

## National Cultural Policy Submission

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Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

The 2026 consultation paper looks like a rinse and repeat update, especially in terms of the genres of work and types of outcomes and impacts it wants to support. While the current proposal is possibly more geared toward programming, it is no less silent on infrastructure needs than the 2023 version.

It is important to talk about infrastructure which is, as the saying goes, often invisible until failure – especially cultural infrastructure, which includes physical, organisational and human capital. This was recognised in the government’s response to core repair work of national cultural institutions soon after the 2023 policy. But that work was bracketed off from Revive 2023 and unfortunately continues to have no place in the 2026 framework [1].

As such, the nation's museums, libraries, archives and galleries appear as glass cathedrals (full of promise, knowledge and awe but are fragile and could shatter at any moment) in both the 2026 discussion paper and in the scope of the recently appointed advisory panel.

Why include cultural infrastructure/Pillar 4 at all if there is no intention to do something about our cultural and collecting institutions? It is fine to say that this is a document open for consultation, but we went through this process before in 2023 without any real changes.

Many activities that the new cultural policy is keen on could be supported or extended through partnerships between independent or small organisations or projects and universities and/or larger cultural institutions, including ones with a national remit. But in failing to acknowledge cultural institutions and their work the cultural policy also fails to function as a potential facilitator for network development. Institutions are already over-stretched and need extra resourcing for this work.

It also needs to be said that many of the university programs that would have provided and accredited the training and development required to produce human capital (another topic absent from the consultation paper) have been partly or fully decimated.

The current consultation paper says the 2023 policy “helped to reshape arts and culture in Australia” and asks “what’s next?”

My response would be that to look ahead requires going back to basics. Apart from the fact that “reshaping” sounds like rearranging deck chairs, it completely overlooks the basic foundations required to meet the cultural policy’s priorities. Achieving pillar 4's aspirations requires direct collaboration with cultural institutions as a fundamental premise (and ongoing practice).

Another thing is that every single one of these cultural institutions has an obligation to represent and serve Australians. Why does the consultation paper and process not explicitly recognise their strengths or the contributions they can make to meeting the policy goals?

[1] <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/kylie-message-the-importance-of-cultural-infrastructure/103772852>