



# National Cultural Policy consultation

City of Casey  
Arts and Culture Services

City of Casey welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the second National Cultural Policy from the Albanese Government. Casey recognises the Commonwealth Governments continued commitment to ensuring Australia is vibrant and creatively participating nation, no matter your background or where you live.

### **About City of Casey**

City of Casey is home to 414,929 residents in Melbourne's southeast growth corridor, 40 kilometres from Melbourne's Arts Precinct and the CBD. Its population is 45% greater than Victoria's most populous regional city, Geelong. Over the past 20 years Casey has been transformed by its growth which is predominantly through migration. 42% of Casey's residents speak a language other than English at home. In 2024/25 Casey hosted 21 citizenship ceremonies with 4195 new Australian citizens; our community reflects the evolving and contemporary face of Australian multiculturalism.

### **Our Arts and Culture services**

City of Casey proudly invests in Art and Culture services. We invest upwards of \$19 million per annum in library services, arts programs, maintaining cultural infrastructure, arts grants, public art and heritage sites with the aim of meeting the demands of our diverse communities, artists and creative businesses. In 2027 we will celebrate 10 years since the opening of our major cultural venue, Bunjil Place.<sup>i</sup>

Council's investment is predicated on arts participation as way to support mental wellbeing and strengthen communities, building a sense of belonging to place and people. These outcomes require a robust national arts and creative sector that works for outer metropolitan areas.

### **Local context and challenges**

Significant challenges face Council and Australia's urban growth areas, as well as Casey residents, audiences and artists to achieve the desired creative and civic participation outcomes.

Key challenges and context include:

- **Significant pro-social infrastructure gaps, both public and private,<sup>ii</sup> driving unequal access to arts participation.** Analysis of Australian Urban Observatory show social infrastructure health index is 2-3 times higher in inner city locations than the outer rings of the 5 largest cities.<sup>iii</sup> Liveability indicators shows that access to Arts & Culture facilities is 44% less in growth areas than non-growth areas in capital cities.<sup>iv</sup>
- **Cost of living pressures continue to impact arts participation.** 41% of households in Casey reported being unable to participate in social or cultural activities due to cost, with 34% reporting children being unable to participate due to cost pressures.<sup>v</sup>
- **People are motivated to participate closer to home.** Our community's primary motivations for attending our free, local and community-focused live music festival this year was (in order of priority) its proximity to where they live, that it was free, and that they could attend with family and friends.<sup>vi</sup>

- **Contemporary Australia’s evolving story is being lived and written in outer metropolitan areas of our cities.** Reflecting Casey’s community, research shows that the migration patterns of culturally and linguistically diverse people are most likely to live in cities and tend to settle in local areas with people from similar origins.<sup>vii</sup> Maintaining civic trust, belonging and a vibrant and sustainable social fabric has a direct impact on the lived experience in our neighbourhoods.
- **Children and young people are our future.** Growth areas like Casey have a higher proportion of children and young people with one in four children in Australia are growing in growth areas.<sup>viii</sup> Ensuring no one gets left behind in participation and career pathways outcomes must be a priority for all levels of government.
- **Limited support for outer metropolitan artist and arts organisation.** Council is not able to fulfil the needs and requirements of all local artists and arts organisations in developing new work and supporting grassroots creative organisations to thrive.

### Summary Opportunities

Among many achievements, REVIVE delivered the urgent reform of Creative Australia. The next iteration of the cultural policy requires a robust, long-term horizon to catch up on the significant changes and benefits that population growth is bringing to the Australian culture and economy. We support A New Approach’s ongoing advocacy for a 10-year strategy.

The Commonwealth Government can play a stronger role in realising the outcomes they share with local government in strengthening communities and participation. Our context most closely aligns with Policy Pillars of ‘A Place for Every Story’, ‘Centrality of the Artist’ and ‘Engaging the Audience’. The Actions that support our community and grow the creative sector include:

#### Funding place-based initiatives allocated to outer metropolitan and growth areas

- Establish place-based funding programs and provide greater support and recognition for methodologies such as Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) that provide platforms for emerging cultural and arts leadership.
- Expand regional funding programs to so that growth areas are eligible.
- Establish a service delivery partnership through Creative Australia that re-tools outer metropolitan institution to connect with emerging audience.
- Build on the existing Commonwealth Government’s Youth Strategy to strengthen out-of-school programs and opportunities for engagement
- Fund Commonwealth-supported First Nations-led cultural organisations and training institutions to partner with outer metropolitan local government with significant First Nations communities to present and develop new work and scout future talent.

