

22 May 2026

Office for the Arts  
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications  
GPO Box 594  
Canberra, ACT 2601  
Sent by email: [REDACTED]

Dear Secretary

## **Submission to the Australian Government Consultation on the Next National Cultural Policy**

The Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Office of the Arts in response to its public consultation paper: *Towards a new National Cultural Policy*.

Due to time constraints, we have limited our response to engaging those issues which most significantly impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their rights. Our submission addresses:

- Pillar 1 'First Nations First' which recognises and respects the crucial place of First Nations stories at the centre of Australia's arts and culture, and provides guidance as to how the Government can ensure cultural policy reflects First Nations priorities, strengthen recognition of cultural rights, recognise the centrality of language to culture, and support pathways for First Peoples leadership across the cultural landscape
- Pillar 4 'Strong Cultural Infrastructure' with respect to the supports required to sustain First Peoples arts, culture and heritage.

The Commission acknowledges the ongoing impacts of colonial processes and structures on First Peoples, and the critical importance of realising and supporting the individual and collective cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to enabling their enjoyment of human rights more generally.

To effectively provide such support, the Australian Government will need to codify its international human rights commitments, integrate these meaningfully into policy, and establish accountability mechanisms and funding arrangements to ensure timely and high-quality implementation across jurisdictions.

The Commission recommends that:

1. The Australian Government should co-design with First Peoples a United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Action Plan for Australia which embeds the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including their cultural rights as expressed through UNDRIP Articles 8, 11, 12, 15, 33 and 34.
2. The Australian Government should align the next National Cultural Policy with the UNDRIP and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reforms, and co-design with First Peoples whole-of-government accountability, implementation and reporting mechanisms for First Peoples cultural outcomes.
3. All Australian governments should prioritise sustained and long-term funding to support community-led initiatives and infrastructure essential to rebuilding strong and thriving First Peoples communities. These initiatives include:
  - practices that restore cultural authority and promote nation-building, good governance and community-facing accountability
  - restorative justice approaches that promote dispute resolution and peacemaking  
language revival programs
  - cultural camps and healing forums
  - intergenerational learning on Country and knowledge transfer and mentoring.

Please contact [redacted] Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice at [redacted] should you have any questions or seek further clarification.

Yours sincerely

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| <p>[redacted]</p> <p>Hugh de Kretser<br/><b>President</b></p> <p>Phone: + [redacted]<br/>Email: <a href="mailto:president@humanrights.gov.au">president@humanrights.gov.au</a></p> | <p>[redacted]</p> <p>Katie Kiss<br/><b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner</b></p> <p>Phone: + [redacted]<br/>Email: [redacted]</p> |
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