

National Cultural Policy Submission

May 2026

Adelaide Fringe

About Adelaide Fringe: Adelaide Fringe is the biggest arts festival in the southern hemisphere! For 31 summer days and nights, it transforms Adelaide and South Australia. It stretches from Coober Pedy to Mt Gambier, with eclectic and vibrant events, including cabaret, theatre, comedy, circus, music, visual arts, workshops and more. Adelaide Fringe was born in 1960 and attracts audiences aged from 1 to 100+ years. It's a true collaboration and co-creation between artists, venues and communities. Adelaide Fringe is a registered not-for-profit open-access festival. We operate a commercial model where artists, venues and producers take the risk and costs are covered by box office revenue. This means that anyone can register an event in Adelaide Fringe! We facilitate relationships between artists and venues to create a festival that transforms the state. We believe in challenging artists to be brave and audiences to be braver. The Adelaide Fringe office is located on Kaurana. Adelaide Fringe is an incubator for local talent with over 50% of our Festival made by local artists annually. We offer pathways for artists to build independent careers in the arts, find audiences and tour their work internationally. We offer year round artist support through our monthly professional development series, collaborations delivering residencies and opportunities within the South Australian small to medium arts organisations and the Honey Pot International Arts Marketplace which sees hundreds of delegates from all over the world come to Adelaide Fringe to network, and buy work leading to millions of dollars of deals made annually for artists to export and tour their work.

Adelaide Fringe is one of many Festivals in Australia that operate on a similar model, yet the impact and infrastructure remains largely unrecognised within the National Cultural Policy. Australia's major Fringe and independent festivals collectively engage millions of audience members, support thousands of independent artists and creative workers, and generate hundreds of millions of dollars in economic impact annually across the country. It is essential that future Cultural Policies recognise Fringe and open access, independent Festivals as national assets. There is currently no national policy framework recognising the role of Fringe festivals within Australia's cultural ecology.

As the largest open-access arts festival in the Southern Hemisphere, Adelaide Fringe demonstrates the critical role arts and culture play in Australia's economic, social and cultural life. Through accessible participation pathways, regional engagement and support for independent artists and arts workers, Adelaide Fringe contributes significantly to tourism, community wellbeing, creative workforce development and international cultural exchange.

First Nations First

Adelaide Fringe supports dedicated First Nations arts investment that enables self-determined cultural leadership, storytelling and career pathways. National cultural policy should embed First Nations leadership across funding, governance and decision-making structures, while supporting regional and community-led cultural practice.

A Place for Every Story

Adelaide Fringe supports stronger collaboration across all government departments and across the arts ecosystem to ensure equitable access, representation and participation. Investment in regional touring, independent festivals, local programming and international export and cultural

exchange is essential to supporting diverse voices and ensuring Australia remains a place where all stories can be shared and experienced.

We recommend a review of the Playing Australia funding model that would enable smaller grass roots shows to tour regionally, this could include a local programming fund, and an increase in allocation to the overall Playing Australia and Festivals Australia Touring funding available.

Centrality of the Artist

Artists and arts workers must remain at the centre of the National Cultural Policy, we support increased professional development opportunities, industry-led skills and training initiatives for artists and arts workers.

We recommend embedding grass roots grants funding that celebrate diversity and new ideas to run alongside the current Creative Australia funding that is centred in excellence.

Strong Cultural Infrastructure

We call for independent, open-access and Fringe Festivals to be recognised with national importance, and to be resourced accordingly within the National Cultural Policy. We call for a National Fringe Festivals Framework to be implemented and a review of Festivals impact as National significance.

We recommend tax reforms in support of Arts organisations, including extending Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) status to eligible not-for-profit arts festivals and organisations. Recognising the significant social, cultural and community wellbeing outcomes delivered by not-for-profit festivals would strengthen financial resilience and support long-term sustainability across Australia's cultural sector.

We recommend a review of the Major Festivals Initiative (MFI) funding models and request that there be equal or equivalent funding available to Fringe / independent Festivals.

In recognition of the quickly rising costs of living it is important that Creative Australia multi year agreements are indexed and allocated budgets are reviewed year on year with this in mind.

Engaging the Audience

Adelaide Fringe supports initiatives that reduce barriers to participation and grow audience engagement, including ticket subsidy programs, national arts voucher schemes, arts education partnerships, affordable participation pathways and increased support for live performance presentation for young audiences.

Conclusion

Adelaide Fringe's open-access model provides essential opportunities for artists to develop work, build audiences and connect to national and international markets. As artists and organisations face rising costs and increasing barriers to participation, investment in accessible cultural infrastructure and sustainable creative careers has never been more important. Independent Festivals must be recognised in a National Fringe Festivals Framework, with a budget allocation recommend at a minimum of \$25million nationally across a two year pilot.

Adelaide Fringe as an independent open -access Festival should be recognised not as discretionary activity, but as core national infrastructure that contributes to education, tourism, economic development, creative export, international diplomacy and social cohesion. Adelaide Fringe welcomes continued collaboration with Creative Australia and the Australian Government to support a thriving, inclusive and globally connected independent Festival footprint for Australia.