#### National guidance and leadership to support local governments to plan and procure

- Complete a national audit of existing government and non-government cultural infrastructure. Assess current and projected population growth and accessibility issues to understand critical cultural infrastructure gaps and priorities.
- Establish minimum service levels (ie. provision ratios per population) within regions and a range of infrastructures that support creative participation and production.

- Fund Creative Workplaces to develop national guidelines for artist procurement focused on local government users, with guidance on AI that supports the emerging challenges to protect and recognise creative labour.

### **Partnerships between levels of government**

- Establish a Ministerial Council that includes local government peak bodies such as National Growth Areas Alliance.
- Work with state and territory governments and Music Australia to encourage more consistent approach to best practice regulation for live music and nighttime economy so that local neighbourhoods have equal opportunity for economic development and informal creative participation.
- Develop a strategy to integrate professional pathways and strengthen capacity and quality teaching across education and training systems that support our artists and creative workforce.
- Strengthen alignment between early years policy and creative engagement outcomes in early learning settings through an existing nationally coordinated conversation.

### **Build capacity for community arts practice and new markets**

- Establish market and professional development programs to address weaker links between Australian presenters aligned with incoming migrant countries-of-origin.
- Through the Department of Home Affairs Migration Review ensure artists are recognised as highly skilled workers and recognise their potential contribution through critical skills that support broader cultural participation

## Response to pillars

### Pillar 1: First Nations First

**1.1** City of Casey, together with Cities of Wyndham and Whittlesea, have the largest First Nations communities in Greater Melbourne.<sup>ix</sup> This is consistent with growth areas in every state which have a **higher percentage of First Nations residents** compared to the greater metropolitan areas.<sup>x</sup> Casey has hosted Ilbijerri Theatre Company and Australian Ballet to present and develop work at our Council-operated Aboriginal Gathering Place, however, these are ad hoc engagements.

**Opportunity 1.1:** Commonwealth-funded First Nations programs, cultural organisations and training institutions might partner with local government to present and develop new work and scout future talent within outer metropolitan communities. This will ensure that the future of First Nations-led practice and leadership has local pathways or ‘on-ramps’ supporting the sustainable long-term development of the Australian arts sector.

### Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story

**2.1 Community-led and community-engaged creative activity provides a platform** for cultural leaders, artists and creative practitioners who are not integrated in the professional arts ecology; these platforms make art relevant and build connections with emerging and harder-to-reach communities. Casey’s local artists<sup>xi</sup> have highlighted the untapped potential within migrant communities including:

- Experienced artists who have achieved acclaim in their place-of-origin find it challenging reach our stages and galleries without proactive and deliberate engagement
- Untrained makers and cultural mediators who might not see how to move from community activities to professional arts practice

### 2.2 Case studies in place-based and community-led programming at Casey

#### Case study 1: The Offbeat Sari (aligned with Pillar 2 and Pillar 5)

*The Offbeat Sari*, a landmark international exhibition celebrating the sari - one of the world’s most widely worn garments opened at Bunjil Place, South-East Melbourne in March 2026. Developed by the Design Museum, London and brought to Australia by Bunjil Place in partnership with Liverpool Powerhouse, South-Western Sydney, *The Offbeat Sari* brings together over 50 groundbreaking saris on loan from leading global designers and emerging studios across India in a large-scale exploration of the contemporary Indian and South Asian fashion garment.

Conceived and curated by Priya Khanchandani to highlight the evolution of the iconic garment and its reinvention in recent times, *The Offbeat Sari* explores how the sari is an expression of identity and resistance, with designers, wearers and craftspeople reshaping the ways in which it is understood, designed, made and worn in contemporary urban India.

Celebrating and fostering cultural awareness, this exhibition is part of an ongoing

series presented by Bunjil Place Gallery that highlights the depth, complexities, and experiences of South Asian diaspora. The City of Casey is home to one of the largest South Asian populations in Victoria, this exhibition provides an opportunity for Bunjil Place to expand and strengthen relationships with new and existing audiences, community groups, and creative networks.

In line with the exhibition, Bunjil Place invited community organisations, schools, artists and creatives working across a wide range of artforms and industries to develop meaningful, community-focused events, programs, and new work in response to the exhibition themes.

