



Being. Belonging. Becoming


<https://artsdisabilitynetwork.com.au>

30 April, 2026.

RE: Consultation for a New National Cultural Policy

Dear Minister Burke and Ms Templeman,

We write to you as Arts and Disability Network Australia (ADNA) and Crossroad Arts. ADNA is one of the leading initiatives to improve access and inclusion across creative industries and workplaces. Working in regional and remote Queensland, Crossroad Arts has an established reputation for creating some of the best theatre and multi art events in Australia with people who experience a disability. Both organisations are committed to working together to build an equitable and inclusive future for Australia's arts and disability sector.

We welcome the Government's recognition that culture is essential to Australia's economy, wellbeing and sense of belonging. We also recognise the initial progress delivered through Revive, including the establishment of Creative Australia and Equity: The Arts and Disability Associated Plan 2024–2028. As the consultation paper notes, we are now at a point of transition — reflecting on Revive's achievements while actively participating in designing Australia's future.

As we approach the development of this new cultural plan, we collectively demand that the government pause and reflect on the structural gap that is very clear.

Arts and disability is referenced only as a past achievement within Revive, with no named successor to the Equity Plan. With Revive scheduled to end in 2027, this creates a potential policy vacuum in which disability risks becoming diffuse — absorbed into broader inclusion language, rather than recognised as a distinct, system-shaping force across workforce, cultural accessibility, infrastructure and participation. While we welcome the commitments and initiatives driven by equity, four years is not enough to create long standing structural change for the disabled community. The government needs to continue to provide our community with an active role in shaping policy decisions that will impact all of our futures.

While as a group we agree that the early achievements of Revive demonstrate the contribution that Australia's arts and disability culture is making to every one of the five pillars, we would like to work constructively with government to ensure that no Australian with access needs is left out of Australia's cultural future. To continue the active, ongoing dialogue with the government which has already begun with the formation of ADNA and our membership of the Equity Advisory Group, we, together with Crossroad Arts, offer the following key recommendations for the new cultural plan:

1. The formation of a sixth pillar: “Access for all Australians.”

Minister Burke and Ms Templeman, in your critical evolution of Australia’s next National Cultural Policy, we strongly advise that your government establish ‘Access for all Australians’ as a dedicated sixth pillar, with clear accountability and resourcing. Access is not a subset of inclusion. It is the condition that enables all five pillars to function. Access not only removes barriers for Australians with disabilities. Embedding access and access practice into Australia’s cultural consciousness recognises individual needs and cultural access. This is the next vital step in providing tailored support to remove systemic barriers. A pillar for access will strengthen First Nations cultural participation and leadership; ensure that everybody can access the spaces, conversations and information needed to create and share their stories; protect artists through safer, fairer and more accessible working conditions; embed accessibility into the design of venues, institutions and digital systems and expand audience participation and engagement across Australia by positioning access as the framework through which all cultural life becomes more innovative and inclusive.

2. Commit to a successor arts and disability framework to the Equity Plan.

Embedded disability leadership and ongoing consultation with d/Deaf and disabled artists, artswokers and screen practitioners must be ongoing to ensure continuity and long-term measurable structural change.

3. Mandate accessibility as a condition of public funding.

Enforceable standards and reporting obligations need to become mandatory across venues, organisations and programs.

4. Recognise access as skilled, essential labour within the creative workforce and fund it accordingly.

This means funding both access costs for artists and budget lines in all arts and cultural funding to ensure that audience accessibility is foregrounded.

5. Invest in disability leadership with targets for increased representation of first nations and CALD disability leaders — groups that are significantly underrepresented in our sector.

Co-creation is not enough. Alternative models of disability leadership mean having people with diverse experiences in positions of power. The government needs to create accessible pathways for people from first nations, culturally diverse and intersectional groups to bring their cultural knowledge of arts and disability culture into leadership positions and to use this to change the way these systems operate.

6. Ensure that all artforms award grants to 20% of d/Deaf and disabled artists in every funding round to ensure that our community plays an active role in shaping Australia’s national story.

This includes funding d/Deaf and disabled people in regional areas in Australia, even when these groups are a minority in their communities.

7. Establish a national Access to Work framework for the creative industries.

Learning from the UK’s Access to Work model, develop a funded, cross-sector model that provides d/Deaf and disabled artists, artswokers and screen practitioners with practical support at work across freelance, part-time and permanent roles, bridging gaps between arts funding and systems such as the NDIS.

8. Recognise arts and disability organisations as core cultural infrastructure.

Position disability-led organisations as essential components of Australia’s cultural ecosystem, with sustained, long-term funding rather than project-based support.

