



Australian Government



Towards a national cultural policy

2022



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National Culture Plan Consultation Framing Submission

Overview

The Australian Government is developing a new national cultural policy, based on the five pillars articulated below. These pillars draw on the goals of *Creative Australia*, our last national cultural policy, launched in 2013.

- **First Nations first:** recognising and respecting the crucial place of these stories at the centre of our arts and culture.
- **A place for every story:** reflecting the diversity of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture.
- **The centrality of the artist:** supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture.
- **Strong institutions:** providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture.
- **Reaching the audience:** ensuring our stories reach the right people at home and abroad.

These pillars provide a good foundation for the cultural and creative industries to consider the needs of, and effectively plan for, a thriving creative sector that delivers benefits to all Australians.

The last two years have been hugely challenging, but the opportunity to develop a new national cultural policy encourages us to think big again. We know that the impact and relevance of arts and culture extend well beyond our sector – we have seen how vital creativity is to connect us to each other, to great ideas, to our higher selves and to the world.

With this in mind, and to support submissions to a new cultural policy, the Australia Council for the Arts – the Australian Government’s principal arts investment, development and advisory body – has identified contemporary concepts and evidence that underpin the five pillars:

1. **First Nations:** Support thriving and self-determined First Nations creative ecosystems.
2. **Participation and inclusion:** Create opportunities for all Australians to participate in and contribute to arts and culture.
3. **Thriving arts and cultural sector:** Support skilled, diverse ecologies of artists and organisations.
4. **Public value:** Strengthen the capacity of the creative sector to deliver benefits to Australians.
5. **Creative economy:** Build sustainable, networked and globally recognised creative industries.

The Council recognises that cultural policy needs to be supported by effective investment and support. This includes commitments to contestability, accountability and measurement, and cooperation between all levels of government, and the private and philanthropic sectors.

This document provides a sense of key directions that, in the Council’s view, will reflect contemporary dynamics of, and support the sustainability, reach and impact of Australia’s cultural and creative industries.

We have set out key areas of focus to help devise the actions and solutions required to realise our sector’s potential to connect, enrich and empower Australians through creativity. We note that this framing submission is non-exhaustive and comes at the start of a series of consultations within – and beyond – the sector. We encourage everyone invested in our cultural future to add their views and insights and to share their ideas, case studies, research and practical expertise to help develop a relevant and useful new cultural policy.

Context

Creativity is generative: it creates new ideas, new connections, new collaborations and new outcomes. It is unifying: building shared identities and finding new forms of representation and inclusion. And it is productive: driving innovation, growth, engagement and 21st century skills.

In a creatively connected nation, creative enterprise is entrenched across society, industry and government as the resource that powers our social, cultural and economic success.

Australia has an extraordinarily diverse, skilled and talented creative sector that produces great art, transformative culture and many forms of participation – driving engagement, wellbeing and cohesion for our communities. Our creative sector also builds the skills we need to ensure a more prosperous future and stronger economy.

In 2022, Australians are emerging from one of the most challenging periods in living memory. A global pandemic, the impacts of climate change and radical disruption have threatened our safety, wellbeing, livelihoods, connections to each other and engagement with the world.

This uncertain period has demonstrated, more than ever, how vital arts and culture are to a brighter future.

Throughout the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, our creative sector has been resilient and agile in the face of uncertainty. Artists, creative workers and arts and cultural organisations have continued to innovate and re-generate, building digital capabilities and finding new ways to engage with local and global audiences.

Arts and culture play a key role in our collective wellbeing and connection to others. And our cultural and creative industries provide flow on benefits to tourism, hospitality, productivity, mental health and social cohesion, all of which

have increasingly been recognised as a vital part of our recovery.

However, while artists, creative workers and arts and cultural organisations have been resilient, COVID-19 has exacerbated many existing – and identified new – challenges for our creative sector.

The experience of lockdowns throughout the pandemic has highlighted that creative practitioners are workers, and often sole traders, in an industry that employs 645,000 people.¹ Before COVID-19, artists – exemplars of the gig economy – already earned below the Australian workforce average and often received income from multiple sources. The loss of income, markets, skills and wellbeing due to COVID-19 has exacerbated artist and creative workers' vulnerability. The pandemic has affected artists' mental health and caused artists to contemplate leaving the sector in search of financial security.² A conversation about industrial standards and settings is vital to the thinking that feeds into the nation's cultural policy.

A national cultural policy allows us to establish new connections, new partnerships and new vision that leads us to a brighter future with the extraordinary power of creativity and culture at its centre.

