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The UNSW School of Art & Design welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the review of the Australian Government's Revive National Cultural Policy. As a leading institution for creative education, research and cultural leadership, the School recognises the critical role that art/design education and creative-led research infrastructure play in sustaining Australia's cultural life, democratic participation and creative economy.

Drawing on the School's experience we recommend that the review strengthen investment in equitable access to creative education, interdisciplinary practice and inclusive institutional governance.

### **Our recommendations:**

- **Whole of government approaches to cultural policy including education and health**
- **Recognise the role universities play in cultural sector by aligning cultural & education policy, (Pillars 3 & 4) including:**
  - Embed arts, design and creative practice as essential components of national education policy from primary school through to tertiary education. There would be no artists without art schools. Likewise, informed audiences are developed through creative education.
  - Expand Indigenous leadership opportunities and places for First Nation's students in creative education.
  - Reverse the long-term decline in arts participation within schools by restoring specialist arts teaching and increasing support for partnerships between schools, universities and cultural institutions.
  - Repeal or substantially reform the Job-ready Graduates Package to reduce financial barriers to arts and design education.
  - Recognise creative education as essential national capability infrastructure rather than discretionary expenditure.
- **Recognise creative-led research as cultural infrastructure that enables critical conversations which are vital to a resilient and cohesive society (Pillars 2, 4 & 5) including:**
  - Support practice-led research and studio-based learning models within universities as critical contributors to Australia's cultural innovation ecosystem.
  - Protect Australian creatives from AI through stronger copyright protections, transparent AI regulation and fair remuneration frameworks for creative labour.
  - Fund collaborative research between universities and the cultural sector.
- **Prioritise inclusive institutional governance even if it requires change (Pillar 4)**
  - Require organisations to create opportunities for diverse leadership of cultural institutions including but not limited to CALD people, indigenous, women, people with disability, younger people possibly through including more of these people on boards, such as happened recently in NSW.

## About us

The School of Art & Design, within the Faculty of Arts, Design & Architecture, traces its origins to the founding of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts in 1833, while UNSW itself was established in 1949. UNSW Sydney is a world-leading teaching and research university, recognised by employers and organisations globally. At UNSW School of Art & Design in Sydney we advance knowledge and practice through creativity, critical thinking, and care. Grounded in a rich history of both experimental and traditional disciplines, we create an environment where artists and designers are empowered to shape the future and make a positive impact both locally and globally. The School offers Australia's most diverse and comprehensive range of art and design studio disciplines, fostering interdisciplinary practices across 3D visualisation, animation, ceramics, drawing, experience, fashion, furniture, graphics, installation, interaction, jewellery, moving image, painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture, sound, textiles, visual effects, and more. These disciplines and more are offered through our undergraduate degrees in Visual Arts, Design, Animation & Moving Image, and Art Theory.

With a student cohort exceeding 4,000 enrolments, the School maintains strong connections to industry through curriculum-embedded collaborations, professional placements, and industry-sponsored initiatives, including five sponsored prizes. Work Integrated Learning (WIL) provides opportunities for students to undertake learning experiences in professional settings. Every student is offered the opportunity to participate as part of their program of study. WIL provides an invaluable opportunity for students at advanced stages of their study to continue to build professional skills and apply their academic knowledge to real-world challenges.

UNSW School of Art & Design undertakes innovative research and scholarship, with creative practice experimentation at its heart, societal impact as its driving purpose, and a commitment to championing Indigenous research and decolonial practices. Across our history, the School has led Australian research in creative arts and design in practice, theory, history, activism and cultural engagement. Our research includes fields evaluated as "well above world standard" in the last Excellence in Research for Australia review. We are home to over 60 research active academics and over 80 Higher Research Degree candidates.

The School undertakes socially embedded research through industry and community partnerships, from NGOs to government bodies to museums and technology companies. Our research supports these partners through expertise in research methods including practice-based research, situated fieldwork, archival research, user-centered design, speculative design, rapid prototyping, and socially-engaged design.

Since 2018, the School has generated \$13.5 million in research income, including funding from national competitive schemes such as the ARC and NHMRC.

The School of Art & Design has a strong record of producing graduates who make sustained and high-impact contributions to the cultural and creative industries in Australia and internationally. Our alumni include leading contemporary artists, internationally recognised designers, and senior figures within influential creative enterprises and cultural institutions. Collectively, they demonstrate the School's capacity to translate research-led practice into significant cultural, social, and economic outcomes.

