

Dear Minister Burke,

Vulcana Circus supports the submission from the national alliance of Community Arts and Cultural Development organisations and individuals. Australia's next National Cultural Policy must recognise and invest in Community Arts and Cultural Development as essential cultural infrastructure.

For Vulcana Circus, this recognition is critical. For Vulcana Circus, this recognition is critical. Vulcana Circus has been part of Queensland's cultural landscape since 1995. Founded in Brisbane, Vulcana was created to provide a safe, non-competitive space where women could explore their physical potential through circus. The organisation takes its name from Vulcana, the British strongwoman of the early twentieth century, whose physical strength and resistance to restrictive expectations of women continue to inspire the organisation's feminist foundations.

Over almost three decades, Vulcana has evolved into a community-engaged circus organisation committed to inclusive, accessible and socially meaningful arts experiences. Today, Vulcana works with women, trans and non-binary adults, young people of all genders, artists and community participants through training, workshops, creative development, community partnerships and performance. Its work continues to create spaces where people whose voices, bodies and stories are not always visible on stage can be seen, heard, valued and celebrated.

Community Arts and Cultural Development is central to this work. It is the methodology that enables organisations like Vulcana to build trust with communities, support creative risk-taking, remove barriers to participation, and create culturally and socially safe spaces for people to express themselves. CACD allows us to work not only with audiences, but with participants, communities and artists as active collaborators in shaping creative outcomes.

CACD operates at the intersection of creativity and community. It builds social cohesion, resilience, wellbeing and meaningful cultural participation across the continent. Yet despite its national reach and impact, CACD is not explicitly recognised within the current *REVIVE* framework. This omission creates a critical policy gap.

Without explicit recognition of CACD, *REVIVE* risks overlooking one of the primary ways many Australians engage with arts and culture: not as passive audiences, but as active participants, creators and community members shaping their own cultural futures. This is particularly important for organisations like Vulcana Circus, where participation, embodiment, collaboration and community connection are core to artistic practice.

CACD is not a niche artform. It is a methodology embedded across health, education, justice, disaster management, regional development, climate adaptation and community wellbeing. Although only 5–6% of national arts investment is explicitly attributed to CACD, this significantly underrepresents its reach because CACD activity is dispersed across multiple funding streams and is not consistently measured. This systemic undercounting leads to undervaluation and weakens policy commitments to equity, access, participation and cultural democracy.

For Vulcana, investment in CACD means investment in the conditions that allow inclusive arts practice to thrive. It supports long-term community relationships, fair employment for community-based artists and cultural workers, accessible pathways into creative participation, and programs that respond to the lived experiences of communities. It also recognises that the value of arts participation is not limited to performance outcomes, but includes confidence, connection, wellbeing, leadership, belonging and social change.

CACD delivers outcomes across multiple domains. It strengthens belonging, improves wellbeing, supports local economies and workforce pathways, enhances civic participation, and builds environmental awareness and climate resilience. Importantly, it provides the relational infrastructure that enables communities to respond to complex challenges, including climate impacts, disasters, inequality and social fragmentation.

CACD directly advances all five pillars of *REVIVE*. It supports First Nations self-determination, ensures diverse stories are visible, recognises community-based artists and cultural workers as essential to national cultural life, and deepens participation across priority communities, including First Nations peoples, young people, culturally diverse communities, disabled communities, and regional and disaster-impacted communities.

To address the current policy gap, I support the submission's call for formal recognition of CACD within the National Cultural Policy; the establishment of a national CACD entity within Creative Australia; investment in workforce development; funding reforms that support long-term, place-based practice; improved national data and evaluation systems; and the embedding of CACD across government portfolios including health, climate, disaster management and regional development.

At a time of increasing climate instability, social fragmentation and compounding disasters, Australia needs approaches that build trust, connection and collective capacity. These are not outcomes policy alone can deliver. CACD provides the creative and relational mechanisms to achieve them.

For Vulcana Circus, supporting CACD means supporting a cultural future where participation is valued, where diverse bodies and stories are visible, and where communities have the resources to create, connect and lead. To realise the vision of *REVIVE* — “a place for every story” — CACD must be recognised, properly measured and resourced as a cornerstone of Australia's cultural future. Without this, the policy risks falling short of its commitments to equity, participation and inclusion.

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[www.vulcana.org.au](http://www.vulcana.org.au)