

## National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

Matthew Curtis



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Matthew Curtis, artist and designer working with Glass, 

I am a practising glass artist who makes for a living, I think through my material of glass. I came to glassblowing through an informal apprenticeship at Denizen Glass in Sydney in the early 1990s and have spent over three decades developing a practice grounded in sustained material research and experimental techniques. My work is held in collections including the National Gallery of Australia, the Corning Museum of Glass, the Saxe Collection at the De Young Museum, Ernst Stiftung in Germany, Parliament House, and the Wagga Wagga National Glass Art Collection.

For artists like me, cultural infrastructure is through artist access facilities, shared and private studios. It is the Canberra Glassworks Fellowship that allowed me to pioneer experimental work with reclaimed television screen glass, leading directly to my current project, Revitrification: transforming architectural waste glass, into bespoke panels and sculptural components through renewable energy. Without that fellowship, that research does not happen.

Craft knowledge is transmitted person to person, often informally, across generations. I learned to blow glass standing beside experienced makers, in a working studio, over years. No online course teaches what a body learns at a furnace. Specialist training pathways have been cut across Australia, and the shortage of skilled craftspeople is documented and worsening. I am asking the government to build on the Creative Workplaces initiative with a long-term workforce plan that addresses skills, training, and career pathways for designers and makers at every stage, keeps money in Australian communities, and builds the market for design-led manufacture. Without deliberate structural investment in how this knowledge is passed on, it will not survive the next generation.

Craft and design need dedicated representation inside Creative Australia: not a new standalone body, but structured internal capacity with its own mandate to advocate for the sector, develop funding pathways, and coordinate across portfolios. Without it, work like mine is absorbed into categories that do not reflect the realities of material practice, the long timelines, the embodied expertise, the infrastructure dependency, or the economic precarity that comes with regional and independent practice. I am based outside a capital, and the fellowship and residency structures that have sustained my career are fragile.

Australian craft and design are internationally recognised. The unrealised potential in international markets is significant. I am asking for an export and tourism development strategy that gets Australian makers in front of global audiences, including at showcase events like Milan Design Week. The distinctiveness of Australian craft and design, its relationship to place, material, and country, is a genuine point of difference internationally. That difference should be supported strategically, not left to individual artists to fund and navigate alone.

The craft and design sector is small, yet foundational. The objects we make, and the knowledge we carry in our hands, must continue to be fostered. Revive is an opportunity to say so clearly, to nurture cultural capital and engage materially across generations.