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20 May 2026

The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for the Arts
Australian Government

Subject: Submission Australia National Cultural Policy Consultation

Dear Minister Burke,

[REDACTED] is a micro social enterprise in the [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Since 2021 we have hosted numerous artist residencies, and exhibitions, delivered community arts recovery and wellbeing programs, and built a distinctive arts-ecology-health model, entirely without recurrent government funding.

We welcome the REVIVE renewal and advocate for three overarching changes:

1. Long-term operational funding for micro and regional arts organisations, replacing sole reliance on competitive project grants.
2. Formal cross-portfolio coordination across arts, health, environment, tourism and planning.
3. Investment in distributed infrastructure for regional and peri-urban creative spaces.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] at the intersection of arts, environment, health and community development. As a regional social enterprise, we reinvest income into community creative activity and environmental stewardship. To date we have hosted over 60 artists, delivered nature-based wellbeing workshops, partnered with Landcare and local Councils, and run Creative Conversations forums from a privately owned property at [REDACTED]

Our model demonstrates that cultural infrastructure exists beyond metropolitan institutions. We are place-based, ecologically grounded and community-embedded, and yet invisible to most current policy frameworks.

Response to the Five Pillars

Pillar 1 — First Nations First

[REDACTED] We understand that genuine commitment to First Nations First must be structural, ensuring the embeddedness of cultural practice, land custodianship and creative sovereignty. Our land-based arts practice puts us in ongoing relationship with Country. This gives us a particular perspective on the inseparability of cultural practice and caring for Country.

Our asks under this pillar:

- Fund regional organisations to develop genuine First Nations cultural partnership protocols. with paid co-design roles, not volunteer consultation. Within project funding opportunities there is rarely economic capacity to embed co-design in micro and small arts organisations' projects.
 - Invest in First Nations-led land-based cultural and environmental knowledge programs, recognising their unique role in both cultural preservation and ecological resilience.
 - Create pathways for regional arts organisations to platform and amplify First Nations practice
- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

without appropriating or leading it.

Pillar 2 — A Place for Every Story

Australia's cultural story is incomplete when it reflects only metropolitan institutions. The [REDACTED], with its subtropical rainforest, scenic opportunities, agricultural communities, and biocultural diversity carries stories that are unique. [REDACTED] works to hold space for these stories and share them with our regional audiences. More than 60 artists have worked from our property, exploring ecological grief, disaster resilience, natural wonder, community identity, wellbeing, healing and belonging. These are the stories that make regional Australia culturally alive.

Our asks under this pillar:

- Mandate geographic equity in arts funding distribution, with specific recognition of peri-urban and hinterland communities as distinct from major metropolitan areas.
- Fund the documentation and archiving of place-based creative practice in regional communities including, Community Arts and Cultural Development, ecological storytelling, community history, and nature-based creative work that preserves stories at risk of being lost.
- Recognise that diversity of story requires diversity of form such as arts-health, arts-environment agri-culture and arts-tourism hybrids are legitimate creative practices, not peripheral programs.

Pillar 3 — The Centrality of the Artist

[REDACTED] residency program exists because we believe artists need time, space and relationship to make meaningful work. We have seen the benefits when artists are given genuine creative conditions rather than project deliverables. The central challenge for artist sustainability in regional areas is financial. Workshop fees cannot cover fair wages, insurance and materials. This is a systemic funding design problem. Compounding this, the administrative burden of grant compliance, reporting and insurance burdens fall on limited staff or volunteers. This is time not spent mentoring artists or building community. Australia cannot claim to put artists at the centre of cultural policy while the operational structures crush the organisations that platform them.

Our asks under this pillar:

- Mandate NAVA's artist fee standard and consider a federal arts worker wage support mechanism.
- Introduce administrative relief grants for small /micro arts organisations, to offset compliance, reporting and insurance costs that reduce capacity for artistic work.
- Fund creative workforce development, mentoring pathways and succession planning in regional arts organisations.
- Investigate a subsidised or pooled public liability and professional indemnity insurance scheme for small/micro arts organisations, particularly those operating hybrid programs such as land-based or health-adjacent programs.

Pillar 4 — Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Currently cultural infrastructure is framed expansively to include the entire ecosystem of physical spaces, digital networks, institutions, and the creative professionals themselves. As a privately held entity ([REDACTED]) our ability to secure investment, access philanthropic capital, and achieve official recognition as cultural infrastructure depends heavily on how we navigate regulatory hurdles. The reluctance to create a dedicated legal structure for social enterprises hits the arts sector particularly hard. Traditional business metrics struggle to evaluate community wellbeing, or creative expression.

