

Australia's story is still being written

Australia's story is shaped through many voices and creative practices. Over more than thirty years working across metropolitan, regional, remote and international contexts, my professional practice as an artist, producer, executive leader and cultural advocate has sat alongside and supported the work of many others contributing to this shared cultural narrative. From my early career as a performer and producer to senior leadership roles with major performing arts companies, youth arts organisations, regional arts bodies and now the WA Museum, my experience has shown me that arts and culture operate not as a luxury but as essential infrastructure supporting identity, wellbeing, connection and resilience.

First Nations First

Throughout my career I have worked in close partnership with Aboriginal artists, cultural workers and communities, with a consistent focus on approaches that place cultural authority, decision-making and authorship with community. This has included working directly with Aboriginal cultural Elders and leaders to support structural, Aboriginal-led change within the arts sector.

A key example of this work was supporting the establishment of the Aboriginal Art Centre Hub of Western Australia (AACHWA), developed through extensive consultation with Aboriginal cultural Elders and Aboriginal art centre leaders across the state. This process was grounded in listening to community-identified needs and aspirations, resulting in a peak, Aboriginal-controlled organisation that strengthens advocacy, sustainability and collective voice for Aboriginal art centres and artists.

My practice has also included large-scale artistic collaborations that centre First Nations cultural leadership, such as Milnjiya, Milky Way – River of Stars with West Australian Ballet (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-9qdlzNnhc>), referenced by Creative Australia as an example of best practice in respecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. I have also served as Chair of NT Dance Company, an Indigenous-owned professional dance company based in Darwin (<https://www.ntdancecompany.org.au>), supporting its long-term artistic and organisational sustainability.

These experiences reinforce that First Nations culture is foundational to Australia's story and that effective cultural policy must prioritise long-term, Aboriginal-led, place-based investment. National policy must move beyond short-term project funding to support enduring cultural infrastructure, leadership and self-determination, particularly in regional and remote contexts.

Supporting the Creative Workforce

Across leadership roles at Regional Arts WA, West Australian Ballet and the WA Museum, I have managed state and federal funding programs, touring networks and workforce strategies that depend on skilled, locally embedded practitioners. Programs such as Sand Tracks (<https://regionalartswa.org.au/presenting/sand-tracks/>) and Out There Burringurrah (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbnSCEiNzto>) demonstrate how sustained investment in people creates cultural, social and economic impact. A future National Cultural Policy must recognise creative labour as skilled work and support secure pathways, fair remuneration and regional workforce development.

Culture as a Public Good

My practice consistently intersects with health, wellbeing, education and social policy. As CEO of Carclew Youth Arts, I led major arts-and-health initiatives, including a multi-year alcohol and substance abuse prevention program delivered through creative practice for young people in the APY Lands. This work demonstrated how arts participation builds confidence, voice and connection for young people at risk, well before arts and health became a formal policy frame.

In my current role as Director, Regions at the WA Museum, I lead regional strategy, activation and capacity building across four regional museums and major projects, including the reactivation of Gwoonwardu Mia – the Gascoyne Aboriginal Cultural and Heritage Centre in Carnarvon. This work supports Aboriginal-led cultural renewal, regional employment and cultural tourism.

Placemaking, Belonging and Leadership

From place-based regional programs to major cultural institutions, my experience demonstrates that arts and culture strengthen community identity, pride and belonging. Effective national cultural policy must be supported by a long-term planning framework that is integrated across government portfolios and grounded in local knowledge and lived experience. Australia's story is still being written every day in regional towns, cultural spaces and on Country. The next National Cultural Policy must ensure artists, arts workers and communities are supported to continue shaping that shared story with equity, confidence and ambition for generations to come.