

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

What's missing from our national cultural policy discussions is recognition of the role Community Arts and Cultural Development already plays across Australia's social, civic and institutional life. Despite its broad reach and impact, CACD remains largely invisible within the current REVIVE framework. This creates a significant policy blind spot, limiting recognition of a practice that actively delivers on national priorities around equity, participation, wellbeing and access, while also reducing government's ability to mobilise creative practice in response to increasingly complex challenges including climate instability, disasters, inequality and social fragmentation.

CACD is not a niche arts practice. It is a methodology embedded across sectors including health, education, justice, regional development, disaster recovery and climate adaptation. While only a small percentage of arts investment is directly attributed to CACD nationally, this significantly understates its actual footprint, as the work is dispersed across multiple funding streams and policy areas without consistent measurement or recognition. The result is systemic undervaluation of a practice already delivering many of the outcomes governments are seeking to achieve.

Across my own experience working within art making institutions, governance, community-led initiatives and cross-sector creative collaborations, I have seen how creative practice becomes infrastructure for connection, trust and participation. CACD creates the conditions for communities not simply to consume culture, but to actively shape it. It strengthens social cohesion and belonging, supports wellbeing, builds local capability and workforce pathways, increases civic participation and helps communities navigate change together. Increasingly, it also plays a critical role in environmental awareness, resilience and climate adaptation, particularly in regional and disaster-impacted communities.

CACD directly advances the ambitions embedded within REVIVE. It supports First Nations self-determination and storytelling, amplifies culturally diverse voices, recognises the value of community-based creative workers and shifts engagement away from passive audience models toward active cultural participation. Its impact is particularly significant for communities too often excluded from mainstream cultural infrastructure, including First Nations peoples, young people, disabled communities, culturally diverse communities and those living outside metropolitan centres.

To address this gap, this submission proposes formal recognition of CACD within the policy; the establishment of a national CACD entity within Creative Australia; investment in workforce development; funding reforms toward long-term, place-based models; improved national data and evaluation systems; and embedding CACD across government portfolios including health, climate, disaster management and regional development.

At a time of increasing social fragmentation, climate instability and compounding disasters, Australia requires approaches that build trust, connection and collective capacity. CACD provides the creative and relational mechanisms to achieve them.