

CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY

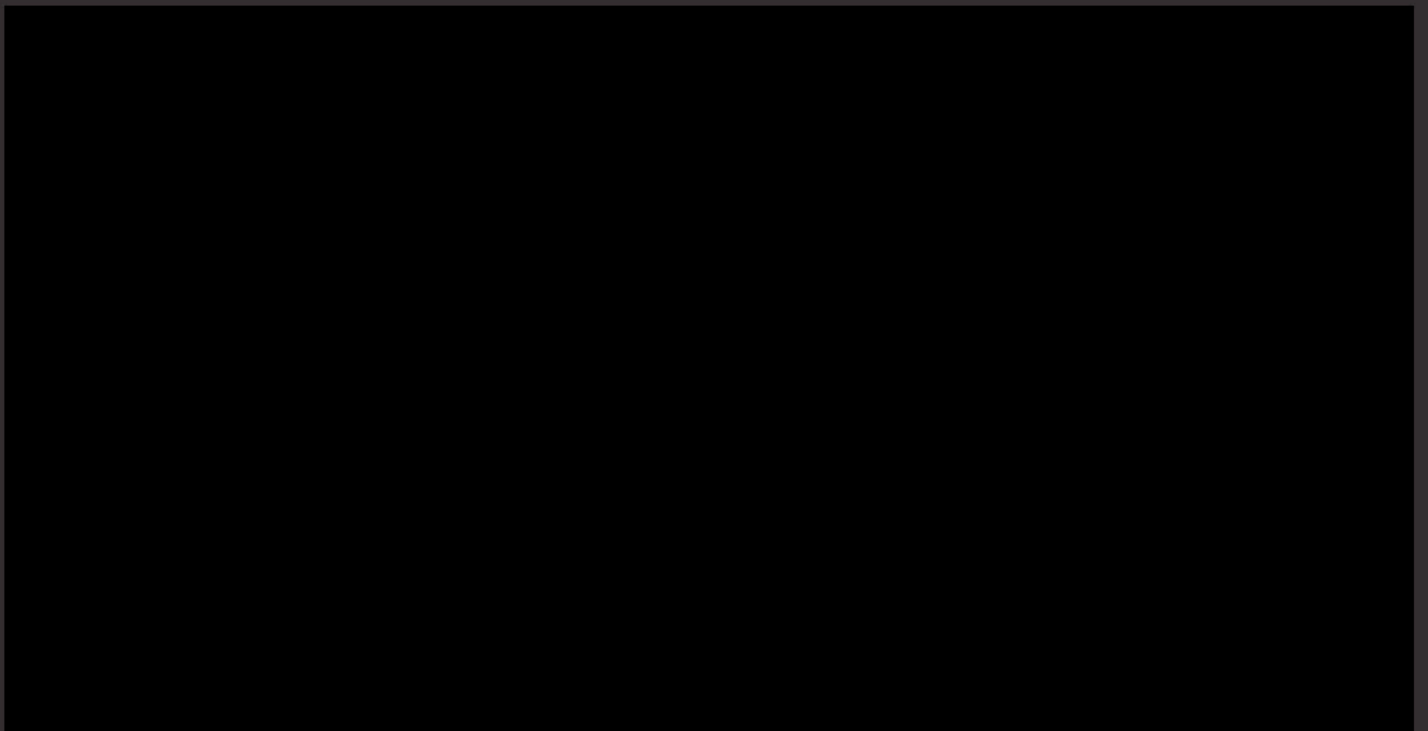
Submission 2026

National Cultural Policy

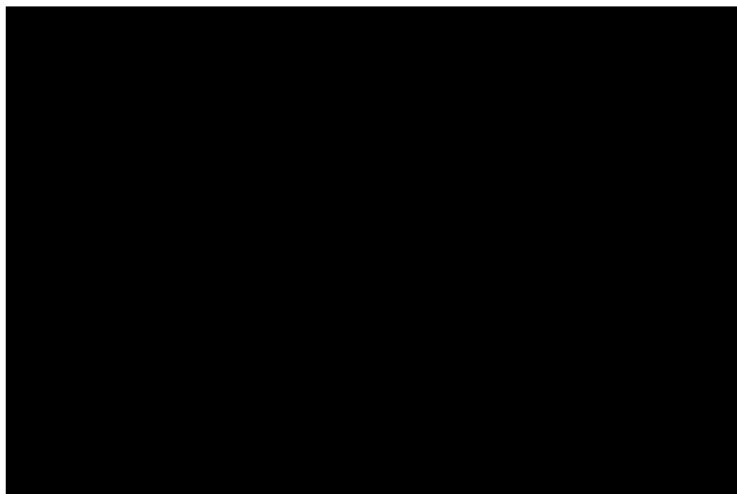
The Centre for Contemporary Photography (CCP, est. 1986) based in Melbourne, welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of Australia's next National Cultural Policy.

While the current policy framework and its five pillars have provided an important foundation