

Submission – National Cultural Policy

Prepared by

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Context

welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of a revised National Cultural Policy and to highlight the role that growth areas must play in shaping Australia's cultural future. This submission has been prepared as an officer level submission in keeping with Strategy relating to arts and culture.

As one of the country's fastest growing local government areas, represents a distinct metropolitan context in which rapid population growth, housing delivery and changing community demographics are creating new and urgent demands for cultural participation, infrastructure and investment.

From perspective, current national policy settings do not yet adequately recognise growth areas as priority locations for cultural policy reform. Although these communities are absorbing a significant share of metropolitan growth and are home to high proportions of young people, families and culturally diverse residents, cultural infrastructure, dedicated facilities and long-term investment have not kept pace. This is particularly significant in the context of , which should be understood as a nationally important multicultural cultural community whose diversity, growth and changing demographics are central to Australia's broader cultural future. The result is an emerging structural inequity in which some of Australia's fastest growing communities experience comparatively limited access to the infrastructure and opportunities needed to participate fully in cultural life.

This submission argues that a revised National Cultural Policy should explicitly recognise growth areas as a distinct national policy priority, align cultural investment with population growth and precinct development, treat culture as essential social infrastructure, and more clearly recognise local government as a critical delivery partner. For , these changes are necessary to ensure that cultural policy is equitable, place-responsive and capable of supporting connected, inclusive and culturally rich communities as Australia grows.

acknowledges that First Nations First must remain foundational to any revised National Cultural Policy. In growth areas, this reinforces the importance of embedding cultural planning, storytelling and placemaking in ways that acknowledge Country, support truth-telling, and ensure that emerging communities are shaped with a stronger awareness of Aboriginal cultural identity and heritage from the outset.

████████ submission is particularly relevant to the pillars of A Place for Every Story, Centrality of the Artist, Strong Cultural Infrastructure and Engaging the Audience. From ██████████ perspective, these pillars must respond more directly to the realities of growth areas, where rapid population change, infrastructure lag, changing audience behaviours and emerging communities require more place-responsive investment, stronger local delivery mechanisms, and earlier cultural planning.

For ██████████, these pillars matter because they provide the framework through which rapidly growing communities can be recognised, supported and connected through culture. The opportunity is to ensure the revised National Cultural Policy more clearly reflects growth areas as priority places for early cultural planning, investment, artist development, local delivery and community access.

Growth Areas Need Recognition

Growth areas represent a distinct metropolitan condition and should be formally recognised within national cultural policy as a priority context for planning, investment and reform.

Growth areas are characterised by rapid population growth that outpaces infrastructure delivery, higher proportions of children and young people, increasing cultural and linguistic diversity, and a strong reliance on local government to deliver arts and cultural services.

Despite their scale and significance, these areas are not formally recognised in current policy frameworks, resulting in funding and programs that continue to favour established inner-city or regional centres.

For ██████████, this lack of recognition results in limited access to dedicated cultural facilities, heavy reliance on shared and multi-purpose spaces, growing demand for accessible cultural programming, and increasing pressure on ██████████ to lead cultural delivery with constrained resources.

Formal recognition of growth areas is essential to addressing these inequities and ensuring that national cultural policy responds more equitably to where communities are growing fastest.

Key Policy Considerations

Recognise Growth Areas as a Distinct Classification

The National Cultural Policy should formally recognise growth areas as a distinct policy and investment category within Australia's metropolitan landscape, rather than treating them as an extension of established inner-city or regional classifications.

From ██████████ perspective, this recognition should be embedded in national funding frameworks, infrastructure planning and policy reporting so that cultural investment more accurately reflects where population growth is occurring, enables more targeted and transparent

allocation of resources, and supports a more equitable distribution of national cultural infrastructure and programming.

Without this formal recognition, rapidly growing communities such as [REDACTED] will remain underrepresented in decision-making and funding structures, and the gap between population growth and cultural provision will continue to widen.

Place-Based Investment That Aligns with Growth

National cultural policy should prioritise multi-year, place-based investment in growth areas rather than relying on predominantly short-term, competitive project funding. For [REDACTED], policy reform should align cultural investment with anticipated population growth, housing delivery and precinct planning so that fast growing communities are not required to wait for cultural infrastructure and programming until after demand has already exceeded supply.

[REDACTED] experience demonstrates why this shift is necessary. Cultural participation is already strong and is being sustained through community and cultural centres such as the [REDACTED] libraries and other community facilities, as well as outdoor and public spaces, using temporary and adaptive programming to engage the community. While effective, this model highlights the absence of purpose-built cultural infrastructure, including scaled facilities for performance and exhibition, and dedicated creative production and rehearsal spaces.

The Growth Areas Liveability Scorecards, developed by the National Growth Areas Alliance in partnership with the Australian Urban Observatory, show that access to cultural infrastructure in growth areas is significantly lower than in established areas. From [REDACTED] perspective, this reinforces the need for sustained, growth-aligned investment frameworks that reduce reliance on one-off competitive grants and enable earlier, more equitable delivery of cultural infrastructure and programming where it is most needed.

Cultural Infrastructure as Essential Social Infrastructure

National cultural policy should recognise cultural infrastructure as essential social infrastructure and require it to be embedded in growth planning alongside core infrastructure such as transport, schools, community facilities and open space. For [REDACTED], this means moving beyond an assumption that cultural infrastructure can be delivered later or retrospectively and instead ensuring that cultural facilities and activation are planned early as core components of liveable, connected and inclusive communities.

Priority infrastructure includes galleries, flexible exhibition spaces, performance venues, outdoor event infrastructure, creative workspaces, rehearsal facilities and multi-use cultural hubs integrated into new centres and precincts. These forms of infrastructure are not secondary amenities; they are essential enablers of participation, identity, belonging and local creative development in fast-growing communities.

