

Dear Minister,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on what should be built next following the successful *Revive* five-year plan, which has seen the establishment and restoration of Australian arts across music, writing, First Nations prioritisation and funding to secure the longevity of authentic Australian stories and artists.

Australia stands at an important cultural crossroads. As our nation continues to evolve socially, economically and geopolitically within the Indo-Pacific region, so too must the stories we tell about ourselves, the voices we elevate, and the creative identity we project both domestically and internationally.

The next phase of Australia's National Cultural Policy presents an opportunity not only to support the sustainability of the arts sector, but to reconsider how culture contributes to nation building, social cohesion (although I prefer to refer to it as Australia's collective cultural heritage), regional engagement and Australia's global identity.

As an independent creative and producer, I believe Australia's future cultural strength lies in its ability to embrace the complexity of contemporary Australian identity — one shaped by First Nations heritage, multicultural lived experiences, post-colonial reflection and growing connections with Asia and the Pacific.

Increasingly, Australia is no longer defined by singular narratives or historical cultural archetypes, but by a collective and evolving cultural story that reflects the diversity of the nation itself.

This submission is informed by both lived experience within the independent screen sector and broader observations about how Australian culture is perceived internally and externally through my professional career across industries and encounters with people outside of Australia. It seeks to contribute to the discussion around how Australia's cultural policy settings can remain relevant, effective and forward-looking in a rapidly changing world. In particular, it reflects on the role of storytelling, media, creative industries and cultural representation in shaping a modern Australia that is confident, inclusive, regionally connected and culturally mature.

Consideration of how Australia's cultural policy settings can remain relevant, effective and forward-looking requires Australia to view itself through an international lens.

If the outside world were asked to define contemporary Australian arts and culture today, what story would they see?

What values, identities and narratives would Australia be projecting into the region we geographically and economically belong to, yet culturally distant?

Importantly, this submission approaches arts and culture not as peripheral industries, but as essential national infrastructure — capable of strengthening democratic participation, deepening historical understanding, supporting economic growth, fostering regional diplomacy and shaping how future generations understand what it means to be Australian, viewed from the inside and out.

Our Collective Cultural Heritage

A future national cultural policy should encourage Australia to be unafraid of telling the full breadth of its national story, particularly where storytelling contributes to social maturity, historical understanding and nation building.

Australia is a vast continent with differing historical perspectives shaped by geography, migration, frontier history and community experience. Northern Australia, for example, often understands Australian identity and history through a different lens to that of south-eastern metropolitan centres, particularly in relation to First Nations history, wartime contributions, migration and Australia's long-standing connection to Asia and the Pacific.

A confident and contemporary Australia should not be afraid to revisit stories that were once overlooked, simplified or excluded from mainstream cultural narratives. Many Australians are still unaware that Billy Sing, an Australian of Chinese heritage, became one of Australia's most renowned snipers during the First World War and is credited with saving countless Australian and allied lives through his extraordinary military service.

Likewise, the contributions of First Nations servicemen and women to Australia's wartime history have often received insufficient visibility within mainstream education and storytelling. These are not divisive stories — they are Australia's collective cultural heritage stories.

Contemporary Australia is capable of engaging with its history with greater honesty, nuance and maturity. Cultural policy therefore has an important role in supporting creative works, public broadcasting, education-linked storytelling and screen content that embeds these layered histories back into the national consciousness, allowing Australians to better understand not only how the nation was built, but who contributed to its story.

Screen Narrative Proximate with Our Closest Neighbours

Australia is no longer culturally isolated from Asia, nor should its creative identity continue to be framed primarily through Eurocentric narratives that do not fully reflect the multicultural reality of modern Australia. Our future cultural strength lies in embracing narrative proximity rather than relying solely on cultural familiarity rooted in historical similarity.

The [Asia-Pacific](#) film and entertainment market generated a revenue of USD 37.8 billion, accounting for 33.5% of the global market in 2025. It is projected to grow to USD 83.5 billion by 2033.

Traditionally, [North American](#) market dominated the film and entertainment market in 2025 reaching a revenue of USD 38.2 billion and accounting for 33.9% of the global market, which is slightly ahead of the Asia-Pacific market by 0.4% and projected to grow to USD 83.5 billion by 2033 as well.

There is an equally sizeable market to our north, with exactly the same appetite for screen productions.

The next National Cultural Policy presents an opportunity to position Australia as a confident Indo-Pacific creative nation — one capable of producing stories that resonate across borders through shared human experiences, migration, diaspora identity, regional collaboration and contemporary multiculturalism.

Australia's cultural and media presence in Indo-Pacific remains comparatively under-represented when measured against the dominant influence of content from the United States, United Kingdom, and Europe. This is despite Australia's deepening strategic relationship with countries such as Indonesia, the presence of our largest overseas diplomatic mission in Jakarta and Australians' number one overseas destination in Bali.

At present, Australia's screen and creative industries continue to be shaped internationally by legacy cultural exports such as *Crocodile Dundee*, first released in 1986. While historically significant in establishing early global recognition of Australian storytelling, its enduring association highlights a lack of contemporary narrative renewal within key regional markets.

More recent screen exports such as *Bondi Rescue* have achieved notable visibility in Western markets, including the United States, United Kingdom, and parts of Europe, particularly among tourism audiences. However, its resonance across Asian markets, including Indo-Pacific, remains comparatively limited. Similarly, long-running Australian television narratives such as *Neighbours* and *Home and Away* continue to reflect a predominantly domestic, suburban Australian worldview, which does not consistently position Australia within its contemporary regional context or its lived proximity to Southeast Asia.

