



Screen, Media and The Arts Education, Training and Workforce

Essential Screen Skills is the education and training arm of Essential Crew. We work at the intersection between schools, Vocational Education and Training, Higher-Education and Industry. We deliver the Screen and Media Gateway to Industry Schools Program and host the Screen, Media and The Arts Industry, Skills and Jobs Advisor both proudly supported and funded by the QLD Government.

Essential Screen Skills welcomes and commends Revive and the actions that have been achieved and acknowledge that there is much more needed to fully realise the NCP objectives.

Australia's screen, media and Arts industries rely on a strong, coordinated education and training pipeline, yet this pipeline is in systemic decline. Falling participation, reduced tertiary provision and workforce shortages are already constraining capacity and undermining long-term sustainability.

Recent peer-reviewed evidence from *The polycrisis for arts and creative education in Australia*. (Gattenhof, S., & Saunders, J. N) demonstrates that declining school participation, reduced tertiary enrolments and course closures are interconnected and compounding, creating a "polycrisis" that is eroding the education-to-workforce pipeline that underpins Australia's cultural and creative industries. This evidence directly supports the case for systemic policy reform, highlighting a misalignment between cultural policy ambitions and the weakening education and training systems required to deliver them.

At the same time, Screen Australia's **Production Infrastructure and Capacity Analysis (PICA)** confirms that the screen sector faces persistent skills gaps, limited career progression pathways, infrastructure pressures and scalability challenges, with training and workforce development identified as critical priorities for maintaining competitiveness.

These findings are reinforced by sector-wide evidence from the **National Performing Arts Technical Safety & Workforce Meeting 2025 Insights Report**, which identifies a national workforce crisis across the technical pipeline, driven by compounded pressures in recruitment, training, retention and workplace conditions. The report highlights a fragile workforce pipeline, where outdated and inconsistent training, limited access to professional development, and weak career progression pathways are accelerating workforce depletion faster than it can be replenished.

Critically, this evidence base reinforces the structural policy gap identified by the National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE). NAAE's proposal for a **sixth pillar – Arts Learning**,

Training and Pathways recognises that education and training are not peripheral, but foundational infrastructure for workforce development, cultural participation and industry sustainability.

To realise the ambitions of the National Cultural Policy, the Government should:

- **Adopt the NAAE's proposed 6th Pillar – *Arts Learning, Training and Pathways***, explicitly recognising education and training as the foundation of workforce capability and addressing the “polycrisis” identified in national research.

And implement NAAE's proposed actions for the **6th Pillar – *Arts Learning, Training and Pathways***:

- Commission a National Inquiry into Arts Education and Training to establish a coordinated, cross-portfolio evidence base and identify actions to strengthen participation, provision, equity and workforce sustainability.
- Develop a National Arts Education Strategy to align schooling, Initial Teacher Education, tertiary pathways and workforce development, with clear national targets, sustained investment and research.
- Embed First Nations Leadership and Cultural Authority Across Arts Education to ensure First Nations-led curriculum, training and clear pathways into arts and cultural sector roles.
- Fund Arts Education in Schools to Ensure Universal Access, including curriculum delivery, resources, arts teacher professional learning and a nationally coordinated Artist-in-Schools program.
- Strengthen the Arts Education Workforce through targeted investment in teacher education, professional learning and workforce development to address shortages and reduce out-of-field teaching.
- Strengthen Tertiary Arts Education and Training Pathways to stabilise and expand Creative Arts programs across universities and TAFEs, and strengthen pathways from education into arts careers and the creative workforce.

- Fund Arts Professional Associations, Peak Bodies, Service Organisations and Cultural Institutions to expand access to high-quality arts learning, partnerships and outreach, particularly for students in regional, remote and disadvantaged communities.
- Establish a national Arts Education Working Group jointly led by the Office of the Arts and the Department of Education, with sector representation, to ensure a coordinated and cohesive national approach to arts education. This group would support the implementation of policy and strategy and help realise the promise of arts education over the next decade.

Feedback from the Industry, Skills and Jobs Advisor for Screen, Media and The Arts - Qld

Australia's National Cultural Policy must recognise that a sustainable, equitable cultural future depends on rebuilding the education and training systems that enable artists and arts workers to enter, remain in, and progress through creative careers. The current decline in arts education access - described by Gattenhof & Saunders (2026) as a "polycrisis" - is a threat to the nation's cultural capability. This decline affects First Nations communities, regional Australia, and young people seeking creative futures. Without intervention, the workforce pipeline underpinning the policy's ambitions will continue to erode.

Pillar 1 - Culturally safe, community-led training pathways must be a core priority for **First Nations** communities. Access must be guaranteed from school through to TAFE, university, and industry, with delivery shaped by local leadership and cultural authority. Revive's First Nations Creative Workforce Strategy is an important foundation, but it requires long-term, place-based funding to ensure continuity, stability, and genuine self-determination.

Pillar 2 - A Place for Every Story, A Story for Every Place, the policy must address the collapse of regional creative training. As TAFE and university creative arts courses close or contract outside metropolitan centres, regional communities lose the ability to tell their own stories, build local creative economies, and participate in national cultural life. Regional training infrastructure must be recognised as essential cultural infrastructure.

Pillar 3 - Centrality of the Artist requires a commitment to treating artists as workers with lifelong training needs. The Job Ready Graduates policy increased the cost of creative degrees and contributed to declining enrolments and course closures. Revive should advocate for tertiary pricing reform, improved ATAR scaling for creative subjects, and affordable, flexible pathways that allow artists to upskill throughout their careers.

Pillar 4 - Strong Cultural Infrastructure, training must be recognised as core infrastructure. The 2025 Technical Safety & Workforce Insights Report identified severe shortages in lighting, sound, staging, rigging, and production management, with safety risks linked to under-trained crew.



National technical training programs, regional delivery hubs, and accredited safety pathways are essential to stabilise the production workforce.

Pillar 5 - Engaging the Audience requires investment in digital capability. Audiences increasingly expect immersive, hybrid, and technologically sophisticated work, yet the decline in arts education undermines the development of the 21st-century skills needed for innovation.

To address these systemic issues, the policy should adopt a **sixth pillar**, as recommended by the National Advocates for Arts Education:

Pillar 6 - Arts Learning, Training and Pathways

Arts education is essential national infrastructure. Establishing this pillar would provide policy coherence, visibility, and accountability across the Arts, Education and Training portfolios. It would ensure equitable access to quality arts learning, strengthen the pipeline from education to workforce, embed First Nations leadership, and support teacher education, professional learning, and tertiary provision. A national parliamentary inquiry, a 10-year Arts Education Strategy, restored tertiary pathways, and dedicated investment in school-based arts learning are critical actions.

Embedding this sixth pillar would ensure that Australia's cultural ambitions are matched by the education and training systems required to realise them.

Bibliography

Polycrisis in Arts Education, Gattenhof, S., & Saunders, J. N. (2026). *The polycrisis for arts and creative education in Australia*. **Australian Journal of Education**, 70(1), 87–106.

Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00049441261421275>

Production Infrastructure and Capacity Analysis (PICA), Olsberg SPI. (2026). *Production Infrastructure and Capacity Analysis (PICA) for Australia's screen production sector*. Commissioned by Screen Australia.

Available at: <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/insights-and-trends/industry-reports/production-infrastructure-and-capacity-analysis-pica/>

Penny Miles (October 2025). **National Performing Arts Technical Safety and Workforce Meeting Abridged, Insights Report**.

Available at: [National-Technical-Meeting-2025-Insights-Report.pdf](#)