

City of Wanneroo Submission to the National Cultural Policy Review **Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place**

Introduction – About the City of Wanneroo

The City of Wanneroo (the City) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to inform Australia's next National Cultural Policy. The City supports the intent of building on *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*, and recognises the importance of a national policy framework that supports creativity, cultural expression, participation, cultural infrastructure and the long-term care of Australia's stories.

The current consultation identifies that the next National Cultural Policy will build on the five pillars of *Revive*: First Nations First, A Place for Every Story, Centrality of the Artist, Strong Institutions, and Reaching the Audience. The City strongly supports these pillars and encourages the Australian Government to ensure that local government is recognised as a critical delivery partner across each of them.

The City of Wanneroo is one of Western Australia's largest and fastest-growing local governments. The City's estimated resident population was 246,147 as at 30 June 2025 and is forecast to grow to 437,016 people by 2046. Wanneroo is one of Western Australia's most culturally diverse and family-oriented local governments, with children aged 0–14 years representing approximately 22% of the population and more than one in five residents speaking a language other than English at home. This growth is occurring across a large geographic area of approximately 684 square kilometres, including established suburbs, coastal communities, rural and agricultural areas, conservation landscapes and major growth corridors.

This growth creates both opportunity and pressure. The City is home to culturally diverse communities with strong local identities, rich Aboriginal and historic heritage, growing creative participation, and increasing expectations for accessible cultural experiences close to home. At the same time, the scale and pace of population growth place significant pressure on cultural infrastructure, collections storage, heritage conservation, public programming, arts development, audience engagement and operational resourcing.

The City is therefore well placed to provide feedback on the role of outer-metropolitan local governments in delivering national cultural outcomes in high-growth communities.

The Role of Local Government in Australia's Cultural Eco-System

Local government is one of the most direct and accessible delivery mechanisms for cultural participation in Australia. Councils provide the local infrastructure, programs, events, public spaces, collections, services and relationships through which many people first encounter arts, culture and heritage.

At the City of Wanneroo, this includes:

- Operation and programming of the Wanneroo Regional Museum
- Management, development and care of museum collections
- Operation and programming of the Wanneroo Regional Art Gallery
- Operation of five public libraries offering a broad range of library services and programs, with 3-4 further public libraries scheduled for development over the next 20 years.
- Delivery of community arts development, public programs and community cultural initiatives
- Management of public art and cultural activation across growing communities
- Stewardship of local history and community collections through the Community History Centre.
- Interpretation and care of historic heritage sites including State Heritage listed places Cockman House and Buckingham House, which are active museums.
- Support for Aboriginal heritage, local truth-telling, cultural consultation and place-based storytelling.
- Stewardship of Aboriginal and historic heritage sites
- Delivery of accessible, low-cost and family-friendly cultural events and experiences year round

This work is often delivered at the point where the national cultural policy becomes real for communities: in local museums, galleries, libraries, community centres, heritage places, public art trails, local festivals and events, school programs and neighbourhood cultural projects such as community murals.

According to the Australian Government's Office of the Arts, councils collectively invest over \$2. billion annually into cultural infrastructure and services. Despite this, local government is not formally recognised within national cultural funding structures as a core delivery partner (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sports and the Arts. Office of the Arts, 2025). The City notes that *Revive* recognises galleries, libraries, museums, archives and digital collections as cultural infrastructure that must be restored, built and maintained. The next National Cultural Policy should more explicitly recognise that local governments are responsible for a significant proportion of this infrastructure, often without adequate national funding alignment for its development, maintenance, staffing or lifecycle management.

The City of Wanneroo encourages the Australian Government to recognise local government as a core delivery partner within the national cultural ecosystem, alongside national institutions, state agencies, peak bodies, Aboriginal organisations, artists, creative industries and community-led cultural organisations and to ensure that future policy settings better align funding and responsibilities.

