



## Queensland University of Technology

### Response to the Australian Government's public consultation *Towards a new National Cultural Policy*

May 2026

QUT thanks the Minister for the Arts and the Office for the Arts for the opportunity to provide input to the formulation of a new National Cultural Policy.

#### **Culture for the Real World**

At QUT we take seriously our commitment to supporting, promoting, generating and educating for the benefit of Australian culture. As *the university for the real world*, we are constantly seeking practical ways to benefit the community that sustains us. Just this year, we have taken two prominent steps to contribute meaningfully and tangibly to Australian cultural life, one through direct cultural production and the other through helping prepare the next generation of cultural workers and citizens for the world they will graduate into:

- *Assuming custodianship of Meanjin literary journal*  
The revival and transfer of *Meanjin* from Melbourne University Press to QUT brings Australia's most respected outlet for new high-quality writing home to the Country where it was launched and for which it was named by Clem Christesen in 1940. Work is well underway in preparing for a return to publication in 2026, both digitally and in hard-copy format, and the establishment of the ongoing publication program.
- *Launching a Bachelor of Arts degree, for commencement in 2028*  
Technology is reshaping how we live and work. At the same time, culture, ethics and communities are shaping how technology evolves. The biggest challenges of our time sit where these forces meet.  
The Bachelor of Arts at QUT is designed for that intersection. As a university of technology, QUT brings a distinctive perspective to the humanities, combining critical thinking with digital capability, research expertise with real-world application, and creative insight with industry awareness.

We share the Government's sense of the success of *Revive*, the current National Cultural Policy that has been in place since early 2023, and support the intention to build the new Policy around its five pillars: *First Nations First, A Place for Every Story, Centrality of the Artist, Strong Cultural Infrastructure, and Engaging the Audience*. In composing our response to the consultation paper, we address the last of the three prompts on p.8, 'What you would like to see reflected in the next National Cultural Policy.'

## *What we would like to see reflected in the next National Cultural Policy*

### **1. Why Culture Matters**

With two important qualifications, we would like to see in the next National Cultural Policy a succinct and explicit statement about Why Culture Matters, along the lines of the one featured on p.5 of the present consultation paper. These observes that culture *drives prosperity and innovation, connects people and builds resilience, and defines who we are and how Australia is understood globally.*

However, while we endorse all three elements of the value of culture – and the arts that inform, interpret and help shape it – we believe those elements are inverted in this list: not only in terms of importance, but more fundamentally in terms of inherent valency.

While creatives are certainly interested in making a living from their art, and while audiences are economic agents as well as social, cultural, human subjects, few Australians either make or consume art primarily for the economic value or innovation output their participation generates. Similarly, social connection, cohesion and resilience are significant and welcome effects of art and culture, but they are not its *raison d'être*. Closer to the heart of the matter is the third element, the way culture explains and interprets Australia and Australians to ourselves and to the world. We think these three virtuous effects of culture should be listed in the reverse order to which they are presented here.

Even inverted, however, that list still inadequately describes why culture matters to Australians. We argue that art and culture are actually most important to Australians for the sheer joy of becoming immersed and absorbed in – even captivated and transformed by – art and culture, in all their forms. People do not go out to see a band to boost their local economy or provide incentive for technical innovation – they go out to have a good time, be swept away and come home a little transformed from the person who ventured out.

Similarly, without denigrating art as vocation, most art-makers are driven by fierce avocation over all other considerations, as an elemental, virtually existential imperative of expression, and the inherent enjoyment of proficiency in craft. These aspects of enjoyment and personal manifestation and transformation – the primary drivers for both makers and consumers of art and culture – appears only minimally in *Revive* and not at all in the present consultation paper.

We therefore recommend that a statement on Why Culture Matters be included in the next National Cultural Policy, comprising these four central elements in their order of valency:

- Culture enthral, expresses and transforms us
- Culture defines who we are and how Australia is understood globally

Culture connects people and builds resilience

- Culture drives prosperity and innovation

## 2. Digital cultural for children

We would like to see in the next National Cultural Policy clear statements linked to strong mechanisms supporting and sustaining the delivery of high-quality digital content and experiences for children. The aspiration to build and renew arts and culture in Australia must begin with the youngest audiences.