## Response to the Pillars

The review of Revive presents an opportunity to strengthen Australia's cultural infrastructure by recognising creative education as the central component of a sustainable national cultural ecology. Our School's emphasis on collaborative leadership, interdisciplinary practice and socially engaged cultural work suggests a number of priority areas for policy development:

## **1. First Nations First:**

The three pillars of the UNSW Indigenous Strategy are Culture and Country, Grow Our Own and Give Back. These resonate with the aspirations and expectations of many in the arts and cultural sector to centre First Nations in Australian culture in respectful and meaningful ways. This work goes beyond any 'sector' as it is integral to the broader need for social justice and reconciliation that Australia must continue to address. We therefore recommend:

- Increasing funded places, scholarships and pathways for First Nations students in creative arts and cultural leadership education.
- Indigenous artistic activity is distinctive and should be visible on a global stage. If we do not record and preserve this activity it is lost. A priority should be in establishing principles of Indigenous Data Governance in the arts.
- Expanding Indigenous leadership opportunities across galleries, museums, universities, festivals and publicly funded cultural organisations.
- Partnerships between tertiary institutions and First Nations communities to support culturally informed research, teaching and exhibition practice.
- Funding structures that enable sustained First Nations governance and decision-making authority across cultural institutions.
- Long-term investment in First Nations-led curatorial, artistic and research programs that strengthen cultural continuity, language and cultural sovereignty.

## **2. A Place for Every Story:**

The School advocates for a culturally inclusive sector that reflects the diversity of contemporary Australia in both cultural production and institutional leadership. A sustainable cultural sector depends upon equitable representation not only on stages and walls, but also within governance and decision-making structures. We recommend:

- Increased support for culturally diverse, disability-led, regional and LGBTQIA+ arts organisations and curatorial initiatives.
- Investment in independent and artist-run spaces that provide pathways for experimental and underrepresented voices.
- Funding for community-engaged curatorial projects that connect local histories, lived experience and public participation.
- Greater recognition of curatorial and public programming work as essential infrastructure for enabling cultural access and representation.
- Governance reforms that encourage more representative boards and executive leadership structures across publicly funded cultural organisations.
- National cultural policy must champion the role of art, artists, and art education to address challenging topics.
- Societal resilience comes from strengthening ethical and careful forms of debate. Universities can provide evidence-based approaches to supporting artists, cultural leaders and audiences to engage in difficult conversation.

### **3. Centrality of the Artist:**

Creative education and sustainable professional pathways are fundamental to supporting artists and cultural workers. Supporting artists requires sustained investment in the broader ecosystems of education, research and cultural labour that underpin creative practice. The School recommends:

- Higher education in the arts is the engine of a creative economy and cultural policy must connect to education policy. Art and design schools are where the practitioners and audiences of tomorrow are trained.
- Repeal the Job-ready Graduates Package, which disproportionately increased costs for humanities and creative arts education and has undermined access to cultural and creative training. Current education policy creates barrier to diverse participation in the arts at tertiary level– which directly hinders the ambitions of Revive. Current Education Policy settings also creates barriers to global engagement, through student caps.
- Expand paid internships, residencies and mentorships connecting universities, cultural institutions and independent organisations.
- Support early-career curators, producers and arts workers alongside artists as essential contributors to cultural production.
- Increase investment in small-to-medium arts organisations as key sites for experimentation, professional development and artistic risk-taking.
- Recognise curatorial labour, cultural research and arts administration as integral to sustaining artistic ecosystems.
- Track career pathways for people in the creative and cultural sectors noting the prevalence of portfolio careers.
- Protect Australian creatives from exploitative uses of artificial intelligence through stronger copyright protections, transparent AI regulation and fair remuneration frameworks for creative labour.

### **4. Strong Cultural Infrastructure:**

The School supports an expanded understanding of cultural infrastructure that includes education, research, archives, digital systems and community engagement alongside physical institutions. Importantly, arts-led research powers innovation in the cultural sector which underpins a creative society. We recommend:

- Cultural policy must support collaboration between academia and industry.
- Connected and Collaborative Institutions build better infrastructure, incentivise institutions to work collaboratively.
- Recognition of tertiary arts education and practice-led research as core components of national cultural infrastructure.
- Developing whole-of-government approaches to cultural policy that integrate arts and culture with education, health, social policy and community wellbeing.
- Investment in digital cultural infrastructure, archives and collections to ensure sustainable access to Australia's cultural histories, including initiatives such as the [Design & Art Australia Online \(DAAO\)](#).
- Support for curatorial research, publishing and commissioning programs that strengthen cultural interpretation and knowledge production.

- Whole-of-government approaches to cultural policy that integrate arts and culture across education, health, social services and community development portfolios.
- Support for cross-art form and interdisciplinary approaches rather than narrowly siloed or partisan approaches to cultural funding and policy.
- Better integration of design into cultural policy priorities, including the development of a Design strategy.

### **5. Engaging the Audience:**

The School recognises public participation and engagement as central to contemporary cultural practice and leadership. Arts-led research enables critical conversations which are vital to a resilient and cohesive society. We recommend:

- Increased investment in creative education, essential for growing audiences.
- Increased support for participatory and community-led arts programming including policies that encourage cultural institutions to work collaboratively with communities rather than through top-down models of engagement.
- Investment in public engagement initiatives that connect audiences with contemporary art, cultural debate and local histories.
- Support for interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaborations that expand cultural participation beyond traditional arts audiences.
- Funding for experimental curatorial and digital engagement models that respond to changing audience behaviours and technologies.
- Expanding opportunities for collaboration between universities, cultural institutions and communities.
- Supporting digital and public engagement initiatives that increase access to arts and culture across metropolitan, regional and remote Australia.
- Encouraging cultural institutions to adopt collaborative and community-responsive models of leadership and programming.

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