Creativity connects us: to ideas, to each other, to new perspectives and to the world. To effectively support the sustainability, reach and impact of Australia's cultural and creative industries, we need whole-of-government policy and practical responses to the challenges we face, and to support the tremendous potential of our creative nation.

First Nations

Goal: Support thriving and self-determined First Nations creative ecosystems

First Nations Australians are the custodians of 75,000 years of cultural knowledge and creative innovation. Dance, song, painting, performance and storytelling are an integral part of First Nations creative expression, knowledge transfer, connection to Country and the navigation of spiritual and social relationships through ceremony.

Arts and culture are deeply embedded in First Nations identity, cosmology, community, sites of knowledge, living archives and sources of connection. There's a body of evidence showing that participation in arts and culture supports outcomes across the Closing the Gap framework.³

Australia has much to learn from this embedded model of arts and culture. We can learn from whole-of-community models of participation, in which stories and songs are collectively owned, managed and maintained. We can learn from the deep connections to place, to community and to identity.

The First Nations arts and cultural economy has tremendous strength and potential, particularly in remote Australia, representing substantial sales, export value

and support for local communities. We are witnessing huge growth in engagement around First Nations textiles, fashion and homewares. Internationally, First Nations arts and culture is being recognised in cultural infrastructure projects and global exchanges which strengthen our ties, particularly in our region.

This growth requires focused attention on First Nations leadership, respect, understanding and protection of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP), adherence to First Nations cultural protocols and a nuanced understanding of the extraordinary diversity of First Nations peoples.

This needs to be done the 'right way': with self-determined, First Nations-led approaches that support artists, communities, organisations and sustainable practice and ensure that recognition, rights and revenues flow back to the creators of the works. First Nations organisations offer leadership and play an integral role as incubators and the safe cultural spaces to mentor talent. Supporting them – as well as individual creatives – has a huge impact on the resilience and sustainability of sector.

To support thriving and self-determined First Nations creative ecosystems, we need to focus and consider the following:

Focus areas

- First Nations workforce and capacity building with a focus on Indigenous self-determination in governance and leadership
- Investment and capacity building of First Nations small to medium arts organisations
- Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) consumer protection frameworks, laws and protocols
- Development and pathways for First Nations creative workers and leaders
- First Nations creative industries: music, fashion, writing, visual arts and games
- Global First Nations exchange
- Further investigation associated with a National Indigenous Arts and Culture Agency/Authority (NIACA)

Considerations

- Uluru Statement from the Heart (2017)
- Closing the Gap targets and Australia Council's Closing the Gap Refresh submission
- National Indigenous Visual Arts Action Plan 2020-25
- National Indigenous Arts and Cultural Authority (NIACA) Consultations
- The Productivity Commission's report on the value, nature and structure of the markets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visual Arts and Crafts (unpublished, scheduled November 2022)
- Protocols For Using First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property in the Arts
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act 2021
- United States' Indian Arts and Crafts Act 1990
- Panama's Special System for Collective Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Participation and inclusion

Goal: Create opportunities for all Australians to participate in and contribute to arts and culture

Australia's diversity is our greatest asset. Our country is rich in artistic, cultural and creative resources, and the source of this wealth is our people: their ingenuity, their creativity, their perspectives and their lived experiences. Our diversity leads to greater artistic vibrancy and innovation, and it is vital we continue to support opportunities to fully engage in our creative expression, including as workforce, leaders and audiences.

Arts and culture belong to all of us. Cultural participation is a human right and arts and culture have a unique capacity to connect all of us irrespective of our life circumstances and experiences. Every Australian should experience the transformative power of art and participate in the cultural life of the nation, no matter where they live, what language they speak, their life stage, or circumstances.

The Council's National Arts Participation Survey tells us that 98% of Australians engage with arts and culture, with particularly high participation rates for

multicultural communities.⁴ It also tells us Australians increasingly believe the arts help us understand different perspectives, express our identity and understand the people and cultures of this country.⁵ We know, however, that access to resources and positions of leadership are still uneven and that barriers still exist to participation.⁶

Dynamic ecosystems of creative participation exist in the regions, from world class galleries to community choirs to extraordinary festivals. Evolving with changing times, arts and cultural businesses are digitising and building strong digital capabilities and compelling digital offerings. However, there are challenges around equitable access, creation, ownership, discoverability of content, and payment models.⁷

Ensuring all individuals and communities can participate in and contribute to Australia's cultural and creative life through the arts – both online and in person – will improve the long-term health and vitality of our nation.