for recognising culture as central to Australia's social and economic future, the next stage of policy development presents an opportunity to move beyond broad thematic framing toward long-term structural investment, sustainability, and sector capacity-building.

This should be one of the goals of the next Cultural Policy.



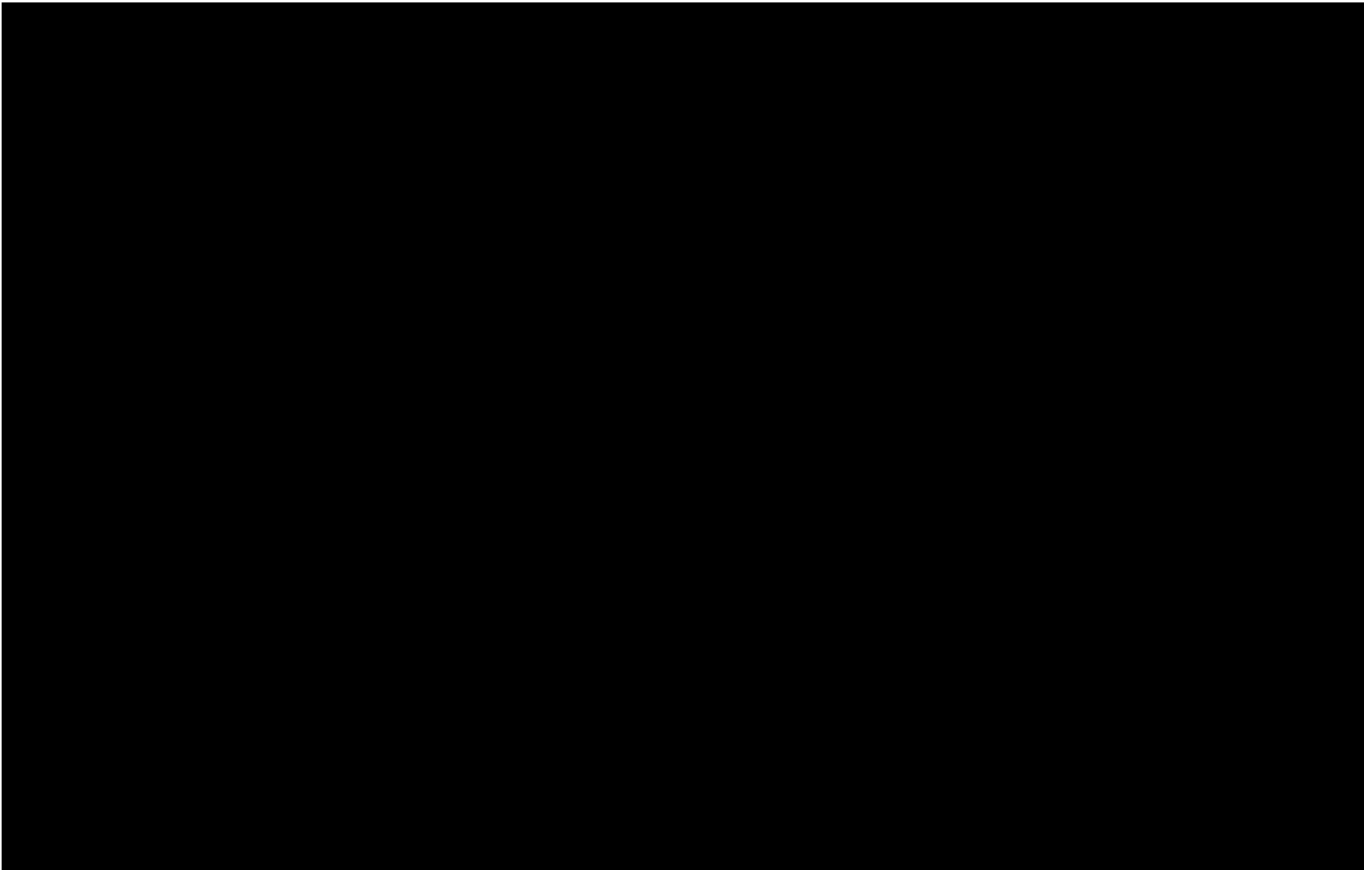
**Photography is now
the most pervasive
visual language of
contemporary
Australia.**



