



**21 May 2026**

**Office for the Arts  
GPO Box 594  
Canberra ACT 2901**

**Re: PYT Fairfield Response to the National Cultural Policy Consultation**

PYT Fairfield welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of Australia's next National Cultural Policy. As a Western Sydney-based company working at the intersection of contemporary theatre-making, Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD), youth arts and multicultural artistic practice, we see both the enormous potential and the structural limitations of the current policy landscape.

For nearly 40 years, PYT Fairfield has worked with young people, emerging artists, newly arrived communities and underrepresented culturally and linguistically diverse artists and audiences in one of the most culturally complex regions in the country. Western Sydney represents almost 10% of Australia's population, yet organisations working in the region continue to experience systemic underinvestment relative to our diversity and impact. After all, Western Sydney represents both a major opportunity and a structural gap in national cultural policy..

PYT Fairfield's practice sits across multiple policy areas simultaneously. We are:

- a youth arts organisation
- a professional theatre company
- a multicultural arts organisation
- a CACD organisation
- a training and development provider
- a presenter and venue operator
- a wellbeing and social support space for young people and newly arrived communities.

Unlike organisations that are often resourced to focus on one or two of these areas, PYT Fairfield must operate across all of them simultaneously, in order to survive.

The challenge is not whether this work matters, it clearly does. The challenge is that the current funding and policy environment does not adequately support organisations carrying this level of cultural and social responsibility.

At the same time, we are proud of what we have achieved. PYT Fairfield has become nationally recognised for developing a contemporary multicultural theatre identity that reflects modern Australia. We pay all artists according to LPA award rates, maintain full-time employment for staff so they can earn a

liveable wage, and this year we will deliver our first international presentation in the company's history.

We are increasingly recognised as one of Australia's leading multicultural theatre makers. The work being developed in Fairfield is not regional to Australia's cultural future, it is central to it. However, this success is being achieved through unsustainable levels of labour and structural precarity.

### **A Place for Every Story**

This pillar is central to PYT Fairfield's work.

Our organisation exists because many communities in Western Sydney have historically not seen themselves reflected in Australian cultural institutions, on Australian stages, or within dominant narratives of Australian identity.

PYT Fairfield works with young people, refugees, migrants, underrepresented culturally and linguistically diverse communities and emerging artists whose stories are often absent from major cultural platforms. We create pathways for people who may never otherwise have had access to artistic careers, training or professional creative opportunities and we do this by allowing them to take on leadership across all areas of theatre-making. It's messy but it's ultimately the most accessible way of making theatre, that is authentically theirs.

The current policy framework acknowledges inclusion and representation, but in practice there remain major inequities in how cultural investment is distributed.

We continue to compete for multi-year operational funding against organisations with:

- significantly larger venues
- commercial programming capacity
- local government operational support
- established philanthropic networks
- greater staffing capacity.

PYT Fairfield operates an 80-seat venue in Fairfield. Our audiences are largely local and many come from communities experiencing economic disadvantage. We cannot simply increase ticket prices to sustain operations. Charging \$0-\$10 tickets is often the only way to ensure access for our communities.

This creates a structural problem: organisations like ours cannot build a circular commercial economy to sustain artistic development. Every project must secure new external funding before it can proceed.

At the same time, policy settings often privilege scale measured through commercial outcomes rather than social, artistic and cultural impact.

If Australia genuinely wants "a place for every story," then the policy must recognise that equitable storytelling requires equitable infrastructure.

Otherwise, “a place for every story” will mean that some stories have larger, more profound platforms than others.

This includes:

- place-based investment that reflects population growth and cultural diversity
- funding models that acknowledge the realities of low-income communities
- operational support for culturally diverse organisations carrying social and artistic responsibilities simultaneously
- greater recognition of Western Sydney as a national cultural engine rather than a peripheral region.

The Western Sydney Arts Alliance submission identifies ongoing geographic inequity in cultural investment and highlights that funding systems do not adequately reflect Western Sydney’s scale, diversity or needs. PYT Fairfield strongly supports this assessment.

### **Centrality of the Artist**

PYT Fairfield strongly supports the principle that artists should be central to national cultural policy. However, the lived reality for many artists and organisations is increasingly precarious.

The current environment places enormous pressure on organisations like ours to simultaneously:

- deliver artistic excellence
- provide community support
- deliver education outcomes
- address wellbeing and mental health needs
- create career pathways
- maintain organisational sustainability.

In many cases, arts organisations are carrying these responsibilities because there are few other services available to support these communities.

Artists and arts workers are increasingly leaving the sector because they cannot sustain a viable life through creative practice alone. In 2024 and 2025, PYT invested over \$200,000 in one work with the ambition to present it internationally. The core artist who developed this work is of a culturally and racially marginalised ancestry and in need of sending money home to his family to survive. He has therefore made the decision to leave the arts and focus on full-time work to do this. That investment is lost, but more importantly, the sector loses a significant artist.

This is particularly acute in Western Sydney, where many artists are first-generation creatives without inherited financial or institutional support.

