

Zali Steggall Arts and Culture Policy, 2019

I believe that the arts play a pivotal role in the overall health of any society. Through the arts, communities tell their stories, focusing on and creating things that unite them rather than divide them.

For many of us, sport on a Saturday morning or a Wednesday night are part of our weekly routine, and its value is self-evident: it builds teamwork, community spirit and better health. The arts deliver many of the same benefits, but are still often viewed as a luxury, rather than a fundamental building block of national identity.

Warringah hosts festivals and live music, with strong social, cultural and economic benefits. Almost one in 10 workers in Warringah work in cultural or creative industries.ⁱ Warringah is home to one of the highest concentrations of Indigenous markings and culturally significant sites in the country.ⁱⁱ They should be celebrated, and we need to make sure they are adequately protected.

How can we better support our arts and culture sector to harness the power of the arts to attain social, economic and cultural benefits?

Let's make arts and culture more of a priority, both nationally and locally

Nationally, I will be a voice for creative industries in Parliament, and help reprioritise the arts on the policy agenda. Locally, I will work with creative industries to strengthen Warringah's arts scene, create opportunities for emerging artists and help protect our cultural heritage.

This policy statement sets out my support for the following actions:

- 1. Protect and adequately fund the ABC, SBS and NITV**
- 2. Establish a Music Commission, reporting to the Minister for the Arts**
- 3. Adopt a more targeted and equitable approach to arts funding**
- 4. Create more opportunities for artists in Warringah**
- 5. Explore initiatives to celebrate Warringah's history and Indigenous heritage**

1. Protect and adequately fund the ABC, SBS and NITV

Australians know the value of our public broadcasters. Polls show that more than 80% of Australians agree that the ABC provides a valuable service to the community.ⁱⁱⁱ The ABC, SBS and NITV are there to create and broadcast content that commercial networks will not because they prioritise people over profit. Our public broadcasters are there to tell Australian stories, and provide quality content that reflects both community diversity and community needs.^{iv}

ABC funding has been cut by more than \$300 million since the Coalition came to power, despite Tony Abbott's famous pre-election promise that there would be "no cuts to the ABC or SBS".^v Growing financial pressure on the public broadcasters makes it harder and harder for them to fulfil their purpose and charter. If they do not, nobody else will. The ABC, SBS and NITV must be protected and adequately funded so they can continue to provide quality news, information and entertainment to everyone from the coast to the outback.

2. Establish a Music Commission, reporting to the Minister for the Arts

Last year, the NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into the Music and Arts Economy found that the state's live music scene was in crisis.^{vi} Though the music scene varies state by state, Australia as a whole needs to increase focus and support for music. An Australian Music Commission would support the industry by providing tools and resources for young artists, delivering music programs in schools, creating networks and relationships through musical mentorships, and providing grant funding for musical projects.

This idea is not new. The New Zealand Music Commission supports its music industry, both culturally and economically, through similar programs.^{vii} *Music Works*, a program run by the Victorian government, empowers artists and small-medium organisations through resourcing, upskilling, professional development programs and grant funding. This dual approach of industry investment and development has helped generate over \$800 million a year in economic activity and tens of thousands of jobs for Victorians.^{viii}

3. Adopt a more targeted and equitable approach to arts funding

Despite the efforts of the Australia Council for the Arts, many arts organisations are deeply concerned about the strategic vision for public funding for the arts. The 2019 Budget was criticised for providing ad hoc arts funding and so was received cautiously: it committed funding for live music and other individual projects but overlooked other priority areas, including the Regional Arts Fund.^{ix} The National Association for the Visual Arts says the Budget provides little relief for the declining incomes and opportunities for Australian artists^x, and The Australian Major Performing Arts Group believes the Budget does not reflect meaningful reform or investment for the whole of the arts industry.^{xi}

Industry organisations have also called for additional funding for the Australia Council to support existing programs and initiatives at all levels, across the board. As one example, the demand for the Council's grant programs is exceeding their funding capacity, with only 1064 grants approved out of 5464 proposals in 2017-18.^{xii}

Our approach to arts funding should be targeted and equitable, so as to adequately cater for the various companies, organisations and individuals who are fundamental to our diverse and vibrant arts sector and community. As well as our major performing arts organisations, who inspire and support future artists, provide employment, education and put Australian arts on the world stage, our medium and smaller organisations also play an important role in these areas, particularly in rural and disadvantaged communities. Advocates have highlighted the need for more investment in this sector.^{xiii}

We need to ensure that the objectives of arts funding are clearly defined, that funding mechanisms are well governed to achieve those objectives, and that there is a clear national strategy for the arts to help fulfil our potential both locally and nationally.