Photography shapes how Australians communicate, learn, document history, participate in civic discourse, engage with technology, and understand themselves and others.

Yet despite its centrality to contemporary culture, photography remains significantly underrepresented within Australia's cultural infrastructure and policy settings.


There is currently no nationally coordinated framework to support the development, preservation, presentation, education, and critical discourse surrounding lens-based practice. This absence creates a substantial cultural gap at a time when image-making technologies, visual literacy and storytelling, digital platforms, and new media are rapidly reshaping society.



The next National Cultural Policy should recognise that investment in contemporary photography is not solely an arts outcome: it is an investment in cultural literacy, education, innovation, tourism, workforce development, and Australia's international cultural identity.

Photography intersects directly with emerging industries including digital media, screen culture, publishing, design, communications, advertising, archives, technology, and education.

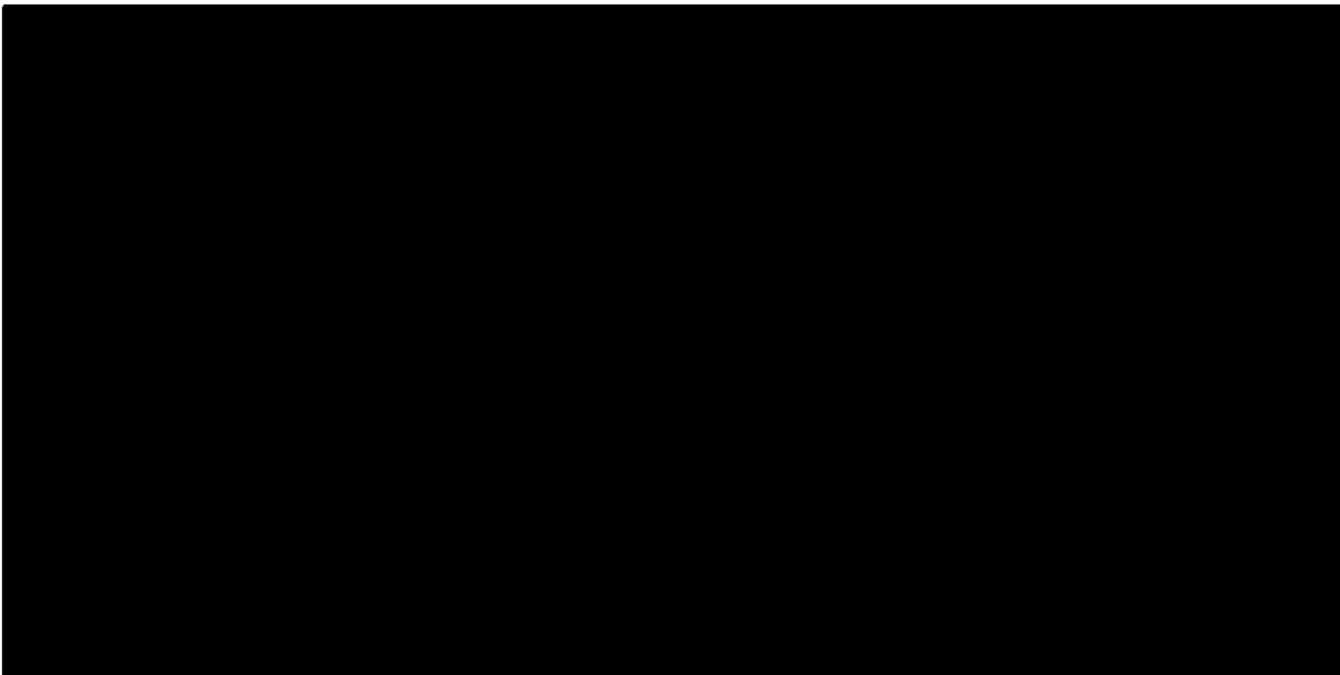
As visual communication becomes increasingly dominant across public and private life, visual literacy must be understood as an essential contemporary capability, one that is at the centre of what the CCP delivers.



