



19 May 2026

The Hon. Tony Burke MP  
Minister for the Arts  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

Dear Minister Burke,

**Australia's New National Cultural Policy: expanding the definition of cultural infrastructure to improve everyday life in public spaces**

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of Australia's new National Cultural Policy.

AILA believes cultural policy must recognise the critical role public landscapes and civic space play in shaping social cohesion, cultural identity, belonging and democratic life.

***We recommend the Australian Government to adopt an expanded definition of cultural infrastructure and participation that includes the public realm and shared spaces of everyday life.***

Landscape architecture is more than environmental and technical practice; it is also a cultural practice. Landscape architects shape the parks, streets, campuses, civic spaces, waterfronts, memorials through which Australian life is experienced collectively. These places support gathering, ceremony, recreation, protest, learning, and exchange between diverse communities.

At a time of growing social fragmentation, loneliness and polarisation, well-designed public landscapes are critical civic infrastructure. They shape how people gather, encounter difference, participate in public life and build shared understanding. Culture is not only housed in institutions; it is embedded in the design, form and stewardship of everyday shared spaces.

As urban theorist Ali Madanipour observed:

“Not only does urban space provide the theatre for social struggle, as many great urban spaces will attest, it is also the ultimate symbolic representation of the conflicts, aspirations and values of past generations. The complex matrix of buildings and spaces in all great cities embraces us with the stories, philosophies, consciousness, religions, wars, heroes and heroines, of the failures, victories and dreams of our ancestors, all immortalised within the public realm.”

*Ali Madanipour, cited in Alexander Cuthbert, The Form of Cities (2006).*





This is significant within the Australian context, where Country represents a holistic expression of culture, identity, and ecology. First Nations knowledge systems recognise that land, story, language and cultural practice are inseparable. Country is not simply a setting for culture; it is culture itself.

AILA believes Australia's cultural policy should therefore acknowledge the role of landscape architecture and public space in:

- strengthening social cohesion and civic participation
- supporting intercultural understanding and belonging
- embedding First Nations knowledge and Caring for Country
- enabling public life, cultural exchange and democratic expression
- improving mental health, wellbeing and community resilience
- shaping culturally rich and climate-responsive cities and regions
- ensuring equitable access to meaningful public and cultural space across metropolitan, suburban and regional communities.

The challenges facing Australia including climate adaptation, urban growth, housing pressure and social change, require an expanded understanding of cultural infrastructure. Public landscapes must be recognised as essential civic and cultural infrastructure that underpin long-term social resilience.

***Recommendation: AILA requests the Australian Government expand the definition of cultural infrastructure and participation to include the public and shared spaces of everyday life.***

Landscape architects bring critical expertise in shaping these environments to reflect cultural values and support inclusive and resilient communities.

AILA would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss an expanded definition, as well as assist in policy development to ensure the policy objectives and outcomes benefit as many people and places as possible.

AILA would also request to assist in cross-disciplinary dialogue on culture, public space, social resilience and the future of Australia's civic landscapes.

We would be pleased to meet and discuss and express our support for the Australian Government's New National Cultural Policy. Please contact [REDACTED] for further communications.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Daniel Bennett FRLA  
National Chair  
**Australian Institute of Landscape Architects**

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