

TURNING WORLD

Who we are

Turning World is a boutique cultural agency engaging Australia with the Asia Pacific. Based in Melbourne, Turning World offers policy, curatorial and producing services with a focus on engaging with large-scale cultural institutions, governments and major events. Turning World has been engaged with every level of government and regularly consults to Federal and State Governments on cultural diplomacy and international engagement strategy and projects. Turning World was also critical in the creation of leading Asian engagement festival Asia Pacific Triennial of Performing Arts (Asia TOPA). Turning World Director Kate Ben-Tovim was appointed by Minister Burke to the *National Cultural Policy* Expert Reference Panel. Full bios of Co-Directors Kate Ben-Tovim and Tam Nguyen [here](#).

Turning World proposal to strengthen Australia's international cultural engagement

Turning World warmly welcomed the first national cultural policy for a decade, *Revive*. However, with international strategy notably absent from the policy, we share Minister Burke's view expressed in ArtsHub that *Revive 2.0* is the right context for '*strengthening opportunities for market development and international engagement for Australian creatives*'.

Australia is currently limiting its potential for Australian artists on the international stage. There are key export support mechanisms missing, and a lack of connectivity mechanisms between the relevant key government players and the cultural sector. Our key recommendations for the NCP refresh are:

1- Support Live Performance Export (NCP Alignment- All 5 Pillars)

Turning World has worked collectively with colleagues, specifically the newly formed 'Australian Live Performance Export Alliance', to identify urgent sector priorities for international engagement.

We endorse the Alliance's call for a refreshed National Cultural Policy to:

1. Name live performance export and international cultural engagement as strategic priorities in the next National Cultural Policy.
2. Establish an ongoing dedicated live performance export fund for tour-ready artists and organisations with demonstrated international demand.
3. Pilot a presenter-fee matched funding model, such as 30% matched support against guaranteed international presenter fees, to convert confirmed demand into viable touring.
4. Create a quick-response international disruption fund and require realistic contingency in all publicly supported international touring budgets.
5. Establish a cross-government International Cultural Relations coordination mechanism linking arts, foreign affairs, trade, tourism, migration, state agencies, Creative Australia, overseas posts and the live performance sector.
6. Establish dedicated First Nations-led international exchange, Indigenous diplomacy and market development infrastructure, including culturally grounded investment models and implementation support for existing Indigenous-to-Indigenous exchange strategies.

2- Prioritise strategic coherence for international cultural relations (NCP Alignment- Pillar 3, Pillar4, Pillar 5)

Our experience is that Australia lacks strategic coherence when it comes to international cultural activity, which limits our impact and ambition. We note the recent British Council commissioned report '[Soft Power Trend 2020-2025](#)' key finding that '*The global soft power landscape increasingly rewards strategic coherence over resource scale, with evidence suggesting that countries achieving closer alignment between policy objectives, institutional mandates and programme delivery secure superior returns on investment.*

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We would therefore like to offer two practical models for increasing strategic coherence for our international activity, delivering on Actions already identified in National Cultural Policy and filling a much-needed gap in Australia's cultural infrastructure when it comes to international cultural policy.

2.1 - Support Australian Cultural Diplomacy Centre (ACDC) [*working title], a new, independent cultural diplomacy entity.

ACDC is a bold new creative and strategic project, spearheading meaningful connections between Australia's cultural sector and national interest priorities. Bridging diplomatic and creative sector expertise, ACDC will deliver high-value opportunities for Australian artists overseas in support of national interest priorities. ACDC will also play a thought leadership role, positioning cultural diplomacy as a strategic capability that supports Australia's long-term interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Turning World is now 18 months into a \$560,000 four-year funding relationship (2025-2028) with the Sidney Myer Fund to pilot this new entity. We have also raised over \$600,000 in project funding from DFAT and state government global portfolios for new activity in the Indo-Pacific in the last two years.