We believe the National Cultural Policy focus should therefore shift toward building sustainable cultural ecosystems that generate long-term public value.

This includes stable operational funding models, workforce and skills development pathways, national infrastructure investment, and coordinated support for institutions that provide ongoing public benefit.

A resilient cultural sector requires more than project-based activity; it requires enduring organisations capable of creating jobs, retaining expertise, supporting artists across entire careers, and delivering accessible public engagement over time.



Within this context, CCP proposes that photography be recognised as a priority area within Australia's cultural ecosystem for the next Policy and that dedicated institutional support be established to ensure the medium can sustainably contribute to national cultural life.

This includes supporting the Centre for Contemporary Photography as a permanently resourced, internationally benchmarked institution in Melbourne through multi-year operational funding and targeted capital investment. Such support would allow CCP to operate as a dynamic centre for contemporary photography, with the capacity to produce major exhibitions, commission new work, create and present Australian photographic culture, and deliver ambitious public and educational programming.

Importantly, sustained investment in CCP would generate broad cultural and economic outcomes. A strengthened photography institution would support employment across curatorial practice, education, arts administration, publishing, production, conservation, installation, design, digital technologies, and tourism.

It would create structured pathways for artists, students, educators, and emerging practitioners through mentorships, residencies, internships, commissions, and professional development programs. It would also contribute to Melbourne and Australia's reputation as a destination for contemporary culture, strengthening cultural tourism and international engagement.

The current policy pillars remain relevant within this broader vision.

Photography plays a vital role in enabling First Nations artists and communities to assert cultural authority and contemporary storytelling; it creates space for diverse Australian experiences and histories; it supports artists through professional practice and fair remuneration; it relies upon strong and stable cultural infrastructure; and it engages audiences across physical, regional, and digital contexts.

However, these principles must now be supported by practical mechanisms that ensure long-term sustainability and sector growth.



Beyond a single institution, there is a significant opportunity to develop a nationally connected photography network that links metropolitan, regional, and international activity.

