

# MAXIMISING CULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

---

## BUILDING AUSTRALIA'S CREATIVITY

---

*A submission to the Australian Government regarding the new National Cultural Policy.*

*Richard Caladine  
22 May, 2026.*

### KEY POINTS

---

- *To achieve the goals of the National Cultural Policy cultural productivity must be maximised.*
- *Cultural productivity is the generation of cultural works and events, and engagement with cultural works and events.*
- *When creativity is optimised, cultural productivity increases in quantity and quality.*
- *The basis of any creative work is creative thinking.*
- *Education, business and government systems have led many Australians to consider themselves not creative or not capable of creative thought.*
- *The research clearly states: we are all creative, creative thinking can be learnt, enhanced and maintained.*
- *Training, research and information programs on creative thinking are recommended to maximise cultural productivity.*

## INTRODUCTION - CULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

---

The National Cultural Policy has at its heart the concepts of inclusivity and opportunity: 'A place for every story and a story for every place.' Its stated focus is to build a cultural landscape that reflects our diversity, supports our workers, and strengthens the nation we share.

To achieve these goals we must increase and enhance our national cultural productivity while ensuring equitable input from all sections of our diverse culture and minority groups.

***Cultural productivity is:***

- ***The generation of cultural works and events, and***
- ***Engagement with cultural works and events.***

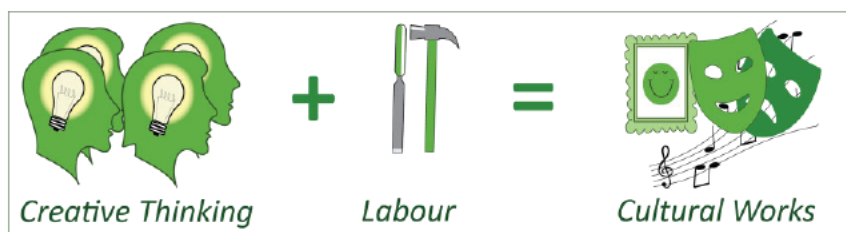
When creativity is optimised and cultural workers have enhanced skills of creative thinking, the generation of artistic and cultural work will increase in quantity and quality.

When they identify as creative, audiences are more receptive. Their experiences of cultural works or events become deeper and richer in meaning.

***Cultural works and events are inherently the results of creative endeavours.***

***The basis of any creative work is creative thinking.***

***Developing creative thinking skills is thus central to maximising cultural productivity.***



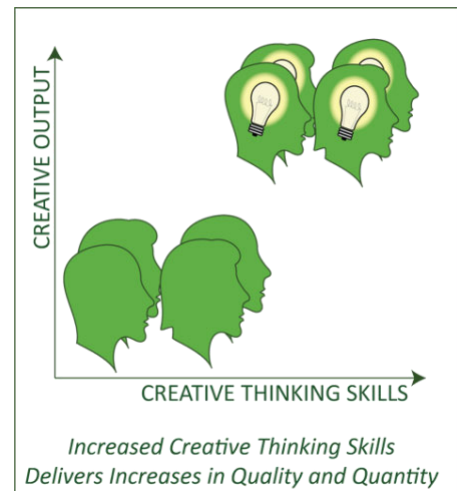
## CREATIVE THINKING

---

Creative thinking is the collective term for the cognitive processes that lead to original ideas, solutions and perspectives.

Creative thinking can happen in different ways. Many authors<sup>i</sup> have discussed divergent and associative thinking and while these are not always congruent with creative outcomes they form the basis for exercises to enhance creative thinking skills.

This submission recommends widespread training in creative thinking to maximise creative thinking and thereby maximise cultural productivity and participation.



## THE CREATIVITY DEFICIT - WHY MANY CONSIDER THEMSELVES NOT CREATIVE

---

The research clearly states that we are all creative<sup>ii</sup>. However, there are several, salient factors that cause many Australian individuals to consider themselves not creative. These stem, in the main, from the way our social, educational and work lives are organised.

The research is quite clear in identifying high levels of creativity in young children and the significant or complete decay of these during the years of education<sup>iii</sup>.

Modern education systems are designed for large numbers of students and are particularly good at developing critical thinking skills. However, mass systems of education are ill-equipped to develop creative thinking skills in the majority of graduates.

Mass systems of education require efficient methods of measuring student performance. Examinations and assignments are often the favoured means of doing this. In these forms of assessment students compete, either with each other or against a possible score. Often the goal is to achieve the correct answer or to present a valid argument.

Creativity is not easy to measure. While there is generally only one correct answer to a mathematical problem, challenges that require creative solutions might have no single, correct answer but many effective and appropriate ones. In mass systems this is much less efficient to assess, or measure. It is not surprising then, that educational systems tend to favour processes requiring logic, deductive thinking and analysis rather than creativity. While this is easy to understand in terms of the efficiency needed, it is at odds with a world in need of a creative thinking population. Creativity is needed to solve problems as well as to create cultural works and experiences. Some of the difficulties of developing creative thinking skills in mass systems of education are:

- The discouragement of divergent thinking in favour of convergent thinking. Divergent thinking is a cognitive process capable of delivering creative outcomes.
- Failure is feared and tasks that may result in failure avoided. Failure is an important part of creativity<sup>iv</sup>.
- The low value placed on creative subjects (e.g. compared to STEM).

By limiting opportunities to develop creative thinking skills our education systems are not preparing students for the needs of the world they inhabit.

