



Towards a New National Cultural Policy

Submitted by Scitech | 20 May 2026

1. Summary of Recommendations

Scitech recommends that the next National Cultural Policy:

- Recognise museums and science centres explicitly within all five pillars of the policy framework.
- Recognise museums and science centres as active participants in the creative industries: as producers of original physical, digital, and live experiences, and as employers of creative workers both directly and through outsourcing.
- Acknowledge science literacy and public science engagement as legitimate cultural outcomes, on equal footing with other forms of cultural participation supported by the policy.

2. About Scitech

Scitech is Western Australia's leading interactive science and technology discovery centre, and one of Australia's most significant science engagement organisations. Based in Perth, Scitech delivers programs, exhibitions, and experiences that reach more than 450,000 people each year across Western Australia, from the metropolitan area to regional and remote communities.

Scitech's reach extends well beyond Western Australia. Our digital products, including Particle, our flagship science news platform, connect with a combined annual audience of more than one million people. Through our partnership with Imagine Exhibitions, we develop and export original exhibition content to international venues across North America and beyond. By audience reach, Scitech is among Australia's largest museum exporters of exhibition content.

We are also a member of the Council of Australasian Museum Directors (CAMD), whose institutions collectively serve tens of millions of visits annually and represent some of the most significant cultural infrastructure in the nation. CAMD is also making a submission to this consultation process, and Scitech endorses the sector-wide perspectives it presents. This submission supplements that voice with our particular focus on science engagement and the role of science centres and museums within the cultural policy framework.

Scitech welcomes the development of the next National Cultural Policy and the Government's commitment to building on the foundations of Revive. We make this submission in a constructive spirit, seeking to strengthen the framework rather than question its intent.



3. Museums Belong in the Cultural Policy Conversation

Australia's museums, galleries, and science centres are among the most visited cultural institutions in the country. They are places where stories are told, where history is preserved, where discovery happens. Australians associate museums directly with culture. They are destinations for school excursions, for family weekends, for international visitors seeking to understand who we are. They sit at the heart of civic and cultural life in every major Australian city.

Yet museums and science centres receive limited explicit recognition in the current Revive policy framework or in the consultation paper. The five pillars rightly speak to First Nations culture, to creative workers, to infrastructure, to storytelling, and to audience engagement. Museums and science centres embody all five pillars simultaneously. They are not peripheral to the cultural policy agenda; they are among its most tangible expressions.

This gap is particularly evident in Pillar 4 (Strong Cultural Infrastructure). Museums and science centres hold the collections, occupy significant cultural buildings, employ the workforces, and serve the audiences that the pillar is designed to sustain. A cultural infrastructure plan that excludes museums and science centres is, by definition, incomplete.

We urge the next National Cultural Policy to recognise museums and science centres, and the cultural roles they play, explicitly within the relevant pillars.

4. Museums Are Active Participants in the Creative Industries

Scitech develops original physical exhibitions, digital experiences, and live theatre-based science programs. Each of these is a creative production. They involve designers, writers, fabricators, software developers, performers, and educators working together to create experiences that do not exist elsewhere. We commission original work and engage creative industries workers both directly as employees and through outsourced production. Scitech functions, in practice, as a creative production house operating at the intersection of culture, education, and public engagement.

This is not unique to Scitech. Across the Australian museum sector, institutions create, commission, and export creative works at significant scale. The sector supports a substantial workforce of creative professionals whose contribution to the creative economy is real but largely invisible in cultural policy accounting.

Pillar 3 (Centrality of the Artist) and Pillar 5 (Engaging the Audience) both speak directly to the work museums do. We recommend that both pillars explicitly recognise museums and science centres as creative employers and producers, not merely as venues or audiences for the work of others. Similarly, Pillar 2 (A Place for Every Story) should acknowledge that the stories told in



museums and science centres, including the stories of scientific discovery and human curiosity, are a distinct and valued form of cultural expression.

5. Science Literacy as a Cultural Imperative

Scitech's core argument is that science is culture, and science literacy is a cultural outcome that deserves explicit recognition in national cultural policy.

Every thriving city has a science centre or natural history museum at or near its cultural heart. From London's Natural History Museum and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. to Questacon in Canberra and Scitech in Perth, these institutions reflect a shared societal understanding: that curiosity about the natural world, about how things work, about the story of life on Earth, is as fundamentally human as the impulse to make art or tell stories. Science engagement is a form of cultural participation in its own right. Across the world, science centres and museums lead the way in providing equitable access to cultural participation, often incorporating and investing in regional and remote access despite financial and logistical challenges.

This matters. We live in an environment saturated with mis- and disinformation. The ability to assess evidence, evaluate arguments, and distinguish credible claims from misleading ones is increasingly a civic skill, not just a scientific one. Institutions that build science literacy are performing a function that sits at the intersection of culture, democracy, and community resilience.

The consultation paper rightly notes that cultural participation is linked to higher civic trust. We would add that science literacy is part of the same story. A population equipped to think critically, to weigh competing claims, and to engage confidently with complex evidence is a culturally stronger population. Science engagement institutions contribute directly to that outcome.

We therefore recommend that the next National Cultural Policy explicitly acknowledge science literacy and public science engagement as cultural outcomes, and that institutions delivering these outcomes be recognised within the framework alongside galleries, libraries, and performing arts organisations.

Scitech welcomes the opportunity to discuss any aspect of this submission with the Office for the Arts. We are committed to working with government to ensure that the next National Cultural Policy reflects the full breadth of Australia's cultural institutions and the communities they serve.

John Chappell
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