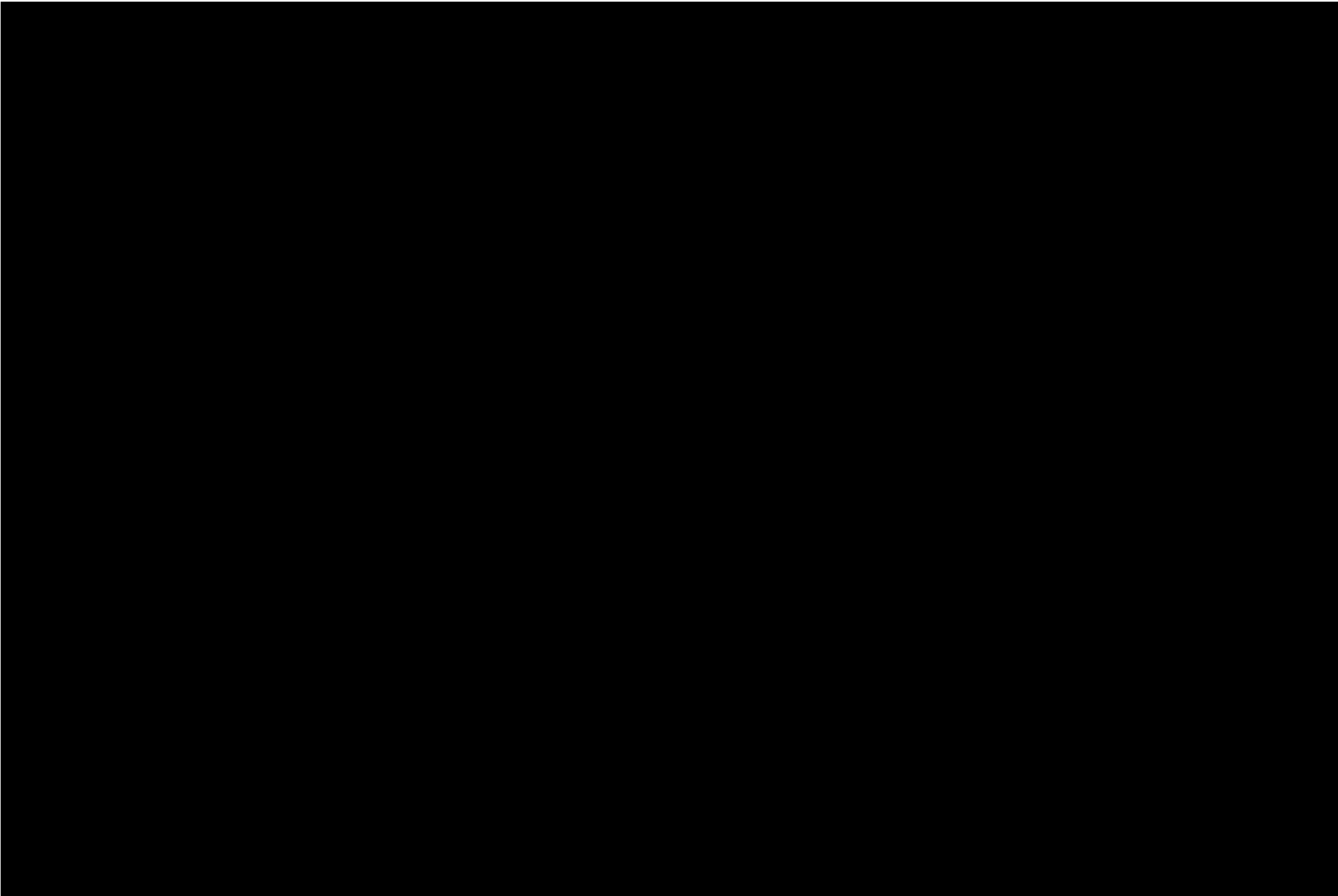
Through partnerships with organisations such as with the Museum of Australian Photography, Ballarat International Foto Biennale, regional galleries, universities, local governments, and independent arts organisations, CCP could contribute to a coordinated national photography touring and engagement framework.

Such a model would increase equitable access to contemporary photography across Australia while strengthening regional participation, cultural exchange, professional mobility, and audience development.