The Case for Policy Longevity: A 10-Year Strategic Horizon

For high-growth local governments such as the City of Wanneroo, cultural infrastructure, heritage stewardship, collection care, audience development and community cultural development require planning horizons that extend well beyond short-term funding cycles.

A primary concern for the City is the historical "stop-start" nature of the Commonwealth's approach to cultural investment. The next policy review should provide a stable, long-term framework that enables local governments to align cultural planning with long-term financial plans, community infrastructure plans, asset management plans, public art plans and heritage strategies. This reduces the risk of "orphaned" infrastructure that lacks ongoing operational support.

The City advocates for *Revive* to be transitioned into a 10-year National Cultural Framework, providing the sector with stability that transcends Federal, State, and Local election cycles and ensures cultural momentum is maintained. There should be clear implementation roadmaps across all levels of government.

There is significant apprehension within the sector that a potential future shift toward a less culture and arts-focused administration could see *Revive* dismantled. Without a legislated or long-term bipartisan commitment, the sector lacks the investment certainty required to embark on major capital works or long-form cultural development.

Policy certainty is particularly important in growth corridors, where decisions made now will determine whether new communities have equitable access to cultural infrastructure and services for decades to come.

Funding and Sustainability of Cultural Infrastructure and Services

The City supports the continued focus on cultural infrastructure, but notes that current funding models often favour short-term, competitive, project-based investment. These models do not adequately support the long term responsibilities carried by local governments, particularly in high growth and outer-metro contexts.

For the City of Wanneroo, key infrastructure and sustainability pressures include:

- Absence of a dedicated performing arts centre within the City or neighbouring Councils, limiting access to professional performing arts, touring productions, rehearsal facilities and local creative development.
- Growing demand for library, gallery, museum, education, early years and public programming
- Increased public art and heritage asset portfolios with long-term maintenance obligations not covered by traditional capital-only grant structures.
- Limited specialised collection storage and conservation capacity, creating risk to the preservation of community history and limiting public access
- High demand for community history enquiries from residents, researchers, internal business units and stakeholders

- The need to care for significant heritage places in accordance with conservation standards and legislative obligations
- Geographic access barriers for residents in growth corridors, particularly north of the City.

To ensure the successful, long-term implementation of *Revive* within high-growth regions, the City of Wanneroo identifies the following requirements for a sustainable cultural ecosystem:

1. **Transition to Sustained, Formula-Based Funding:** The City advocates for a shift from competitive, short-term grant cycles toward predictable, formula-based funding models. For rapidly expanding local governments, this financial certainty is essential to move beyond reactive programming and into the strategic, multi-year delivery of cultural services.
2. **Establishment of National Provision Benchmarks:** The implementation of standardised national targets for cultural facilities, such as museum and gallery square-metres per capita, would provide the City with a rigorous, evidence-based framework. These benchmarks are necessary to justify the development of essential cultural infrastructure alongside traditional utilities, ensuring residents in growth corridors have equitable access to arts and culture.
3. **Legislated Policy Stability and Bipartisan Roadmaps:** The creation of a legislated, long-form roadmap is required to mitigate policy volatility. By providing a stable, 10-year policy horizon, the Australian Government can offer local governments the security needed to confidently commit ratepayer funds to major cultural projects, knowing they will maintain federal alignment and support across multiple political cycles.

The City recommends that the Australian Government establish cultural infrastructure funding streams that support not only new buildings, but also:

- Collection storage and conservation facilities
- Environmental control and disaster preparedness
- Digital infrastructure and collection management systems
- Public art maintenance and renewal
- Heritage conservation works
- Accessibility upgrades
- Operational funding to support staffing, programming and public access

Response to Pillars

Pillar 1: First Nations First

The City strongly supports the principle that First Nations arts and culture must be First Nations led. This principle should remain foundational in the next National Cultural Policy.

