

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Organisation

Adelaide Design Week



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Adelaide Design Week is an open platform connecting design practice across South Australia and nationally. Our network spans: industrial designers, architects, makers, craftspeople, artists, educators, students, graphic designers, built environment practitioners, spatial designers researchers and creative independent and local businesses. We support design not as a niche discipline, but as a cultural force that shapes how Australians live, gather, build, communicate and imagine the future.

One of the most significant challenges in Australia's cultural sector is that design remains under-recognised within cultural policy, despite its profound public impact - something we highlighted in our theme \every*where\, at ADW2026. Design shapes our cities, public spaces, homes, systems, products, services and communities—yet policy and funding frameworks often privilege traditional arts categories, leaving interdisciplinary design practice without clear support pathways.

This creates a disconnect between cultural policy and contemporary creative practice. Increasingly, the most impactful work happens between disciplines: architecture and social practice, craft and advanced manufacturing, design and community engagement, public art and placemaking. These hybrid practices are often collaborative, public-facing and socially engaged—but structurally difficult to support.

A new National Cultural Policy should explicitly recognise design and craft, making and interdisciplinary creative practice as essential parts of Australia's cultural ecosystem.

A second challenge is access. Cultural participation remains concentrated in metropolitan institutions and established sectors. Yet some of the most dynamic creative work occurs in temporary spaces, workshops, streets, schools, studios, maker spaces and community-led environments. Cultural policy must better support decentralised, place-based cultural activity that reflects how audiences actually, in real-time engage with creative work.

Adelaide Design Week has demonstrated strong public appetite for this kind of engagement. Audiences are eager for accessible, participatory cultural experiences that blur the line between exhibition, education, industry and civic life. This presents a major opportunity.

National cultural policy should support:

- cross-disciplinary practice that connects art, design, craft and the built environment
- grassroots and place-based cultural initiatives beyond major institutions
- stronger recognition of making, fabrication and craft as cultural practice
- pathways for emerging practitioners, students and independent makers
- partnerships between cultural organisations, education, industry and local government
- regional and national design networks that support knowledge sharing and collaboration

Investment should extend beyond presentation outcomes to ecosystem-building: mentorship, production infrastructure, affordable spaces, commissioning opportunities and long-term capacity building, and value the people and their work. These people, thier hard work - they make design happen.

Australia has an opportunity to define culture more expansively—not only as what is displayed in institutions, but as what is designed, built, made and collectively experienced in everyday life.

A contemporary cultural policy should reflect the reality that creativity is interdisciplinary, civic and embedded in the systems that shape society. Design belongs within that national cultural conversation.