

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

National Cultural Policy consultation 2026

I write as President of the global advocacy association of theatre and performance for, with and by children and young people – ASSITEJ International.

Children and young people have fundamental human rights to play, to access culture, and to engage with complex art, to have opportunities for self-expression and to have a voice and be heard, as stated in Articles 31, 13 and 12 in the UN Declaration of the Right of the Child. If we are to be serious about lifelong engagement in the arts, this must begin from the youngest age.

Yet currently, there is a strategic blind spot for children and young people's arts, resulting in limited access and underfunding, reinforcing systemic disadvantage. Children and young people under 25 years old make up 29% of Australia's population. Revive's articulation of children and young people as creators or participants in the arts contains few actions outside of education. However, the transformative potential of arts engagement from early childhood to early adulthood, means it has critical importance in fostering creativity and contributing to a more inclusive society.

- There are distinct issues facing children (0-12 years), young people (13-17 years) and young people (18-24 years), as both audiences and creators.
- Children and young people have unique cultural needs, including safe spaces for belonging, agency in co-creation, cultural safety, opportunities for challenge and risk, and support for their health and wellbeing.
- Arts for children and young people are undervalued due to societal perceptions that prioritise adult cultural participation. This bias often relegates children and young people's participation to education and neglects the need for diverse, rigorous, and meaningful artistic experiences that respect their capacity and potential as discerning audiences and creators.
- There are significant barriers to accessing the arts for children and young people, including attitudinal, socio-economic, geographical, cultural and identity-based barriers.

Recommendations:

- Create and implement a 6th pillar in the NCP for children and young people, 0-25, acknowledging the intersectionality of this 29% of the population.
- Create and implement a 10 year strategy for children, young people and the arts, in collaboration with young people and sector cultural workers.
- Increase investment in organisations that create work for, with and by children and young people and for projects that encompass work created across all ages and for the youth arts sector who develop work by young people.
- Provide professional development funding, supported mentorships and placements for First Nations and D/deaf and/or Disabled leaders and emerging artists in this sector.
- Commission national audience development and awareness strategies for children and young people's arts to reduce barriers to access.

ASSITEJ International has membership of 82 national centres and networks across 87 countries on 6 continents. The issues are startlingly similar in our sector worldwide including lack of value and recognition of both the

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practitioners and the audiences. Australia has an opportunity to lead in this space, where we have led before, and focus attention, interest and investment on the growth of artists and audiences in our country.

Sue Giles AM – President ASSITEJ International

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