



PACFA College of Creative and Experiential Therapies Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation

Acknowledgement of Country

PACFA College of Creative and Experiential Therapies (CCET) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country of the places that we call home and in which we work. We honour the long history of caring, cultural, creative and healing practices that have taken place on this continent for millennia and continue today. We extend our respect to elders past and present, and to all First Nations People.

Introduction

This submission is made on behalf of the College of Creative and Experiential Therapies (CCET), a division within the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA).

PACFA is Australia's leading registration and membership body for tertiary degree qualified counsellors and psychotherapists, with the highest standards for registration across the sector. Our 12,000+ members are bound by our Code of Ethics and accountable to professional conduct procedures. PACFA is the only mental health counselling organisation to be a full member of Allied Health



Professions Australia (AHPA) and qualifying member of the National Alliance of Self-Regulating Health Professions (NASRHP).

CCET represents Creative and Experiential Therapists working across counselling, psychotherapy, community arts, arts and health, education, disability, trauma, mental health and wellbeing contexts throughout Australia.

Since our previous submission to the National Cultural Policy consultation in 2022, CCET has grown significantly as a national professional community and contributor to Australia's evolving arts and health landscape. CCET now has an established membership base, a national leadership structure, formalised membership pathways, published standards and capabilities, regular monthly national professional development programming, and an active role contributing to broader policy and workforce discussions connected to mental health, disability, counselling, psychotherapy, and creative health.

Creative and Experiential Therapists work with and through creativity, embodiment, imagination, story, relationship, movement, sound, image, performance, and more-than-verbal forms of communication and meaning making. Many members identify both as artists and therapists, and work across interdisciplinary settings where culture, creativity, wellbeing, and community life intersect.

CCET strongly supports the development of a National Cultural Policy that recognises the vital contribution of arts and culture to individual and collective wellbeing, social connection, community resilience, truth-telling, inclusion, and public life.

We also see strong alignment between CCET's work and the growing national recognition of arts and health as an important interdisciplinary field. We are encouraged by Creative Australia's work to strengthen the arts and health sector, and by the increasing recognition that creativity and cultural participation are essential aspects of healthy communities. CCET is a co-signatory of the submissions being made by the Victorian Network for Creativity and Wellbeing, and the joint submission by Arts Health Network NSW / ACT, Arts Health Network Queensland, Victorian Network for Creativity and Wellbeing, Arts Health Network South Australia, and we endorse the recommendations of both those submissions.



Since Our 2022 Submission

Since our previous submission, CCET has continued developing as a professional home for Creative and Experiential Therapists within Australia.

Key developments include:

- the establishment and growth of a national CCET practitioner membership community
- development of CCET standards, capabilities, and membership assessment pathways
- ease of recognition through the introduction of CCET digital badges
- contribution to national reform discussions connected to counselling and psychotherapy workforce standards
- advocacy relating to Creative Therapies within the NDIS and broader health and wellbeing systems
- ongoing interdisciplinary professional development programming open to the broader arts and health community
- development of national practitioner networking initiatives including the CCET Exchange
- increasing contribution to dialogue and leadership within Australia's creative health / arts and health / creative wellbeing ecosystem.

CCET's standards and capabilities framework reflects the distinctive contribution of Creative and Experiential Therapies within counselling and psychotherapy practice, including relational, sensory, embodied, arts-based, and more-than-verbal ways of working.

Importantly, Creative and Experiential Therapists are now recognised within the National Standards for the Counselling and Psychotherapy Workforce. This represents an important milestone for the profession and reflects the growing recognition of creative and experiential approaches within Australia's broader mental health and wellbeing landscape.

CCET members and leadership continue contributing to national dialogue through publications, presentations, conferences, supervision, research, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Recent examples include:



- the [Empowering Voices](#) publication relating to Creative Therapies and the NDIS
- the forthcoming *Art as Knowing: Creative Decolonisation and Field-shaping as Healing Practice* as part of the soon-to-be-published by Routledge edited book "The Healing Arts and Indigenous Entanglements"
- leadership in national arts and health conversations and events.
- CCET Convenor presented research at the European Federation of Art Therapy conference, London 2025, and the World Art Therapy Conference 2026.

CCET has also developed an extensive monthly online professional development series that welcomes practitioners from across the arts and health community, including counsellors, psychotherapists, social workers, artists, educators, community practitioners, and allied health professionals. These events regularly feature leading Australian and international practitioners and researchers working within creative health and arts-based practice, including internationally respected researcher in the field of arts and health, Professor [REDACTED]

This interdisciplinary approach reflects our commitment to bridge-building across the broader arts, health, and community sectors. Our work reflects the five pillars of REVIVE, and informs our recommendations for Australia's Cultural Policy.



Pillar 1 First Nations First

Our work: First Nations Leadership, Culture and Truth Telling

CCET recognises the centrality of First Nations cultures, arts, storytelling, healing practices, and ways of knowing to any meaningful Australian cultural policy.

