

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Organisation

JUTE Theatre Company

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

JUTE Theatre Company strongly supports the continuation of a National Cultural Policy. Revive has helped centre arts and culture as essential to Australia's economy, wellbeing, identity and civic life. The next policy must address the structural settings that prevent regional artists, organisations, young people and audiences from fully contributing to Australia's cultural future.

1. Centrality of the Artist: Build the Regional Creative Workforce

Regional Australia is facing a critical creative workforce shortage, particularly in technical production, stage management, design, producing and specialist arts administration. These pressures are being worsened by the closure and contraction of tertiary creative arts courses, rising study costs, and school-level settings that discourage Year 12 students from choosing creative arts subjects. Recent research has identified more than 40 discontinued creative arts courses and degrees in less than a decade, and a 21% decline in Year 12 ATAR arts enrolments from 2015-2023.

The next policy should establish a national Creative Workforce Pipeline, including incentives to retain or restore regional creative arts courses and student enrolments.

2. Arts Education Across All Developmental Stages

The next policy should recognise arts education as a lifelong developmental foundation. In the first five years of life, arts-rich experiences support emotional maturity, communication, social connection, imagination and confidence. This is especially important given that the AEDC has shown emotional maturity experiencing the greatest developmental decline in recent years.

The next policy should support stronger integration of arts and cultural learning across early childhood settings, schools, vocational pathways, tertiary education and community-based learning.

3. A Place for Every Story: Fairer Federal Investment for Queensland

Queensland continues to experience structural inequity in federal arts investment. Queensland represents 20% of Australia's population. Queensland persistently receives around 10% of multi-year funding from Creative Australia, despite its population share. This can be addressed through strategic investment programs and transparent federal investment reporting by state and region.

4. Engaging the Audience: Back Innovative Regional Models

JUTE's DARTS initiative demonstrates what regional-led investment can achieve. This three-year, artist-led initiative supported 50+ regional Queensland theatre makers, with skills development, artist residencies, interregional touring, and productions.

The next policy should support more region-led production and touring models that embed local artists, build local capacity and create deeper audience development outcomes.

5. Engaging the Audience: Culture Bonds for Young People

To grow future audiences, we recommend a national "Culture Bonds" program: vouchers for young people aged 15-25 to access live performances, exhibitions, workshops and creative training. This would reduce cost barriers, support youth participation, and generate income for local cultural organisations.

6. Whole-of-Government Approach

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Culture intersects with Education, Health, Tourism, Trade and Regional Development. The next National Cultural Policy should establish formal cross-portfolio mechanisms so cultural policy strengthens workforce development, wellbeing, arts education, cultural tourism, export readiness and regional liveability over the next decade.

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