

## **Position Statement: Creative Arts Education in Australia's National Cultural Policy**

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Australia's cultural future depends on equitable access to high-quality creative arts education across both primary and secondary schooling. Creative arts education—including music, visual arts, drama, dance, and media arts—develops creativity, confidence, and cultural understanding while fostering a skilled creative workforce and engaged audiences. However, access remains uneven across the country. Inequities are evident not only in primary education but also in secondary music education, where program availability, subject continuity, and resourcing vary widely depending on school location and socioeconomic context. These disparities risk narrowing participation, reducing diversity, and weakening Australia's cultural vitality.

A coordinated national response is needed to ensure all students, regardless of background, can meaningfully engage in the arts throughout their schooling.

### **Recommendation 1: Strengthen Creative Arts Education in National Policy**

A strengthened national policy framework is essential to address fragmentation and inequity.

**Preferred pathway:** Establish a dedicated Creative Arts Education pillar within the National Cultural Policy. This would provide a clear structure for aligning cultural and education systems, embedding creative learning from early childhood through to tertiary education. It would support sustained investment, national coordination, and accountability, while ensuring recognition of First Nations cultures and contemporary Australian practice.

**Alternative pathway:** Embed creative arts education across all pillars of the National Cultural Policy, positioning it as a foundational enabler of cultural participation, industry development, and community engagement. This approach must include clear leadership, coordinated implementation, and measurable accountability to ensure consistent and equitable outcomes.

Both pathways aim to ensure continuity of learning across primary and secondary schooling and to address systemic inequities in access and provision. [

### **Recommendation 2: Establish a National Standard for Music Education**

Introduce a national benchmark for quality music education across primary and secondary schools. This should include a minimum 60 minutes of sequential, curriculum-based music learning per week in primary years, alongside supported pathways for continued music study in secondary education. A consistent standard will reduce inequities, improve learning outcomes, and strengthen student wellbeing and engagement.

### **Recommendation 3: Invest in the Music Education Workforce**

Develop a nationally coordinated strategy to strengthen workforce capacity across both primary and secondary education. This should include targeted professional learning for generalist teachers, expanded pathways for specialist music educators, and structured roles for teaching artists. Strengthening partnerships with arts organisations will also help deliver high-quality programs, particularly in underserved communities, while supporting sustainable creative careers. Established and well regarded tertiary teacher education programs should lead this work.

#### **Recommendation 4: Track Progress Through National Data**

Implement a coordinated national data strategy to monitor student access, program delivery, and teacher readiness across all schooling levels. Addressing current data gaps will enable evidence-based decision-making, targeted investment, and measurable progress toward equity in both primary and secondary arts education.

Ensuring equitable access to creative arts education across the full span of schooling is essential to Australia's cultural, social, and economic future. A strong, coordinated policy response will enable all young Australians to participate in and contribute to a thriving cultural life.