Early investment is critical. Delaying cultural infrastructure until after communities are established reduces impact, increases long-term costs, and limits the ability of culture to shape social connection and place identity during the formative stages of growth.

Supporting Artists and Local Creative Economies

National cultural policy should do more to support artists, creative workers and local creative economies in growth areas, including through dedicated funding pathways that recognise the distinctive role of local government in enabling participation, commissioning, activation and artist development. In places like [REDACTED], councils are often the first and most consistent providers of cultural opportunities, particularly where broader cultural ecosystems are still emerging.

Current funding pathways do not adequately reflect this reality. Requiring councils to compete within the same limited funding pools as individual artists and organisations constrains both local government delivery and artist support, particularly in areas where cultural systems are still being built or not yet considered.

There is opportunity to establish dedicated funding streams for local government-led initiatives, strengthen artist development pathways in outer metropolitan growth areas, and provide targeted support for young, diverse, and emerging creative practitioners whose communities are shaping the future profile of Australia.

This is particularly critical in [REDACTED], where a growing youth population represents not only future demand for cultural participation, but also a significant future creative workforce that national policy should actively nurture and retain.

Building Identity, Belonging and Social Cohesion

The National Cultural Policy should recognise that cultural programming and activation are fundamental to building identity, belonging and social cohesion. In newly developing communities, culture is not an optional enhancement; it is a core mechanism for connecting people to place, to one another, and to the evolving identity of neighbourhoods.

In [REDACTED], cultural programs and local activation endeavour to fill this role by strengthening social cohesion, supporting multicultural participation, and creating shared experiences that bring diverse communities together however, resources are inadequate. As part of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] experience also reflects the importance of recognising multicultural growth communities as nationally significant to achieving broader cultural policy outcomes, including inclusion, belonging, participation and social cohesion.

Events, temporary activation and public programming should be recognised and funded as essential early cultural infrastructure, particularly in communities where permanent facilities are still emerging. These activities are often the first visible forms of cultural investment and play a critical role in establishing identity, inclusion and participation before larger infrastructure is delivered.

These initiatives are highly effective, scalable and capable of delivering immediate community outcomes, yet their contribution is often undervalued in policy and funding settings.

A revised National Cultural Policy should provide more stable support for this work through funding models that recognise the long-term value of community activation, place-based programming and cultural participation in shaping resilient and connected communities.

Access and Affordability

National cultural policy should more directly address access and affordability in outer-metropolitan growth communities, where cost of living pressures, limited access to nearby cultural facilities, and transport related barriers can significantly reduce participation. For [REDACTED], equitable access means recognising that geography should not determine a community's ability to engage in cultural life.

In this context, [REDACTED] cultural activities play a critical role in maintaining participation, inclusion and cultural access across diverse communities, particularly through free or low-cost programs and initiatives that help remove financial and geographic barriers.

From [REDACTED] perspective, a revised National Cultural Policy should include stronger mechanisms to address outer-metropolitan access gaps, support affordable and locally delivered pathways, and ensure that national commitments to equity and cultural participation are realised in the communities where population growth is occurring fastest.

[REDACTED] Specific Priorities

[REDACTED] priorities for inclusion in the revised National Cultural Policy are to:

- Formally recognise growth areas as a distinct national policy and investment priority;
- Align cultural investment with population growth, housing delivery and precinct planning;
- Embed cultural infrastructure and programming activation into new communities from the outset;
- Invest early in both permanent facilities and temporary activation to support participation, identity and belonging;
- Strengthen pathways for young people, emerging artists and diverse creative communities;
- Enable flexible, multi-use and adaptive delivery models that reflect the realities of fast-growing areas; and
- Formally recognise and resource local government as a critical delivery partner in achieving national cultural policy outcomes.

Conclusion

[REDACTED] position is that a contemporary National Cultural Policy must respond more directly to the realities of rapid population growth, outer-metropolitan expansion and changing community demographics. As one of Australia's fastest-growing local government areas, [REDACTED] illustrates both the opportunities and the structural inequities facing growth communities. While these areas are delivering a significant share of national population growth and shaping the identity of future Australia, they continue to experience lower access to cultural infrastructure, fewer dedicated facilities and less policy recognition than established metropolitan and regional centres.

From [REDACTED] perspective, the revised policy should explicitly recognise growth areas as priority locations for cultural investment, planning and collaboration. This means embedding cultural infrastructure and programming into precinct and housing growth from the outset, aligning investment with population demand, strengthening access and affordability, and ensuring that

young people, emerging artists, diverse communities and new suburbs are not left behind by funding models designed around established centres. [REDACTED] priority is for the policy to move beyond broad principles and deliver a more equitable framework that recognises growth area conditions as a distinct national policy challenge.

[REDACTED] also expects the National Cultural Policy to more clearly recognise local government as a critical delivery partner in achieving national cultural outcomes. In growth areas, councils are often the first and most consistent providers of cultural programs, local activation, artist development opportunities and community participation pathways. However, this role must be matched by policy settings, funding mechanisms and intergovernmental collaboration that enable local government to plan early, deliver at scale, and respond flexibly to the needs of rapidly expanding communities.

Ultimately, [REDACTED] expectation is that a revised National Cultural Policy will treat culture as essential social infrastructure, recognise growth areas as central to Australia's cultural future, and align national investment with where communities are growing fastest. A stronger policy response will not only improve cultural access and participation in [REDACTED] and similar LGAs, but will also help ensure that growth delivers connected, inclusive and culturally rich communities. For [REDACTED] this is both a matter of equity and a necessary step in creating a national cultural policy that is contemporary, responsive and fit for Australia's future.