To create opportunities for all Australians to participate in and contribute to arts and culture, we need to focus on and consider the following:

Focus areas

- Longer-term creative, community-led solutions to complex challenges
- Sustained, aligned commitment to equity and inclusion standards and measures across the sector
- Targeted investments to address inequities and empower creative pathways for regional, disabled and culturally diverse creatives
- Targeted investments for children, young people and older Australians
- Accessible and supported investment and participation processes
- Inclusive pathways to leadership roles in the sector, including via training organisations
- Consideration of socio-economic inequity and affordable access to arts and cultural experiences, including accessible digital engagement opportunities
- Audience development and diversification capabilities and strategies

Considerations

- The [National Disability Insurance Scheme](#) (NDIS) and the [National Disability Insurance Agency](#) (NDIA)
- [Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31](#)
- [Article 31, United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- Regional development plans, organisations and authorities
- Activation of social infrastructure and local assets
- Networked community organisations, including multilingual and internationally connected individuals and groups Australian Local Government Association (ALGA)'s [Arts and Culture Policy Position statement](#)

Thriving arts and cultural sector

Goal: Support skilled, diverse ecologies of artists and organisations

Australian cultural and creative workers are the custodians of our national imagination, telling Australian stories that build a confident and relevant contemporary Australian identity, connect with audiences and communicate our values and vision to the world.

Great creative work does not just happen. It is the product of long periods of development: the hard graft of testing and refining skills, collaborations, refinements and evolutions of art forms.

Our creative sector includes a diverse ecosystem of forms of work, types of organisations and relationships. It includes independent artists, writers, creators, cultural practitioners, sole-traders, small, medium and large companies, funded and non-funded organisations and formal and informal networks. It includes peak bodies, trade bodies, service organisations, commentators, and critics. For independent artists, creative work is precarious, and often risk-taking, involving substantial self-funded development. Funded arts organisations support career pathways, art form development, the commissioning of new work, outreach, educational programs, audience development and international opportunity.

Creative work is diverse and often interdisciplinary, employing new modes of creation, community engagement, distribution, innovation, and relationships with audiences. Arts and cultural practice areas and the markets for this practice are

not discrete nor neatly defined. Publicly funded and commercial arts co-exist and cross-pollinate ideas, talent and audiences. They operate as part of a complex ecology of talent, finance, audiences, content, and creative practice. The not-for-profit cultural sector contributes much of the underlying development for commercial cultural providers. Public investment enables creators to take risks with creative content and ideas.

However, the loss of income, markets, skills and wellbeing due to COVID-19 disruptions has impacted artists and creative workers, exacerbating many existing challenges for our creative sector. Those employed in industries driven or supported strongly by arts and creativity – such as health, education, tourism, hospitality, and regional and community businesses – have also felt these effects.

A thriving ecosystem needs brilliant new ideas and great execution. We need artists, skilled creative workers, innovators, entrepreneurs and great collaborators. We need capable organisations and institutions who work sustainably in and beyond 'the arts'. We need investment and distribution networks that allow for viable business models for artists and creative businesses, and we need Australian work to be discoverable, profiled and celebrated. To be successful, our institutions, partners and creatives must be highly-skilled, inclusive, relevant and resilient.

To build a thriving arts and cultural sector, we need to focus on and consider the following:

Focus areas

- Support for the creation of new work
- Pathways for emerging artists and creative workers
- Industry aligned skills training and business development capabilities
- Support for organisations and networks to address service needs and identified gaps in the sector
- Distribution ecologies in which audiences discover and connect with Australian arts and culture and artists earn revenues and maintain rights in their work
- Digital skills and literacy at all levels of the sector, including new approaches to digital practice, distribution and platforms

Considerations

- National Performing Arts Partnership Framework (NPAPF) and Visual Arts and Craft Strategy (VACS)
- National Skills Commission (NSC) skills and training research
- National Digital strategy
- New definitions of the marketplace and changing expectations of audiences and participants including the impact of participatory digital technologies
- Transactional technologies such as Blockchain
- Employment and skills frameworks (including upcoming jobs summit)
- Workplace structures that impact the working conditions of artists, including income support, employment, superannuation and taxation. And targeted investment to address these
- Intellectual Property laws (including moral rights), the artists' resale royalty scheme and other policies, codes of practice and protocols
- Space for making and sharing art, and the 2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan

Public value

Goal: Strengthen the capacity of the creative sector to deliver benefits to Australians

Arts and culture can play an important role in all aspects of Australians' lives, and have relevance across a range of portfolios of government. The benefits of arts and culture are evidenced in a range of domains - wellbeing, education, Intellectual Property (IP) generation, innovation and the future of work, cohesion, infrastructure, environment, ageing and our influence on the world stage. Arts and culture add substantial value and help address a breadth of current challenges.