Our work continues to be informed by listening to and learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners, including leadership within PACFA's College of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Practices and the contributions of Aboriginal Arts Therapist and researcher [REDACTED] within CCET leadership and scholarship.

Creative and Experiential Therapists understand creativity, culture, relationship, community, and wellbeing as deeply interconnected. We recognise the arts as vital spaces for truth-telling, collective memory, cultural continuity, mourning, resistance, survival, and renewal.

Many of our members work in ways that consciously support cultural safety, deep listening, relational accountability, and decolonising approaches to practice. We believe the arts play an essential role in supporting communities to encounter difficult histories, sustain cultural identity, and strengthen collective wellbeing.

We support continued investment in First Nations-led arts, healing, and cultural initiatives, and believe these approaches have much to teach broader Australian systems about relationality, community care, and holistic wellbeing.

Our recommendations:

- Creative health responses must actively support culturally safe and community-led creative practice
- Arts-wellbeing initiatives must be trauma-informed, anti-oppressive and fit for the challenges of climate change.



Pillar 2 A Place for Every Story

Our Work: Creativity, Participation and Community Wellbeing

Creative and Experiential Therapists work across a wide range of settings including schools, hospitals, community organisations, disability services, private practice, youth services, aged care, mental health services, and community arts initiatives. Across these settings, creativity functions not only as artistic expression, but as:

- communication
- relationship
- identity formation
- cultural participation
- emotional literacy
- community connection
- collective meaning making.

Creative practice can support participation for people who experience barriers within predominantly verbal or clinical systems, including children, disabled people, trauma survivors, culturally diverse communities, and socially isolated individuals. Importantly, many Creative and Experiential Therapists work in preventative and community-based ways that support wellbeing before crisis occurs. We believe Australia's cultural future depends not only on supporting professional arts industries, but also on supporting everyday community participation in creative life. CCET strongly supports the idea that every person in Australia should have access to culturally safe and accessible spaces for creativity, arts participation, and community connection.

Our recommendations:

- Cultural policy and funding must support sustainable creative and cultural infrastructure within communities
- Cultural funding must be allocated to strengthen regional and community-based arts and health participation opportunities
- The Australian government must create structures, mechanisms and processes that deliver cross-portfolio integration with shared funding streams.

Pillar 3 Centrality of the Artist

Our Work: The Centrality of Artists and Creative Practitioners

Many Creative and Experiential Therapists identify both as therapists and artists. Our members include visual artists, musicians, dancers, performers, writers, community artists, and interdisciplinary practitioners working across multiple sectors. Creative practitioners contribute significant emotional, relational, cultural, and community labour within Australian society. However, many artists and arts workers continue to experience financial precarity, burnout, underemployment, and limited long-term infrastructure support.

The growing arts and health field offers important opportunities for sustainable interdisciplinary collaboration between artists, therapists, educators, health practitioners, and communities. Examples of this collaborative work can be seen in initiatives such as the annual cross sectorial PACFA endorsed CPD, Creative Mental Health Forums (2021 – 2025), which bring together practitioners from across arts, health, disability, education, and community sectors to explore shared questions, knowledge and practices around creativity, wellbeing, culture, and care.

These gatherings demonstrate the possibilities that emerge when perceived boundaries between arts practice, community arts, therapeutic arts, and wellbeing work become more relational, collaborative, and interconnected.

We are also heartened by the emergence of the National Creative Therapies Pilot and look forward to contributing to future dialogue, evaluation, workforce development, and interdisciplinary learning connected to this important initiative.

Our Recommendations:

CCET recommends that the new National Cultural Policy:

- invests in workforce sustainability, practitioner development, and interdisciplinary learning opportunities
- Ensure sector sustainability by strengthened arts education and increased economic security for artists and creative health practitioners



Pillar 4 Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Our Work: Strong Cultural Infrastructure and Creative Hubs

As members of Australia's Creative Health workforce, CCET practitioners often work in settings that are designed for other uses, that are temporary or improvised, and that are not ideal for supporting optimal outcomes for our communities. CCET believes Australia requires stronger long-term investment in cultural infrastructure that supports everyday participation, creativity, connection, and wellbeing within communities. This includes support not only for major institutions and events, but also for accessible local creative infrastructure such as community arts hubs, open studios, creative wellbeing spaces, interdisciplinary arts-health initiatives, regional creative networks and shared cultural gathering spaces.

Every community should have access to dedicated, culturally safe creative spaces that support participation across the lifespan. CCET also sees significant opportunity in the activation of existing public cultural infrastructure for community creative participation and wellbeing. Across Australia, many civic cultural spaces — including gallery foyers, arts centres, libraries, community halls, and public institutions — remain underutilised outside exhibition or event times. With modest investment in staffing, coordination, and programming, these spaces could support workshops, exhibitions, intergenerational programs, arts-health initiatives and community creative gatherings. Expanding access to existing infrastructure in this way would strengthen local cultural ecosystems, increase participation, support regional communities, and enhance community wellbeing through ongoing engagement with creative practice. We also support investment in interdisciplinary knowledge sharing and relationship-building events that bring together practitioners from across arts, health, education, disability, and community sectors.

