



22 May 2026

National Cultural Policy Submission The Australian Tapestry Workshop: A National Cultural Asset

The Australian Tapestry Workshop (ATW) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on a new National Cultural Policy. After the successful delivery of *Revive*, the next iteration of the National Cultural Policy presents an opportunity to further embed a whole of government approach to the promotion of arts and culture in the daily life of Australians.

As part of a **nation of makers**, ATW is a site of artistic excellence and a productive cultural enterprise. We combine advanced skills, cultural storytelling and economic output. Our broad range of activities delivers value to the national creative economy. ATW generates seven dollars for every dollar of government investment. We demonstrate how cultural infrastructure can deliver public value, social cohesion and measurable economic return.

This submission proposes four key ideas to support the national Craft and Design ecology in which ATW operates:

- 1) Establish a national Craft and Design Strategy** to support makers and develop cultural infrastructure bodies like ATW.
- 2) Invest in skills and workforce development** to support training and apprenticeships and knowledge transmission in specialised craft practices.
- 3) Support capital and capability development** to ensure that manufacturers like ATW are positioned to compete globally in the coming decades.
- 4) Establish export market and cultural tourism development strategies** to enable the Craft and Design sector to increase exports, grow audiences and promote Australia as a cultural destination.

Established in 1976, ATW is Australia's only dedicated tapestry production studio and one of the few globally operating at this level. Our activities include:

- Collaboration with leading Australian and international artists
- Production of large-scale, hand-made, commissioned textile works
- Preservation and transmission of specialised weaving skills
- Public engagement through exhibitions and open studio access

ATW operates within a network of craft and design organisations that in 2025 reached more than four million people, supported more than 4,000 artists and enabled 5000 artworks to be fabricated or exhibited. Despite leveraging public investment and delivering high returns on investment, this ecosystem is structurally vulnerable. It lacks a cohesive national strategy and recognition as core infrastructure. It is constrained by short-term funding cycles and limited investment in market development. Failure to strengthen this ecology represents a lost opportunity to realise the economic and social value of public investment.

ATW is a nationally significant cultural institution that delivers across all five pillars set out in *Revive*.

First Nations First

ATW plays a significant role in enabling First Nations artists to realise complex, large-scale works in tapestry form contributing to:

- The translation of First Nations knowledge systems into enduring cultural assets
- Economic participation through major commissions
- Expansion of First Nations cultural expression into national and international contexts

This work supports cultural authority and economic empowerment, aligning with national priorities for Indigenous cultural industries.

A Place for Every Story

Tapestries produced by ATW are installed in civic institutions, cultural venues, commercial and public spaces. They function as permanent storytelling infrastructure, reinforcing the role of culture in everyday life. These works embed Australian stories into the built environment, contributing to:

- Placemaking and civic identity
- Public access to culture outside traditional gallery settings
- Long-term cultural visibility across generations.

The Centrality of the Artist

ATW enables artists and makers to extend their practice into new material and spatial dimensions. Through collaboration with master weavers and dyers, artists gain access to specialised production capabilities, new interpretive possibilities and opportunities for major commissions. This expertise is not accessible anywhere else in Australia.

This model:

- Places the artist at the centre of production
- Generates income and career development opportunities for artists
- Expands Australia's creative output and intellectual property base.

Strong Cultural Infrastructure

ATW contributes to national manufacturing infrastructure, supporting a specialised field of primary producers of Australian made goods. Local production delivers economic and environmental benefits and sustains:

- Skilled employment in weaving, dyeing and textile production
- Training pathways and knowledge transmission
- Local supply chains linked to design, architecture and fabrication.

Engaging the Audience

ATW's public programs support diverse audiences to participate in artistic production. We contribute to community health, social cohesion, cultural tourism and visitation.

This engagement strengthens:

- Public appreciation of craft and design
- Demand for cultural experiences that build connection and community cohesion
- The broader creative economy and cultural tourism.

ATW's Economic Impact, Productivity and Public Value

ATW represents a high-performing example of cultural infrastructure that delivers measurable economic, social and cultural returns.

ATW's activities generate:

- **Economic multipliers**, where public investment stimulates additional private and earned revenue
- **Gross Value Added** through the production of high-value, commissioned artworks
- **Employment outcomes**, including highly skilled, long-term jobs in a specialised sector
- **Productivity gains**, enabling artists to produce work with ambition and at scale



www.austapestry.com.au

AUSTRALIAN TAPESTRY WORKSHOP

- **Asset creation**, with tapestries functioning as enduring cultural capital
- **Export and cultural diplomacy benefits**, through international commissions and cultural diplomacy.

There is strong alignment between the ideas in this submission and government priorities as stated in THRIVE 2030 – Australia’s Visitor Economy Strategy; National Skills Agreement and Jobs and Skills Australia priorities; Future Made in Australia; and Measuring What Matters.

We endorse the submissions of the ACDC Network as a shared response to the National Cultural Policy. A strategic commitment to ATW and the Craft and Design ecology delivers outcomes across all five pillars of *Revive*, demonstrating that Australia’s makers are essential to both cultural vitality and economic performance. It will ensure that the new National Cultural Policy remains visionary, sustainable and economically effective.

Catherine Jones and Sophie Travers
Co-Directors / CEOs
Australian Tapestry Workshop

Attachment: Australian Tapestry Workshops Case Studies