


National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Australia's new National Cultural Policy represents an important moment for rethinking how culture is valued, supported, and shared. At its core, the policy aims to strengthen the arts sector, preserve heritage, and promote creative industries. These are worthwhile goals, but the real measure of its success will depend on how meaningfully it addresses long-standing gaps—especially in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

For decades, Aboriginal culture has often been positioned as something symbolic rather than something living, evolving, and central to national identity. While there has been increasing acknowledgment in recent years, respect has not always translated into structural change. Cultural knowledge has frequently been appropriated, misrepresented, or excluded from decision-making spaces. A policy like this must go beyond recognition and actively ensure that Aboriginal communities have control over how their cultures are represented, protected, and shared.

One of the key strengths of the new policy is its stated commitment to First Nations leadership in the arts. If implemented properly, this could shift the balance of power—placing cultural authority back into the hands of Aboriginal people themselves. That means funding Indigenous-led organisations, supporting language revitalisation, and protecting cultural intellectual property. However, there is always a risk that such commitments remain surface-level unless backed by long-term investment and accountability. Respect is not just about visibility; it is about listening. Aboriginal culture is deeply connected to land, story, and community, and it carries knowledge systems that have existed for tens of thousands of years.

A truly respectful cultural policy would treat this knowledge as foundational rather than supplementary. It would embed Indigenous perspectives across all areas of cultural life—not just in designated “Indigenous programs,” but in mainstream institutions, education systems, and public discourse. At the same time, the policy presents an opportunity to frame Australia as a place where everyone can learn from one another. Cultural diversity is one of the country's greatest strengths, and fostering an environment of shared learning can help build deeper understanding and social cohesion. Aboriginal culture, in particular, offers valuable insights into sustainability, community responsibility, and connection to place—lessons that are increasingly relevant in today's world.

Creating a space where everyone can learn requires accessibility and openness. This means supporting community arts, regional programs, and educational initiatives that bring people together rather than concentrating cultural experiences in major cities or elite institutions. It also involves encouraging dialogue—allowing different cultural perspectives to be expressed, challenged, and appreciated in a respectful way.

In conclusion, the National Cultural Policy is a step in the right direction, but its impact will depend on how seriously it addresses the issue of respect for Aboriginal culture. If it can move beyond symbolic gestures and empower Indigenous voices while fostering a culture of shared learning, it has the potential to reshape Australia's cultural landscape in a meaningful and lasting way.