

## National Cultural Policy Submission

1469945

Public

Organisation

Art Education Australia

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Art Education Australia (AEA) is the national peak body for visual arts education, representing educators, researchers, artists and institutions across all stages of learning. For five decades, AEA has shaped curriculum, supported teacher practice and advocated for the role of visual arts in education and cultural life. As the Government reviews Revive and develops the next National Cultural Policy, AEA affirms that visual arts education is essential cultural infrastructure underpinning all pillars.

This submission aligns with the NAAE and supports continuation of the five-pillar framework. To realise its ambitions, the policy must explicitly embed visual arts education across all pillars as a central enabling condition of Australia's cultural future. Arts education is where artists are formed, audiences cultivated, participation normalised and the future creative workforce sustained. This depends on curriculum-embedded learning led by specialist teachers.

Visual arts education develops creative capability, critical thinking and cultural literacy, equipping young people to engage with complex social, technological and ecological challenges. It connects learners to Australian stories and identities and, critically, to First Nations knowledges through processes grounded in respect and local cultural protocols. Arts learning also supports wellbeing, belonging and civic participation.

Schools remain the most equitable point of access to arts and culture; investment in specialist teaching is therefore a long-term cultural and economic strategy. Yet access remains uneven. Many primary schools lack specialist teachers, with provision concentrated in higher socio-economic communities. Regional and remote communities continue to experience inequitable access to arts programs and pathways.

Artist-in-schools programs provide enrichment but cannot replace the continuity and pedagogical depth of curriculum-based learning. Addressing this requires coordinated policy across education and cultural portfolios, positioning arts education as a shared national responsibility.

Across the five pillars, AEA recommends:

**First Nations First:** Fund partnerships between schools and First Nations communities to co-design curriculum and professional learning. Support "two-way learning," with local protocols governing programs and First Nations authority embedded in teacher education.

**A Place for Every Story:** Commission a national audit of visual arts pathways and embed artist-student residencies in public schools aligned with the Australian Curriculum: The Arts.

**Centrality of the Artist:** Recognise visual arts educators and teaching artists as part of the creative workforce. Establish a national Teaching Artist Wage Standard and support workforce sustainability through HECS-HELP forgiveness tied to service in priority schools.

**Strong Cultural Infrastructure:** Recognise schools as cultural hubs and enable access to arts capital funding, including regional "Art Tech Labs." Ensure digital initiatives support visual arts education while addressing implications of AI.

**Engaging the Audience:** Scale youth-led exhibition platforms and require funded institutions to provide curriculum-linked resources and outreach to all schools, positioning students as creators, curators and critics.

AEA also supports a Sixth Pillar to address fragmentation and secure conditions for cultural continuity and workforce sustainability.

AEA stands ready to collaborate to embed these measures.