### **Case study 2: Cultivating Creative Cultures with Communities (4Cs) program (Aligned with Pillar 2 and Pillar 3)**

City of Casey and Bunjil Place is a co-producer and venue delivery partner for Cultivating Creative Cultures with Communities (4Cs); founded by Laitini Matautia-Ulugia, a teacher at Lyndhurst Secondary College, the program has run for 20 years. The Annual Showcase brings together over 15 schools from Southeast Melbourne to share performances and cultural practices through song, dance, music, and art. The 4C's initiative has grown with prominent cultural groups in the student cohort include Māori and Pacific Islanders, Indian, Middle Eastern and African communities. The program elevates and celebrates the cultural diversity in the Melbourne's southeast and has expanded to other outer metropolitan schools in Greater Melbourne, based on growing reputation and schools demand. The program delivers cultural, social and educational outcomes. Participation is embedded in formal secondary education through VCE-Vocational Major curriculum. Founder Laitini Matautia-Ulugia describes the students as 'ones that don't fit a box' and who benefit from a culturally safe environment to remain engaged in their education.

It is also an intergenerational experience for families. As Ms Matautia-Ulugia says:

*'The program facilitates connections within diaspora communities. The parents focus is to maintain cultural connection with their kids. [In 4Cs] It's done through making their traditional costumes, through their stories – it's not something you can always create on a sewing machine. Some costumes, especially articles passed down from generation to generation represent a connection to ancestors, to be present in spirit as they dance and speak their language. That's what's going on behind the scenes... Having it [4Cs program] in schools normalises the fact that they're from a rich, ancient culture, and that they're part of a culture. Without the cultural connections there is a growing gap between parents and kids.'*

**Opportunity 2.2:** Establish place-based funding programs and provide greater support and recognition for methodologies such as Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) that provide platforms for emerging cultural and arts leadership.

**Opportunity 2.2:** Through the Department of Home Affairs Migration Review ensure artists are recognised as highly skilled workers and recognise their potential contribution through critical skills that support broader cultural participation. Aligning Australian Government strategic interests, economic partnerships and migration patterns with artists’ country-of-origin will enable greater synergies for audience and market development.

**Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist**

**3.1 Artist procurement** is undertaken across functions of local government. Practices are varied and directly contribute to the quality of artist commissions and creative services, they indirectly assign value to artists’ work and intellectual labour. Better access to best practice procurement and fair and equitable pay would reduce friction for diverse users of artist services. This is urgent as current and emerging AI capability will further erode and dilute procurement opportunities for artists and creative workers.

**3.1 Opportunity:** Fund Creative Workplaces to develop national guidelines for artist procurement like Office of Victorian Government Architect ‘smart client’ guidelines.<sup>xii</sup> Integration of AI guidance would support the emerging challenges to protect and recognise creative labour.

**3.2 Young people and creative learning:** Casey has a higher proportion of residents across every age range between 0-44 years old compared with the national average (Appendix 1). However research indicated that household income a key driver of participation for children<sup>xiii</sup> and access to extra-curricular activities are especially unequal for young people.<sup>xiv</sup> The impact of missing out on extra-curricular activities has long-term consequences: they predict intentions to remain in education after compulsory schooling, they boost young people’s confidence, extend social networks and provide them with new skills and abilities.<sup>xv</sup>

**3.2 Opportunity:** Build on the existing Commonwealth Government’s Youth Strategy to strengthen out-of-school programs and opportunities for engagement especially in places with high youth populations and gaps in social infrastructure such as growth areas.

**3.3 Arts Education** Casey has 102 primary and secondary schools.<sup>xvi</sup> A recent focus group<sup>xvii</sup> with local arts education stakeholders highlighted critical challenges that the creative sector face with supporting pathways to professional creative practice in our education systems, describing the environment as a ‘professional development desert’. Educators identified priority needs at different education stages:

**Early Years & Primary: Foundation Building**

- Creative confidence building through existing community resources. This could involve low-stakes exploration and engagement that can be achieved through libraries services.
- Every primary school aged student access a show at a local cultural venue or gallery, such as Bunjil Place. This could facilitate introduction to professional arts companies.

**3.2 Opportunity:** Strengthen alignment between early years policy and creative engagement outcomes through engagement with ARACY-led initiatives The Nest<sup>xviii</sup>

and The Investment Dialogue for Children.<sup>xix</sup> This would support greater integration of creativity in early learning settings through an existing nationally coordinated conversation.

