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AICSA response to City of Adelaide Draft Cultural Policy

The Arts Industry Council SA (AICSA) is a non-government not-for-profit acting as an independent voice for the arts in SA. Run by a volunteer Executive Committee and part-time General Manager, AICSA acts on behalf of its members to advocate for a strong future for South Australian artists, arts workers and arts organisations.

We are pleased to see City of Adelaide's recent consultation on the Draft Cultural policy, and further understand that City of Adelaide aims to be Australia's cultural and creative capital by nurturing careers and sector growth and supporting talent retention, through partnerships and coinvestment.

Fundamentally it is essential that Councillors and administration staff alike are aware of the value arts and culture bring to a vibrant and safe city and the need for increased arts engagement and opportunities within their policies and procedures and we applaud the consultation and development work the City of Adelaide has done to develop and deliver this.

Here we respond to the draft cultural policy and its five principles of:

- Amplifying Our Creative Capital
- Culturally Inclusive and Socially Connected
- Reconciliation and Truth-Telling
- Preserving Cultural Heritage, Embracing Progress
- Creating Space for Cultural Expression

We suggest a reordering of the five principles. We hope that *Reconciliation and Truth-Telling* will be at the centre of the policy and would be in fact the first priority above all others. The arts sector as a whole plays an important role in supporting First Nations rights, including reconciliation and truth-telling.

In addition to this, we argue that the final priority of *Creating Space for Cultural Expressions* is the most pressing and urgent aspect of the policy. We recognise that "creating space" refers to both physical spaces as well as creating the conditions for art-making to occur.

Many discussions with our membership have recently highlighted limited access to spaces to create, including live music and performance venues, rehearsal spaces and independent galleries and multi purpose arts spaces. These facilities are limited statewide but especially in the Adelaide CBD. This is highlighted by many urban hubs delivering year round activations in metro Adelaide, (eg. Goodwood Theatre, Warehouse Theatre in Unley, Shedley Theatre in

Elizabeth) whilst independent venues within the CBD are rapidly declining, with the recent closures of The Bakehouse Theatre, Prompt Creative, Hades Hula House, My Lover Cindi, along with many others, and with other organisations seeking new offices outside the CBD. We argue this diminishes the cultural ecosystem of the city of Adelaide and the state of South Australia. Artists and creatives no longer have access to affordable venues to present and create work in. We believe more can be done to increase capacity for arts and cultural institutions and independent artists to present work within the City of Adelaide. As part of the Cultural Policy feedback we encourage an audit on access for both artists and audiences in large and small scale venue infrastructure within the City of Adelaide, and increased investment in the operation of these businesses knowing they can not compete on commercial lease agreements.

We would also suggest that there is a need to highlight another priority, or to rethink *Culturally Inclusive and Socially Connected* principle, to better prioritise issues of access, diversity and inclusion in the policy. We acknowledge the policy has benefited from an inclusive advisory panel, we recommend highlighting the intersectionalities of our community and the important role, young people, older people, people living with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, women; and LGBTQIA+ communities play within the five guiding principles and how this will shape the cultural policy and its implementation. It is essential to look deeper than participation and access to ensure communities are deeply engaged in delivery, in choices, opportunities and funding outcomes. Our recommendation is to further develop these outcomes and opportunities with a sharper focus on community needs and marginalised voices ensuring representation at all levels of engagement.

We look forward to further understanding and collaboration in regards to actions that will take place against this plan as there is limited information shared around how the objectives will be achieved.

The AICSA Executive Committee