

## Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation

### *Response to Public Consultation Paper: Towards a New National Cultural Policy*

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on a new National Cultural Policy. I write as a communication design researcher and creative practitioner with an interest in accessibility, participation and public understanding.

Building on existing commitments to equity and disability inclusion, I encourage the next policy to recognise cognitive accessibility and communicative legibility as enabling conditions within Australia's strong cultural infrastructure.

Cultural inclusion is often framed in terms of representation, funding, and physical access. These are essential. However, participation is also shaped by whether cultural content, institutions and public-facing information are designed to be understood and engaged with by diverse audiences. People may be excluded not only by barriers to entry, but by barriers to participation, interpretation and cultural meaning-making.

This matters to diverse audiences, including neurodivergent people and others navigating increasingly complex information environments. In this context, accessibility should be understood not only as access to cultural spaces, but as access to meaning, participation and cultural meaning-making.

This perspective aligns strongly with several pillars of the consultation framework.

Under **A Place for Every Story**, inclusion should involve not only ensuring diverse stories are present but ensuring they are legible and meaningful to diverse publics.

Under **The Centrality of the Artist**, policy should recognise artists, communication designers and creative practitioners as contributors to cultural life, including through practices that make complexity more accessible and participatory.

This includes support for socially engaged creative practices, including craft-based and participatory forms of practice, that foster slowness, attentiveness, artistic experimentation and collective meaning-making, yet are often undervalued in policy settings.

Under **Engaging the Audience**, changing audience behaviours and discovery pathways raise not only questions of access and reach, but also of interpretation and understanding. This includes not only whether cultural work can be discovered, but whether it can be meaningfully engaged with once encountered.

To strengthen the policy, I encourage consideration of three priorities:

- Embed cognitive accessibility principles within cultural funding, audience engagement and institutional practice.

- Recognise communication design and socially engaged creative practice as part of Australia's cultural ecology and as contributors to strong cultural infrastructure.
- Support experimentation in participatory and neuro-inclusive creative practice through targeted programs, co-design approaches and institutional standards.

These priorities could be embedded across the existing pillars or reflected as a stronger explicit commitment to accessibility by design.

Australia has an opportunity to lead by recognising that exclusion can arise not only through barriers to access or representation, but through barriers to participation, interpretation and cultural meaning-making.

Addressing these barriers would strengthen inclusion, artistic innovation, public trust and participation.

A future-facing cultural policy should recognise that accessibility is not an add-on, but part of how a vibrant, sustainable and participatory cultural sector is built.