
Federal Cultural Policy – The Second Act

Sydney Festival Submission

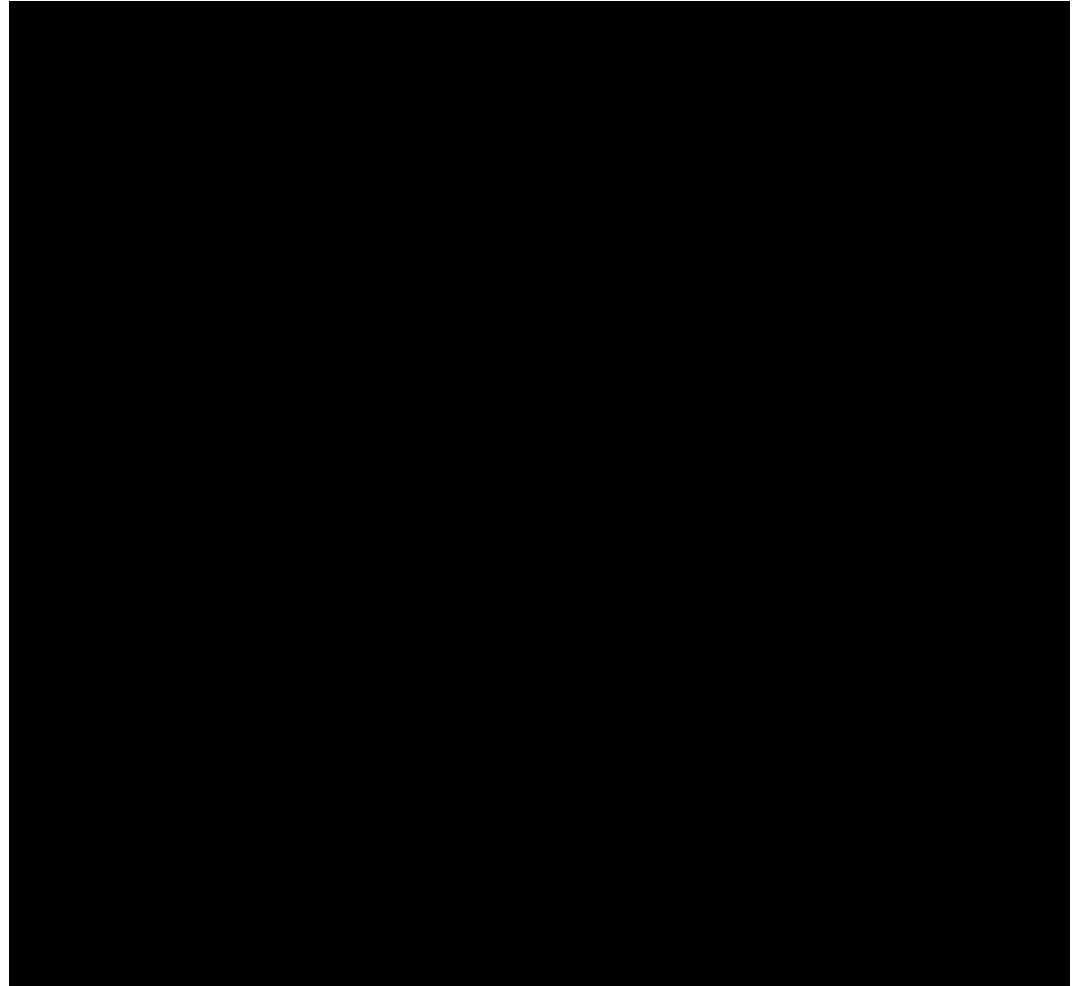


Introduction

Major arts festivals are essential cultural and civic infrastructure. They create shared public experiences, strengthen participation and belonging, support artists and communities, and shape how Australia presents itself to the world.

As one of Australia's leading international arts festivals, Sydney Festival welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the next National Cultural Policy. *Revive* established an important framework for recognising the value of arts and culture across Australian life. The next phase of policy development presents an opportunity to build on this foundation and respond to the changing conditions shaping artists, audiences and cultural organisations.

Sydney Festival believes cultural policy should support ambitious artistic practice, strengthen cultural participation, enable international exchange, and recognise the essential role festivals and arts organisations play in Australia's civic, cultural and economic life.



