

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

The current National Cultural Policy, Revive, is an important acknowledgment of the value of arts and culture within Australia's social, economic, and community life. As a regional artist, producer, and Co-Founder of PH(R)ASE in the NSW Northern Rivers, I strongly support the policy's commitment to strengthening cultural infrastructure, supporting artists, and improving equity of access across the sector. However, for the policy to create meaningful long-term impact, greater recognition and investment in regional creative ecosystems is essential.

The Northern Rivers is home to one of Australia's largest regional creative communities, yet many independent artists and small organisations continue to operate within under-resourced systems. Regional artists often work across multiple roles simultaneously — creating work, producing projects, facilitating community engagement, and sustaining local cultural activity — with limited infrastructure and support.

Following the devastating floods across the Northern Rivers, artists and cultural workers played a critical role in community recovery, connection, and resilience. Creative practice provided spaces for healing, storytelling, and rebuilding social cohesion. Reports such as Arts Northern Rivers' Dance Sector Uplift and Who We Are demonstrate the significant contribution arts and culture make to regional recovery and long-term community wellbeing. These findings reinforce the need to recognise cultural infrastructure as essential infrastructure.

One of the greatest challenges facing regional artists is the absence of sustained intermediary structures that support sector coordination, advocacy, professional development, and connection to state and national systems. Compared to metropolitan centres, regional artists often have reduced access to networks, producers, funding pathways, and strategic support. This impacts career sustainability, workforce retention, and equitable participation within national cultural conversations.

Through PH(R)ASE, we are developing artist-led initiatives such as the Regional Independent Artist Network (RIAN) to respond directly to these gaps. These place-based models strengthen regional coordination, support independent artists, encourage collaboration, and improve connectivity between regional practice and national cultural policy frameworks. Importantly, they are designed by artists embedded within the communities they serve.

Future national cultural policy must continue moving beyond short-term project funding toward sustained investment in regional cultural ecosystems and artist-led infrastructure. Regional artists should not only be participants within national cultural systems, but recognised as leaders and contributors shaping Australia's cultural future.

A strong national culture depends on thriving regional communities. Continued investment in locally embedded, artist-led infrastructure will ensure regional artists and organisations are adequately supported, connected, and represented within Australia's cultural landscape.