Local government has an important role in supporting Aboriginal-led cultural expression, truth-telling, interpretation, place naming, public art, heritage protection and community education. However, this work must be properly resourced, culturally safe and grounded in self-determination.

Within the City of Wanneroo, First Nations storytelling is relevant across museums, heritage, public art, community programming, environmental interpretation, place-based engagement and local history. The City has supported community-led exhibition development, Aboriginal cultural consultation, truth-telling work, Noongar naming projects, and the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in heritage interpretation. This work has highlighted the importance of long-term relationships, paid consultation, appropriate governance, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property protections, and careful handling of cultural knowledge.

The City recommends that the next National Cultural Policy

- Provide dedicated funding for Aboriginal-led cultural programs delivered in partnership with local government
- Support paid engagement pathways for Elders, knowledge holders, Traditional Custodians, First Nations artists and cultural consultants
- Develop practical national guidance for local governments on Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, cultural permissions, truth-telling, public interpretation and community-led storytelling
- Support Aboriginal organisations to lead cultural tourism, heritage interpretation, language, arts and education initiatives.
- Recognise that cultural safety requires time, relationship-building and sustained resourcing, not one-off consultation
- Provide funding for training local government staff in culturally safe practice, First Nations collection care, interpretation and engagement.
- A renewed review of unmanaged Crown land transfers to First Nations organisations. Providing Traditional Owners with a tangible land base is essential for long-term sustainability of local cultural and economic entities.

Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story

The City strongly supports the principle that Australia's cultural policy must reflect the breadth of Australian stories and the contribution of all Australians as creators of culture. In a high-growth outer-metropolitan area such as Wanneroo, this includes Aboriginal histories, migration stories, agricultural heritage, coastal life, market gardening, local government history, domestic life, community advocacy, volunteerism, suburban growth, youth culture and contemporary creative practice.

Local government museums, galleries and community history services are essential to preserving and sharing these "hyper-local" stories. National stories are built from local stories. Without investment in local collections, local heritage and local storytelling, many community narratives will remain invisible or be lost.

The City of Wanneroo's museum and community history collections capture the lived experience of a rapidly changing region. These collections include objects, photographs, oral histories, documents, artworks, archival material and community stories connected to the Wanneroo region's Noongar heritage, rural industries, migration, market gardening, coastline, shipwrecks, local government, domestic life and suburban expansion.

However, the City faces increasing pressure in relation to collection storage, cataloguing, digitisation, conservation, access and interpretation. This reflects a broader national issue: community collections are growing, volunteer-led organisations are under strain, and many local stories rely on ageing custodians, fragile records and limited storage environments.

The City recommends that the next National Cultural Policy:

- Recognise that local government libraries, museums, galleries and community history centres as core social and cultural infrastructure
- Establish funding for collection storage, conservation, digitisation and access
- Fund local history and oral history initiatives in high-growth communities
- Support place-based storytelling that reflects outer metro communities
- Strengthen relationships between national cultural institutions and local governments including through loans, touring exhibitions, skills exchange and shared digital platforms
- Continue to invest in and expand initiatives such as the Sharing the National Collection program and Visions of Australia program

Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist

The City supports the recognition of artists as workers and the need for sustainable career structures, fair remuneration, vocational pathways and safe working cultures.

Local government plays a significant role in commissioning artists, supporting public art, providing exhibition opportunities, delivering workshops, contracting creative facilitators, and connecting artists with community audiences. However, local government procurement systems, funding limitations and inconsistent sector guidance can create barriers to fair pay and sustainable practice. The City supports artists through commissions, programming, events and public art and would benefit from the following recommendations:

That the next National Cultural Policy

- Recognise National Association for the Visual Arts guidance and other relevant sector standards as practical benchmarks
- Fund professional development, mentorships, traineeships, and placement for artists and arts workers
- Recognise that cultural labour includes both visible public-facing work and the specialist behind the scenes labour to care for collections, produce exhibitions and engage communities
- Mandated Fair Pay and NAVA Standards: The City recommends that National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) rates be recognised as a standard, providing clarity and consistency for procurement and ensuring fair remuneration for artists, arts workers, curators, cultural producers, workshop facilitators and public artists.
- The City advocates for federal funding to support structured traineeships and career pathways for culture and arts support workers, including curators, collection managers,

technicians, conservators, arts administrators and community cultural development practitioners.