First Nations Cultural Leadership

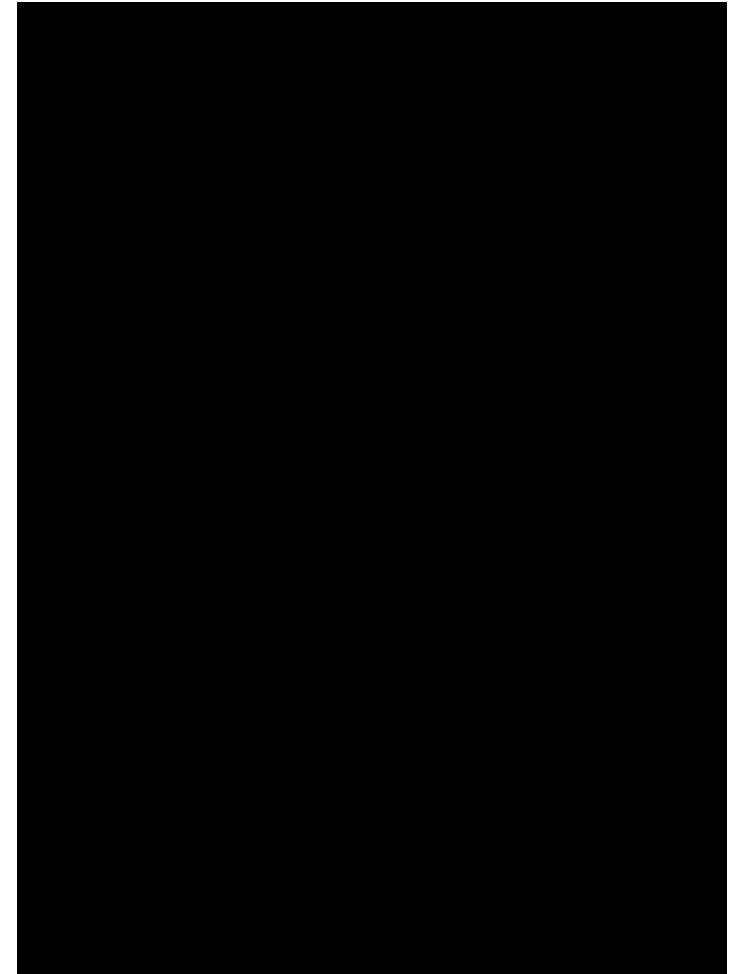
Place First Nations leadership, storytelling and cultural authority at the centre of Australia's cultural future through sustained investment, visibility and decision-making power.

Policy Priorities

Long-term investment in First Nations led artistic and cultural practice
First Nations leadership embedded across programming, governance and organisations
Support for both emerging and established First Nations artists
Free and accessible public cultural experiences
Connection to Country, community and contemporary cultural expression
International visibility and cultural exchange for First Nations work
Recognition of successful existing models, such as Blak Out at Sydney Festival

Policy Rationale

First Nations culture is central to Australia's identity and cultural future. Strong cultural policy should move beyond symbolic inclusion and support genuine cultural authority, long-term partnerships and sustained investment. Programs such as Blak Out at Sydney Festival demonstrate the impact of embedding First Nations leadership within major cultural institutions, creating ambitious artistic outcomes, deep community engagement and powerful shared public experiences.



A Strong and Sustainable Cultural Infrastructure

Focus on strengthening the organisations, infrastructure and workforce that allow culture to thrive long-term.

Policy Priorities

Invest in existing cultural organisations and festivals that already deliver strong cultural, social and economic outcomes