**Secondary & Tertiary: Victorian Certificate of Education and Beyond**

- A priority gap are educational resources and professional development for teachers including upskilling workshops, educational digital resources and curriculum links, networking, and mentorship, connecting artists with schools
- Need for clearer university pathways integration and internship including workplace learning
- Building technical skills development in areas such as production and lighting
- Existing schools focused programming at Bunjil Place such as 4Cs and Emergent high school graduate showcase and exhibition are very well respected and service a critical milestone for students
- Cross-school collaborations are essential and should be incentivised for presentation in professional venues, such as Southeast Music Student Showcase<sup>xx</sup>

**3.3 Opportunity:** Develop a strategy to integrate professional pathways and strengthen capacity and quality teaching through the education systems that support future artists and creative workforce.

**Post-Graduation: Career and professional transition support**

The Casey focus group identified a critical period of creative career attrition 3-5 years after art school.

- Programming needs identified were career transition support and practice development
- A focus on supporting arts careers for students from migrant backgrounds was identified as urgent
- Addressing attrition requires a shift in the family and societal pressures that under-value creative career and their viability

**3.3 Opportunity:** Transitional support to consolidating a viable career pathway include mentorship programs, access to studio spaces near where artists and creatives live and professional networks. Casey’s Emerging Artist Creative Hub is a good example of how this can be achieved.<sup>xxi</sup>

**Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure**

**4.1 Growth areas face different cultural infrastructure challenges** to established national and state institutions; we must find ways to address the gap in adequate and fit-for-purpose cultural infrastructure that is both public and privately-operated. Without a dynamic mix of local high street music venues, rehearsal and gallery spaces, local halls for cultural celebrations, space for large-scale outdoor events and performing arts centres we limit the ability for communities to come together in ways that suit their cultural appetites (art form, type of event) and life stage.

Casey’s investment in Bunjil Place has been transformative in connecting communities with each other and with art. Our venues facilitate large scale participation. They also fill an

increasingly urgent gap in spaces, particularly for schools.

Across states there is significant disparity between pro-culture regulation settings and shared investment between levels of government. A national lens on planning for adequate supply of cultural infrastructure relative to current and forecast population is required to support regional and national planning.

**4.1 Opportunity:** Expand regional funding programs to so that growth areas are eligible.  
**4.1 Opportunity:** Partner across levels of government for better planning outcomes including:

- Complete a national audit of existing government and non-government cultural infrastructure. Assess current and projected population growth and accessibility issues to understand critical cultural infrastructure gaps and priorities.
- Establish minimum service levels (ie. provision ratios) within regions and a range of infrastructures that support creative participation and production.

**4.2 Case study on live music infrastructure and grassroots artist spaces**

**Case study 4: Live and Local – Music on our high streets**

Local venues are a critical part of local cultural infrastructure. Live music on high streets create opportunities for:

- Emerging musicians to start out their careers
- Comfortable and informal ways to participate and socialise
- Economic development for small businesses

In the Victorian context, Casey has 1 venue per 37,378 residents, compared with Metropolitan Melbourne that has 1 venue to 8,785 residents. The most recent Music Victoria venue audit shows outer metropolitan Melbourne represents 15% venues in Victoria while we’re home to 42% of Victoria’s population.<sup>xxii</sup>

City of Casey’s venue audit in 2024 showed significant gap in provision of local venues, and compared with NSW Local Government over an identical period of time and with a shared methodology, the emerging picture demonstrates the critical need for a national audit of infrastructure and regulation.

	Venues	Events Aug	Events Sept	Population	Venue to population ratio
NSW Council A	63	583	570	263,500	4,182
NSW Council B	53	533	483	251,934	4,753
NSW Council C	42	340	311	219,141	5,217
NSW Council D	12	157	152	283,204	23,600
VIC Casey	11	116	126	411,158	37,378

**4.2 Opportunity:** Work with States and Territories and Music Australia to encourage more consistent approach to best practice regulation for live music and nighttime economy so that local neighbourhoods have equal opportunity for economic development and informal creative participation.

