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The Honourable Simon Crean MP
Minister for the Arts
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email: culturalpolicy@pmc.gov.au

Dear Minister

Proposed New National Cultural Policy for Australia

I write in behalf of Australia ICOMOS, the Australian National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites. ICOMOS is an advisory body to UNESCO on cultural heritage issues and nationally we are the peak NGO relating to cultural heritage conservation in Australia. I apologise for the lateness of this submission but we were not one of the organisations consulted in this process and so have only recently become aware of this initiative.

Australia ICOMOS congratulates the government on investing in the development of a new and invigorated cultural policy for Australia. We note however that by limiting the discussion largely to the arts that the government is missing the opportunity to embrace the broadened definition of 'culture' that is more common throughout the world and particularly in our region.

It seems that the 'Cultural' policy as proposed is conceptualised more as an 'Arts' policy. However, if it is truly the intention to provide a National 'Cultural' policy, the scope should be expanded to include both intangible and tangible cultural heritage, the latter including the places and cultural object collections that play such a significant role in the life of Australians. There are a number of international models, particularly among our Asian neighbours where the connection between traditional culture, cultural heritage and modern artistic expression are recognised as inter-related.

You will note of course that at the international level the interconnections between the creativity of the 'Arts' and the other elements of 'culture' are highly emphasised (see <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/>). So while the Commonwealth Government currently divides the responsibilities relating to the conservation, enhancement and celebration of cultural heritage between portfolios and departments, it is important for National Policies to acknowledge and respect the fact that these are fundamentally related and should work in a seamless and holistic way for the benefit of current and future generations of Australians.

I would be happy to discuss this issue with you further. Please do not hesitate to contact me at austicomos@deakin.edu.au or at the address above should you wish to do so. Australia ICOMOS also requests that you add us to your consultation distribution list for this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Harrington', with a large, elegant loop at the end.

DR JANE HARRINGTON
President