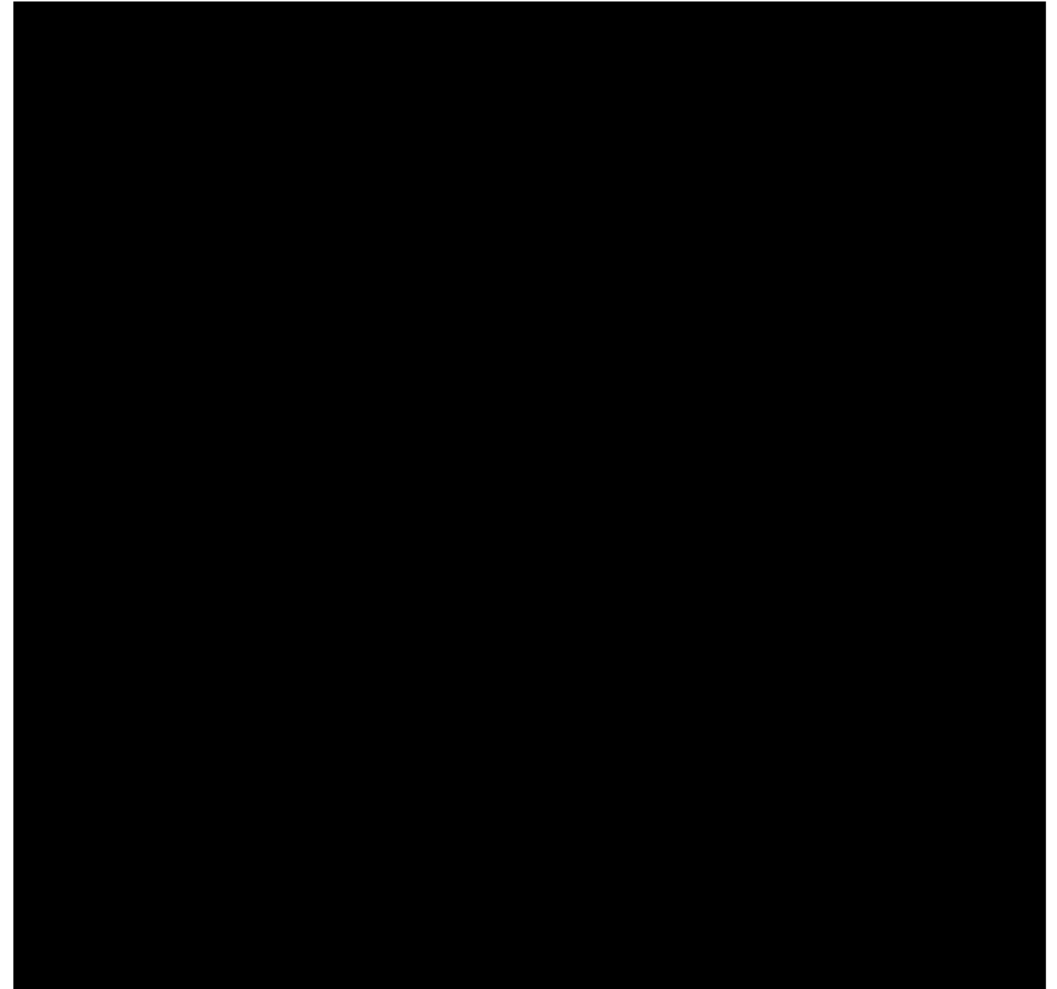
Support sustainable operating models, not just project-based activity

Build workforce capability, leadership pathways and sector resilience

Recognise festivals and arts organisations as essential civic infrastructure

Policy Rationale

Strong institutions create continuity, audience trust, artistic development pathways and long-term impact. Stability allows organisations to take creative risks and support artists more effectively.



Australian Stories, Artists and Creative Practice

Support ambitious Australian work and ensure artists can create work of scale, relevance and with international significance.

Policy Priorities

Investment in new Australian work and artistic experimentation

Support for independent artists and small-to-medium companies

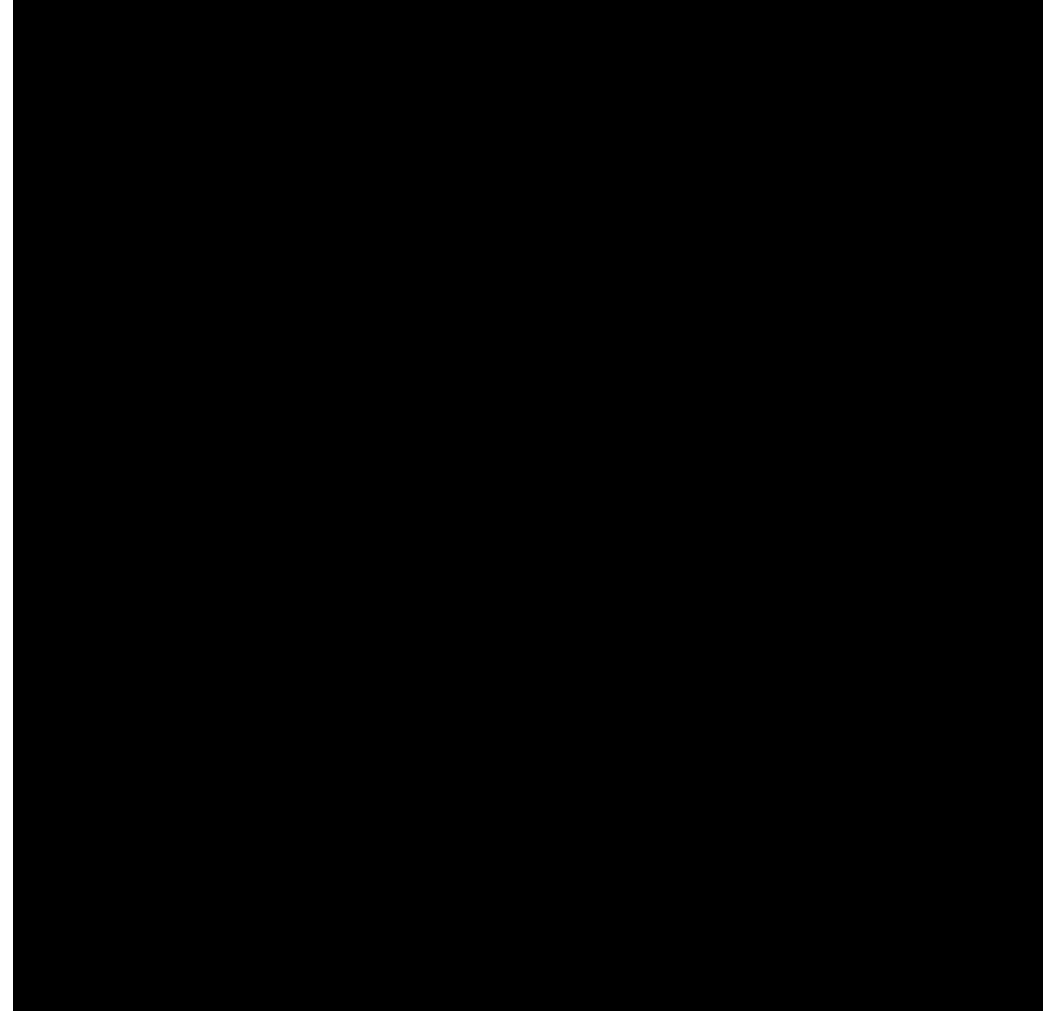
Long-term commissioning and development pipelines

