



To the National Cultural Policy Consultation Team,

All The Queens Men (ATQM) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of Australia's next National Cultural Policy.

ATQM is a queer, feminist and artist-led community engaged arts organisation based in Naarm/Melbourne and working nationally. For more than fifteen years we have worked at the intersection of artistic excellence, social connection, public health and community empowerment, creating participatory arts experiences with and for communities who are often underrepresented in mainstream cultural life.

Our work has consistently demonstrated that arts and culture are essential for connected, healthy and equitable communities. Through projects such as The Coming Back Out Ball, LGBTIQ+ Elders Dance Club, Play Date and Congress, we have seen firsthand how creative, practical and physical participation can reduce social isolation, increase positive health outcomes, strengthen belonging, support intergenerational connection and create safer, more inclusive communities.

Across the last 15 years, we have:

- Created 34 new Australian works, presented in 8 countries
- employed 1500 artists
- Collaborated with over 200 communities
- Been seen by over 2million audience members in real life and online

We support the growing call for Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) practice to be more deeply recognised, resourced and embedded within Australia's cultural future.

We recommend the next National Cultural Policy:

### **1. Recognise CACD as a distinct and essential field of practice**

Community-engaged arts practice is not secondary to the arts sector - it is central to how many Australians experience and participate in culture.

National research shows that 84% of Australians acknowledge the positive impact of arts and creativity on individuals and communities, while 98% of Australians engage with the arts in some form (higher than sport).

ATQM's work demonstrates how Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) practice creates artistic, social and civic outcomes simultaneously. Through projects such as The Coming Back Out Ball, LGBTIQ+ Elders Dance Club, Play Date and Congress, we have seen firsthand how community-engaged arts practice can reduce social isolation, strengthen belonging, support intergenerational connection and create safer, more inclusive communities.

### **2. Establish a national CACD body within Creative Australia**

We support the establishment of a dedicated national CACD body within Creative Australia to advocate for the sector, develop and safeguard specialised practice frameworks, coordinate national collaboration, research and evaluation, strengthen cross-sector partnerships and amplify community voices within cultural policy.



ATQM's practice regularly operates across arts, health, local government and community sectors, demonstrating the need for stronger national coordination and advocacy for this work.

### **3. Invest in long-term and sustainable CACD funding**

Meaningful community impact cannot be achieved through short-term project cycles alone. ATQM's LGBTIQ+ Elders Dance Club has engaged with almost 7,000 older LGBTIQ+ people through more than 250 editions of Dance Club since 2016, building trusted relationships with older queer communities experiencing social isolation and discrimination.

Long-term operational investment enables organisations to build trust, develop community leadership, create lasting cultural participation whilst improving wellbeing and belonging.

### **4. Support workforce development and leadership pathways**

ATQM's practice is grounded in reciprocity, skills sharing and community leadership. Our projects aim to leave communities with the tools, confidence and agency to continue creative participation beyond the life of a project.

National policy should support leadership development, mentorship, succession planning and sustainable career pathways for CACD practitioners, artists and community leaders.

### **5. Strengthen evaluation, research and evidence gathering**

ATQM evaluates its work through measures including social cohesion, empowerment, self-determination, identity and wellbeing because these reflect the lasting impacts communities experience through participation.

Independent evaluation of The Coming Back Out Ball found participants reported feeling less isolated, more connected to community and more confident sharing their lived experiences. One participant described the project as "feeling less of a need to hide who I really am."

Similar to the health and social services sectors, CACD requires longitudinal evaluation approaches that measure outcomes over time, rather than relying solely on short-term transactional metrics such as attendance figures and economic impact. Long-term social impact research would better capture the role CACD arts practice plays in reducing isolation, strengthening belonging, improving health and wellbeing and building more connected communities.

### **6. Build cross-sector partnerships**

ATQM's work regularly intersects with health organisations, local government, festivals, social services and community organisations because the impacts of cultural participation extend far beyond traditional arts outcomes. Across 15 years, ATQM has collaborated with 65 partners and 18 festivals to deliver projects that strengthen community connection and social inclusion.

Future national policies should support deeper collaboration beyond the arts sector and include health, education and community sectors. This can assist in building a preventative social infrastructure across key policy areas. Social prescribing throughout the Health sector, an Artist in Residence in every aged care environment, CACD Facilitators at town hall meetings, the mutual benefits are boundless and good for the economy.



## **7. Embed community voice in cultural policy**

ATQM's practice is built on deep listening, co-design and community collaboration. Communities are not simply participants within our work; they actively shape projects, stories and outcomes.

National cultural policies should ensure communities, particularly those historically underrepresented in cultural life, have a meaningful voice in shaping Australia's cultural future.

## **8. Support regional and place-based cultural participation**

ATQM's projects have been delivered across metropolitan, regional, national and international contexts while remaining grounded in local collaboration and place-based engagement. Community-led cultural participation strengthens local identity, increases access and ensures regional communities are part of Australia's broader cultural conversation.

National investment should support ambitious, community-responsive cultural experiences in regional and outer metropolitan communities.

At ATQM, we believe communities fearlessly embracing joy, social justice and equity can shape their own creative and cultural identities.

Australia needs a cultural policy that understands culture not only as industry, but as connection; fundamental to everyone's identity. Not only as content, but as care. Not only as an economic contribution, but as collective belonging.

We thank the Government for the opportunity to contribute.

All The Queens Men