9. Tie all public cultural funding to accessibility compliance and reporting.

Make accessibility a condition of funding, with clear standards, measurable outcomes and accountability mechanisms across all government-funded organisations and programs.

10. Introduce national targets for disabled artist representation including representation in international opportunities.

Set 20% targets across festivals, commissions, touring programs and publicly funded institutions to ensure disabled artists are embedded across the cultural landscape — not confined to specialist programs.

11. Develop a national access rating and certification system

Based on the recommendations made by The Code of Practice, create a transparent framework to assess and communicate accessibility across venues, festivals and organisations, enabling accountability and informed audience participation.

12. Invest in a national network of trained Access Coordinators

Fund and embed access coordinators as standard roles across the sector, recognising access as skilled, professional labour essential to delivery.

13. Reform grant processes to embed accessibility and equity

Require accessible application formats, flexible timelines and recognition of non-linear career pathways, ensuring funding systems reflect the realities of disabled artists' lives. Provide tailored access support for grant applications so our entire community has equal access to grant opportunities.

14. Introduce audience access subsidies and participation support

Provide funding for ticket subsidies, support workers and access costs to remove financial barriers and expand cultural participation.

15. Build a national data and evaluation framework for arts and disability

Track workforce representation, audience engagement, participation rates and outcomes to inform policy, measure impact and ensure accountability.

16. Invest in long-term leadership and career development pathways

Support emerging, mid-career and established disabled artists through dedicated programs, international pathways and disability-led business development.

17. Invest in disability-led creative development programs and cross-disciplinary commissioning models.

Create an annual commissioning opportunity, similar to the UK's Unlimited. This will support d/Deaf and disabled artists as storytellers, directors, choreographers, writers and cultural leaders — not solely as subjects of representation. These programs should encourage collaboration across artforms and create pathways for ambitious, large-scale work that reshapes Australia's cultural narrative.

18. Recognise community arts, studio programs and participatory practice as essential career pathways into the professional sector for many disabled artists.

Cultural policy must value non-linear and non-traditional development models, ensuring funding systems support artists whose practices emerge through community participation, lived experience and alternative forms of creative training.

19. Recognise social mobility for disabled Australians as a core policy concern

In acknowledging the intersection of disability and class, the new cultural policy should invest in accessible pathways that enable disabled artists from underrepresented, low-income and intersectional backgrounds to enter, sustain a career and move into leadership positions in the cultural sector.

20. Integrate arts and culture into national and international climate governance.

In Law Studies journal, Cat Wood's Notes that 'people with disability are becoming increasingly vulnerable as climate change effects worsen. Their inclusion and protection are at risk, and Australia's First Nations people with disability face particular challenges.' We agree with Creative Climate, that the new cultural policy 'must embed and resource culture and community-led climate action as a structural priority' — naming it explicitly across all five existing pillars, as well as in our newly proposed sixth pillar. We also endorse Creative Climate's commitment for supporting First Nations leadership in climate actions with

dedicated funding, cross-portfolio coordination, and sector-wide accountability frameworks to ensure it is delivered.’

To fully support these important contributions, ADNA support the submission from the national alliance of Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) organisations and individuals — of which we are a part. We argue that Australia’s next National Cultural Policy must recognise and invest in CACD as essential cultural infrastructure. As outlined in the full submission, CACD operates at the intersection of creativity and community, delivering social cohesion, resilience and meaningful cultural participation across Australia.

CACD delivers outcomes across multiple domains. It strengthens social cohesion and belonging, improves wellbeing, builds local economies and workforce pathways, enhances civic participation, and supports environmental awareness and climate adaptation. Crucially, it provides the relational infrastructure that enables communities to respond to complex challenges and to participate in shaping their cultural futures.

Including the above recommendations and ensuring that access is named as the sixth pillar in the sequence to Revive is not simply a matter of equity. It is a strategic investment in a cultural system that is more connected, more reflective and more equitable for the nation it serves.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this next chapter and look forward to working with Government to ensure that every Australian can access the spaces, conversations and resources they need to contribute to the next part of our national cultural story.

ADNA welcomes the opportunity to meet with government to further discuss our recommendations.

We endorse the intersecting access, disability justice, community and cultural development and climate action strategies of the sector including the submissions of:

Accessible Arts
Diversity Arts Australia
Creative Climate
CACD Sector

Yours sincerely,

Sarah-Mace Dennis
National Director,
Arts and Disability Network Australia.

On behalf of:

Arts and Disability Network Australia,
Crossroad Arts,
Access2Arts,
DADAA,
Accessible Arts,
Arts Access Victoria,
Access Arts Queensland,
Arts Access Darwin,
Incite Arts.