International pathways for Australian artists and cultural exchange

Ensuring cultural policy supports ambition, not just output volume

Policy Rationale

Great cultural moments come from sustained investment in artists, ideas and experimentation that embraces creative risk. Australia's cultural identity is strengthened when artists are supported to make bold work that reflects contemporary Australia.



Access, Participation and Cultural Belonging

Ensure culture is accessible, inclusive and embedded in public life.

Policy Priorities

Equity of access across geography, income and community

Culturally responsive and community led participation models

Accessibility and disability inclusion

Youth engagement and audience development

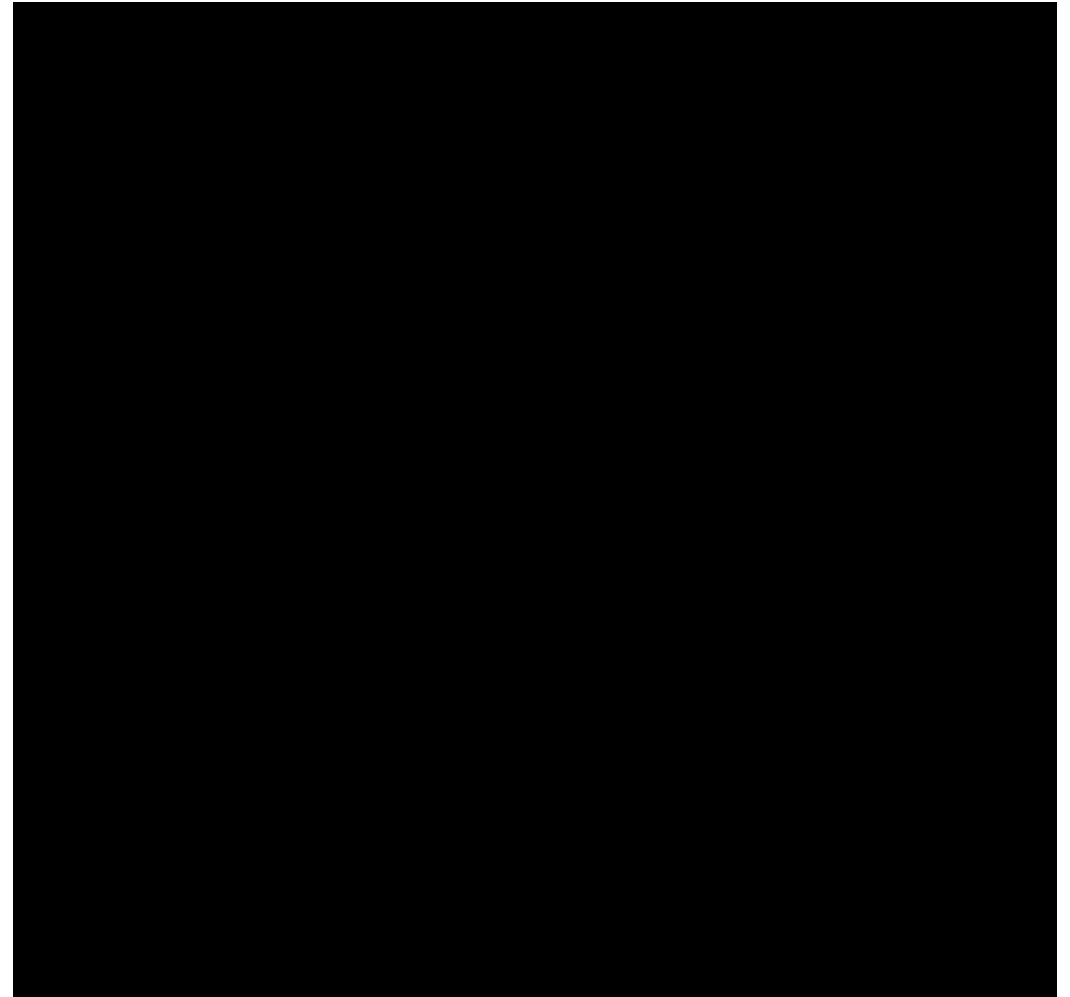
Public space activation and free cultural experiences