- The City would welcome a review of taxation and fiscal policy settings affecting the cultural sector, including the treatment of prize money and the potential for salary-sacrifice or similar arrangements for not-for-profit arts workers, to support workforce sustainability

For the City of Wanneroo, workforce development is particularly critical. The City's cultural services rely on specialised expertise across a wide range of disciplines, including museum and gallery practice, collection management, exhibition development, public programming, education, Aboriginal engagement and ICIP, heritage interpretation, public art, visitor experience and community cultural development. These skills are essential to delivering the pillars of the National Cultural Policy at a local government level, where much of the public's direct interaction with arts and culture occurs.

There is a growing need for accessible and fit-for-purpose education and training pathways to support this workforce. In Western Australia, there are currently limited university and TAFE courses that provide practical, industry-aligned training in museums, galleries, collections care and cultural infrastructure management. Strengthening tertiary and vocational pathways is essential to developing future practitioners, supporting career progression, and ensuring a pipeline of skilled professionals capable of working across local, state and national cultural institutions.

This challenge is compounded by the absence of a funded peak body for the museum and collections sector, which limits coordinated advocacy, professional development, shared standards and sector-wide capability building.

Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure

The City supports the continuation of a strong national focus on cultural institutions. However, the next National Cultural Policy should define "institutions" broadly to include local government cultural infrastructure, not only major state, national, philanthropic or commercial institutions.

In many communities, the most accessible cultural institutions are local: the local museum, local gallery, library, heritage site, community history centre, public art collection, cultural festival, civic collection or community arts program. These institutions hold public trust, provide free or low-cost access, support education and wellbeing, preserve local memory and create opportunities for participation, enhancing social connection and supporting social cohesion and community safety.

This pillar represents the most significant pressure point for the City of Wanneroo, particularly within a high-growth context.

The City currently does not have a performing arts centre, limiting community access to professional performing arts, touring productions, and opportunities for local creative development. Beyond the delivery of new facilities, the City's cultural infrastructure needs also

include long-term stewardship, particularly in the absence of national funding for the ongoing maintenance of public art portfolios and heritage sites. A 10-year plan must therefore incorporate whole-of-lifecycle management of cultural assets to ensure they remain safe, functional, and accessible for future generations.

The City recommends that the next National Cultural Policy:

- Recognise local government cultural facilities as part of Australia's national cultural infrastructure.
- Establish a dedicated cultural infrastructure and renewal fund accessible to local governments
- Include operational funding as well as capital funding opportunities
- Support implementation of national museum and gallery standards
- Develop national cultural facility provision benchmarks, including access, travel distance, population catchment and square-metre guidance
- Support outer-metropolitan growth councils to plan cultural infrastructure early, before service gaps become entrenched
- Fund lifecycle planning for heritage places, public art, collections, galleries, museums and performance infrastructure
- Support climate resilience, environmental sustainability and disaster preparedness for cultural institutions
- Invest in structured workforce pathways, professional development and succession planning to ensure local governments have the specialised skills and capability required to manage cultural infrastructure and significant collections in line with recognised professional standards and best-practice stewardship.

The City also recommends that the Australian Government consider the specific needs of outer-metro growth areas. These communities often experience the access barriers of regional areas but are not always eligible for regional funding. A more nuanced funding framework is needed to recognise geographic distance, public transport limitations, rapid population growth and lack of established cultural infrastructure.

Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience

The City is committed to the delivery of accessible cultural programming. For local government, audience development begins with access: cultural experiences must be physically reachable, affordable, welcoming, relevant and inclusive.

In Wanneroo, the City's audiences include young families, children, schools, seniors, Aboriginal communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability, artists, local history researchers, volunteers, community groups, tourists and residents in both established and growth suburbs. The City's cultural services provide important low-cost and free cultural experiences, particularly for communities that may not otherwise access state or national cultural institutions.

The City recommends that the next National Cultural Policy include:

- For the continuation and expansion of programs that support live performance, local festivals, and touring circuits.
- Fund local, place-based cultural programming in growth corridors
- Support touring exhibitions, touring performances and outreach models that reach outer suburban audiences
- Support digital access to collections, exhibitions and public programs
- Fund inclusive engagement models for young people, families, people with disability, CALD communities and older residents
- Support transport-aware cultural planning, including recognition that distance and public transport gaps affect cultural participation
- Support partnerships between national institutions and local venues to increase access to high-quality cultural experiences close to home
- Formal Recognition of the "Outer-Metropolitan" Category. The City urges the Australian Government to recognise outer-metropolitan growth corridors as a distinct category in funding frameworks. Currently, residents in sprawling areas like Wanneroo face geographic isolation and infrastructure gaps similar to regional populations, yet are often excluded from regional support; a dedicated classification would ensure more equitable resource allocation for these "visibility gap" regions.
- Recognise libraries as trusted, accessible and culturally safe civic spaces that enable cultural participation for disengaged and under-represented communities, and acknowledge the complementary role of local museums and galleries in delivering inclusive, place-based cultural engagement

Conclusion: The Role of the Australian Government in Addressing These Issues

To support the City of Wanneroo in delivering the five pillars of *Revive*, the Australian Government should:

- Establish a long-term, 10-year national cultural framework that provides policy stability and aligns with state and local government planning cycles
- Create a dedicated cultural infrastructure fund that supports local government museums, galleries, performing arts spaces, collection stores, public art, heritage places, digital infrastructure and Libraries (Strong Cultural Infrastructure)
- Develop national provision benchmarks for facilities including population, distance, accessibility and growth-area considerations (Strong Cultural Infrastructure)
- Invest in local collections, community history, conservation, and digitisation recognising that local collections are small pieces of a national story (A Place for Every Story)

- Support Aboriginal-led cultural programs, ICIP guidance and truth-telling frameworks that are practical for local government implementation and properly resourced. (First Nations First)
- Embed fair pay and workforce development standards, including support for artists, arts workers, curators, collections managers, technicians, educators, conservators and cultural administrators (Centrality of the Artist)
- Recognise outer-metropolitan growth corridors as a distinct funding and policy category, particularly where communities experience regional-style access barriers within metropolitan boundaries
- Increase investment in place-based arts and access programs (Engaging the Audience)
- Expand partnerships between national institutions and local venues, including loans, touring exhibitions, touring performances, skills exchange and shared digital access
- Improve alignment between all levels of government
- Invest in audience data and inclusion benchmarks to support evidence-based planning, participation measurement and equitable cultural access

The City encourages the Australian Government to recognise local government as a **key delivery partner across all five pillars**, and to align funding and policy frameworks accordingly.

The City of Wanneroo supports the continuation and strengthening of Australia's National Cultural Policy. The next policy should build on the foundations of *Revive* while addressing the practical delivery challenges experienced by high-growth local governments.

For communities such as Wanneroo, culture is not separate from liveability, identity, reconciliation, education, economic development or community wellbeing. It is delivered through local museums, galleries, public art, heritage places, libraries, community programs, festivals and events, local collections and the everyday work of connecting people to place.

The City encourages the Australian Government to recognise local government as an essential partner in delivering national cultural outcomes. With appropriate policy stability, funding alignment, infrastructure investment and workforce support, local governments can continue to ensure that there is truly a place for every story, and a story for every place.