The power of arts and culture to generate empathy, challenge stereotypes and deepen understanding are invaluable in the context of a fracturing public sphere. Arts and culture help us understand one another better⁸ and helps enable all Australians to feel part of a shared civic community.

There is an urgent need to develop new approaches to address mental health in Australia - a crisis which affects millions of Australians and costs over \$70 billion each year.⁹ Arts interventions address the social determinants of health and the need for cross-portfolio approaches to mental wellbeing. Arts approaches to mental health give participants a sense of control over their life, build and deepen relationships, generate skills and self-confidence, facilitate social inclusion, and help overcome stigma

by empowering participants to explore a range of experiences and identities.¹⁰

Similarly, engagement with arts participation has proven benefits to improve educational engagement and outcomes, by building self-confidence, facilitating creative problem solving, supporting collaboration and empowering teachers and students with new modes of learning. Creative engagement are powerful contributors to child development, education and young people's lives, building the necessary skills for the jobs and workforce of the future.

The arts are also powerful drivers for regional, domestic and international tourism. In particular arts and culture provide a powerful platform to share and build Australia's reputation internationally, and actively engage in cultural diplomacy, relationship building and expand our economic potential to new markets.

To fully realise all these benefits, arts and culture need a seat at the table in policymaking, planning and program delivery across portfolios and sectors such as health, education, First Nations, multicultural policy, regional development, small business, women, innovation, justice, trade and foreign affairs.

To maximise the public value generated by arts and culture we need to focus on and consider the following:

Focus areas

- Whole of government approaches that embed arts and culture in policymaking and program delivery
- Investment in the evidence base for the value of the arts in working across sectors
- Creative practitioners who are trained and resourced to work and apply their skills in new contexts
- Robust partnerships with clear ambitions and commitments to collaboration
- Education policy development to support arts education, training and research
- Investment in Australian stories to showcase our unique culture and activate cultural exchange with international networks

Considerations

- [National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan](#)
- [The National Arts and Health Framework](#)
- [Productivity Commission's mental health and wellbeing recommendations](#)
- National curriculum
- [UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education](#)
- Australian Research Council
- [Austrade's tourism policy and strategy](#) and National Indigenous Australians Agency's [Indigenous Tourism Fund](#)
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) soft power strategies and priorities

Creative economy

Goal: Build sustainable, networked and globally recognised creative industries

Creativity is generative. It generates new ideas, new work, new practices and new connections. Arts, culture and creativity play a vital role in education, supporting the development of skills, generating IP and driving innovation and technology for all Australians.

Ideas, talent, audiences and career pathways now move between a range of cultural and creative industries as visual artists work in fashion, composers create for games, writing is adapted for screen and production design moves from theatre to screen to digital story world. This cross-pollination is important for the vitality of our ecosystem, it generates new forms of creative practice and it maintains relevance to audiences.

Our creative industries form a substantial networked ecology, employing 645,000 people, or 6% of the workforce.¹¹ These industries also contribute \$115.8 billion or 6.3% of GDP to our economy.¹² Australian arts and cultural products are significant exports and deliver cultural and economic value to the nation. Australian rights generate over \$10 million every year for

Australian authors and publishers.¹³ The combined annual export of Australian musicians, music publishers and record labels is estimated to be approximately \$195 million.¹⁴ In 2018, the overall copyright industries in Australia – which have arts and culture at their core – contributed \$4.8 billion in exports.¹⁵

In a radically disrupted world, traditional industries are being challenged by the fourth industrial revolution and global and systemic issues such as climate change. We need to support the unique value of our human potential through creativity as a driver of productivity.

These dynamics are not unique to Australia. Complex and rich creative ecologies exist in every culture and offer powerful platforms for mutual understanding, exchange, market development and lasting outcomes from person-to-person relationships to institutional and state-led collaborations. Arts and culture are integral to cultural and global relations, as well as great sources of revenue and global recognition for Australia's creative organisations, artists and allied businesses.

To realise the potential of the creative economy we need to focus on and consider the following:

- Robust data sets, including satellite accounts, for creative industries
- Support for creative practitioners and industry to develop new business models – including fostering collaborations between not-for-profit and commercial parts of the sector
- Strong understandings of how to develop, protect and extend original Intellectual Property (IP)
- An end-to-end understanding of the value chain from creation to distribution
- Mechanisms to extend the impact of our creative industries globally, including in terms of market development, sources of revenue, cultural understanding and exchange
- Increased collaboration between sectors, including a strong understanding of transferrable skills
- Robust digital infrastructure that is accessible and enabling
- Greater collaboration on international market development and cultural opportunities including across portfolios from the arts and cultural spheres to foreign affairs and trade

Considerations

- Cultural and creative industries models
- Legislative and regulatory frameworks, including exploration of potential tax structures that leverage our creative economy
- The roles and remits of partner agencies
- Local content quotas for Australian radio, broadcast TV and streaming platforms
- Export and market development opportunities.
- Supports for businesses and digital transformation
- World Economic Forum, [The Future of Jobs: Employment, skills and workforce strategy for the fourth industrial revolution](#)

Effective investment and support

Commitments to contestability, accountability and measurement

To fully realise the many benefits of arts and culture, robust and accountable investment structures are needed for a well-functioning ecology for creative work.

