NCP, which only occasionally mentions other major government spending areas of health, education, tourism, tertiary training and social security. A genuinely whole-of-government approach is the way to ‘join the dots’, not a continuation of the ‘arts’ budget model that is perennially subject to funding cuts when times get tough.

Federal government bureaucracies at present appear to be locked into their own separate fiefdoms where the arts and culture are concerned. For example, the vision for sustainable arts practice is severely compromised when Centrelink actively works to get underpaid or temporarily out-of-work artists into unrelated employment.

- There needs to be a complete overhaul of the social security system with regard to artistic practice, and this is equally true for all government agencies.

Career development and management: As discussed earlier, programs such as SCOPE for Artists must be resourced if artists are to contribute their considerable expertise, skill and training to the cultural ecosystem.

- See recommendation under Goal 4, above.

Research: There is no longitudinal research into the arts, arts practice, arts education, training, employment, economic benefit or the international impact of Australian cultural product. We have excellent research statistics produced by the Australia Council, but there is a complete absence of long-term studies. We talk about the ‘value of the arts’ but the value is, in fact, unknown if we’re looking to understand, for instance, how an arts-rich education affects cultural understanding, well-being, participation levels and health outcomes in adult society.

- Longitudinal research into all aspects of the arts industry is absolutely essential in developing a long-term cultural policy, and must be immediately prioritised.
- The introduction of the new Australian Curriculum in the Arts must be used as an opportunity to conduct longitudinal studies into all aspects of our culture.

The efficiency dividend: This must be the most inefficient way of raising revenue that could be imagined in the context of a national cultural policy. Cultural institutions are not, by definition, money making concerns, and they deserve better from governments that purport to support cultural excellence. The Australia Council’s ongoing battle to fund the engine room of creativity and innovation – the small to medium sector – is a case in point.

- The efficiency dividend must immediately be removed from all cultural institutions, including the Australia Council.

Review of the small to medium performing arts sector: The Howard Government’s final budget in 2007 finally recognised the major contribution of the small to medium performing arts sector by providing \$19.4m (recurrent). This marked an important milestone in providing stabilisation funds, but it has not reversed the trend in a sector where demonstrated excellence cannot be properly supported by the Australia Council. Small, highly successful dance companies employ artists, provide mentoring, choreographic development, performing opportunities and international recognition not available anywhere else in the arts industry. This is a sector where a relatively small investment of government funds buys an enormous amount of capacity. Artists are burning out in this sector, and there is little incentive in the way of ongoing employment, wages parity or job satisfaction while the sector remains under continual threat of non-existence.

- It is time to review the contribution the small to medium performing arts sector makes to our artistic lives, to innovation and creativity, to education and to productivity.

Content development for the NBN: As mentioned in the ArtsPeak submission, Ausdance strongly supports the introduction of a 1% levy on the NBN to fund capacity and content development. Choreographers are keen to contribute their work via the NBN, but they are generally not keen to just reproduce work staged previously in a black box theatre.

- New content must be encouraged and invested in, and a levy is a sensible and innovative way to ensure that the potential of the NBN can be met creatively, ensuring accessibility and enjoyment to the arts for all Australians.

Definitions: As the peak body for dance in Australia, we want to see dance included in the Core arts preamble (p.4) – ‘Music, performing arts, literature and visual arts ...’ is an unacceptable definition – is music not a performing art? We strongly recommend the use of the words ‘dance’, ‘theatre’ and ‘media’ in place of the generic term ‘performing arts’. Para 4 of the Introduction also names some art forms and not others, e.g. there are five art forms in the Australian Curriculum, and they include media arts (but not ‘painting’ and ‘craft’, rather visual arts and design).

- It would be useful to make correct reference to all art forms.

5. How can you, your organisation or sector contribute to the goals and strategies of the National Cultural Policy?

Ausdance is very committed to the notion of a national cultural policy and to building the capacity of the dance community. We will continue to work with the Ausdance network, our partners, the dance community and federal and state/territory arts and education agencies to ensure that artists and arts educators meet their potential as outstanding contributors to our cultural environment.

6. Are there any other goals you would like to see included in the National Cultural Policy?

We consider the Government’s present commitment to an *arts education entitlement for all* is an essential part of a national cultural policy. We would like to see this more clearly articulated in the goals, and acknowledgement that implementation will require a significant commitment to resourcing pre-service and inservice training for teachers, the important role of artists in residence, and the development of new resources to empower teachers to make a significant impact in their classrooms in, through and about the arts.