

National Cultural Submission [REDACTED]

State and territory-based arts centres are essential cultural infrastructure. They are places where people gather, learn, make, participate and connect. They are spaces where culture is not only presented, but actively created through community participation, artistic development and shared experience.

Across [REDACTED], organisations including [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

collectively engage more than 300,000 visitors and participants annually through exhibitions, workshops, artist studios, public programs, classes, performances and community-led activity. Together, these organisations provide accessible opportunities for participation across all stages of life, supporting children and young people, emerging artists, older Australians, professional artists and diverse communities.

As recognised in *Revive*, strong cultural infrastructure is critical to ensuring that every Australian story has a place. However, cultural infrastructure must be understood as more than major institutions or landmark buildings alone. Community arts centres are deeply embedded local infrastructure. They provide the spaces, equipment, technical facilities and creative environments that enable Australians to participate directly in cultural life.

Importantly, this infrastructure supports a vital creative ecosystem that nurtures participation and development at every level — from children engaging in creativity for the first time, through to community makers, emerging practitioners and some of Australia’s leading artists and craftspeople. Arts centres create pathways for artistic excellence while also supporting creativity as an essential part of everyday life, wellbeing and belonging.

Small-to-medium arts organisations and arts centres are also the foundation of Australia’s broader cultural ecology. They provide the environments where artists develop skills, experiment, undertake professional development and sustain creative practice over time. This talent pipeline is critical to the success of Australia’s major cultural institutions, festivals and international cultural profile. National institutions depend on the artists, makers and creative workers developed and supported within locally embedded arts organisations and creative communities across the country.

At the same time, these organisations deliver outcomes far beyond artistic development alone. By providing accessible spaces for participation, learning and creative expression, arts centres contribute directly to community wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion. The [REDACTED] identifies arts and culture as central to “identity and belonging,” recognising that participation in arts and cultural activity improves wellbeing through social connection, inclusion, stress reduction and community cohesion. Similar

priorities are increasingly reflected nationally through wellbeing, preventative health and social cohesion agendas.

Arts centres also contribute significantly to Australia's economic and creative capability. They support tourism, creative industries, cultural manufacturing, skills development and workforce pathways. [REDACTED] demonstrates how locally embedded cultural infrastructure can also generate national and international impact. As Australia's leading centre dedicated to [REDACTED] combines artist development, public participation, tourism, education, manufacturing and cultural production within a single site. Alongside other [REDACTED] arts centres, it contributes to a vibrant and interconnected cultural ecology that supports both community participation and professional creative practice.

Despite this significant public value, the operational sustainability of arts centres is under increasing pressure nationally. Current funding and indexation models are no longer keeping pace with the real cost of maintaining existing levels of community participation, cultural access and creative activity.

Across the sector, organisations are experiencing substantial increases in wages, insurance, utilities, maintenance and specialist production costs that significantly exceed government indexation. At the same time, governments are increasingly relying on arts centres to deliver broader social and economic outcomes including wellbeing, youth engagement, social cohesion, tourism activation, creative skills development and cultural inclusion.

Without increased operational investment, arts organisations will be forced to reduce programming, increase participation costs, defer maintenance, reduce artist support and limit public access. This risks the gradual erosion of Australia's locally embedded cultural infrastructure and the significant social and economic return it delivers.

Recommendation

Establish a dedicated Creative Infrastructure Sustainability Fund to support the long-term operational sustainability, maintenance and renewal of arts centres, creative participation spaces and specialist cultural facilities across Australia.

The Fund would provide investment through State and Territory Governments and locally embedded arts organisations to maintain accessible public cultural infrastructure, address rising operational and maintenance costs, support specialist creative production facilities and equipment, strengthen workforce sustainability and creative skills development, and improve access to affordable cultural participation.

The Fund should recognise that arts centres deliver significant cultural, social and economic outcomes beyond the arts sector alone, contributing directly to national priorities including tourism, manufacturing, wellbeing, education, workforce development and social cohesion.

This investment would help ensure Australia can maintain the locally embedded cultural infrastructure that underpins community participation, artistic development, creative industries capability and the long-term sustainability of Australia's cultural ecology.

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