A coordinated approach to investment in arts and culture – with strong partnerships between government, for profit, not-for-profit and philanthropic sectors – would bolster our creative economy and maximise existing investment in a range of domains.

National investment structures should better align with creative investment and evaluation frameworks across local, state and territory governments, a range of portfolios and international partners. These frameworks and partnerships would require well-articulated and mutually agreed aims and measurable outcomes.

Extension of allied data warehouses would refine and increase the sharing of data on the impacts and outcomes of cultural and creative industries and enable the better targeting of investments. Better coordination and rigour would also ensure data systems and technologies properly address human rights, privacy, safety, accessibility and Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

A better coordinated approach to investment in the sector would:

- clearly articulate relevance and public benefit for all Australians
- draw on robust evidence and deliver measurable outcomes
- improve the ability of creative industries to be informed by research, data and insights
- support targeted critical cultural and creative infrastructure investment into the future

- include stakeholder input and consider existing priorities and commitments
- guide decision-making, relevant to the investment objectives
- underpin measurable governance and is delivered with efficiency and efficacy.

The outcomes of shared investment would:

- support and advance First Nations arts and culture
- support artists and arts and cultural organisations to foster artistic and creative expertise to deliver enriching arts experiences for all Australians
- build cross-agency and sector capacity to measure and communicate collective impact
- provide substantial economic opportunity for cultural and creative companies, organisations and practitioners – enabling them to create new work, build sustainable collaborations, grow their businesses, take risks and increase the scale of their ambitions
- enable opportunities for Australians to be transformed and inspired through arts, culture and creativity
- reflect the diversity of Australia and supports equity of opportunity and access in expression and participation
- strengthen the global profile of Australian arts, culture and creativity, and build the capability of Australia’s creatives to engage internationally
- deliver outcomes for whole-of-government priorities and programs.

Endnotes

- 1 ABS 2019, *Australian Industry, 2017-18*.
- 2 Flore J et al 2021, 'Creative Arts Workers During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Social imaginaries in lockdown', *Journal of Sociology* 0:00.
- 3 Gooda M and Dudgeon P 2014, *The Elders' Report into Preventing Indigenous Self-harm and Youth Suicide*. Australia Council 2017, *Living Culture: First Nations arts participation and wellbeing*. Ninti-One and CRC for Remote Economic Participation 2017, *Interplay Project* (2011-17). See the Australia Council's [Submission to the Closing the Gap Refresh](#) for more.
- 4 Australia Council 2020, *Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.
- 5 Australia Council 2020, *Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.
- 6 Australia Council 2021, *Towards Equity: A research overview of diversity in Australia's arts and cultural sector*.
- 7 Australia Council 2021, *In Real Life: Mapping digital cultural engagement in the first decades of the 21st century*.
- 8 Australia Council 2020, *Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.
- 9 This includes direct economic costs such as cost of services including healthcare, housing and justice services; cost of lost productivity due to reduced employment opportunities, absenteeism and presenteeism; and cost of care services provided by family and friends. See Productivity Commission 2021, [A Brief Overview of the Mental Health Inquiry Report](#).
- 10 Davidson JW and Krause AE 2018, 'Social and applied psychological explorations of music, health and wellbeing', *Music, health and wellbeing*. Boydell KM et al 2021, 'Graffiti walls: Arts-based mental health knowledge translation with young people in secondary schools', *Creative approaches to health education: New ways of thinking, making, doing, teaching and learning*.
- 11 ABS 2019, *Australian Industry, 2017-18*.
- 12 Based on 2017-18 data. Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (BCARR) 2020, [Cultural and creative activity in Australia: 2008-09 to 2017-18](#).
- 13 Australia Council and Macquarie University, *Reaching Out: Australian Books in international markets*.
- 14 Australia Council 2019, [Born Global: Australian music exports. A summary by the Australia Council for the Arts](#).
- 15 PricewaterhouseCoopers 2020, [The economic contribution of Australia's copyright industries - 2006-2018](#).



