

## National Cultural Policy Submission May 2026

### **Overview**

Bundanon welcomes the development of a new National Cultural Policy by the Australian Government, following the implementation of *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place (Revive)*. Bundanon embodies all five pillars of *Revive*, foregrounding First Nations first; the centrality of the artist; strong cultural infrastructure; engaging audiences regionally, nationally and internationally; and reaching diverse communities, sharing the nation's stories in all their richness and diversity. Consultation for a new National Cultural Policy is a welcome opportunity to help shape the policy framework to support the government's commitment to investing in cultural capacity and infrastructure that reflects the values and benefits of Australian arts and culture.

Bundanon reflects the culmination of Arthur and Yvonne Boyd's vision as a place for people to create, connect, learn and engage in conversation across the artforms, sciences and environmental stewardship, in a landscape setting, linking contemporary artforms with the history and legacy of the Boyd family. Bundanon's regional bush location and national remit, ecological stewardship, and diverse creative and educational programming position it uniquely in Australia, offering a timely case study for the future of cultural organisations. As the only National Collecting Institution (NCI) located in regional Australia, Bundanon has a significant role in engaging regional audiences and can contribute a unique perspective to the development of the new policy. This includes insight into the requirements and challenges facing the sector, particularly for regional and remote cultural organisations, such as rising cost-of-living pressures, reaching diverse audiences and equitable access to arts and culture.

### **First Nations First**

Bundanon places First Nations first through its dedication to recognising and respecting the vital place of First Nations stories at the centre of Australia's arts and culture. The Traditional Owners of the South Coast region on whose land Bundanon is located, are key collaborators across all areas of the organisation's core purpose. Bundanon's Arts Program continues to focus on local, national and international First Nations practitioners by supporting First Nations Artists in Residence and through First Nations led exhibitions, public programs and community engagement.



The new National Cultural Policy should continue to build recognition and visibility of First Nations artists, voices and stories, ensuring they hold a central position for all Australians and supporting First Nations cultural exchange and creative control. The policy should support and recognise the circumstances and challenges of First Nations communities, artists and cultural workers living in regional and remote locations.

Bundanon's governance is strengthened by the ongoing contribution by its First Nations Board director and senior identified First Nations position, Cultural Liaison Manager. Bundanon's First Nations Advisory Group has been established to support respectful, ethical, and meaningful engagement with First Nations communities, ensuring best practices in the care, interpretation, and presentation of First Nations cultural heritage. These roles are dedicated to the growth of community partnerships, and to ensuring First Nations voices are at the centre of programs and governance at Bundanon. The First Nations first pillar contained within the National Cultural Policy has allowed the organisation to shape these engagements in ways that have delivered significant benefits for First Nations people and audiences.

Opportunities for cultural policy and funding to support the agency of First Nations people through permanently funded identified positions in leadership and on governing bodies, should remain a key consideration. Greater support for leadership development programs would strengthen pathways for emerging First Nations leaders across the cultural sector, including a focus beyond metropolitan centres, to expand the network of talent and participation.

There is an opportunity for the National Cultural Policy to recognise caring for Country practices including cultural burning, environmental stewardship and ecological management as core cultural practices integrated with national cultural funding systems. The policy should acknowledge and support First Nations land-based practices as significant cultural practices of knowledge exchange, expression and community engagement, and embed collaboration across portfolios and programs coordinated across all levels of government. Bundanon recommends including a formalised community partnership framework within the policy. The policy should build on and fund partnerships between the NCIs and Traditional Owners ensuring local voices and cultural practices are strengthened, supported and amplified by the NCIs.

### **A Place for Every Story**

Bundanon has an important role in place-based arts and culture, providing regional communities access to local, national and internationally significant arts and cultural practice. It is essential that the National Cultural Policy supports true diversity of the creative sector and addresses the challenges for organisations, artists and communities working in regional locations where infrastructure limitations and expenses have a significant impact on community engagement and audience reach.

The new policy should recognise the diversity of the creative sector, from artists to the organisations that support them; and acknowledge that many live, work or operate beyond the major city centres and have important stories to tell. Visibility, access, infrastructure support and heightened expenses represent key challenges for artists and organisations operating within regional and remote locations and should be reflected in the new policy to further support cultural organisations to collaborate with communities, and support and commission the work of regional artists and creators.

The new National Cultural Policy must advance efforts to safeguard pluralism, and support diverse communities and perspectives, through the development of frameworks that uphold artistic freedom and creative risk-taking through risk management and values-based approaches. Bundanon continues to prioritise community and connection ensuring generosity and creating safe and respectful spaces for conversation and exchange.

Bundanon celebrates and presents a diverse artistic program which advances access and equity, including a focus on creative practitioners and audiences with Cultural and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds, First Nations local and national communities, and people with disability. The National Cultural Policy should continue to reflect the diversity of stories and the contribution of all producers and creators of Australia's nationally significant culture, shaping identity, and building social resilience.

The policy should continue its commitment to disability equity and access to arts and culture by implementing *Equity: The Arts and Disability Associated Plan*, and directly funding cultural organisations to achieve their accessibility targets. The new policy must continue to invest in support for NCIs to deliver accessible programs and prioritise opportunities for artists with disability to develop their practice and be represented in all NCI programming.

### **Centrality of the Artist**

Bundanon's purpose as a creative and working arts environment, and a centre for arts education, supports the development of artist-led creative practices and cultural appreciation, fostering a foundation for sustainable careers in creative industries.

Bundanon's Artists in Residence program supports new work, research and collaborations by Australian and international artists, helping to bolster the arts sector and professional practice; and its Art Museum supports new commissions and diverse contemporary practices and artforms under its diverse Arts Program.

