

Submission to the National Cultural Policy Revive Review

From: La Mama Theatre

La Mama Theatre welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the review of the National Cultural Policy, Revive. We acknowledge the significance of the original policy as a long-awaited and essential recommitment by the Federal Government to arts and culture after a prolonged period of instability and underinvestment. Revive provided a clear framework through its five pillars, restored confidence across the sector, and recognised the intrinsic value of artistic practice to Australia's social, cultural, and economic wellbeing.

As one of Australia's most enduring small-to-medium arts organisations, La Mama represents a vital part of the country's cultural ecosystem. For almost six decades, we have supported the development of independent artists, premiered new Australian theatre work, and fostered deep community engagement. This work and longevity underpins the trust and esteem in which La Mama is held by theatre making communities and audiences. In 2025 we paused public performance for a strategic review. In 2026, we will support 185 new Australian developments, 8 audience-ready works and participate in targeted partnerships and festivals: Hope Punk Climate Festival, Festival of Puppetry, Melbourne Fringe Festival, First Nations Cultural Conservation in Action and FaraDays street activation in partnership with local business.

Small-to-medium arts organisations, including institutions such as La Mama Theatre, are foundational to Australia's cultural life. We provide essential cultural infrastructure: incubating new voices, sustaining artistic careers, and ensuring that diverse communities can see themselves reflected in contemporary performance. Despite this, the sector is operating with limited resources and faces persistent financial precarity, placing long-term sustainability at risk.

La Mama acts as a key delivery partner across all pillars of Revive. We extend the impact of **First Nations First** by providing platforms and partnerships that embed First Nations voices across the broader sector. We realise **A Place for Every Story** by championing diverse, emerging, and underrepresented artists, we enact the **Centrality of the Artist** by providing remuneration, development, complete freedom and creative homes for independent practitioners and deliver on **Engaging the Audience** through deeply local, accessible, and community-connected programs.

Strong Cultural Infrastructure: To sustain this role, small-to-medium organisations must be formally recognised as critical cultural infrastructure within federal policy. This recognition should be backed by the establishment of a dedicated Small-to-Medium Arts Sustainability Fund.

Revive marked a critical turning point for Australia's cultural policy landscape. Its next phase must translate ambition into structural reform. We therefore recommend that the new policy:

- Establishes a dedicated Small-to-Medium Arts Sustainability Fund as outlined above.
- Increases organisational funding for the small to medium sector.
- Commits to long-term (minimum 4-year) indexed operational funding agreements.
- Embeds small-to-medium organisations explicitly within definitions of national cultural infrastructure.

Sustaining small-to-medium arts organisations is essential to ensuring that Australians across metropolitan, regional, and remote communities can access and participate in our shared cultural life. Without targeted and structural investment, the policy's goals will remain aspirational rather than achievable. La Mama Theatre urges the Government to act decisively to secure the future of this vital sector.