



Submission for National Cultural Policy

The central challenge facing Australia's arts sector is one of stability in a time of continuous global disruption. Rising costs, shifting audience behaviours, the impacts of climate events, geopolitical instability and the acceleration of digital change are not temporary pressures – they are the permanent operating environment. For a country like Australia, where distance makes international cultural engagement both more costly and more consequential, this instability directly threatens the international reputation and regard that Australian artists and companies have built over decades. This new National Cultural Policy must respond accordingly with sustained and increased investment that builds genuine resilience across the sector and maintains Australia's standing in the world.

Funding, Communications and Sector Relationships

- Self-determination for independent artists — Funding models should enable greater agency for artists in determining the approaches most suitable for them when creating and delivering projects.
- Streamlining of funding applications and reporting obligations — A consistent approach among funders - from application through to acquittal - would reduce the administrative workload that sits outside a grant's core deliverables.
- Funding body representation at funded activity — Stronger relationships and deeper sector knowledge would be supported by greater attendance at funded events. This builds trust with the wider sector and creates opportunities for simplified reporting models.

Centrality of the Artist (Pillar 3)

- Support for sustainable careers — Many artists working across the professional performing arts carry significant financial precarity alongside their creative practice. The Art of Tax Reform Summit found that professional Australian artists earn an average gross income of \$54,500 annually including \$16,000 from non-arts work. Tax reform measures, including expanded FBT concessions for arts not-for-profits, would strengthen career sustainability.
- Industry-led skills and training — Nation-wide initiatives to address critical workforce and skills shortages are needed, with particular focus on technical, producing and touring roles. On-the-job mentoring, traineeships and collaborations between different sized organisations and training institutions should be supported.
- Protection of creative rights — As digital tools and AI reshape how work is produced and distributed, policy must address fair remuneration and the protection of creative rights in the digital environment.

National and International Touring (Pillar 5)

- International touring was significantly underserved by Revive and must be a central priority of the next National Cultural Policy. The ability of Australian companies to tour internationally sustains artist careers, strengthens organisations, develops skills and networks, and maintains Australia's standing in the global cultural landscape. This in turn supports diplomatic and trade relationships in ways that extend well beyond the arts. We ask that the next policy name international touring as essential cultural infrastructure, not an optional extension of domestic activity.
- Touring to mature markets — Europe, North America and North Asia — is the foundation of Australia's international cultural reputation and must be strongly supported. These are not simply export opportunities; they are ongoing relationships between companies, artforms and ideas built over decades. Presence in major international festivals and venues sustains high regard for Australian practice, creates pathways for artistic exchange, and opens doors for diplomatic and trade conversations that would not otherwise exist. The costs of touring from Australia to these markets have escalated sharply and

investment has not kept pace. Many companies are currently forced to decline invitations they would previously have accepted, and each refusal erodes relationships that are difficult to rebuild.

- Emerging market development – particularly in Southeast Asia and the Pacific – requires a different and complementary form of investment. This work is grounded in exchange, reciprocity and long-term relationship building. Both sides develop capacity, skills and knowledge through genuine collaboration. We strongly support increased investment in this area. However, it must be developed alongside, not instead of, support for touring to established markets. These are distinct activities with different logics and different infrastructure needs, and policy must treat them accordingly.
- Support for international presenters to attend Australian festivals. A key and often overlooked mechanism for growing Australia's international touring activity is investment in bringing international presenters, programmers and festival directors to Australian events. This builds the relationships and direct experience of Australian work that leads to future invitations and is a cost-effective way to develop the pipeline of international opportunity.
- Expanded investment in national touring. Investment in Playing Australia and equivalent programs should be increased to reflect real cost growth, supporting both regional touring and metropolitan circuits for small-to-medium companies. New engagement models — including multi-year presenter agreements, green touring initiatives and community-embedded programming — should be actively supported.
- International disruption and resilience fund — Disruption – through climate events, conflict, visa barriers, freight failure and presenter collapse – is now a routine operating condition, not an exceptional one. A quick-response resilience fund and mandatory contingency requirements should be embedded in all publicly supported international touring budgets.
- Cross-government coordination for international cultural engagement. Australia's international cultural activity spans arts, foreign affairs, trade, tourism and migration, yet support remains fragmented. A coordinated framework linking Creative Australia, DFAT, Austrade and state agencies – with First Nations cultural leadership embedded from the outset – would significantly strengthen Australia's international cultural presence.