Internationally, countries that have invested in dedicated photography institutions and networks have demonstrated the significant cultural, educational, and economic value of sustained support for lens-based practice (France, Germany, Netherlands, Japan). Australia currently lacks comparable infrastructure despite the global importance of photography as both an artistic and communicative medium.

Without investment, Australia risks losing creative talent, cultural knowledge, and international visibility in one of the defining cultural forms of the twenty-first century.




The next National Cultural Policy presents an opportunity to address this gap by embedding photography within long-term national planning for culture, education, technology, and creative industries.

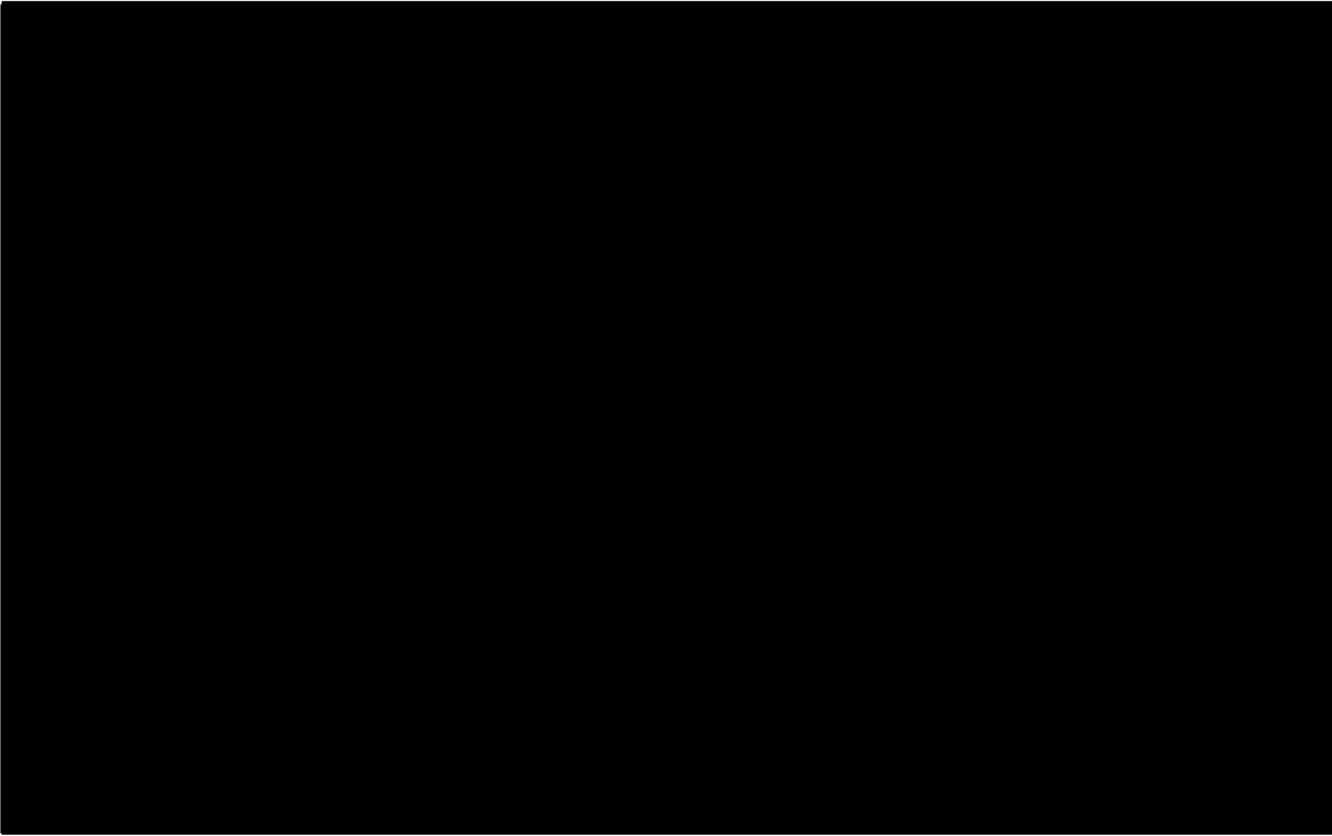
This requires coordinated investment in infrastructure, recurrent funding, touring frameworks, education, and workforce development. Providing CCP with sustainable and stable support would represent a foundational step toward building a impactful, connected, and internationally engaged photography sector capable of delivering enduring cultural and economic benefit for Australia.