Australia has a globally recognised cohort of screen and entertainment talent, including Chris Hemsworth, Margot Robbie, James Wan, Jacob Elordi, and Nicole Kidman, whose work has significantly shaped contemporary global film and television. However, despite their Australian origins, they are often perceived in parts of Asia and other international markets as extensions of Hollywood rather than distinctly Australian artists. This dilution of national attribution means Australia's cultural contribution is frequently under-recognised, weakening its cultural visibility and soft power. Strengthening the clear association of these successes with Australia would better reflect the nation's creative output and align with a more outward-facing cultural policy focused on international engagement and recognition.

As a result, Australia's cultural projection risks lagging behind its diplomatic and economic ambitions in the region. The gap is not simply one of content distribution, but of narrative relevance and proximity. As well as identifying key creatives and co-production houses supported by Australian government and funding through commissioners and private equity.

Importantly, Australia's cultural identity abroad should not be perceived as exclusionary, outdated or disconnected from the diversity of its own population.

A forward-looking cultural policy must continue supporting creative works that reflect multicultural Australia not as a secondary consideration, but as central to the national story itself. Australian stories that engage authentically with our neighbouring region can create stronger cultural diplomacy outcomes, expand export opportunities for Australian creatives, and encourage collaborative production models that reflect the interconnected future of our region.

Economic vulnerability of independent and emerging screen creatives

Another critical consideration for the future of Australia's cultural sector is the economic vulnerability of independent creatives and emerging screen practitioners.

Across the screen industry in particular, many independent producers, writers, actors and crew members continue to operate within highly unstable financial conditions despite contributing significantly to Australia's cultural output and creative innovation. From personal experience, and through conversations across the sector, it is common for independent projects and pilot productions to rely upon extensive unpaid or minimally paid labour, with talented creatives and crew volunteering their time, skills and resources simply to bring Australian stories to life.

While this reflects the extraordinary dedication and passion that exists within the industry, it also exposes a structural fragility within Australia's creative economy. I have rarely encountered another industry where groups of Australian professionals regardless of their heritage, unite with such commitment, often without financial security.

And, why do creatives do this?

It is because of a shared belief in the cultural value and future potential of the work they are creating.

A forward-looking cultural policy should recognise that independent creatives are not peripheral to Australia's arts sector — they are often its incubators of innovation, multicultural storytelling and future export potential. Greater support mechanisms are needed to ensure creative workers can sustain long-term careers without relying on unsustainable personal sacrifices and unpaid labour to participate in the national cultural landscape.

Emergence of a Collective Cultural Heritage Broadcaster

Australia's broadcast ecosystem has yet to fully evolve to reflect the complexity of contemporary Australian identity, particularly within an Indo-Pacific and multicultural or collective heritage context.

Australia's mainstream media and broadcasting landscape also requires reconsideration within the context of a forward-looking cultural policy. Many major broadcasters, including Sky News Australia, Seven Network, Nine Network, Network 10 and even Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), continue in many respects to project a cultural image of Australia shaped by previous generations and historical narratives that no longer fully represent the lived reality of contemporary Australian society.

While Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) has historically played an important role in introducing multicultural perspectives and communities into the national conversation, Australia has evolved far beyond multiculturalism as simply the celebration of ethnic cuisines, migration stories or cultural festivals. Contemporary Australia is now a deeply interconnected collective cultural identity shaped simultaneously by First Nations heritage, post-colonial reflection, Asian-Pacific engagement and multicultural lived experience.

Yet there remains no major public broadcasting platform fully dedicated to projecting this contemporary Australian identity back to Australians themselves and outward to the region and globally.

As Australia continues to test and redefine the fabric of multiculturalism, social cohesion and national identity, cultural policy must encourage media and creative institutions to evolve accordingly — supporting narratives that reflect modern Australia not as fragmented communities existing beside one another, but as a shared and continuously evolving national culture, a collective cultural heritage.

Recommendations

Australia has the opportunity to become recognised not only for preserving its collective cultural heritage, but for shaping a modern creative identity that reflects the nation we have become.

This includes supporting emerging creatives from culturally diverse backgrounds, incentivising Australian regional co-productions, strengthening Asia-Pacific screen and arts partnerships, and investing in narratives that allow Australia to be seen internationally as contemporary, collaborative and culturally self-aware.

Recommendation #1. Develop an Indo-Pacific Creative Partnership Strategy

Establish targeted funding programs and co-production incentives that strengthen creative collaboration between Australia and neighbouring Indo-Pacific nations, particularly Indonesia and Southeast Asia, across screen, music, literature and digital arts. This should position Australia as an active regional cultural partner through narrative proximate storytelling rather than a culturally isolated Western market.

Currently, official co-production MoUs exist with China, India, Malaysia and Singapore, however explore Indonesian market and formalise overarching initiatives and funding to secure long-term sustainability in screen narrative development and productions.

Establish long-term high-quality development and co-production funds with major stakeholders such as leading producers, showrunners, mid-leading writers, production houses, private equity, commissioner commitments and government grants from both Australia and its bilateral partner.

Recommendation #2. Expand Support for Multicultural and Diaspora Storytelling

Increase long-term funding pathways for creatives from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, particularly emerging independent producers, writers and directors whose work reflects contemporary multicultural Australia. Diversity should not be treated as a niche category, but as central to Australia's evolving national identity and cultural export strategy. Create sustainable state and Federal level incubators.

Recommendation #3. Create Sustainable Funding Models for Independent Creatives

Introduce development grants, pilot production funds and minimum creative wage protections for independent screen productions to reduce overreliance on unpaid labour and

