Northern Centre for Contemporary Art (NCCA)
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23 May 2026

Larrakia Country

Submission to the Review of Revive — Australia's National Cultural Policy

The Northern Centre for Contemporary Art (NCCA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the review of *Revive: Australia's National Cultural Policy*. NCCA is an independent, non-commercial contemporary art organisation based on Larrakia Country in Garramilla / Darwin. We are the only Northern Territory member of Contemporary Arts Organisations Australia (CAOA), the national network of small-to-medium contemporary arts organisations.

For more than 37 years, NCCA has supported contemporary art and artists across Northern Australia. We endorse CAOA's submission in full. This complementary statement, made on behalf of NCCA's Staff and Board, addresses what Revive 2.0 must deliver for small-to-medium visual arts organisations operating in Northern, regional and remote Australia — where this sector is not one part of a larger ecology, but the principal contemporary visual arts infrastructure available to artists, audiences and communities.

Essential infrastructure, chronically under-resourced

Between 2021 and 2025, NCCA has:

- worked with approximately 490 artists and at least 100 creative consultants, averaging around 100 artists per year
- developed and presented more than 700 new works
- welcomed 56,650 onsite visitors and engaged a further 100,680 audiences online, plus an additional 807,000 international audiences through the 2022 Manifesta 14 project in Prishtina
- delivered around 180 free public and education programs reaching more than 9,600 participants and students
- invested approximately 70% of operational turnover directly into artists and arts workers
- maintained a program in which an average of 38% of artists identified as First Nations, culturally diverse, LGBTQIA+, living with disability or young people, with First Nations artists alone averaging 25% of the program

These outcomes have been achieved on annual turnover that grew from approximately $260,000 in 2023 to $366,000 in 2025 — a fraction of the resources available to comparable organisations in metropolitan centres.

Independent analysis of NCCA's 2022 program found that the organisation generated $8.6 million in economic benefit to the Northern Territory and supported 63 jobs, including permanent staff, casual staff, local contractors and volunteers. Approximately 5,900 interstate and international visitors travelled to the Northern Territory and engaged with NCCA during their stay.

These are not the outcomes of a peripheral cultural organisation. They are the outcomes of an essential piece of public cultural infrastructure operating without the baseline investment required to sustain its role. In the Top End, the alternative to a stable and properly resourced NCCA is not duplication or consolidation. It is the absence of contemporary visual arts infrastructure altogether.

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The Northern, regional and remote reality

Revive rightly identifies First Nations First and Strong Cultural Infrastructure as central pillars. However, current funding settings do not adequately recognise the real cost of delivering these priorities outside Australia's south-eastern capitals.

Operating from Darwin means:

- substantially higher costs for freight, travel, materials, insurance, maintenance and digital connectivity
- a small and dispersed donor base, without the entrenched tradition of arts philanthropy available to many southern-state organisations
- distance from decision-makers, corporate headquarters, media centres, philanthropic networks and partner institutions
- the genuine cost of cultural safety, including travel, time on Country, Elders' and cultural fees, translation, and meaningful engagement with First Nations artists, communities and remote art centres
- exposure to climate and disaster risk, including cyclones, extreme heat, flooding and monsoonal damage to leased premises — costs that under-capitalised small-to-medium organisations cannot absorb
- compounding pressure on wages and staff retention: a decade of static operational funding combined with the cost of living in a regional area makes it structurally difficult to fairly pay and retain the arts workers without whom these organisations cannot function

Despite these structural disadvantages, NCCA platforms the work of regional and remote First Nations artists and art centres, including Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Art Centre, Iwantja Arts, Marrawuddi Arts & Culture, Jilamara Arts & Crafts, Maningrida Arts & Culture and the Hermannsburg Potters, among others. We connect Northern Australian artists to national and Southeast Asian audiences and are working towards a First Nations-led curatorial model through the establishment of a First Nations Curatorial Fellowship.

NCCA supports CAOA and NAVA in advocating for nationally consistent award wages for arts workers, so that this work is valued at a national standard. This work directly advances the ambitions of *Revive*. But it cannot be delivered sustainably through flat funding models that treat geography as incidental rather than structural.

What Revive 2.0 must deliver

NCCA endorses CAOA's three core recommendations:

- the establishment of a legislated Visual Arts Council
- the renewal and expansion of multi-year operational funding, including the Visual Arts, Craft and Design Framework
- dedicated investment in mobility and touring delivered through small-to-medium organisations

In addition, NCCA makes two recommendations that respond directly to the realities of Northern, regional and remote operation.

1. Increase the operational funding floor for small-to-medium visual arts organisations

The Northern Territory has one of the highest concentrations of artists per capita in Australia, and an internationally significant density of First Nations artistic practice. Yet a decade of static investment has eroded the real value of Commonwealth support across the small-to-medium sector.

NCCA's Commonwealth operational funding sits at approximately $150,000 per annum — effectively the same figure received 15 years ago. This funding has not kept pace with inflation, insurance, workplace compliance, rising rent, freight, production costs or the professional obligations now expected of contemporary arts organisations.

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Recent independent research demonstrates the scale of the income crisis facing the practising visual arts workforce: MacNeil et al. (2022) found that the gap between census self-identification as a practising visual artist and ATO-declared visual arts income approaches 50%, indicating that most practising visual artists earn too little from their practice to register meaningfully in income data. Operational funding uplift is the most direct mechanism the Commonwealth has to translate Revive's *Centrality of the Artist* pillar into measurably higher and more frequent artist payments through the organisations — like NCCA — that pay them.

A meaningful uplift in baseline operational funding, indexed annually, is the single most effective intervention the Commonwealth can make to stabilise the sector. It would protect the public outcomes that organisations like NCCA already deliver: artist development, First Nations cultural leadership, regional access, education, tourism, employment and national cultural exchange.

2. Establish a dedicated Northern, regional and remote loading

> The cost of operating a small-to-medium arts organisation in Northern Australia is materially higher than in metropolitan centres, while the philanthropic and corporate base available to offset those costs is significantly smaller.

NCCA recommends that *Revive 2.0* introduce a formal Northern, regional and remote loading within the Visual Arts, Craft and Design Framework and Creative Australia operational funding streams. This loading should recognise distance, freight, travel, cultural-engagement costs, climate-related risk, reduced access to philanthropy, and the higher cost of maintaining public cultural infrastructure in remote and regional settings.

Comparable loadings already exist in Commonwealth health and education funding. The cultural sector deserves the same recognition that geography is not a marginal consideration, but a core determinant of cost, access and equity.

In closing

NCCA has absorbed more than a decade of static funding while expanding its First Nations programming, accessibility, regional reach, national profile and international engagement. There is no further efficiency to find. What remains is a policy choice.

With modest but structural reform, *Revive 2.0* can ensure that the major independent contemporary art organisation in the Top End — and the wider small-to-medium sector across regional and remote Australia — is resourced to support the next generation of artists, audiences and communities.

Without that reform, the Commonwealth risks asking the organisations most closely aligned with the ambitions of *Revive* to continue delivering national cultural policy outcomes on funding settings that no longer meet the cost of doing so.

We thank the Government for the opportunity to contribute and stand ready to provide further evidence, case studies or site visits on request.

Signed,

The Staff and Board of the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art