

**Malcolm Moir**



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Committee Secretariat  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**Re: Inquiry into Australia's Creative and Cultural Industries and Institutions.**

I am pleased to be given the opportunity to provide the following submission to the above inquiry and look forward reading to the final report.

The sector described as *Creative and Cultural Industries and Institutions* involves many different forms of organisations – from sole traders to multi-million-dollar government institutions, from international film producers to local ballet schools.

Sadly, the sector is an extremely low ranked priority in terms of government support, celebration and attention. I cannot remember when a cabinet minister held the portfolio exclusively as it is most often a secondary responsibility – as if it is not important enough.

**SOFT POWER**

The role of the Australian Creative and Cultural Industries – including cinema, theatre, music, digital and other visual arts is not seen as importantly as it could as the most important soft power the Australian Government can access.

Yes, DFAT does have a program but its piecemeal and reactive largely and not strategic and ongoing. This bring in the role of the ABC's role in the Asia Pacific Region and how it positioned Australia as a leading power in the region.

Anecdotally I have heard from diplomatic representatives that our artists - for example film stars and musicians - are the most useful ambassadors for the country, but these artists benefited from much more support through government funding than today's emerging artists.

For example, many mid-career artists benefited from free university as a meeting point in their creative lives – today this is not as likely, campus life is not what it was. In the last few decades artists could live on Sunday triple time wages, for them the

changes in penalty rates changed their ability to create. The list goes on but fundamentally it is about where the arts fit – is it a sideboard item or the main course.

For me, the *Creative and Cultural Industries and Institutions* are central to a good life. We often attribute a culture's celebration of these industries as marks of the development of a society and when travelling these are things we seek out to develop and understand.

## **HEALTH IMPACT**

For over a decade I have been associated with Arts and Health Australia. This organisation run by a globally recognized leader in the field Margret Meagher, has run international conferences with speakers talking about their evidence-based research on the role of the arts in a person's health.

Arts and Health Australia covers wide-ranging subject matter and goes from ways to ameliorate depression and PTSD, to ways of providing positive environments for people with Alzheimer's. It looked at the design of the facilities and the difference between consuming art and creating it. Simple things that should be integral to the health system for a patient centric system are too radical – such as dancing as a relief for Parkinson sufferers or singing for stutterers.

Today we could be training art practitioners to work in the health and allied industries to provide a better environment for people in hospitals and retirement homes. Studies show the impact of artists in residence are very positive.

## **EDUCATION IMPACT**

I was one of the lucky people to have parents that saw the value of an arts education – from piano and clarinet to school orchestras and concerts, theatre and galleries. I know how much I value this education now but feel that contemporary society does not value it in the same way. Richard Gill AM one of our national treasures who recently died, was one of the most inspirational music educators. His life commitment to the area was due to the transformational role it can play on a child's development. For those who find words difficult due to cultural or other issues, music can be transformational. Again, not an indulgence and if so no more than any sporting pursuit.

## **RECONCILIATION**

As we continue our journey towards a more reconciled country the role of the arts in indigenous understanding is so important. It will be indigenous arts that help the rest of society develop a greater appreciation of the richness and the complexity of our first nations culture – the funding needs to be increased.

In a recent article by Dr Wendy Were from the Australia Council she offers the following – *Often the most powerful forces in our lives can be the hardest to quantify. The subtle, fluctuating levels of our own wellbeing, confidence and connections are core to our happiness, our sense of security, our decision making and much of our economic activity. (Why art engagement matters, Australia Council 2020)*

I hope to have highlighted a few areas that I feel need some attention but there is a lot of examples above that show we are operating in a very disconnected

My hope of the Inquiry is

- 1) The findings confirm the sector has far more opportunity to be offered to a contemporary and diverse Australia.
- 2) The findings result in some action in a timely manner resulting in better outcomes.
- 3) The finding identify that the sector is disconnected from other sectors and a more integrated approach be embraced.
- 4) The sector is seen as being of higher priority that it is currently by having a single cabinet minister representing the sector.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Moir