

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Australia's next National Cultural Policy must recognise that culture does not only live in major institutions, galleries, or capital-city stages. Culture also lives in community halls, grassroots gatherings, kitchens, churches, storytelling circles, music, language, and the everyday labour of communities who continuously create spaces for belonging, often without long-term funding or institutional support.

As a Pasifika diaspora community organiser and founder of the Aurosokwo Project based on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country in Kamberra/Canberra, I have seen firsthand how multicultural and diaspora-led creative work is frequently sustained out of personal sacrifice. Much of this work happens voluntarily, out of pocket, and outside formal systems, despite the significant social and cultural value it creates. For many Pasifika, migrant, and multicultural communities, creative practice is inseparable from identity, wellbeing, intergenerational knowledge-sharing, and community care. Yet these forms of cultural leadership are often under-recognised within national arts frameworks.

There remains a gap between large-scale policy language and the realities faced by grassroots organisers trying to create safe, accessible, culturally grounded spaces for their communities. The next National Cultural Policy should prioritise long-term investment into community-led cultural infrastructure, especially for culturally diverse and regional communities. This includes flexible micro-funding, accessible grant pathways, mentorship opportunities, and support for emerging grassroots leaders who may not yet have the institutional language or resources to navigate traditional arts systems.

The policy should also recognise the importance of diaspora storytelling and cultural preservation. Many young people from migrant and Pasifika backgrounds are navigating questions of identity, displacement, climate anxiety, and belonging. Creative spaces allow them to reconnect with language, culture, ancestry, and community in meaningful ways. Supporting this work is not simply about "arts participation"; it is about strengthening social cohesion, cultural continuity, and collective wellbeing. Accessibility must also remain central. Smaller community-led initiatives often struggle with venue costs, administration burdens, and limited operational support. Funding models should value relational and community-centred outcomes, not only attendance numbers or commercial scalability.

Importantly, the next policy should continue to honour First Nations leadership while also creating stronger pathways for solidarity and collaboration between First Nations and diaspora communities. Many multicultural communities deeply value the opportunity to create respectfully on Indigenous lands and learn from Indigenous systems of cultural care and storytelling.

Australia's cultural future depends on supporting the people already doing the work at the grassroots level. A strong National Cultural Policy should ensure that creativity is not only sustained by those who can afford to self-fund it, but by systems that genuinely value community-led cultural labour as essential to Australia's identity and future.