### **Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience**

**5.1 Existing national and regional presenting and touring markets are not fit-for-purpose** in meeting the cultural needs and appetites in Casey, where we have significant new migration patterns bringing with it diverse art form and cultural interests. At Bunjil Place we have increasing number of semi-professional and community presenters bringing international acts however greater work needs to be done to develop international markets aligned with Australian incoming migration patterns so that audience development is more targeted.

**5.1 Opportunity:** Establish market and professional development programs to address weaker links between Australian presenters aligned with incoming migrant countries-of-origin. Establish culturally-aware training programs to increase professionalisation among amateur and community presenters who have strong links to emerging audiences.

**5.2 Systemic barriers to audience participation and diversification** are now well evidenced in Australia and internationally, including:<sup>xxiii</sup>

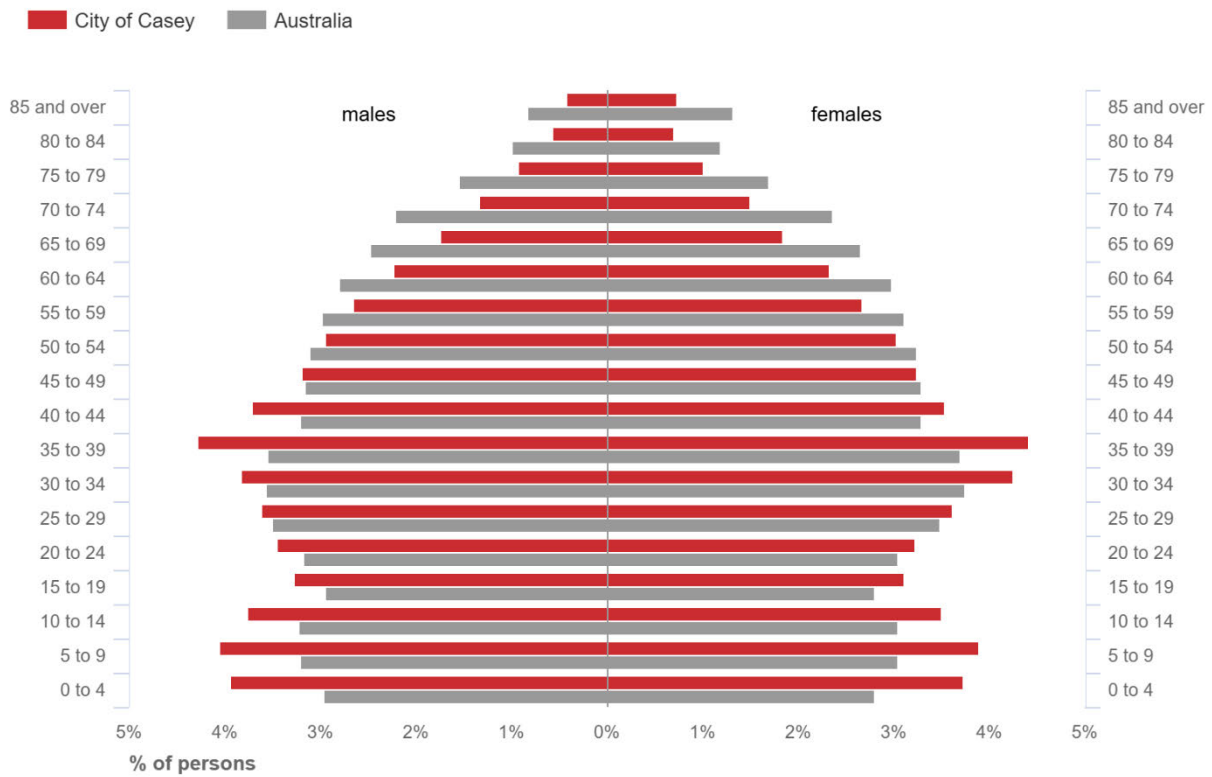
- Evidence that transport and distance have a significant impact on attendance of cultural institutions in major cities.<sup>xxiv</sup>
- Cost<sup>xxv</sup>
- Variety of activities and experiences relevant to, and representative of the lived experience of new and diverse communities.
- Perceptions of belonging in cultural institutions: the National Arts Participation Survey found that three in ten Australians agree that cultural and creative experiences are not really for people like them; and First Nations and CALD respondents were more likely to report that 'cultural and creative experiences are not really for people like me'.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Implementing these findings and new emerging practices have more limited evidence of success. The Commonwealth Government can play a role in a national pilot that prioritised audiences in new and emerging arts markets with greater barriers to participation.

