

My name is Connor Sweeney, I'm a performing artist living in Melbourne, currently employed at Harry Potter and the Cursed Child playing at the Princess Theatre (looking forward to getting back on stage when the time is right).

I have formerly been employed with Queensland Theatre (the QLD state theatre company), Sydney Theatre Company, and Dracula's Cabaret. I received a Bachelor of Musical Theatre from Griffith University Queensland Conservatorium in 2014. I was awarded a scholarship at my high school- the Hutchins School in Hobart- for performing arts. I have been able to pursue a career in performing arts.

The creative and cultural industries are symbiotic with every other industry you can name. Creativity and ingenuity drives progress, and fostering artistic skills serves that progress. A work ethic without creativity doesn't advance.

I have observed evidence of symbiosis with business while working for Harry Potter with bars, restaurants, hotels, regional travel, interstate travel, international travel, retail, tourism. The show brings roughly 4400 audience members per week from around the world to Melbourne. I'm really proud to be a part of that. I'd be even prouder if it was an Australian story generating that kind of appeal, and the government can be a part of that village that brings a story to life.

The non economic benefits of the arts are numerous. The arts rise above language, class, religion, gender, and other factors that seem to divide the world. Art brings people together. It elicits different reactions and emotions but everyone can agree that it moves them to think, to feel, and to act. Art is there to remind us of the values that we uphold.

To increase access and involvements with the arts we need to change the attitude that the arts are only for certain types of people, or that it is a hedonistic non-necessity, or that it is the opposite of productivity/economic contribution/work.

There needs to be infrastructure in place that can support the sharing of stories. That means modes of travel between metropolitan and regional areas for artists and audiences, and incentives for people to participate in it. That means quotas for original, inventive, diverse Australian content in our popular forms of media. That means art, music, drama, dance classes in all schools.

A comprehensive National Cultural Policy should include a priority in arts education throughout K-12, incentives for international players to use local production companies and professionals, and more money for the ABC to create Australian content.