Additionally, [REDACTED] hybrid model of arts, health, environment and tourism in a rural-residential setting,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

does not fit neatly into any single land use category. We have navigated unnecessary complexity around programming, activation and public access. These are structural barriers that disproportionately disadvantage the very models of distributed, community-embedded cultural infrastructure that government says it wants to encourage.

The lead-up to the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the associated Cultural Olympiad presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity. Regional arts organisations like [REDACTED] can offer place-specific cultural experiences, (ecological, Indigenous-adjacent, wellness-oriented) that no metropolitan venue can replicate. But this requires investment now, not in 2031.

Our asks under this pillar:

- Expand the definition of cultural infrastructure in policy and funding frameworks to explicitly include hybrid arts- facilities.
- Work with state and local governments to streamline planning approvals for hybrid arts-health-environment uses in rural and peri-urban settings, creating enabling frameworks rather than barriers.
- Invest in a Regional Cultural Olympiad program for Brisbane 2032 that specifically resources localised hinterland and regional Queensland arts organisations to develop international-quality cultural tourism offerings.

Pillar 5 — Engaging the Audience

Audience engagement in regional areas requires deliberate design. Distance, transport, cost and digital access are real barriers. [REDACTED] model addresses this through place-based programs that bring arts to participants where they are, workshops embedded in community life, residencies that involve local people as co-participants, and exhibitions.

Our arts-and-nature wellbeing programs are a form of audience engagement that current policy frameworks do not outwardly recognise. When a community member joins a creative health workshop in a regenerative garden setting, that is participation in Australian cultural life. When a family attends an ecological arts exhibition and begins talking about their relationship to the land around them, that is cultural engagement. These encounters are as valuable as any ticketed performance, but they generate no box office data, no audience metrics, and no evidence visible to cultural funding bodies.

The growing evidence base for arts-based health and wellbeing interventions, from social prescribing pilots in the UK to Australian research in community arts and mental health, strongly supports investment in participatory arts programs as preventative health infrastructure. [REDACTED] sits at this intersection by design. Policy should catch up.

Our asks under this pillar:

- Broaden the definition of cultural participation to include arts-health, nature-based creative programs and community wellbeing initiatives, with appropriate measurement frameworks.
 - Fund community arts engagement programs as core infrastructure, recurring, not project-by-project.
 - Establish national bodies dedicated to Community Arts and Cultural Development and Arts and Health, in partnership with Health and Ageing portfolios. Provide resources to undertake research by arts organisations to deliver evidence-based participatory programs in regional and rural communities.
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Cross-Cutting Challenges for Micro Arts Organisations

Beyond the five pillars, we draw the Committee's attention to structural challenges that cut across all policy areas and that are acutely felt by micro and regional organisations.

The Funding Design Problem- Project grants create instability for organisations trying to build ongoing programs. [REDACTED] has never received recurrent operational funding. Every program we run, every artist we host, every community member we serve has been delivered through a combination of earned income (workshop fees and venue hire), volunteer contribution and short-term project grants. None of which provides the sustained investment needed for strategic growth.

The policy renewal must address the structural gap between what micro-organisations need to become sustainable and what the current funding system is designed to provide.

Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD)- Community Arts and Cultural Development is a distinct field of professional practice, relational, long-term, participatory and outcomes-focused. CACD practitioners build trust, develop community capacity and create lasting cultural change, but this work is slow, underfunded and poorly recognised in national cultural policy. [REDACTED] model is grounded in CACD principles. We ask that the renewed policy formally recognise CACD as essential cultural infrastructure alongside more visible art forms.

Ethical Creative Technology

Artists are among the most important voices in shaping how communities relate to emerging technologies. [REDACTED] programs engage participants in questions of ecological knowledge, digital storytelling and community identity. We support the policy's recognition of the role artists play in guiding ethical, community-centred approaches to AI and digital culture. We ask that this recognition be matched with investment in artist-led technology programs in regional communities.

Conclusion

[REDACTED] has built something rare: a thriving, place-based creative ecosystem in regional Queensland that serves artists, community and Country simultaneously. We have done this without recurrent government support, navigating planning complexity, funding gaps and structural invisibility at every step.

We are asking for renewed National Cultural Policy that expands its definitions, investments in distributed infrastructure, values long-term community relationships and recognises the centrality of place-based practice. This vision will not just benefit [REDACTED], it will strengthen the entire ecology of Australian cultural life.

We would welcome the opportunity to present further evidence or participate in any regional consultation process.

We thank the Minister and the Department for the opportunity to contribute to this important process.

Warm regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Pioneering Imagination, Exploration, Creativity and Wellbeing

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