**5.2 Opportunity:** Establish a service delivery partnership through Creative Australia that re-tools targeted institution to connect with emerging audience. A focus on outer metropolitan locations like Casey, Wyndham (Vic), Blacktown (NSW) and Parramatta (NSW) with large potential audience growth is essential.

## Appendix 1

Age-sex pyramid, 2021



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, selected years between 1991-2021 (Enumerated data).  
Compiled and presented in profile.id by .id (informed decisions).



<sup>i</sup> Bunjil Place was a \$125m investment in cultural infrastructure with City of Casey contributing 91.4% of the capital investment of together with Federal Government contributing 8% and Victorian Government contributing 0.6%  
<sup>ii</sup> We mean infrastructure that is Council-owned and operated such as Performing Arts Centres to local pubs and bars with regular original live music on high streets.  
<sup>iii</sup> Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research, City Ring Estimates of Australian Urban Observatory, Social Infrastructure Health index data 2023, 2024.

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- iv National Growth Areas Alliance 2024 [From deficit to equity](#) and Australian Urban Observatory, 2024 [Growth Areas Liveability Scorecards](#)
- v Casey Household Wellbeing Survey 2025
- vi City of Casey, Creative Communities Open Space Survey – Insights and Trends Report March 2026 (n=344)
- vii Peter McDonald. 2024. Understanding Australian Migration 2024. ARC Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research. <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2024-06/apo-nid327379.pdf>; John Daley, Danielle Wood and Carmela Chivers. 2017. Regional patterns of Australia’s economy and population. <https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/890-Regional-patterns.pdf>
- viii <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa/highlights>
- ix <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/victoria-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-population-summary>.
- x [Ancestry | National Growth Areas Alliance | Community profile](#)
- xi Casey art sector consultation, August 2025
- xii <https://www.ovga.vic.gov.au/chapter-4-procurement-design-service>
- xiii Orian Brook, Dave O’Brian and Marc Taylor. Culture is bad for you. 2020. Manchester University Press
- xiv UK Government. Social Mobility Commission. 2019 *An Unequal Playing Field: Extracurricular Activities. Soft Skills, and Social Mobility*, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d307b8de5274a14e9f6bc20/An\\_Unequal\\_Playing\\_Field\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d307b8de5274a14e9f6bc20/An_Unequal_Playing_Field_report.pdf)
- xv UK Government. Social Mobility Commission. 2019 *An Unequal Playing Field: Extracurricular Activities. Soft Skills, and Social Mobility*, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d307b8de5274a14e9f6bc20/An\\_Unequal\\_Playing\\_Field\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d307b8de5274a14e9f6bc20/An_Unequal_Playing_Field_report.pdf)
- xvi [https://data.casey.vic.gov.au/explore/dataset/primary-and-secondary-schools/table/?disjunctive.suburb&disjunctive.postcode&disjunctive.type\\_of\\_school&disjunctive.ward](https://data.casey.vic.gov.au/explore/dataset/primary-and-secondary-schools/table/?disjunctive.suburb&disjunctive.postcode&disjunctive.type_of_school&disjunctive.ward)
- xvii September 2025 consultation with art teachers and regional university representatives.
- xviii <https://www.aracy.org.au/the-nest-wellbeing-framework/>
- xix <https://www.investmentdialogue.org.au/>
- xx <https://www.bunjilplace.com.au/events/southeast-music-student-showcase>
- xxi <https://www.casey.vic.gov.au/emerging-artist-creative-hub>
- xxii <https://www.musicvictoria.com.au/music-victoria-releases-2025-victorian-live-music-venue-audit/>
- xxiii See Orian Brook. 2016. Spatial Equity and cultural participation: how access influences attendance at museums and galleries in London. *Cultural Trends* 25: 1;
- xxiv [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291186994\\_Spatial\\_equity\\_and\\_cultural\\_participation\\_how\\_access\\_influences\\_attendance\\_at\\_museums\\_and\\_galleries\\_in\\_London](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291186994_Spatial_equity_and_cultural_participation_how_access_influences_attendance_at_museums_and_galleries_in_London);
- xxv Creative Australia. 2023 “Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey,” <https://creative.gov.au/advocacy-and-research/creating-value/>;
- xxvi Creative Australia. 2023 “Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey,” <https://creative.gov.au/advocacy-and-research/creating-value/>.