Our Recommendations:

- Cultural funding must invest in accessible local creative hubs and arts participation spaces to support community health and wellbeing
- Support activation of existing civic cultural infrastructure for ongoing community participation and wellbeing initiatives
- The Australian government creates a grassroots-embedded national body for creative health / arts and wellbeing / arts and health.

Pillar 5 Engaging the Audience

Our Work: Research, Standards and Sector Development

As Australia's arts and health sector continues to develop, we believe there is significant opportunity to strengthen collaboration between:

- Creative Australia
- health systems
- universities
- community organisations
- professional associations
- artists and practitioners
- audiences and participants

CCET sees strong alignment between our work and Creative Australia's interest in developing standards, frameworks, and infrastructure for the arts and health sector. CCET members also have an important role to play in the ongoing development of Australia's emerging arts and health sector, including contributing to conversations around standards, ethics, workforce development, supervision, evaluation, and research.

Creative and Experiential Therapists bring expertise in trauma-sensitive practice, relational process, group facilitation, ethical responsiveness, and arts-based inquiry that can contribute meaningfully to interdisciplinary arts and health initiatives.

CCET members are well positioned to collaborate alongside artists, community practitioners, educators, health professionals, and researchers in the design, delivery, and evaluation of arts and health programs and projects. Importantly, interdisciplinary collaboration between arts practitioners and Creative and Experiential Therapists can help ensure that when complex or acute mental health needs arise within community arts or arts and health settings, appropriate therapeutic support, referral pathways, and ethical responses are available.



This collaborative and relational approach will strengthen both community wellbeing and the long-term sustainability of the broader arts and health sector.

We would like to see future policy that supports:

- interdisciplinary collaboration
- ethical and culturally responsive practice
- practitioner wellbeing and supervision
- workforce sustainability
- arts-based and community-based research methodologies
- evaluation approaches appropriate to creative practice contexts.

Creative and Experiential Therapists bring distinctive skills in relational practice, group facilitation, trauma-sensitive creative process, participatory engagement, and arts-based inquiry that can contribute meaningfully to interdisciplinary teams and community initiatives.

Our Recommendations:

- the new National Cultural Policy recognises arts and health / creative health / creative wellbeing as an important interdisciplinary field
- recognises the contribution of Creative and Experiential Therapists within Australia's broader creative health ecosystem
- strengthens pathways for collaboration across arts, health, education, and community sectors
- the new National Cultural Policy supports research and evaluation methodologies appropriate to arts-based and community-centred practice.



Recommendations Summary

CCET recommends that in reviewing the National Cultural Policy:

- Creative health responses must actively support culturally safe and community-led creative practice (pillar 1)
- Arts-wellbeing initiatives must be trauma informed, anti-oppressive and fit for the challenges of climate change. (pillar 1)
- Cultural policy and funding must support sustainable creative and cultural infrastructure within communities. (pillar 2)
- Cultural funding must be allocated to strengthen regional and community-based arts and health participation opportunities. (pillar 2)
- The Australian government must create structures, mechanisms and processes that deliver cross-portfolio integration with shared funding streams (pillar 2).
- Cultural policy invests in workforce sustainability, practitioner development, and interdisciplinary learning opportunities (pillar 3).
- Ensure sector sustainability by strengthened arts education and increased economic security for artists and creative health practitioners (pillar 3).
- Cultural funding must invest in accessible local creative hubs and arts participation spaces to support community health and wellbeing (pillar 4).
- Support activation of existing civic cultural infrastructure for ongoing community participation and wellbeing initiatives (pillar 4).
- The Australian government creates a grassroots-embedded national body for creative health / arts and wellbeing / arts and health (pillar 4).
- the new National Cultural Policy recognises arts and health / creative health / creative wellbeing as an important interdisciplinary field (pillar 5).
- recognises the contribution of Creative and Experiential Therapists within Australia's broader creative health ecosystem (pillar 5).
- strengthens pathways for collaboration across arts, health, education, and community sectors (pillar 5).
- the new National Cultural Policy supports research and evaluation methodologies appropriate to arts-based and community-centred practice (pillar 5).



Conclusion

CCET knows that creativity and culture are essential public resources that contribute profoundly to wellbeing, belonging, participation, identity, connection, and collective life.

Creative and Experiential Therapists work at the intersection of arts, culture, health, education, and community wellbeing. We see increasing opportunities for collaboration across these sectors as Australia continues developing more holistic, relational, and community-centred approaches to wellbeing and cultural participation.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this important national conversation and look forward to the continued development of a cultural policy that recognises creativity as a vital part of healthy individuals, healthy communities, and a healthy society.

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