



Submission: New National Cultural Policy

Position Statement

The City of Perth, as Western Australia's capital city local government, plays a central role in shaping Australia's cultural life and supporting a sustainable, thriving creative economy. Under the City of Perth Act, it is responsible for maintaining vibrant cultural precincts and strengthening Perth's reputation as an innovative, sustainable and globally connected city.

This role aligns with the objectives of Revive, particularly in supporting artists, strengthening cultural infrastructure, and enabling equitable cultural participation. Locally, the Capital City Plan positions arts, culture and heritage as fundamental to a liveable, inclusive and prosperous city, reinforced by Western Australia's cultural policy focus on growing the creative economy, participation and access to infrastructure.

Context

Australia's creative industries contribute over \$60 billion annually and support more than 600,000 jobs, while playing a vital role in identity, wellbeing and social cohesion. However, the creative workforce remains fragile, with many artists facing low and insecure incomes. A key structural barrier is limited access to affordable, fit-for-purpose creative space.

The City of Perth's *Making Space for Culture* (2021) identified strong demand for such space in inner Perth, with affordability as the primary constraint—consistent with national trends. At the same time, CBDs, including Perth, have increasing underutilised commercial space due to changing work and retail patterns, presenting an opportunity for adaptive reuse.

A key barrier is the National Construction Code (NCC), where classifications often group small-scale creative uses with large venues. While appropriate for major facilities, these requirements are disproportionate for studios and rehearsal spaces, creating unnecessary costs and delays. Reforms in New South Wales and South Australia demonstrate that more proportionate approaches can safely support small-scale cultural activity.

National Creative Space Framework

The City of Perth proposes the development of a *National Creative Space Framework*. This framework would shift the focus of cultural policy beyond program delivery toward enabling infrastructure, recognising that access to space is a fundamental condition of cultural production. A central element would be regulatory and administrative reform to reduce unnecessary barriers to using existing buildings for cultural activity. This includes streamlining planning and building approvals, enabling proportionate compliance requirements for small-scale uses, and supporting adaptive reuse and temporary activation.

Local initiatives already demonstrate how this approach can be implemented. The establishment of Western Australia's first Special Entertainment Precinct in Northbridge provides a fit-for-purpose framework that protects and supports live music and entertainment venues while accommodating urban growth. Working with State Government through coordinated planning and noise regulation reforms, the precinct introduces clearer expectations for both venues and new residential development, reducing land use conflict and improving operational certainty.

Complementing this, the City is progressing a draft Bonus Plot Ratio policy to incentivise the inclusion of cultural infrastructure within new developments. This approach enables additional development yield where proposals incorporate publicly accessible cultural facilities, creative production spaces, or venues for live performance. Together, these measures demonstrate how protective mechanisms and incentive-based approaches can operate in tandem to strengthen cultural infrastructure and embed cultural outcomes within urban development.

Joined Up Government

Stronger coordination across all levels of government is needed to reduce fragmentation and better align funding, planning, regulation and infrastructure investment. This would support a more cohesive and sustainable creative ecosystem.

Greater Western Australian representation in national decision-making is also needed to reflect the State's specific conditions and opportunities.

A National Creative Space Framework could include nationally consistent NCC reforms, support for adaptive reuse, clearer pathways for temporary use, recognition of creative workspaces as essential infrastructure, and stronger intergovernmental coordination.

Strong creative industries are fundamental to Australia's cultural identity, economic resilience and global competitiveness. Access to affordable, appropriate space is critical to achieving the ambitions of *Revive*.

Conclusion

The City of Perth welcomes the leadership demonstrated through *Revive* and encourages deeper collaboration across all levels of government to address structural barriers. The City stands ready to contribute to a coordinated national response that strengthens cultural infrastructure, supports creative practice, and ensures Australia's cultural life continues to thrive.

Research notes

- Australian Bureau of Statistics – Cultural and Creative Activity Satellite Accounts
- Creative Australia – National arts participation and artist workforce reporting
- National Association for the Visual Arts – Artist working conditions and infrastructure advocacy
- A New Approach – Cultural and economic systems research
- World Cities Culture Forum – International city cultural policy benchmarking

Contact:

Kim Jameson
Alliance Manager Arts and Culture
City of Perth

