

FORM Building a State of Creativity Limited

Submission to the Public Consultation on Australia's next National Cultural Policy

21 May 2026

About FORM

FORM Building a State of Creativity Limited (FORM) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation based in Western Australia. We are a thought leader, catalyst, and long-term delivery partner for communities and governments seeking to harness the power of creativity for economic and social benefit. For over two decades we have worked across the 2.6 million square kilometres of WA – with regional and remote communities, First Nations artists and art centres, schools, governments – delivering programs in cultural tourism, creative placemaking, creative education, and Aboriginal and Islander partnerships.

Our View

The five pillars of Revive are sound. But implementation has been uneven, with some parts of the sector lagging behind others in policy development and investment, and the next policy must move from interventions to systemic change. Our aspiration is a National Cultural Policy that positions creativity as a central pillar of a future-ready Australia – essential to lives, learning and livelihoods – not as a cultural add-on, but as an upstream solution to the social and economic challenges of our time.

Four priorities should anchor the next policy:

- A whole-of-government, cross-jurisdictional approach – coordinating federal, state and territory investment and policy, and across portfolios.
- A systems-change agenda – repositioning creativity as central to national priorities, not peripheral to them.
- Long-term, strategic investment – genuine 10-year, multi-year funding that allows the sector to plan, grow and contribute at scale.
- An ecosystem approach – a unifying national vision for the sector that simultaneously honours its diversity (e.g. regional, remote, urban, commercial, not-for-profit, First Nations-led); and a cultural narrative that does both as well.

First Nations First (Pillar 1)

First Nations First must mean more than positioning – it requires genuine respect for the immense diversity of Aboriginal and Islander communities, languages, cultural protocols and priorities. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Self-determination must be the organising principle, supported through funding decisions, governance structures, and genuine allyship. Policy must avoid win-lose dynamics between First Nations and non-First Nations communities. Instead, it should foster a diversity of experience held within a united national identity grounded in shared values.

As is the case under every pillar, we recommend a cross-portfolio approach – coordinating Arts, Education, and Health – that recognises language, land, economic development, and cultural expression as inseparable.

A Place for Every Story (Pillar 2)

Reaching audiences beyond those who already identify as 'arts people' requires investment in participatory, place-based creative experiences that meet people where they are. FORM's

work demonstrates that creativity embedded in community life – particularly in regional and remote Australia – builds belonging, resilience, and local pride.

According to A New Approach's most recent Big Picture report (2024), Australia ranks 26th out of 33 OECD countries for government investment in recreation, culture and religion, spending just 0.9% of GDP against an OECD average of 1.2% - and investment has not kept pace with population growth (www.newapproach.org.au/insight-reports/the-big-picture-4). A National Cultural Leadership Framework that coordinates investment across all levels of government is essential to address this underperformance and ensure regional and remote communities are not left behind.

Centrality of the Artist (Pillar 3)

Two issues are urgent. First, education. Australia's curriculum must be refocused to develop the capabilities that the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025 identifies as among the most critical and fastest-growing for the workforce of tomorrow: creative thinking, resilience, curiosity and lifelong learning, and systems thinking (www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025). Arts and humanities are essential foundations to embed these capabilities, not just for future artists and arts workers, but across every industry. As Artificial Intelligence disrupts nearly every job and vocation, Arts education is not supplementary, it is core. Cross-portfolio coordination between Arts and Education at federal and state levels is needed to drive systemic change.

Second, Artificial Intelligence legislation must focus on principle, not platform: how does Australia want human and non-human creative effort to be valued? This is philosophical and ethical work, and cultural policy is the right vehicle to establish the values framework that underpins Australia's response – protecting creative rights, ensuring fair remuneration, and keeping human creativity at the centre.

Strong Cultural Infrastructure (Pillar 4)

Creative industries require uplift in both the hard and soft infrastructure that enables them. This submission focuses on the current investment model, which is not working. Creative Australia's own published guidelines report success rates of between 10% and 20% across competitive grant programs – meaning the vast majority of applications are unsuccessful, representing enormous investment of time and organisational capacity (www.creative.gov.au/investments-opportunities/application-process/faq). The next policy must shift from high-volume, short-cycle project funding to long-term, strategic investment.

We recommend:

- A 10-year, multi-year investment framework as the foundation of the next policy.
- Devolution of funding decisions to peak bodies and sector organisations with the expertise and relationships to make targeted investment, leverage philanthropic and corporate investment to grow funding pools, and decrease administration.
- Active investment in the connective infrastructure of the ecosystem – the organisations that bridge geographies, sectors, and disciplines – alongside the major institutions.
- Use of non-financial levers – planning, procurement, tax settings, curriculum – that can transform the conditions for creativity at scale.

Engaging the Audience (Pillar 5)

FORM's experience across cultural tourism and creative placemaking points to a fundamental reframe for audience engagement policy: the most durable and meaningful

connections between people and culture are built through participation, not consumption. When creativity is embedded in the places people live, work and travel – through public art, place-based experiences, festivals, and community-led storytelling – it builds audiences organically and sustainably, reaching people who would never self-identify as arts-goers. Benefitting more people and increasing the value proposition of the sector.

Australia’s cultural tourism opportunity is significant and underleveraged. Today’s visitors – domestic and international – seek authentic, meaningful experiences rooted in real places and living cultures. The next policy should more explicitly connect cultural objectives with tourism and trade strategy, through genuine cross-portfolio coordination.

On digital discovery and new modes of engagement: investment in digital and new media experiences in the public realm – particularly in regional and remote communities – can dramatically extend reach without displacing the live and place-based experiences that remain irreplaceable. Policy should support the creative sector to develop genuine digital capability, not simply digitise existing content. Young people, who are already creating and sharing culture through digital environments, must be recognised as both a primary audience and a primary creative constituency: shaping participation pathways for the next generation is one of the highest-leverage investments the policy can make.

Overall, increasing the audience requires continued investment in quality, Australian production, accessible through a range of democratised platforms.

In Summary

The next National Cultural Policy can do something genuinely transformative: reposition creativity as a strategic national priority, backed by the long-term investment and cross-government coordination needed to deliver it. A 10-year, whole-of-government, cross-jurisdictional commitment to the creative ecosystem – one that holds a uniting vision while honouring the diversity of its parts – would be a landmark for Australian lives, livelihoods and learning.

FORM would welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspect of this submission.

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