Recommendations:

**CCP proposes 8 key
strategic areas for
support and action.**

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1. *Recognise photography as a priority contemporary artform within the National Cultural Policy.* Acknowledge photography and lens-based practice as central to Australia's cultural, educational, technological, and creative industries landscape.
 2. *Provide multi-year operational funding for the Centre for Contemporary Photography (CCP).* Establish stable recurrent funding to enable long-term planning, workforce sustainability, artist support, public programming, and national leadership.
 3. *Invest in permanent cultural infrastructure for CCP in Melbourne.* Support the development of a dedicated, internationally benchmarked facility for contemporary photography, education, exhibitions, archives, and public engagement.

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4. *Develop a national photography touring and partnership framework.* Support collaborations between CCP, regional galleries, festivals, local governments, universities, and independent organisations to increase access to photography across metropolitan and regional Australia.
 5. *Support real workforce development and career pathways in photography and visual culture.* Fund mentorships, residencies, internships, education programs, and professional development opportunities that build sustainable careers and strengthen sector capability.
 6. *Embed visual literacy and image culture within broader cultural and education policy.* Recognise the growing importance of photography, digital media, technology, and image-based communication in contemporary society and support programs that develop critical visual literacy skills.



7. *Strengthen international engagement opportunities for Australian photographers and institutions.* Work with us to develop international partnerships, exchanges, touring exhibitions, and market development initiatives that increase Australia's global cultural presence and retain creative talent.

8. *Support equitable access to contemporary culture through digital and regional delivery models.* Utilising our expertise fund hybrid, online, and regionally distributed programming that expands audience participation and access to high-quality contemporary photography nationwide.

About CCP:

Established in 1986, the Centre for Contemporary Photography (CCP) has played a foundational role in the development of contemporary photography and lens-based practice in Australia for almost four decades. Based in Melbourne, CCP emerged at a time when photography was still fighting for recognition within the broader visual arts sector, and has since become one of the country's most significant organisations dedicated to photographic practice, critical discourse, and public engagement.

Throughout its history, CCP has championed Australian artists at all stages of their careers, commissioning and presenting ambitious new work, supporting experimentation and innovation, and fostering critical conversations around photography, media, technology, identity, politics, and culture. CCP has provided an essential platform for generations of Australian photographers and image-makers, many of whom have gone on to national and international recognition.

Photography is uniquely important within the Australian context because it sits at the intersection of art, communication, history, technology, and everyday life. It is one of the primary ways Australians document personal and collective experience, engage with social and political issues, preserve cultural memory, and communicate across increasingly digital environments. In an era shaped by social media, artificial intelligence, digital imaging, and rapidly evolving visual technologies, photography has become one of the defining cultural languages of contemporary society.

Despite operating without permanent recurrent funding or a dedicated long-term facility, CCP has continued to deliver nationally significant outcomes for Australian photography and contemporary visual culture, seeing record attendances at its exhibitions and programming. Over nearly four decades, CCP has supported and exhibited many of Australia's leading photographic artists, including Destiny Deacon, Christian Thompson, Hoda Afshar, Anne Zahalka, Trent Parke, Narelle Autio, Patricia Piccinini, Polixeni Papapetrou, and Tamara Dean, often at pivotal early stages in their careers.

CCP has built a reputation for commissioning ambitious new work and creating space for experimentation, risk-taking, and critical discourse around contemporary issues including identity, migration, First Nations storytelling, climate, surveillance, digital culture, and technology. Its exhibitions and public programs have connected photography to broader conversations shaping Australian society, helping audiences critically engage with image culture at a time when visual media dominates public life.