Bundanon has taken an important step from 1 January 2024 to remove all fees associated with its AIRs program, to ensure equity and access for all artists and artforms. This was a direct response to the inauguration of Revive and a commitment to supporting artists. However, strong infrastructure and appropriate resourcing are required to sustain this approach, and this remains an ongoing challenge as costs rise, and budgets are constrained across the sector.

Further investment supported by national policy is essential to boost opportunities for artists to develop their practice and have time for reflection, renewal, and sustained focus on practice development, as well as opportunities for exchange across state, national and international borders.

Risks and opportunities associated with AI and other emerging technologies, and their impact on the cultural sector are key priorities to be addressed in the new policy. Appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks are required to support the requirements to protect authenticity, creative rights, remuneration and intellectual property of artists, and to ensure ethical ICIP practices.

The importance of a living wage and industry standards for the cultural sector should continue to be recognised in the new policy. This includes regulated standards for exhibition, writing, performance fees and new work commissions, consideration of wider salary and remuneration conditions, continuous superannuation and insurance schemes and regulated standards for secondary market sales.

### **Strong Cultural Infrastructure**

NCIs are a foundational element of the *Revive* framework, ensuring visibility and prominence for artforms, living culture and national stories that reach diverse communities. It is critically important to ensure their future viability through appropriate funding, in order to reach diverse audiences, share the nation’s stories, and promote and support creativity, resilience and inclusive communities across Australia.

With the commencement of its Australian Government funding agreement in 2023–2024, Bundanon has had greater operational stability, enabling forward planning to extend into the medium and long term. However, appropriate and sustained levels of funding are critical to the viability of cultural organisations, including NCIs, and the artists they support. Strong infrastructure to support artists and artforms is a crucial investment for the future; ensuring equity and visibility requires robust, sustainable institutions across the sector, including organisations with a strong regional and national presence like Bundanon.

Investment in ongoing operational and program funding is needed to enable not-for-profit organisations and NCIs to deliver best-practice creation and programming within a stable operational context, and to reduce reliance on grant rounds and short-term philanthropic contributions, which often do not provide the continuity needed for long-term planning. This is essential to support organisations and artists in the creation and delivery of new work, major projects and sustained research.

Bundanon’s many collaborations and cooperative partnerships encompass knowledge sharing, research alliances, and capacity building, and are critical to the success of its cultural, educational and environmental programs. Bundanon’s philanthropy and partnership programs connect patrons and donors with a unique opportunity to contribute

to Australia’s strong cultural infrastructure and secure a prosperous future for Bundanon. The new policy should prioritise strengthening policy setting, incentive systems and philanthropy frameworks to support more coordinated investment in the cultural sector.

The new policy should recognise digital transformation as a key part of cultural infrastructure. Strengthening digital capacity, systems and capabilities would improve efficiency and productivity, particularly for smaller and regional organisations that often lack access to comparable technologies, reinforcing the need for equitable long-term operational funding to support resilient infrastructure and capability.

### **Engaging the Audience**

Bundanon delivers a diverse range of exhibitions, education programs delivered by experts in the arts, science, and the environment, with a focus on concerts, major festivals, artist-led talks, symposia, and workshops, widening access and deepening audience engagement with the organisation’s diverse cultural offer. The new policy should continue to support and fund this work, including investment to provide funding for artists and cultural organisations to collaborate nationally and internationally.

The new policy should recognise that community and connection are central to audience engagement, and the importance of supporting inclusive spaces that welcome diverse perspectives and respectful dialogue and exchange.

Bundanon was established with the aim of celebrating arts and culture and the natural environment, and its constitution stipulates the stewardship of cultural and natural heritage. Bundanon is a Commonwealth Heritage listed place, and significant investment is required to maintain the historic, natural and Indigenous heritage values for current and future generations. The National Cultural Policy should prioritise ongoing funding to help maintain Australia’s cultural heritage places adapted for use by arts and cultural organisations so they can continue to deliver place-based arts and cultural practices integrated with Australia’s cultural heritage.

### **Climate Change**

Building on the 5 pillars of *Revive*, Bundanon advocates for a sixth column addressing climate change, and promoting values of sustainability, resources conservation and futureproofing for the next generation. The cultural sector has a role in building awareness of climate change, shaping stories and educating future generations, and advocating for standards in relation to sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Bundanon’s commitment to environmental sustainability and the government’s net zero target is reflected in our use of solar power, harvested rainwater and geo-thermal array, and in our two onsite carbon forests. Bundanon supports multiple biodiverse environments and works with Traditional Custodians in regenerating and caring for Country and in mitigating fire risk through cool temperature cultural burns onsite.

Bundanon's vast and diverse landscape setting, comprising bushland, parkland and farmland, is increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Its location in a high-risk fire area and flood zone places significant pressure on operations, visitor safety, and the preservation of natural and built assets. Weather extremes such as fire, storms and flooding pose ongoing risks. Ensuring climate resilience, sustainability and site protection therefore remains a key operational priority, alongside the careful balance of cultural, educational and environmental activity that such a distinctive landscape demands.

Climate readiness should be a core requirement for arts organisations, with sustainability positioned as a key operational and strategic priority. Organisations such as Bundanon are well placed to lead in this area, offering a model for environmental sustainability and preparedness across the sector. The new policy should recognise the impacts of climate change on operations, including cost, efficiency, performance and safety, and embed sustainability and a whole-of-government net zero approach through clear policy settings. This should include support for cultural organisations to reduce waste, maximise recycling, use sustainable materials, adopt considered environmental practices, and pursue climate-responsive architecture aimed at minimising environmental impact.