

SUPPORTACT

CALL TO PRIORITISE THE MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING OF ARTS WORKERS

National Cultural Policy Review – May 2026

Submitted by Support Act

The current National Cultural Policy, *Revive: A Place For Every Story, A Story For Every Place*, explicitly recognises the importance of artist wellbeing under Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist, including specific reference to Support Act's role in supporting the mental health of music workers.

Through funding delivered via Creative Workplaces, Support Act has expanded this remit to provide sector-specific mental health support across the broader creative industries. This has enabled a strong partnership focused on improving access to culturally safe, industry-informed support services at a national scale.

Australia's creative capability depends on a safe and mentally healthy workforce. Creative workers experience elevated psychosocial risk driven by income insecurity, irregular employment, isolation, high performance pressure, and blurred personal and professional boundaries. Support Act's 2024 sector survey found that 53.5% of creative workers reported high or very high levels of psychological distress — more than three times the general population.

Support Act's 2024 evaluation of the [Wellbeing Helpline](#) highlighted the structural and psychological barriers that continue to limit help-seeking across the sector. While structural barriers can be addressed through service expansion, psychological barriers such as stigma, confidentiality concerns, and avoidance of distress require sustained, trust-building investment over time. Feedback from the sector also reinforced that long-term funding certainty is critical to building confidence in, and engagement with, these services.

Over the past two years, Support Act has

- expanded the Wellbeing Helpline across the broader creative industries
- increased service utilisation
- delivered tailored mental health education and training programs
- expanded culturally intelligent First Nations social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) programs, and
- increased reach into regional and remote communities through Creative Workplaces partnerships.

Our sector-specific EAP-style model is also increasingly being adopted by small and medium creative organisations that would otherwise have limited access to structured mental health support, alongside fee-for-service partnerships with larger organisations such as Opera Australia.

These outcomes demonstrate both the scale of need and the effectiveness of industry-led wellbeing infrastructure that supports mentally healthy creative workplaces. **They also demonstrate that wellbeing support is not supplementary to the cultural sector — it is part of the human infrastructure that enables artists and creative workers to sustain long-term careers.**

To support the next phase of *Revive*, we recommend that the National Cultural Policy:

- commit to long-term investment in accessible, culturally safe, sector-specific mental health support
- establish permanent, multi-year Commonwealth funding frameworks for industry-specific mental health, crisis relief, and social and emotional wellbeing services across the creative industries, noting the leadership role that Support Act provides in these areas
- integrate psychosocial risk and mental health into cultural policy and workplace safety frameworks
- Commit to supporting the recommendations of the forthcoming First Nations Music Industry Review
- expand crisis relief and wellbeing support across all creative industries
- recognise social and emotional wellbeing as essential cultural infrastructure underpinning workforce sustainability

A strong cultural sector depends not only on artistic output, but on the wellbeing of the people who create it. Without sustained investment in mental health infrastructure, the sector's long-term sustainability and creative capacity will remain constrained.

Submitted by:

Clive Miller, CEO

23 May, 2026

Supporting Information

What The Research Says

- **Continued support is critical:** In 2024, Support Act surveyed 1,518 music and creative arts professionals for our report, *Mental Health and Wellbeing in Music and the Creative Industries (2024)*. Key findings include:
 - 53.5% of respondents reported high or very high levels of psychological distress — more than 3 times the rate of the general Australian population.
 - 57% had experienced suicidal ideation, representing 3.4 times the proportion of the general population.
 - 35% reported a current mental health condition, which is 1.6 times the national average.
 - Safety concerns are prevalent, with fewer than 20% feeling safe at work at all times and 43.2% reporting exposure to unsafe conditions in the past year.
 - Economic vulnerability is significant, with 19.6% of respondents reporting an annual income below the poverty line.

