

Submission to the 2026 National Cultural Policy Consultation

The next National Cultural Policy should make one practical shift that would deliver outsized impact for the WA Jazz Project and similar organisations: *treat nationally significant live music organisations outside the east coast as core cultural infrastructure*, and back them with multi-year investment that links creation, presentation, education and touring. For a flagship jazz organisation in Western Australia, the greatest policy value would come from strengthening Pillar 4, Strong Cultural Infrastructure, in direct connection with Pillar 5, Engaging the Audience, because resilient organisations are what allow artistic excellence, access, youth development and audience growth to happen consistently rather than intermittently.

Cultural and creative activity contributes tens of billions of dollars to the Australian economy and supports hundreds of thousands of jobs, yet rising costs are testing the resilience of the systems that support cultural activity. In Western Australia, those pressures are amplified by geography, freight and travel costs, smaller population density, and the difficulty of sustaining large-scale ensemble work at a national standard without recurrent support. A jazz orchestra or flagship jazz presenter cannot be built project by project alone; it requires rehearsal capacity, artistic planning, commissioning, marketing, education delivery, and venue partnerships that endure beyond a single funding round.

The WA Jazz Project exists to enrich and expand jazz in Western Australia through performance, education, and advocacy, and has positioned itself as a flagship for excellence in jazz in the state. That model aligns strongly with the policy paper's emphasis on participation, youth pathways, shared experience, and future skills. It also reflects the reality that jazz is not only an art-form of performance but an ecosystem of mentorship, intergenerational learning, composition, improvisation, and community connection. When policy supports a stable jazz organisation, it is also supporting artists as workers, emerging talent, venue activation, and the discoverability of Australian music.

The new policy should therefore establish a dedicated multi-year pathway for regionally distinctive music organisations that combine high-level artistic output with audience development and education. Eligibility should explicitly include large ensembles (such as jazz orchestras and artist-led organisations) based outside Sydney and Melbourne, with assessment that values public impact, partnerships, and artistic development rather than narrow commercial metrics alone. This would complement existing initiatives that fund venues, festivals, and touring, but it would fill the current gap between one-off project support and the long-term organisational base needed to make that activity sustainable.

A policy setting of this kind would deliver national benefit. It would help audiences in Western Australia experience ambitious Australian music locally, create clearer pathways for young musicians, strengthen cultural participation in a form that is collaborative and distinctively Australian, and give the Commonwealth a visible success story in cultural equity across the federation. If the next policy is serious about every story and every place, then it should ensure that organisations building excellence in places such as Perth are not asked to operate permanently on short-term uncertainty. A modest but reliable multi-year investment stream for organisations like the WA Jazz Project would be a highly effective and nationally resonant reform.