Currently, there are few parameters for how to judge or assure the quality of digital products, services and experiences that are made for and/or used by children. This has particularly detrimental implications for children's access to and use of digital content that supports their entertainment, connection, self-expression and cultural knowledge-building.

For example, there are fewer guardrails across digital media platforms for ensuring children experience quality content than existed for legacy media. The multifaceted ways in which children can consume, create and share content online (through official, unofficial, and fan-created media channels) complicates the level of implied or assured quality that would previously have been associated with specific intellectual property or trusted legacy media products, such as children's television content.

The complex business models and overlapping commercial imperatives that underpin digital environments also introduce new financial considerations which parents, children and families must navigate when making decisions about the types and quality of content they should use or engage with online. These decisions are not straightforward, with parents and families needing to factor for different tiers of experience (for example), or access that must be earned or purchased within products or services that otherwise position themselves as 'free'.

Similarly, a lack of codified obligations and mandates surrounding the production and distribution of quality Australian children's content limits the diverse, empowering and authentic portrayal of Australian children, their experiences and identities at the local and national levels. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), as the national broadcaster, has a crucial role to play in fostering Australian children's experiences, yet it has no mandated thresholds relating to Australian children's content, and has been known to deprioritise domestic content for children in light of other commercial pressures. These issues are compounded by international streaming services, such as Disney+ and Amazon Prime, which pose a threat to local national representation unless incentivised to invest in local productions that prioritise local or nationally representative children's content.

To address these concerns, we call for the new National Cultural Policy to enunciate a clear priority to advance provision of and facilitate children's access to quality children's digital cultural content by practical means such as:

- Governments working in collaboration with industry, educators and researchers to develop consensus about what constitutes high-quality children's digital products and experiences for children of different ages. Once developed, these metrics should be standardised and further endorsed and widely implemented, with transparency

and accountability, at all levels of children’s media production, including by individual creators and users on digital platforms such as social media.

- Government giving greater financial priority to the production of freely available, locally produced and nationally representative children’s content, with new processes and policies introduced to incentivise strategic private investment from global media production and technology companies to help fund the production of accessible, high quality children’s entertainment products, services and content. This could include streamers and commercial broadcasters contributing to a fund that supports the provision of culturally valuable and educational children’s content.
- Government revisiting the definition of what constitutes Australian content under the Significant Australian Content test, to guarantee that content that is being made under Australian creative control represents and reflects Australian children’s lives.
- Government mandating the ABC to provide minimum levels of Australian children’s digital and television content each year, including genres such as live action drama and documentaries, even if these are high cost and low profit ventures. This would further ensure Australian children have access to free online content, which must continue to be part of a family’s choice for their entertainment—whether or not that free content is something they want to, or need to, access. As a matter of basic cultural equity and policy effectiveness, this free entertainment content must be of the same high quality that is made available through paid products and services.

(We also note resonances with a parallel submission made directly to the present consultation by the Digital Media Research Centre at QUT, addressing related questions of local content to ensure Australian screen stories remain central to Australia’s cultural life.)

### **3. Books and reading**

QUT supports the objectives and proposals of the Australia Reads submission,<sup>1</sup> calling for the new National Cultural Policy to invest in a reading nation. We see the benefit of greater recognition of forms of value, additional to economic value, of local literary production, and draw the Government’s attention to the growing bank of rigorous and decisive evidence being conducted around the country – including at QUT – to substantiate the value claim.

We also endorse the submission of Books Create Australia<sup>2</sup> as a shared response to the National Cultural Policy from the Australian book industry, and the *Next Generation Now* report<sup>3</sup> commissioned by Creative Australia in 2024, calling for greater support for children and young people to engage in literature and the arts.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://australiareads.org.au/news/national-cultural-policy-submission-2026/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://bookscreate.com.au/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://creative.gov.au/research/next-generation-now-benefits-arts-children-and-young-people>