

National Cultural Policy Submission

Since 2010 there has been a reduction in the number of tertiary institutions offering study, and by association, research in Jewellery and Metalwork. Departments have been closed and degree majors have been reduced to stand-alone electives or absorbed into broader disciplines alongside other equally important mediums such as ceramics. This contraction in educational provision has significantly weakened the pipeline of emerging practitioners, educators and researchers.

In parallel, national workforce indicators point to an increasingly constrained field. In 2025, *Jeweller* was included on the Australian [Occupation Shortage List](#), recognising difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified tradespeople. *Jewellery Designer* was added to Australia's [Skilled Migration List](#), signalling reliance on international expertise to meet domestic demand. By 2026, the occupation of *Jeweller* was further added to the [Australian Apprenticeships Priority List](#), explicitly acknowledging persistent skills shortages and triggering targeted government incentives to rebuild the workforce.

Taken together, these shifts reveal a critical contradiction: at the very moment when industry demand and recognised skill shortages are increasing, the domestic education and research ecosystem necessary to sustain the field is contracting.

Australia has rich reserves of precious and non-precious materials and a long lineage of innovation in material culture. However, without sustained investment in specialised tertiary education, the nation risks losing not only technical expertise but also the cultural, artistic and research-led knowledge that underpins contemporary jewellery and metalwork practice. This includes expertise in material sourcing, sustainability, fabrication techniques, and the cultural narratives embedded in objects.

The broader context across the creative arts reinforces this concern. National data indicates widespread reductions in creative arts programs, declining enrolments, and the discontinuation or restructuring of courses across multiple institutions. These trends are reshaping the future of creative education and eroding the pipeline of skilled graduates entering the sector. The result is a systemic weakening of both cultural production and industry capability. [\[artshub.com.au\]](http://artshub.com.au), [\[academicjobs.com\]](http://academicjobs.com)

In this context, jewellery and metalwork should be understood not as niche or expendable areas of study, but as strategically important disciplines that sit at the intersection of creative industries, advanced manufacturing, and cultural heritage. Supporting their revitalisation through targeted funding, infrastructure, and policy recognition will be essential to addressing workforce shortages, sustaining regional and national industries, and maintaining Australia's cultural distinctiveness.

