



21 May 2026

Towards a New National Cultural Policy

Consultation submission

Imagine an Australia where people can name artists, scientists and innovators just as readily as they name sports stars, social media influencers or film personalities. An Australia where curiosity, creativity and discovery are celebrated as central to who we are, and where science and innovation are recognised not only for their economic value, but as vital expressions of our cultural identity.

The development of the next National Cultural Policy provides a critical opportunity to ensure Australia's cultural framework reflects the full breadth of how culture is created, expressed and experienced in contemporary society, and that it remains relevant in a time of rapid social, technological and economic change.

Science and innovation should be explicitly recognised as integral components of Australia's cultural identity. Culture shapes how we as Australians understand ourselves and our place in the world. Science and innovation are central to this process, influencing how we interpret evidence, respond to challenges and imagine the future. In a highly digital and technologically enabled society, they underpin many of the ways culture is now created, shared and experienced, reinforcing the consultation paper's position that culture drives innovation, builds resilience and shapes national identity.

Science is often positioned as a technical or economic domain, yet it is equally a form of cultural expression. It reflects deeply human qualities, curiosity, creativity, exploration and discovery and represents one of the primary ways societies generate and share knowledge. The stories of scientific endeavour are stories of people, ideas and imagination, sitting alongside artistic and cultural narratives as part of Australia's shared identity. Recognising this expands the cultural lens to better reflect contemporary forms of expression and participation.

There is a significant opportunity for the policy to go beyond recognition and actively foster public appreciation and pride in science and innovation as part of Australia's cultural identity. This is increasingly important in a world defined by rapid technological change, widespread access to information and growing exposure to mis- and disinformation. Science literacy, the capacity to evaluate evidence, navigate complex information and engage confidently with new ideas, is now a core cultural capability. It underpins informed participation in society, strengthens community resilience and contributes to higher levels of trust and public engagement. Framing science in cultural terms helps position these capabilities not as specialist skills, but as shared societal strengths.



Embedding science and innovation within cultural policy also reflects the evolving ways audiences engage with culture. Participation is increasingly interactive, digital and multidisciplinary, with boundaries between art, technology and science becoming less distinct. Science engagement organisations are often at the forefront of these changes, experimenting with new forms of storytelling, immersive environments and hybrid experiences that align with emerging audience expectations. Recognising this contribution ensures the policy remains future-focused and responsive to changing patterns of cultural participation.

Recognising science and innovation strengthens the intent of all five pillars of the National Cultural Policy. It supports the inclusion and elevation of diverse knowledge systems, including First Nations knowledge; expands the breadth of stories that define Australia; acknowledges the interdisciplinary workforce contributing to cultural production; reinforces the role of museums and science centres as essential cultural infrastructure; and enhances approaches to audience engagement through innovation and accessibility. In this way, science is not an add-on to cultural policy, but a cross-cutting enabler of its core objectives.

To reflect these considerations, the National Cultural Policy should recognise science and innovation as integral to Australia's cultural identity and explicitly support the development of public appreciation and pride in this domain. It should acknowledge science literacy and public science engagement as core cultural outcomes, recognise museums and science centres as central cultural institutions across the policy framework, and strengthen alignment between cultural policy and broader national priorities in science, education, technology and skills.

Embedding science and innovation within the cultural policy framework will ensure it is inclusive, future-focused and reflective of contemporary Australia. It will broaden participation in cultural life, strengthen national identity and support a more confident, informed and connected society. In doing so, it will help foster a culture that values curiosity, knowledge and creativity in all its forms, and positions Australia to thrive in an increasingly complex and rapidly evolving world.

Increasing recognition of science as part of culture would support a more inclusive, future-focused policy, and I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to its development.

Yours sincerely


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