

Submission to the Public Consultation on Australia's next National Cultural Policy

Regional Arts WA – Social Fabric Equity Project

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Introduction

Hi, my name is Mireia Gonzalez. I am a CaLD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) artist, curator and arts worker currently working as the Project Officer for Social Fabric, a cultural equity initiative of Regional Arts WA, and based in Kalgoorlie–Boulder in the Goldfields–Esperance region of Western Australia. My role focuses on Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD), artist development, community engagement and strengthening equitable participation across Rural, Remote and Regional communities.

I am asking for stronger recognition and investment in Community Arts and Cultural Development methodologies, long-term cultural equity initiatives, and culturally safe and inclusive approaches across Australia's arts and cultural sector. This will lead to stronger social cohesion, increased participation in arts and culture, greater representation of underrepresented voices and stronger communities across regional Australia.

There is a lack of sustained funding and support for place-based cultural equity work, with most arts funding delivered through short-term project cycles rather than long-term investment in relationships and community outcomes. Research from the Community Arts and Cultural Development sector shows artists are largely employed on insecure, short-term contracts, limiting continuity and long-term impact, and regional artists earn around 30% less from creative work than metropolitan artists on average (Creative Australia, 2025).

This sits within a wider national context of declining social cohesion. The Scanlon Institute's Mapping Social Cohesion research found that 67% of Australians (around 8,000 respondents) believe racism is a fairly or very big problem in Australia. There has also been a rise in publicly visible racism across media reporting and social media platforms, which can further impact feelings of safety, belonging and participation in cultural life—particularly in regional communities where opportunities for intercultural engagement are already limited.

To address this, I recommend that the National Cultural Policy:

- Recognise Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) as essential cultural infrastructure
- Invest in long-term, place-based cultural equity initiatives

- Support culturally safe and inclusive workplaces across the arts and cultural sector
 - Strengthen pathways for artists as workers, leaders and community facilitators in regional Australia
 - Embed Rural, Remote and Regional perspectives across all policy pillars
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About Social Fabric

Social Fabric is a cultural equity initiative of Regional Arts WA working across the Goldfields–Esperance region of Western Australia. Through Community Arts and Cultural Development methodologies, Social Fabric works alongside communities, artists, researchers and organisations to strengthen equitable participation in arts and culture and create safer and more inclusive creative environments.

The project supports storytelling, artist development, cultural mapping, community engagement and partnership building to address barriers to participation and strengthen cultural belonging. Social Fabric seeks to develop practical models for more equitable arts and cultural systems and demonstrates how arts and culture can contribute to community wellbeing and social cohesion.

First Nations First (Pillar 1)

Within rural, remote and regional Australia, First Nations cultural leadership is grounded in Country, local knowledge systems and community relationships.

Long-term support for place-based and community-led initiatives is necessary to move beyond transactional engagement and toward genuine cultural leadership and self-determination.

Key actions

- Prioritise long-term investment in First Nations-led cultural practice
 - Support governance and decision-making aligned with cultural authority
 - Recognise CACD methodologies as supporting cultural continuity and participation
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A Place for Every Story (Pillar 2)

rural, remote and regional communities are culturally diverse and continually evolving. Stories emerging from regional Australia include First Nations communities, migrant

communities, multicultural communities, young people and communities whose experiences have historically been underrepresented.

Social Fabric demonstrates how inclusive and locally led cultural participation can strengthen belonging and create opportunities for people to see themselves reflected within cultural spaces.

Key actions

- Invest in culturally safe and inclusive participation models
 - Support locally led storytelling and community cultural development
 - Strengthen pathways for underrepresented communities to participate in cultural leadership
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Centrality of the Artist (Pillar 3)

Artists working within CACD contexts are more than creators. They are facilitators, educators, mentors and community leaders.

The lack of sustained support for artists undertaking this work is a significant challenge. Much of the labour associated with community practice, relationship-building and cultural leadership remains undervalued despite generating significant social outcomes.

Key actions

- Recognise artists as essential cultural workers
 - Invest in artist development and leadership pathways
 - Support sustainable employment models and long-term career pathways for regional artists
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In Summary

Social Fabric demonstrates that place-based and community-led cultural practice can create stronger, safer and more inclusive communities.

The challenge facing the sector is lack of sustained investment, and recognition. The next National Cultural Policy presents an opportunity to strengthen systems that support participation, equity and cultural belonging for all Australians, regardless of geography.