Culture as a tool for social cohesion and belonging

Policy Rationale

Culture should not be experienced as exclusive or elite.

Festivals and public cultural events create shared civic experiences that strengthen social connection, participation and community identity.



Culture as National Identity, International Presence and Economic Value

Recognise arts and culture as central to Australia's global identity, tourism, diplomacy and economic future.

Policy Priorities

Position culture as a driver of tourism and international reputation

Strengthen international cultural mobility as a core condition of artistic sustainability, including long-term touring pathways, co-commissioning frameworks and structured exchange programs between Australian and international partners

Recognise festivals as major contributors to city identity and visitor economies

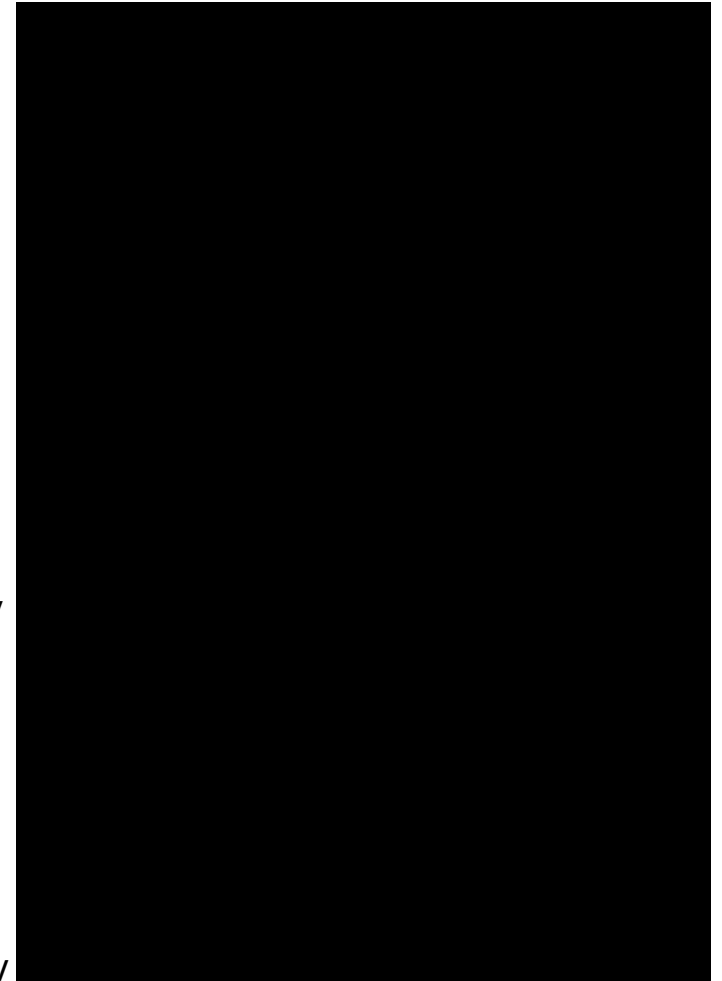
Encourage investment models that leverage philanthropy, business and government together

Measure cultural value broadly; socially, creatively and economically

Cultural policy should support a strong commitment to artistic freedom and cultural expression, enabling the sector to create work that is not constrained by the need for universal approval. In a complex and often polarised media environment, cohesion is best built through connection, collaboration and open cultural conversation, including engagement with difficult or contested ideas, rather than through avoiding them.

Policy Rationale

Culture is not a “nice to have.” It shapes how Australia sees itself and how the world sees Australia. Strategic investment in culture generates economic activity while also building civic pride, global relevance and national confidence.



THANK YOU

For more information please contact:

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