- 68.1% identified the cost of living as the primary challenge to sustaining a career in the sector.
- **Our programs are working:** An independent evaluation of the [Wellbeing Helpline](#) highlighted the following outcomes:
 - 81% of service users reported active improvements in their mental health or professional situation after engaging with counselling.
 - 77% felt their clinician possessed a deep understanding of the unique structural and psychological pressures inherent to the creative industries.
 - 74% expressed high overall satisfaction with the support provided by both the counsellor and Support Act.
 - Efficiency in care delivery was high, with 65% of callers matched with an accredited clinician within 48 hours.
 - The service achieved a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 38, established as an excellent benchmark for national healthcare delivery models.

Case Studies:

Strengthening Mental Health Support Across the Music Industry

Since the introduction of Revive and the establishment of Creative Workplaces, Support Act has significantly expanded industry-specific mental health and wellbeing support across the Australian music industry. In FY25 and FY26, the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline delivered 3,857 counselling hours to over 884 music and creative workers nationally across 3,737 sessions, with March 2026 recording the highest monthly engagement in the service's history.

Support Act also delivered 178 mental health workshops and training sessions to more than 4,200 participants across FY25 and FY26, including programs delivered with organisations such as APRA AMCOS, Australian Live Music Business Council (ALMBC), Tamworth Country Music Festival, BIGSOUND, Indie-Con, Australian Women in Music Awards (AWMAs), CrewCare, Music NSW, Music Victoria, Music SA, Music NT, WAM, Music Tasmania, The Push, Queensland Music Festival, UNIFIED, GYRO and Blak Country Mt Gambier.

The organisation has also expanded its "Support Act as your EAP" initiative, supporting music organisations and small-to-medium employers that would otherwise have limited access to structured mental health support.

These initiatives are helping embed mentally healthy workplace practices, strengthen workforce sustainability and improve access to industry-specific support across the contemporary music sector. They demonstrate the practical impact of Revive and Support Act in supporting not only artistic output, but the people who sustain Australia's music industry.

Creative Workplaces / Support Act – Building Wellbeing Infrastructure Across the Creative Industries

Since the introduction of Revive and the establishment of Creative Workplaces, Support Act has significantly expanded its industry-specific mental health and wellbeing services beyond music into the broader creative industries. In FY25 and FY26, the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline delivered more than 1,600 counselling hours to over 400 creative workers nationally, with increasing demand across visual arts, writing, screen and performing arts sectors.

Support Act also delivered 178 mental health workshops and training sessions to more than 4,200 participants across Australia, with creative industries programming increasing from 9% to approximately 25% of total delivery. Programs have now been delivered in partnership with organisations including Opera Australia, AFTRS, NAVA, the Australian Society of Authors, Artrage, Australian Youth Orchestra, MONA, Patrick Togher Management, Regional Arts NSW, Adelaide Festival and Ilbijerri Theatre*.

These engagements range from partnership agreements to EAP MOU's and / or scheduling of future workshops and trainings. They directly meet the KPIs as outlined in our funding agreement with Creative Workplaces, both in terms of creative industries engagement and increasing our geographic footprint.

This work has helped embed mentally healthy workplace practices, improve access to culturally safe support services, and strengthen workforce sustainability across the sector. It demonstrates how Revive and Creative Workplaces are delivering practical outcomes through industry-led models that support not only artistic output, but the wellbeing of the people who make Australia's creative industries possible.

* At the time of writing, we are in active discussion with: Diversity Arts, Performance Space, Melbourne Festivals Group, Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, Sydney Fringe Festival, Museums and Galleries NSW, Red Hot Arts in Alice Springs, Southern Edge Arts in Albany WA, Actors Benevolent Fund NSW, Screenwest (WA), Tuggeranong Arts Centre (ACT), Canberra Contemporary, Regional Arts Support Network - Qld and Regional Arts Victoria.

Sectoral Alignment

- In addition to this submission, a complementary response has been prepared by Catherine Satour, First Nations Program Manager at Support Act, providing a First Nations perspective on the need to recognise Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) as essential cultural infrastructure.
- Support Act has also contributed to the “Next Generation Now” Contemporary Music Industry submission and endorses its collective recommendations.