



8 May 2026

**Re: Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation**

To Whom It May Concern:

Blak & Bright welcomes the opportunity to provide a formal submission to inform the development of Australia's next National Cultural Policy.

Blak & Bright maintains sustained and accountable relationships with First Nations communities across the country, developed through consistent engagement over many years. These relationships are built through our year-round programming, national festival delivery, partnership with community-led organisations and direct investment in First Nations writers and storytellers through above-industry standard remuneration.

Our model centres long-term engagement where communities shape programming and maintain authority over how their stories are shared. This includes ongoing collaboration with Elders, writers, publishing professionals and cultural leaders, as well as partnerships that prioritise cultural protocol and community benefit over institutional extraction.

As a First Nations-led national literary organisation with sustained investment through Creative Australia, Blak & Bright operates at the intersection of cultural authority and national cultural leadership. As such, we engage with this consultation process from a position of responsibility to our communities and the broader sector.

We acknowledge the progress made through *Revive: A place for every story, a story for every place*, including the establishment of Creative Australia and its associated bodies, and the recognition of arts and culture as central to Australia's economic and social fabric. These reforms represent a meaningful shift in policy architecture.

However, as the consultation paper itself identifies, the sector continues to evolve in conditions of financial pressure and ongoing structural inequity. In this context, the next National Cultural Policy must move beyond consolidation and into structural reform, and Blak & Bright submits the following positions for consideration.

**First Nations First**

Blak & Bright supports the continued positioning of First Nations existences at the centre of Australia's cultural identity, which must be reflected in the redistribution of decision-making authority.

While the establishment of First Nations Arts within Creative Australia is a critical step, First Nations leadership remains unevenly embedded across broader funding systems and institutional frameworks, and there remains a reliance on consultation rather than a transfer of authority.

The next National Cultural Policy should:

- Embed First Nations decision making across all funding streams and policy mechanisms
- Provide long-term scaled investment in First Nations-led organisations commensurate with their national role
- Strengthen recognition and enforcement of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights
- Transition from advisory engagement to models of consent and authority

In this context, it's critical to distinguish between cultural authority and representation. Cultural authority refers to the inherent right of First Nations peoples to lead and determine how our cultures, stories and knowledge systems are shared and governed.

This stands in contrast to the colonial construct of representation, which often centres visibility without transferring power or decision-making. Policy must recognise that cultural authority cannot be substituted with inclusion or consultation and requires structural commitment to First Nations leadership at all levels.

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

Blak & Bright recognises the importance of a culturally diverse and inclusive sector; however the policy must maintain clarity between inclusion and cultural authority.

First Nations storytelling is foundational to this country and carries distinct cultural and ethical responsibilities and cannot be positioned as one voice among many within a generalised framework of diversity.

The policy needs to ensure First Nations cultural expression is protected from extraction and/or misrepresentation within broader programming frameworks, requiring explicit recognition of sovereignty in cultural production and presentation.

### **Centrality of the Artist**

The consultation paper acknowledges the economic and social contribution of artists and creative workers, but this recognition should now be matched by enforceable standards and sustainable conditions.

First Nations artists continue to experience disproportionate precarity alongside expectations to contribute unnecessary cultural labour beyond formal artistic output.

The policy must:

- Establish enforceable minimum standards for artist remuneration
- Support multiyear funding models that enable sustained practice
- Recognise and resource cultural labour, including advisory and community responsibilities
- Ensure First Nations artists aren't disproportionately burdened with delivering cultural legitimacy without adequate support

### **Strong Cultural Infrastructure**

The policy identifies the importance of resilient and adaptable cultural infrastructure, which needs to extend beyond major institutions and include independent community-led organisations.

Blak & Bright and organisations of similar scale and impact function as national cultural infrastructure, however current funding and policy settings continue to privilege centralised institutions over independent entities.

The next policy must:

- Recognise First Nations-led organisations as core national infrastructure
- Provide direct long-term investment to sustain organisational stability and growth
- Align compliance and reporting requirements with organisational capacity
- Rebalance investment toward community-led models that demonstrate cultural authority and accountability

### **Engaging the Audience**

Blak & Bright supports efforts to expand participation and access to cultural experiences, including through digital and international engagement. First Nations cultural work is central to protocol and community connection and mustn't be shaped primarily by market demand or engagement metrics.

The policy must ensure that:

- Cultural integrity is prioritised over audience reach and commercial outcomes
- International engagement is led by First Nations authority
- Digital innovation is balanced with the protection of cultural knowledge and rights

### **Conclusion**

Blak & Bright submits that the next National Cultural Policy represents a critical opportunity to move from foundational reform to structural transformation.

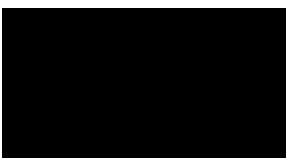
The current framework provides a strong basis, but without a deliberate shift in investment and accountability, the policy risks reinforcing existing inequities.

We encourage the Australian Government to adopt a policy approach that:

- Transfers decision-making authority to First Nations peoples and organisations
- Invests in long-term sustainability rather than short-term delivery
- Recognises independent organisations as essential cultural infrastructure
- Embeds accountability mechanisms that measure impact beyond outputs

Blak & Bright remains committed to contributing to the development and implementation of a policy that reflects the full cultural and economic value of the sector.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and our staff,



**Krista Dunstan GAICD**  
*Chairperson of the Board*  
Blak & Bright