

## National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Organisation

City of Melbourne



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

### SUPPORT FOR A NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY

Creative Melbourne supports the progression of a National Cultural Policy recognising arts and culture as essential civic and economic infrastructure. A coherent national framework, aligned with local government delivery, can strengthen Australia's creative ecology, support sustainable careers, and ensure culture remains central to community life and economic resilience.

### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The sector faces increasing pressure alongside opportunity. Rising costs, loss of affordable creative space and workforce insecurity are impacting artists and organisations. Professional artists in Australia earn on average \$23,200 annually from creative work—below the poverty line—making practice increasingly unviable.

Local governments play a critical role in participation and infrastructure but face growing strain. At the same time, Melbourne's global reputation, diverse communities and strong creative base present opportunities for scalable, place-based solutions. National policy can amplify this by aligning funding, tax and workforce settings with local delivery, while leveraging culture to drive visitation, tourism and growth, including international engagement.

### WHAT WORKS IN MELBOURNE

Creative Melbourne demonstrates how local investment translates to impact. Neighbourhood-based programming and public realm activation embed culture in everyday life and support storytelling. Investment in independent practitioners—through grants, residencies and affordable space—supports innovation and vibrancy.

Platforms including Arts House, SIGNAL and ArtPlay foster artist development, youth engagement and experimentation. These contribute to visitation, extended dwell time and stronger local economies but are increasingly difficult to sustain without structural reform.

### ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL ISSUES

Short-term funding alone will not address systemic challenges. Reform is needed to improve earning conditions, reduce administrative burden, and support transparency and equity.

This includes recognising artists' professional status in the tax system, addressing taxation of grants and prizes, improving funding visibility, and aligning federal programs with local delivery.

There is also an opportunity to strengthen international engagement by ensuring federal funding better supports collaboration with local government. Greater accessibility within programs such as the National Foundation for Australia–China Relations, the Japan Foundation and ASEAN initiatives would enable more artists to present work internationally.

### MEANINGFUL CHANGE OVER 5–10 YEARS

Success would mean a system where artists sustain viable careers, investment is transparent, participation remains accessible, and culture-led destinations drive economic growth—supported by clear international pathways.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in culture-led destinations through targeted place-based funding
- Establish national fair pay standards and income benchmarks
- Progress tax reform to recognise professional artists
- Strengthen incentives for private and philanthropic investment
- Support affordable creative infrastructure
- Invest in children and young people's participation
- Strengthen peak bodies and sector organisations
- Explore long-term income support mechanisms
- Strengthen federal grants and international funding pathways to support collaboration and global opportunities.