Strong Cultural Infrastructure (Pillar 4)

- Increased and indexed investment — Federal investment in arts and culture must increase and be indexed at least to CPI. Current per capita expenditure is at historic lows and sits well below the OECD average. Flat or sub-CPI funding results in real-terms decline, reducing the sector's capacity to employ artists, create new work and keep ticket prices accessible to the whole community.
- Live Performance Production Incentive— We support Live Performance Australia's proposal for a 40% offset on qualifying production costs, applied as a cash rebate for not-for-profit organisations. This would bring live performance into parity with the screen and digital games industries, which already benefit from equivalent federal tax incentives.
- Strengthened arts philanthropy framework — Increasing tax deductibility of donations, expanding matched funding programs and supporting small-to-medium organisations to build philanthropic capacity would substantially grow private investment in the sector. Australia's per capita giving to the arts compares unfavourably with comparable economies and there is significant headroom for growth with the right incentives.
- Venue access and affordability — Financial pressures from venue costs, particularly in publicly funded spaces, are limiting the sector's ability to create and present work. Policy should address leasing structures, rental subsidy schemes and development approval barriers to make more existing spaces available and affordable for arts use.

First Nations First (Pillar 1)

- Dedicated commissioning and touring pathways — We support the sector-wide call for consistent commissioning pathways for First Nations artists – including within non-First Nations-led organisations – and for coordinated national and international touring frameworks, which are essential to long-term employment and career stability.
- First Nations cultural governance and workforce development should operate as cross-cutting principles across all pillars, not as isolated initiatives.

- Culturally grounded international exchange — First Nations international exchange operates through distinct cultural and diplomatic logic that cannot be reduced to standard export models. We support calls for dedicated investment streams, Indigenous-to-Indigenous exchange infrastructure and long-term producer and cultural brokerage capacity are required.

Diversity and Audience Engagement (Pillars 2 & 5)

- Pathways for diverse artists and communities — Co-designed initiatives should support sustained, visible pathways from grassroots practice to professional careers for multicultural, First Nations, d/Deaf, disabled and LGBTQI+ artists. Stronger connections between major companies and grassroots organisations should be encouraged and resourced.
- Arts access for young people — We support sector calls for a federal government-funded Cultural Pass for 13–25-year-olds and a cross-government Arts Access Program for schools would address well-documented cost barriers and begin building the audiences of the future. Cost of living pressures are reducing access to live performance precisely at the age when engagement with the arts has the most formative impact.
- Accessibility for people with disabilities — Targeted investment to address physical, informational and financial barriers to attending live performances is needed across the sector, including capital works grants and funding explicitly designated for accessibility services as an additional investment above core delivery costs.

Independent Artists

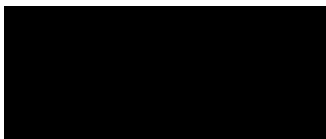
- Formal structure of support for the independent sector — The independent dance sector is strongly supported and resourced by small-to-medium organisations. The development of structural models by Creative Australia that better respond to this diverse sector would assist autonomy and creative self-determination. Independent artists need agency to make their own decisions on how they work, as well as to respond to programs put forward by companies.
- A basic membership model for independents that would offer access to insurance, business training and other key aspects of professional work. This could build a stronger sector by offering more knowledge, professional skills and protections to artists and arts workers operating outside of organisational structures.

Advocacy

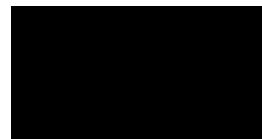
- Clearer and shared messaging on value — Arts and culture contributed 67.4 billion to Australia's economy in 2023-24 and employed over 591,000 people. In addition to ongoing advocacy within and on behalf of the sector, we support greater clarity of shared messaging around the economic, social and diplomatic value of the arts to wider society, particularly as the sector makes the case for sustained investment in the face of competing priorities.
- Coordinated cross-government approach — We support the call from across the sector for a formalised Ministerial Council for culture, reporting to National Cabinet, to give appropriate and lasting priority to the nation's cultural ambitions, and create real mechanisms for cross-portfolio investment linking arts to health, education, trade and community wellbeing outcomes.

Please don't hesitate to get in contact, by phone or email, if you require any further information.

Sincerely,



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