PYT Fairfield has seen extraordinary demand for artist development opportunities. In 2026 alone, we received 85 applications from local artists seeking entry into our education and development programs which, unlike other organisations, or university, is provided free of charge. We were only able to accept a fraction of those applicants despite having significantly expanded the program over the past four years.

Admittedly, PYT does not make work in the same way that many youth art organisations make work. We do not rehearse a show with young actors, or make work for young people, we make brand new Australian work with young people at every part of the making process, from young writers, directors, actors, producers, designers and everything in between, we are very commonly giving young artists from Western Sydney their first jobs within the performing arts sector.

This demonstrates both:

- the scale of creative ambition within Western Sydney
- the shortage of sustained pathways and investment available to emerging multicultural artists.

The Youth Arts submission correctly identifies youth arts organisations as critical artistic pipelines and “essential training grounds and talent incubators for the future of Australia’s cultural life.” PYT Fairfield sees this role every day.

However, organisations delivering this work are rarely funded proportionate to the workforce, wellbeing and developmental responsibilities they carry.

There is also increasing emotional and psychological complexity within youth and CACD practice.

PYT Fairfield works *daily* with:

- young people experiencing mental health challenges
- newly arrived communities
- displaced people and refugees
- artists navigating trauma and social isolation.

Trauma-informed practice is now an essential component of contemporary arts work that is made with social impact in mind, as is the work of PYT Fairfield, particularly within youth and community contexts. Yet the training required to undertake this work safely is often prohibitively expensive.

We believe trauma-informed training, wellbeing support and professional supervision should be publicly funded for organisations undertaking frontline cultural and community practice, who are not making money from these services, but need to incorporate the training in practice.

The CACD alliance submission identifies trauma-informed practice as a core component of CACD methodology and calls for investment in workforce

wellbeing and practice sustainability. PYT Fairfield strongly supports these recommendations.

We also support:

- long-term artist development funding
- increased investment in emerging multicultural artists
- national youth arts investment streams
- cross-portfolio investment linking arts, health, education and social outcomes.

As a company that has recently made new Australian theatre tackling issues such as radicalisation of young men, sexual violence in newly arrived communities and gambling harm within Fairfield, trauma-informed practice is not a nice to have, it's a desperate need.

### **Strong Cultural Infrastructure**

Strong cultural infrastructure must mean more than buildings.

PYT Fairfield's experience demonstrates that cultural infrastructure includes:

- people
- relationships
- organisational capacity
- long-term trust within communities
- workforce sustainability
- affordable creative space
- development and producing capacity.

The current funding environment often assumes that operational funding creates organisational security. In reality, organisations like PYT Fairfield remain highly vulnerable.

Our operational funding supports core staffing and venue costs, but leaves little capacity for:

- project creation
- touring
- international development
- artist commissions
- audience development
- research and development
- philanthropy and fundraising capacity.

Because we receive operational funding through Creative Australia and Create NSW, we are frequently ineligible for project funding streams that larger organisations continue to access through alternate structures. This creates a structural gap where mid-scale organisations are expected to deliver major outcomes without adequate project investment. We do however apply through Multicultural NSW, The Office of Youth, and other funding rounds targeted to our

projects, however these grant programs don't quite understand the nuances of theatre-making to create impact.

We are also carrying increasing administrative and leadership burdens with reduced staffing structures. Historically, PYT Fairfield operated with an Artistic Director, Executive Director and Company Manager. We now operate with a single Director carrying both artistic and executive leadership responsibilities. A significant portion of this leadership role is now dedicated to constantly preparing applications simply to secure the next project. In 2025 the Director submitted just under 50 applications in one year. In 2026, she has, as at 15 May, submitted 45 applications.

The Western Sydney Arts Alliance paper identifies underinvestment in organisational capacity, fragmented systems and barriers to diverse funding sources as key structural issues facing the region. These issues are deeply familiar to us.

We believe the next cultural policy should include:

- increased multi-year operational investment for culturally diverse and place-based organisations
- separate project funding pathways for operationally funded organisations
- investment in leadership succession and organisational capacity
- support for fundraising and philanthropy development in outer metropolitan regions
- recognition of small and mid-scale venues as essential cultural infrastructure.

The arrival of Western Sydney International Airport also presents a major opportunity.

PYT Fairfield is increasingly positioned to build international partnerships and global exchange opportunities centred on multicultural Australian stories. However, there is currently very little investment available to develop international pathways, partnerships or market relationships.

PYT Fairfield needs to apply for entirely new funding every time an international opportunity arises, including for basic travel despite a huge international gateway sitting at our doorstep.

If Australia wants to strengthen its global cultural identity, organisations already producing internationally relevant multicultural work must be resourced to build sustained global relationships.

### **Engaging the Audience**

PYT Fairfield's audiences do not fit traditional assumptions about arts participation.

Many of our audiences are:

- first-time theatre attendees
- multilingual communities
- young people
- families without histories of arts attendance
- communities historically excluded from major cultural institutions.

Audience development in Western Sydney requires different approaches, timelines and investment models.

