

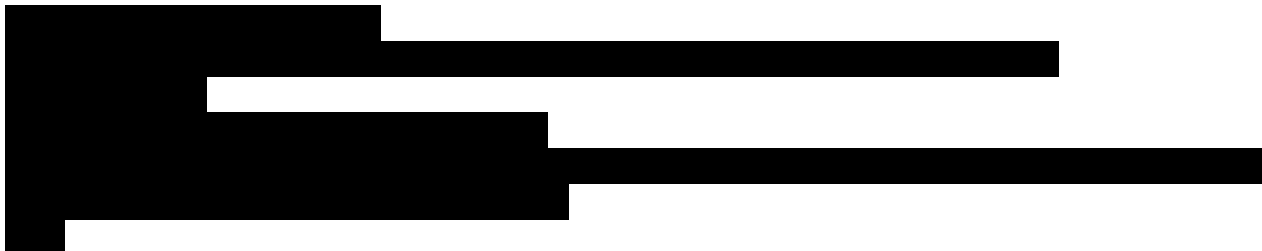
**National Cultural Policy Submission**

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Public

Organisation

NUMAs - Next Up Music Awards &amp; Youth Intern Program

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation

May 2026

Australia's next generation of artists, songwriters, producers, performers and music entrepreneurs cannot be developed by chance. They must be identified early, nurtured intentionally and supported through accessible, industry-connected pathways that begin at school age.

For decades, Australia has produced globally recognised contemporary artists including Sia, Tame Impala, Rufus Du Sol and more. Yet the systems required to cultivate the next generation of Australian contemporary music creators remain fragmented, under-resourced and inconsistent, particularly for young people outside elite or traditional arts pathways.

While important support exists for classical and traditional arts education, there remains a significant gap in early-stage training, mentorship and industry development opportunities for students pursuing careers in contemporary music and the wider music business ecosystem.

This is no longer simply an arts issue. It is an education, workforce and cultural sustainability issue.

Young Australians are growing up in an increasingly digital and AI-driven world, often disconnected from real-life creative collaboration and meaningful pathways into creative careers. Contemporary music remains one of the most powerful ways young people engage with storytelling, technology, entrepreneurship, confidence and cultural identity. Yet many talented students, particularly those in regional areas and underrepresented communities, have little visibility of how to transition from passion to profession.

Programs such as NUMAs (Next Up Music Awards) seek to address this gap directly.

NUMAs is a new national contemporary music platform for Australians aged 6–18, combining recognition, mentorship, industry engagement and paid internship pathways across both the creative and business sides of music. Importantly, it connects schools, teachers, artists and industry professionals to provide real-world experiences that reflect how contemporary music careers actually operate today.

The initiative has been designed not simply as an awards platform, but as a long-term cultural infrastructure initiative that strengthens participation, aspiration and workforce development within Australian contemporary music.

After almost 40 years working across the Australian music industry, including artist development, songwriting initiatives, music export, education partnerships and national and global music programs, I have witnessed both the extraordinary talent Australia produces and the growing number of young artists who abandon careers prematurely or leave Australia altogether because sustainable pathways do not exist early enough.

If we want Australia to continue producing globally influential contemporary artists and creative leaders, support must begin at school age.

The next National Cultural Policy presents an important opportunity to formally recognise contemporary music education, youth pathways and industry-connected creative learning as national cultural priorities. This includes

supporting programs that provide mentoring, paid opportunities and early career development for young people across both metropolitan and regional Australia.

Australia cannot continue celebrating global creative success stories while underinvesting in the systems that create them.

The future of Australian culture depends on the next generation believing there is a place for them within it.