

Submission to the Review of Australia's **National Cultural Policy (REVIVE)**

Submitted by [REDACTED]

In support of the national CACD Alliance submission
May 2026

Introduction

I write this submission as an independent artist in support of Australia's cultural future — one that centres equity, artistic freedom, and the full breadth of community-embedded creative practice.

This submission is structured in two sections. The first endorses and amplifies the collective submission made by the national Alliance of Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) organisations and practitioners, a body of work I support fully. The second raises concerns I hold personally — and that many artists share — about censorship, political interference, and racism in the arts.

Together, these sections reflect a singular conviction: that a healthy cultural policy must both resource community-led creative practice and protect the conditions of artistic freedom that allow that practice to speak truth, build belonging, and hold power to account.

SECTION ONE

Community Arts and Cultural Development: Recognition, Investment and Infrastructure

I endorse in full the collective submission made by the national Alliance of Community Arts and Cultural Development organisations and independent practitioners. What follows is a personal expression of the priorities raised in that submission, written from my experience as an independent artist embedded in community-engaged practice.

What Community Arts and Cultural Development Is — and Why It Matters

Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) is not a niche artform. It is a creative methodology — long-term, relational, place-based — through which communities shape and sustain their own cultural life. It sits at the intersection of creativity, social connection and public value, and operates across health, education, justice, disaster recovery, climate adaptation and regional development.

CACD enables communities to process lived experience, build connection, challenge prejudice, and present stories that rarely appear on the mainstage. As an independent artist, this kind of work forms a significant part of my practice and of the practice of many artists I work alongside.

The Gap in REVIVE

Despite its national reach and impact, CACD is not explicitly recognised within the current REVIVE framework. This has real consequences. What is not counted is not prioritised. What is not visible is not scaled.

Currently, CACD receives approximately \$13–15 million from a total national arts investment pool of approximately \$237.4 million — roughly 5–6%. This figure is structurally misleading: community-engaged practice is dispersed across multiple funding panels and is not consistently tracked or reported. The result is that CACD appears marginal when it is, in fact, foundational.

This gap is especially significant given national policy priorities in equity, cultural diversity, audience participation, youth engagement and climate adaptation — all areas where CACD directly delivers outcomes. Without recognition, those commitments cannot be fully realised.

My Key Recommendations (Supporting the Alliance)

I urge the government to act on the following, as detailed in the Alliance submission:

- **Formally recognise CACD as a distinct and essential field of creative practice within the new cultural policy**
- **Establish a national CACD body within Creative Australia to lead advocacy, research and coordination**

- Increase investment in place-based, long-term CACD practice — particularly in regional, remote and disaster-impacted communities
- Reform funding models away from short-term project grants toward sustained relational investment
- Embed CACD across government portfolios including health, justice, climate adaptation and regional development
- Introduce cross-program tracking so community-engaged investment is accurately counted
- Invest in workforce sustainability, including training, mentoring and trauma-informed practice frameworks
- Ensure equitable access to funding and participation, particularly for First Nations, CALD, disabled and marginalised communities

Australia is facing social fragmentation, rising inequality and compounding climate impacts. These are not just policy challenges — they are relational challenges. CACD is the infrastructure through which communities respond to them. The next iteration of REVIVE must recognise and resource this work so that no community is left behind.

SECTION TWO

Censorship, Political Interference and Racism in the Arts

I write this section from personal and professional experience, and in alignment with many artists who have felt unable to speak publicly for fear of professional consequences. The National Cultural Policy must address these issues directly. The integrity of Australia's cultural sector depends on it.

Core Values Underpinning This Section

This section is grounded in a commitment to:

- Decolonisation, anti-racism and anti-discrimination
- Artists as the moral compass of the sector
- Freedom of artistic expression, without limitation
- Freedom from political interference in the arts

A Decolonial, Anti-Racist and Anti-Discrimination Approach

The National Cultural Policy must take a decolonial, anti-racist and anti-discrimination approach throughout — not as a footnote, but as a foundational

framework. It should respect and take leadership from those in the sector already working from this position.

On the question of definitional frameworks used by arts, cultural and educational institutions: the IHRA definition of antisemitism has been applied in ways that conflate political speech and criticism of state conduct with racial vilification. I urge the government to replace it with the United Nations' core stance, which asserts that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, without distinction of any kind, including race or ethnic origin, and that no state, institution, group or individual should discriminate in human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Artists as the Moral Compass of the Sector

Artists are ethical and values-driven participants in public life. The National Cultural Policy must support this role, not constrain it. Specifically:

- **Artists must be able to speak freely, sign open letters, and participate in boycott actions without risk to their reputation, livelihoods or funding**
- **Arts and cultural institutions must respect cultural diversity, and actively support artists who have been targeted in the media for speaking out against injustice — rather than distancing themselves under political pressure**
- **Artists must not be instrumentalised by institutions, lobbyists, the media or politicians for purposes contrary to their values or work**

Freedom of Artistic Expression

Artistic freedom of speech is already enshrined in the Creative Australia Act (s.11(e): to uphold and promote freedom of expression in the arts). This must be actively upheld in the National Cultural Policy, not merely stated.

Strong cultural infrastructure requires that art be able to facilitate critical discourse, address political issues and critique power and class structures. This is not a threat to social cohesion — it is one of its foundations.

The National Cultural Policy must directly address the culture of intimidation that currently prevents many artists from creating and expressing freely. It must acknowledge and respond to the documented censorship, targeting and cancellation of artists who have spoken out against injustices — particularly where those injustices involve nations that have been condemned by the United Nations for acts of apartheid, genocide and war crimes.

Freedom from Political Interference

Arts funding and programming must remain independent from political interference. This principle is already enshrined in the Creative Australia Act (s.14(2)), which prohibits politicians from influencing or directing funding decisions. It must be meaningfully upheld in practice.

I call for the following actions:

- Ensure independent, arms-length funding processes at federal, state and local government levels
- Prohibit politicians at all levels from influencing — or providing advice that results in — the provision or removal of funding for particular projects or artists
- Implement a formal inquiry into political interference in the arts, including through donations, board membership and lobbying
- Ensure that donors do not influence programming or organisational decisions at arts institutions
- Review board membership at publicly funded arts organisations to identify and address conflicts of interest arising from political party connections or lobbyist relationships

Conclusion

A genuinely inclusive and democratic cultural policy requires two things to be true at once: the infrastructure to ensure all communities can create and participate in cultural life, and the conditions of freedom that allow artists to speak honestly within that life.

CACD provides the relational infrastructure. Artistic freedom provides the conditions. Neither is dispensable.

I urge the government to formally recognise and resource Community Arts and Cultural Development as a cornerstone of Australia's cultural future, and to take meaningful action to protect artistic freedom from censorship, political interference and systemic racism.

No community should be left behind. No artist should be silenced.

#REVIVECOMMUNITYARTS

This submission is made in personal support of the national CACD Alliance.