



Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation

South Australian Fashion Industry Association (SAFIA)
Submitted by Dr Nathan James Crane, Board Chair
Adelaide, South Australia | May 2026
Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure

About SAFIA

The *South Australian Fashion Industry Association* (SAFIA) is the representative body for everyone in South Australia's fashion ecosystem. SAFIA is dedicated to building a vibrant, sustainable, and culturally significant fashion ecosystem across the state. We champion emerging and established designers, supports industry development, and advocates for the recognition of fashion as a genuine form of cultural expression. Through education partnerships, industry initiatives, and public programming including ADL Fashion Week, SAFIA works to connect creative talent with the infrastructure and opportunities needed to sustain long-term practice for a local sector that contributes more than \$220 million annually to the state's economy.

The challenge

Fashion and design are among the most intimate and democratically accessible forms of cultural expression available to Australians. They carry identity, reflect place, and connect communities in ways that are felt before they are articulated. Yet, as is often the case, the fashion sector is repeatedly asked to justify its existence in economic terms through export revenue, employment figures, GDP contribution, while its cultural dimension goes largely unrecognised by the policy frameworks designed to support exactly this kind of work.

Where **Revive** established Music Australia and Writing Australia as dedicated bodies (investing in those artforms as culture) fashion has no equivalent. The sector is treated as an industry rightly so, yet it is also, and perhaps more fundamentally, a cultural one. We believe the policy infrastructure available to it should reflect that.

What we would like to see

The next National Cultural Policy should formally recognise fashion and design as cultural practice, not merely commercial activity, and invest accordingly.

Specifically, SAFIA would welcome three things:

- First, a clear policy commitment to fashion and design as *cultural forms*, with dedicated funding pathways that sit within the cultural portfolio rather than defaulting exclusively to industry or trade frameworks. This would allow organisations working at every level including national, state, and local, to access support appropriate to their cultural function.
- Second, meaningful support for place-based fashion and design culture beyond Sydney and Melbourne. In Adelaide, initiatives like ADL Fashion Week serve a genuine cultural function: showcasing creative capability, fostering local identity, and creating pathways from design education into sustained professional practice. State-based organisations such as SAFIA are the connective tissue between national ambition and local reality, and they require structural support proportionate to that role.



- Third, formalised education-to-industry pathways in fashion and design, so that the creative intelligence being developed in Australian design schools has an ecosystem capable of receiving and sustaining it, one that includes, and is not limited to, the major metropolitan centres.

Why this matters

A cultural policy that names design as one of Australia's great creative exports, while providing no infrastructure to sustain the conditions in which design culture grows, has not yet fully honoured its own values. The next policy has a genuine opportunity to close that gap, and in doing so, to acknowledge that fashion and design are not decorative additions to Australia's cultural life, but disciplines that carry real cultural weight and deserve to be treated as such.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback.

Dr Nathan James Crane

Board Chair, South Australian Fashion Industry Association | May 2026