



National Cultural Policy submission

Over 47 years Utp has built a reputation for fearless support of artists. Based in Western Sydney on Dharug Nura, Utp views our national conversations through the lens of cultural diversity, socioeconomic diversity, and with the largest urban population of First Nations people we are deeply influenced by First Nations leadership.

What we do

- Utp Rising – alternative art school for young people in Western Sydney
- Human Rights in the Arts Symposium
- Another World Festival – sharing new experimental work with diverse audiences
- Long term Artists in Residence Program - development to presentation
- Community arts programming

Challenges and gaps that we believe need to be addressed

- Censorship, harassment and cancellation of artists and arts workers
- Stagnant funding levels for arts projects and Small-Medium organisations
- The recognition of First Nations sovereignty and cultural rights
- The recognition of diaspora and migration stories as Australian stories
- Barriers created by economic inequality for artists and audience members
- Barriers created by lack of Disability access for artists and audience members
- Recognition of the community arts sector as the beating heart of impact in the arts

1. First Nations First – Recognising and respecting the crucial place of First Nations stories at the centre of Australia's arts and culture

We support the key priorities put forward in the First Nations Performing Arts Workforce Development Framework 2025–2030 led by Blakdance.

Utp is currently the only non-Indigenous arts organisation in the country with First Nations leadership at every level—across leadership, producing, and Board. While we are proud of this, we do not believe it should be exceptional. We want to see this become standard practice across the sector.

To achieve this, we need greater investment in **training and development opportunities for First Nations leaders** — both current and emerging. These opportunities must be embedded within culturally safe organisations that actively recognise and respond to the ongoing impacts of colonisation and the associated cultural load.

Recommendations:

- A minimum of 10 days of cultural leave as standard

- Cluster hiring approaches that avoid the culturally unsafe expectation of a single individual representing the diversity of First Nations perspectives
- Embedded ICIP (Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property) protections as standard in all artist and arts worker contracts and embedded in practice
- Fair payment for consultation and cultural labour
- Benefit sharing embedded within project and organisational budgets
- Payment for First Nations people serving on Boards (Utp takes the broader position that all Board members should be remunerated in order to ensure diversity on Boards)
- Increased training for non-indigenous team members

2. A Place for Every Story – Reflecting the breadth of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture

Australia is a signatory to several core international human rights treaties. Our right to enjoy and benefit from culture is contained in Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Australia has also ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), of which Article 13 protects the right of expression and information for children.

To ensure that all Australians have equal access to the arts, as enshrined in these treaties, we must **address the barriers to participation, not just for audiences but also for artists**.

- Plurality over social cohesion that embraces diverse positions, opinion, identity and life experience

In practice, this looks like **project investment** that can allow for:

- Access for artists to cultural advisors or elders to ensure cultural safety
- Mental health support for artists (Support Act, organisational EAP, Creative Workforces)

CACD provides the relational infrastructure that enables communities to **connect, adapt and respond** - particularly in contexts of social change, climate disruption, and recovery. Without increased, clearly identified and trackable investment, this infrastructure remains fragile, limiting both its impact and its capacity to meet growing national demand for community-driven solutions to complex challenges.

Recommendations:

- Formal Recognition - Explicitly recognise Community Arts and Cultural development within the new cultural policy as a distinct and essential field of practice.
- Establish a National CACD Entity - Embed a national body dedicated to CACD within Creative Australia to lead coordination, advocacy, research and sector development.
- Increased investment in CACD practice - Supporting local arts initiatives that strengthen social cohesion and foster belonging in Australian communities
- Invest in Workforce & Practice Sustainability - Support training, mentoring, wellbeing and trauma-informed practice frameworks specific to the needs of CACD practice.
- Reform Funding Models - Shift to long-term, place-based and relational investment models for CACD practice.
- Embed CACD Across Policy Areas - Position CACD across health, disaster management, climate adaptation, justice, education and regional development.

- Strengthen Research & Evaluation - Further develop national CACD data, impact measurement and evidence frameworks.
- Equity of Access - Ensure equitable access to funding, resources and participation nationwide.

3. Centrality of the Artist – Supporting the artist as worker and celebrating artists as creators

Examples have been documented of “the Australian arts and cultural sector harming its own artists, cultural workers or audience (2023-2026)” (Kate Larsen Keys). These instances have disproportionately impacted artists who are from migrant backgrounds and First Nations artists. At Utp we see the chilling ripple effect this has on the community and next generation of artists who see this and believe that the sector is not for them.

Artists need a safe workplace where bullying, harassment and contract cancellations are not feared.

Recommendations:

- Reestablishing a commitment from Creative Australia to expert, independent and arms-length decision making free from government or third-party interference
- Reinstating **Art Form Boards** to ensure accountable sector input in Creative Australia decision making
- **Rescinding or reimagining new speech suppression laws**
- Creating new resources to help avoid and/or **mitigate censorship in the future**
- The establishing of an enforceable **Code of Conduct for organisations and funders** that could be supported by Creative Workforces

4. Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Utp congratulates the government on the significant hard infrastructure investment since Revive was launched. The next phase needs to focus on **investment in the soft infrastructure of small-to-medium organisations and project funding**. The sector needs **significant increase in multi-year operational, administrative and capacity-building support for organisations**.

5. Engaging the Audience – Making sure our stories connect with people at home and abroad

Above mentioned **international human rights treaties provide a basis to re-think the relationship the arts has with our communities of audiences**.

Community arts is where new audiences are developed - this sector should be centred in a new policy and should have the funding to back it.

The sector needs help measuring impact on audiences. Creative Australia has a role to play here in educating on the many models of evaluations and in setting standardised measurable metrics.

In practice, this looks like **project investment** that can allow for:

- Accessible ticketing structures to ensure diverse audiences can access the arts
- Additional fees for community participants

- Community liaison
- Public programs that engage and educate
- Artist development programs and increased investment in arts education