4. Create more opportunities for artists in Warringah

Arts and cultural development requires both high-level strategic vision and commitment, energy and initiative at the grassroots level. Warringah is lucky to be home to many schools that excel in creative subjects. Mosman High School, Stella Maris College, St Augustine's College, Mackellar Girls and Manly Selective Campus are just some of the schools in our area that are renowned for their visual art, dance, drama and music. We need to ensure that our emerging artists are given opportunities to develop their skills and contribute to our communities.

I will work with local government and community groups to create further opportunities in Warringah for creatives to develop and showcase their talent.

- **Support for more arts courses at Brookvale TAFE**

Creative occupations account for 9.2% of Warringah's workforce, more than double the national average. There are over 2,700 creative businesses in Warringah, ranging from arts education, music publishing and book retailing, to radio broadcasting, clothing manufacturing and creative arts.^{xiv} Yet Brookvale TAFE offers only two arts courses, which means locals have to travel to St Leonards or Hornsby TAFEs to access further creative courses. I will pursue more arts courses being available at Brookvale TAFE, with students working with local businesses and staying in the area.

- **Showcasing our talented students**

NSW showcases creative performers at state-wide events such as *ENCORE*, *OnSTAGE* and the Schools Spectacular. We should do the same to showcase the talent in our local area. In 2019, Manly Art Gallery and Museum held *Express Yourself*, an exhibition of the works of HSC Visual Arts students from 20 high school across the Northern Beaches. I'd like to help create the same opportunity for our drama, music and dance students.

- **Buskers by the Sea**

I'd like to help establish the next *Sculptures by the Sea* for Warringah. *Buskers by the Sea* would partner with high schools, local music venues and businesses to create an annual event for musicians and music lovers at one of our fantastic beaches like Manly, Collaroy or Balmoral. Musicians would play at multiple points along the promenade, and attendees would be invited to walk between them. Any money donated by the public would be split between the artists.

- **Supporting live music venues**

Live music venues in our area have been doing it tough. The Northern Beaches Music Festival was almost cancelled this year due to cumbersome regulations.^{xv} I will support federal grants to help with the costs of running or establishing a live music venue.^{xvi} But Warringah is also home to a number of volunteer-run live music venues that provide an entry point for many emerging artists and receive very little support. I'd like to make funding more accessible for these community organisations.

- **Explore possibilities for a Warringah Arts and Cultural Centre**

Arts and cultural centres are community hubs that facilitate exchanges and build connections across diverse communities. They provide access to audiences to experience arts and culture locally, and in turn, opportunities for artists to connect to those audiences. Bankstown, Blacktown and Campbelltown Arts Centres are examples of centres that enhance and support growth in arts and culture in Western Sydney. In the same way, a Warringah Arts and Cultural Centre could be a multi-arts facility offering local artists and groups a creative space for performances and rehearsals, exhibitions and classes/workshops/programs in collaboration with local organisations, further enhancing Warringah's arts and culture sector.

5. Explore initiatives to celebrate Warringah's history and Indigenous heritage

Warringah has a rich history, with an abundance of important heritage buildings and historical sites contributing to the area's reputation as a world-class tourist destination and place to live. We need to create further opportunities to both celebrate and protect this history, and connect tourists and locals to cultural and historical sites across the area. A Warringah Arts and Cultural Centre could foster this connection.

Manly's North Head Sanctuary alone hosts historical military fortifications as well as the infamous

Quarantine Station. Mosman's Georges Heights is home to the site of a WWI-era military hospital and fortifications, as well as the Headland Park Artist Precinct. We need to ensure the protection of these important sites and encourage opportunities for them to be revitalised and to continue to contribute to our cultural life.

Warringah is also home to one of the highest concentrations of Aboriginal archaeological sites in the country, including rock art, shell middens and ceremonial grounds.^{xvii} I will support initiatives to celebrate the history, language and cultural practices of Warringah's traditional owners while protecting and respecting important Aboriginal sites in the area.

Zali Steggall, Candidate for Warringah, 2019

References

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- ^{xvi} <https://www.minister.communications.gov.au/minister/mitch-fifield/news/more-live-music-more-opportunities-australias-musicians>.
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