Much of our work involves building trust, cultural relevance and long-term participation rather than simply marketing single productions.

The CACD submission identifies participation and co-creation as central to audience engagement, rather than passive consumption. This reflects PYT Fairfield's practice.

We are not simply presenting work to audiences, we are developing future artists, audiences and cultural leaders simultaneously.

However, organisations doing this work often lack:

- marketing budgets
- audience data capacity, or even audience willingness to complete data
- distribution infrastructure
- touring support
- pathways into national visibility.

There remains a perception that multicultural work is niche or community-specific rather than central to Australian cultural identity.

In reality, multicultural Australia is contemporary Australia.

The next cultural policy should actively support:

- national and international touring pathways for culturally diverse work
- audience development investment in Western Sydney
- multilingual and culturally responsive marketing support
- export pathways for multicultural Australian stories
- stronger investment in youth audience development.

### **Why the Five Pillars Matter to PYT Fairfield**

The five pillars matter because they collectively describe the conditions necessary for organisations like PYT Fairfield to exist sustainably.

- “First Nations First” matters because cultural leadership and truth-telling must remain central to Australia's cultural future.
- “A Place for Every Story” matters because multicultural, refugee and migrant communities deserve to see themselves represented within the nation's cultural identity.

- “Centrality of the Artist” matters because artists cannot continue to carry increasing social and emotional responsibilities without sustainable investment.
- “Strong Cultural Infrastructure” matters because organisations need people, space, systems and long-term operational stability to survive.
- “Engaging the Audience” matters because cultural participation builds resilience and social cohesion.

PYT Fairfield sees these pillars not as separate priorities, but as deeply interconnected.

Youth arts, CACD practice, multicultural storytelling and contemporary theatre are all forms of nation-building. They create spaces where people can imagine themselves as part of Australia’s cultural future.

The CACD submission argues that cultural participation strengthens social cohesion, belonging and civic trust. We see this impact constantly in our work. For many of our participants, PYT Fairfield is not simply a theatre company. It is:

- a place of belonging
- a pathway into artistic identity
- a leadership space
- a site of community connection
- a place where people feel visible.

This work has artistic value, social value and national value.

### **What We Would Like Reflected in the Next National Cultural Policy**

PYT Fairfield would like to see a national cultural policy that:

#### **1 . First and Foremost Invests Equitably in Western Sydney**

Funding and infrastructure investment should reflect:

- population size
- cultural diversity
- community need
- demonstrated artistic impact.

Western Sydney should be recognised as a major national cultural region.

#### **2. Recognises CACD as Core Cultural Infrastructure**

CACD practice should be explicitly recognised as essential national cultural infrastructure, not as a peripheral or secondary practice.

We strongly support the CACD alliance recommendation for formal recognition of CACD within the national policy framework.

#### **3. Creates Sustainable Pathways for Youth and Emerging Artists**

Youth arts organisations should be recognised as:

- artistic incubators
- workforce development systems

- cultural leadership pipelines.

We support the recommendation for a sustained national youth arts funding stream and stronger cross-portfolio investment in youth arts outcomes.

#### **4. Supports Workforce Wellbeing and Trauma-Informed Practice**

The policy should acknowledge the emotional labour undertaken by arts organisations working with vulnerable communities.

This should include:

- funded trauma-informed training
- culturally relevant wellbeing support
- sustainable staffing structures.

#### **5. Enables International Cultural Exchange**

Australia's multicultural arts sector has enormous global potential.

The next policy should support:

- international touring and exchange
- export pathways for multicultural work
- long-term international partnerships
- research and development funding for global engagement.

With Western Sydney International Airport opening, there is a major opportunity to position Western Sydney as a gateway for international cultural exchange of multicultural storytelling.

#### **6. Creates More Flexible Funding Systems**

The current divide between operational and project funding creates major barriers for mid-scale organisations.

Organisations should not be penalised for receiving operational funding.

There must be:

- project pathways for operationally funded companies
- multi-year artistic development funding
- support for research and development
- investment in organisational growth and succession.

PYT Fairfield believes Australia's next cultural policy must move beyond symbolic inclusion toward structural equity.

The organisations shaping Australia's future cultural identity are often the same organisations carrying the greatest financial, emotional and organisational pressures.

Despite these challenges, PYT Fairfield continues to produce nationally significant work, develop emerging artists, support multicultural communities, grow audiences and expand Australia's national cultural identity.



We are ambitious about what Australian theatre can become.

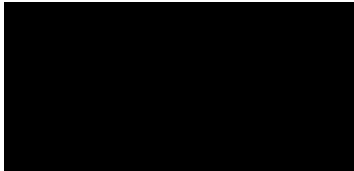
We believe multicultural Australian stories are not peripheral to the nation's cultural identity, they are central to it.

But ambition alone cannot sustain the sector.

The next national cultural policy must invest in the organisations already doing the difficult work of building Australia's cultural future.

Without that investment, organisations like PYT Fairfield will continue to succeed despite the system, rather than because of it.

**Signed**



**Jacqueline Hornjik**  
**Director**  
**On behalf of PYT Fairfield**