

23 May 2026

The Hon. Tony Bourke MP, Minister for the Arts, National Cultural Policy Expert Panel
and Policy Advisory Group
National Cultural Policy Consultation 2026

Dear Minister, Panel and Advisory Group Members,

SUBMISSION FOR THE NEXT NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY CONSULTATION

Canberra Potters' Society Incorporated

Canberra Potters welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on Australia's next National Cultural Policy. We endorse two submissions to which we are signatory and contributor: the Australian Craft and Design Centres (ACDC) network submission, *We are a Nation of Makers*, and the joint ACT Arts Centres' submission on cultural infrastructure sustainability. This submission reinforces both from the perspective of a small, ceramics-specific arts organisation working at the intersection of professional practice, education and community.

Who we are

Founded in 1975, Canberra Potters is the ACT's pre-eminent ceramic arts organisation and the sole tenant and steward of Watson Arts Centre, a publicly owned facility. Canberra Potters is also uniquely positioned as the only not-for-profit ceramics organisation in Australia that offers such a complete and comprehensive range of services and opportunities for artists, makers and the public. Our Watson Arts Centre facility includes ceramic workshops, professional kiln and glazing facilities, a gallery, artist studios, onsite artist accommodation, and a retail shop. Through exhibitions, residencies, classes, workshops, masterclasses and community events, we support everyone, from beginners to internationally acclaimed artists.

Each year we welcome more than 10,000 visitors, deliver 38,000+ contact hours of learning to over 2,000 students, support a membership of 700+ ranging from beginners to internationally regarded artists, and provide paid opportunities for 150+ artists and makers. Four members are currently elected to the International Academy of Ceramics. Eighty per cent of our income is self-generated. In 2025 we paid \$180,000 to artists and \$820,00+ to artworkers.

We are one of a network of ACT arts centres — including Belco Arts, Tuggeranong Arts Centre, Ainslie + Gorman, Strathnairn, PhotoAccess, Street Theatre and Canberra Glassworks — that collectively engage more than 300,000 visitors and participants every year. We are also part of a national craft and design ecosystem that includes ACDC network organisations along with ceramics focussed organisation including Sturt, Slow Clay, Clayschool and the Australian Ceramics Association.

Strong cultural infrastructure includes small specialist organisations (Pillar 4)

Revive recognises the importance of strong cultural infrastructure. As the ACT Arts Centres' submission makes clear, infrastructure is not only major institutions and landmark buildings — it is also the locally embedded arts centres that hold the kilns, studios, darkrooms, hot shops and rehearsal rooms in which Australians actually participate in cultural life. The imminent closure of the Australian Design Centre, alongside well-documented pressures on small-to-medium organisations nationally, shows how fragile this layer is.

Like other ACT arts centres, Canberra Potters is experiencing increases in wages, insurance, utilities and specialist production costs that significantly outpace government indexation, while being asked to deliver an expanding range of cultural, wellbeing, education and tourism outcomes. We strongly support the ACT Arts Centres' call for a **Creative Infrastructure Sustainability Fund** to underwrite the long-term viability of arts centres and specialist cultural facilities. We equally support the ACDC proposal for a **dedicated structure within Creative Australia** to work in partnership with the craft and design sector. The two proposals are complementary: one secures the buildings and operations; the other secures the sector-wide architecture our discipline needs.

Artisan skills, training pathways and the centrality of the artist (Pillar 3)

Australia is losing the specialist post-secondary education that once underpinned the crafts. The number of tertiary ceramics programs has shrunk markedly, and technical knowledge — kiln building, glaze chemistry, materials science, large-scale work — is increasingly held only within organisations like ours. We carry significant responsibility for sustaining skills that were previously the domain of dedicated tertiary courses, while operating on small-organisation budgets. Without small specialist arts organisations, the talent pipeline on which major national institutions, festivals and Australia's international cultural profile depend will weaken.

We endorse ACDC's call for a **10-year workforce plan** for crafts people and designers and ask that such a plan recognise and resource the role organisations like Canberra Potters already play — through masterclasses, residencies, paid mentoring, internships and First Nations artist-led learning. As Artificial Intelligence reshapes knowledge work, the embodied, material and tacit knowledge held in the crafts becomes more — not less — culturally and economically valuable.

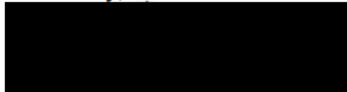
Ceramics, accessibility and wellbeing (Pillar 5)

Ceramics is uniquely accessible and as an artform distinctly supports and builds community and social cohesion. It invites participation across ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds; it requires no prior literacy and offers immediate sensory and creative reward. Our programs welcome school children, people living with disability, older Australians and complete beginners alongside professional artists. The evidence base for the wellbeing, social-connection and mental-health benefits of hands-on creative participation — explicitly recognised in the ACT Wellbeing Framework — is strong and growing. Any national audience-engagement strategy should resource *participatory* craft as well as *spectator* arts.

A nation of makers, made locally

Canberra Potters is a working example of what *Revive* aspires to: a small organisation embedded in community, stewarding a public asset on Ngannawal and Ngambri Country, sustaining skills, supporting artists at every career stage, and contributing to Canberra's standing as Australia's arts capital and a future UNESCO City of Design. The next National Cultural Policy has an opportunity to back organisations like ours — and the wider ACDC and ACT arts-centres networks — to be sustainable, to grow our cultural impact and reach nationally and internationally and to increasingly work with other sectors in areas such as skills and training, manufacturing and tourism.

Yours sincerely,


Jessi England
CEO & Artistic Director
Canberra Potters Society Inc | Watson Arts Centr