Our pilot activity has so far included:

- Appointment by DFAT Public Diplomacy Branch as Cultural Sector Advisor (2025) for DFAT cultural focus program in the Pacific
- Two-year program to increase Australian performing arts sector literacy and market development with Southeast Asia, funded by DFAT's ASEAN-Australia Centre
- Direct engagement by multiple Overseas missions to provide cultural diplomacy programming advice and connect diplomats with artists and cultural sector colleagues
- Delivering high quality cultural diplomacy programs in the Indo-Pacific in collaboration with the festivals sector, performing arts sector and music industry
- Developing capacity building programs for Southeast Asian cultural sector professionals utilising Australia's technical and production expertise
- Developing cultural diplomacy training for cultural sector and diplomatic practitioners

Our pilot activity has more than proven the need for this new entity and has demonstrated how diplomacy networks can be better leveraged for market expansion in the emerging markets of Indo-Pacific. We have also demonstrated how centralising this work outside of government can improve efficiency and encourage new investment in the cultural sector from non-arts funding sources.

We are ready to stand up this new independent entity in the next 6-12 months and would see alignment with the National Cultural Policy refresh as the ideal context to bring this new initiative to life.

We note in particular Pillar 5 Action '*Strengthening arts collaboration and exchange and cultural diplomacy by leveraging Australia's global diplomatic network in key Australian overseas Posts*' [pg106]. ACDC enables NCP to deliver on this action with a new entity already proven to be trusted by DFAT, trusted by the sector, and deliverable in partnership with Philanthropic funding already secured.

Benefits for NCP in supporting ACDC:

- Leveraging Australia's global diplomatic network in key Australian overseas Posts to see more opportunities created for Australian artists overseas and more efficient utilisation of existing resources for international engagement activity
- Encouraging increased investment in culture from non-Arts Government portfolio areas (ie DFAT, Office of the Pacific, State Government international trade portfolios)
- Leveraging diplomatic networks for market expansion in emerging markets of Indo-Pacific, creating more offshore employment for Australian artists
- Building stronger domestic communities by demonstrating the value of our First Nations and diaspora artists to Australia's reputation overseas

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- Building cultural sector literacy for Australia's diplomatic community, and diplomatic literacy for Australia's cultural sector
- Synergising philanthropic and government investment on international engagement priorities

2.2 - Establish a Government Advisory Panel for International Cultural Relations chaired jointly by the Office for the Arts and DFAT.

Turing World supports Australian Live Performance Export submission which recommends a *Government Advisory Panel for International Cultural Relations chaired jointly by the Office for the Arts and DFAT.*

In 2025 Kate Ben-Tovim undertook a Churchill Fellowship, and the creation of a Council for International Cultural Relations was one of the recommendations from her Churchill Fellowship report '*Cultural Power is Political Power*' following her observations of similar mechanisms overseas.

A Council for International Cultural Relations could bring together industry experts across culture, music, First Nations knowledge and creative industry sectors to advise the government on policy integration, international activities in key priority regions (including export opportunities) and drive a systematic approach to global foreign policy, cultural and major event calendars.

Similar to the UK Soft Power Council, this could be co-appointed by both the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister for the Arts. Whole-of-government integration could include representation from DFAT, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA), the Office of First Nations International Engagement and Austrade. State governments would also have a strong role to play.

Australia already utilises a similar model for the sports sector via the Sports Diplomacy Consultative Group. There could be a strong advantage to an International Cultural Relations Council working closely with the Sports Diplomacy Consultative Group to better leverage connections between sport and culture, especially in the leadup to Brisbane Olympics 2032.

The formation of a council could also support the development of a 'trusted supplier' register for government of respected service providers with cultural expertise.

Benefits for NCP in supporting a Government Advisory Mechanism

- Generating more opportunities for Australian artists overseas through better co-ordination and unlocking greater whole-of-government investment in cultural activity overseas
- Leveraging Australia's global diplomatic network in key Australian overseas posts
- Supporting international market development for the cultural sector with appropriate strategies for emerging and emerged markets
- Showcasing our stories, people, places and products in a more unified way and helping them stand out in international markets
- Leveraging the international major event calendar (ie major international sports fixtures, Australian government diplomatic meetings and summits, DFAT cultural focus programs) to see more opportunities for Australian artists

I would be very happy to expand on this submission with further detail if this is of interest. This could include a more detailed proposal including detailed strategic plan and investment measurement frameworks for the proposed new ACDC entity.

Kate Ben-Tovim

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Founding Director, Turning World //