The organisation has also delivered substantial education and professional development outcomes through artist talks, mentorships, workshops, publishing initiatives, photobook launches, masterclasses, and exhibition opportunities for emerging practitioners. CCP has consistently provided pathways between education, creative practice, and industry, functioning not only as an exhibition venue but as a key incubator for Australia's photography sector.

Recent exhibitions and projects have demonstrated CCP's ongoing relevance and capacity for international engagement. Programs such as Familial brought together Australian and international artists exploring migration, grief, memory, and displacement through photography and video, while CCP's longstanding partnership with RMIT delivered Auto-Photo: A llfe in portraits, the most attended photography exhibition in Australia. We continue to work with publishers, festivals, and independent arts organisations to expand audience reach and strengthen sector collaboration nationally and internationally.

Importantly, CCP has achieved these outcomes despite major funding reductions and the loss of its long-term Fitzroy premises in 2024. Even under these conditions, CCP continued to present exhibitions, maintain partnerships, support artists, and engage audiences through adaptive programming models and temporary project spaces. In 2023 alone, the organisation presented work by more than 500 artists and raised substantial independent support through fundraising, philanthropy, and artist-led initiatives.

These achievements demonstrate both the resilience of the organisation and the significant unmet demand for a dedicated national centre for contemporary photography in Australia. CCP has consistently delivered cultural, educational, and professional outcomes far beyond the scale of its available resources. With stable recurrent investment and permanent infrastructure, CCP could substantially expand its contribution to employment, tourism, international exchange, education, and Australia's global cultural profile.

Submission approved by:
Daniel Boetker-Smith, Director
Dr. Patrick Pound, Chair of CCP Board.

Image credits:

1. Installation photo, Auto-Photo: A Life in Portraits. A CCP exhibition, hosted by RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, 2025.
2. Minami Ivory, 2025 - from the CCP/Perimeter Zine publication series, 2025
3. Photobooth image, from the collection of Patrick Pound, inc. in Auto-Photo: A Life in Portraits. A CCP exhibition, hosted by RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, 2025.
4. Ryley Clarke, - from the CCP/Perimeter Zine publication series, 2025
5. Ryley Clarke, - from the CCP/Perimeter Zine publication series, 2025
6. Photobooth image of Alan Adler, from the collection of Metro Auto Photo, inc. in Auto-Photo: A Life in Portraits. A CCP exhibition, hosted by RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, 2025.
7. Event documentation photo, Auto-Photo: A Life in Portraits. A CCP exhibition, hosted by RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, 2025.
8. Hussein Abdirahman Mohamud, - from the CCP/Perimeter Zine publication series, 2025
9. Hussein Abdirahman Mohamud, - from the CCP/Perimeter Zine publication series, 2025
10. Installation photo, Auto-Photo: A Life in Portraits. A CCP exhibition, hosted by RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, 2025.
11. Peta Duncan, from 'Until the tide takes me home'. A CCP exhibition hosted by Agency Projects, Melbourne, 2025.
12. Event documentation photo, Auto-Photo: A Life in Portraits. A CCP exhibition, hosted by RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, 2025.
13. Installation photo, 'Familial'. A CCP exhibition, hosted by Hawthorn Town Hall Gallery, Melbourne, 2026.
14. Auto-Photo: A Life in Portraits. A CCP & Perimeter Editions publication, supported by the Gordon Darling Foundation, 2024.
15. Hussein Abdirahman Mohamud, - from the CCP/Perimeter Zine publication series, 2025
16. Nur Aishah Kenton, from 'Familial'. A CCP exhibition, hosted by Hawthorn Town Hall Gallery, Melbourne, 2026.
17. Rushdi Anwar, from 'Walking through the Darkness'. A CCP exhibition, 2023.