

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Submission: Community Bands and the National Cultural Policy Community bands are a foundational yet under-recognised part of Australia's cultural ecosystem. With a history spanning more than 150 years, they have provided continuous service to communities across metropolitan, regional, and remote Australia, yet remain seldom reflected in Commonwealth arts policy. There are hundreds of community bands nationwide, engaging people of all ages and backgrounds. They deliver significant cultural, educational, and psychosocial benefits through regular, inclusive music-making, strengthening wellbeing, resilience, and community connection.

Pillar 1: Nations First Community bands have historically played a limited role in engaging with First Nations culture. However, they offer strong potential as spaces for sustained participation, relationship-building, and cultural exchange. Policy should prioritise long-term partnerships with First Nations cultural organisations, alongside initiatives that support First Nations participation as performers, leaders, and creators. These settings support psychosocial wellbeing and deeper cross-cultural understanding through shared practice.

Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story Community bands are among the most accessible forms of cultural participation. They reflect local identity, support culturally diverse expression, and enable lifelong engagement. They also act as training grounds for emerging composers and performers, providing opportunities to develop skills and test new work.

Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist Community bands connect education and artistic practice, maintaining links with schools, tertiary programs, and private teachers. They support positive educational outcomes and sustain creative skills across a lifetime. They rely on skilled conductors and educators who require recognition and support. Australian band composers also contribute internationally; works by composers such as Jared McCunnie are performed at major championships in the UK, US, and Europe, showcasing Australian creativity globally.

Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure Community bands are grassroots cultural infrastructure embedded in local communities. They support civic life, including ANZAC Day commemorations across suburban and regional Australia, and contribute to local events and festivals. They also generate economic impact through state and national championships, while elite ensembles achieve world-class standards. Policy should support access to spaces, sustainable funding, and partnerships with local government and education sectors.

Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience Community bands provide accessible live music and are often the first point of engagement with the arts, building audiences and strengthening community connection. Conclusion Community bands are a foundational layer of Australia's cultural life. Policy should recognise and invest in their role in community wellbeing, education, participation, and national identity.

****Key priorities:**** recognition in policy, targeted funding, First Nations partnerships, infrastructure support, and investment in participation.