Businesses and governments add to the misconception that some of us are creative and some are not. Some industries divide employees into 'creatives' and 'others'. Often the 'creatives' look, dress and act differently to the 'others' thus reinforcing the 'other's' self-perception as not creative. If I don't look like a 'creative' I am not creative.

The propagation of this false division is a great disservice to the 'others,' businesses and our nation. If the 'others' are classified, overtly or by implication, as not creative, they feel they don't have the right to exercise their creativity in such an environment. This is a waste of resources for the organisation and the nation. It is also a missed opportunity for happiness. When people exercise their creativity they generally feel more fulfilled, more in control of their lives and happier. The literature is quite clear about causal links between creativity and happiness, creativity and well-being<sup>v</sup>.

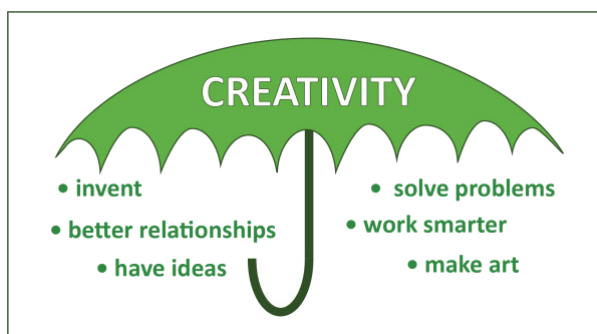
Governments describe some industries as creative and others as 'non-creative'. Creative Australia's website presents key findings from an analysis of cultural and creative employment in Australia drawing on tables of employment data from the Australian Census of Population and Housing (2021).

The analysis uses the 'creative trident approach' – an innovative methodology for measuring the scale and make-up of the creative economy, and which considers:

- a) creatives working in the creative industries
- b) creatives working in non-creative industries, and
- c) non-creative workers employed in the creative industries.<sup>vi</sup>

Clearly there is a need to differentiate between the type of work undertaken for many reasons. However, labelling some industries and workers as 'non-creative' adds to the misconception that many of us are not creative.

People who say they don't have a creative bone in their bodies often mean they are not artistic. In many cases this can be interpreted as the inability to draw or express oneself in the visual arts. Many people have a personal definition of creativity that it is limited to the production of art in any of the artistic fields. This is not what creativity is.



Creativity can exist in all aspects of human endeavour. It can be used to invent, solve problems, be more engaged in your work, have better relationships and, if you want, to make art.

Developing creativity will not necessarily turn us into great artists. However, it might increase our appreciation of the arts and encourage us to undertake artistic projects.

Clearly some people seem to have a predisposition to performing well in one of the arts. Child prodigies do exist and in some cases they are the product of extensive training and practice. However, research<sup>vii</sup> indicates that some child prodigies differ from the norm in other ways. Some are on the autism spectrum, especially when the autism allows greater attention to detail. Others have greater capacity for working memory.

However, the vast majority of those who are successful in any of the arts did not start out as child prodigies. Great artists must have passion for their artistic practice. It is possible for anyone to be an artist. Assuming a minimum level of health and ability, once they have found their particular branch of the arts they will usually succeed if they have: passion, determination, application, skills and creativity.

To maximise cultural productivity we must convince the Australian population that we are all capable of creative thinking. Fortunately the research shows that creative thinking skills can be rediscovered, relearnt and enhanced<sup>viii</sup>.

***Creative thinking skills can be rediscovered, relearnt and enhanced.***

---

## WHY DO WE NEED CREATIVE THINKING?

At the start of any creative endeavour there has to be an idea. It may not be fully formed or an exact indication of the finished product or solution. Some idea, whether nebulous, concrete or in between must exist before work can begin.

Coming up with ideas is an unfortunate victim of the decay of creativity mentioned above. If we are to maximise our nation's cultural productivity our creative output must increase. We must therefore find ways to rediscover and enhance our creative thinking skills.

As mentioned, the research is quite clear in acknowledging we are all capable of creative thought. The research is also emphatic that creativity is not something we either have or lack<sup>ix</sup>. Creative thinking is a capability of all able-minded humans.

***To maximise our cultural, artistic and creative output and thus achieve the overall goals of the National Cultural Policy, we must find ways to:***

- ***Promote the growth of creative thinking skills in all Australians.***
- ***Educate our population to identify as creative.***

## CREATIVE THINKING AND THE PILLARS

---

A population with enhanced creative thinking skills will positively impact the Five Pillars around which the National Cultural Policy is being built.

### PILLAR 1

---

Maximising the creative thinking skills of our First Nations people will strengthen recognition of cultural rights, recognise the centrality of language to culture, and support pathways for First Nations leadership across the cultural landscape through artworks and cultural experiences, stories and performances of greater impact and quality. The experience of First Nations culture by others will be enhanced and enriched when they have creative thinking skills as these afford deeper insights into the works within their cultural contexts. A population which identifies as creative is more likely to seek out creative and cultural experiences.

### PILLAR 2

---

Diverse forms of cultural expression and participation in a world of change can lead to exclusion or the limitation of opportunities. Enhanced creative thinking skills will allow diverse cultural groups to produce works in greater quantity and of greater quality. Creative thinking skills will provide the agility to pivot from one delivery platform to another with minimal disruption. When Australians identify as creative there is less impediment to the production of cultural works and events and greater acceptance of cultural works from other cultural contexts.

### PILLAR 3

---

For many years the Australian population has not recognised the necessity of arts and culture, resulting in many branches of the arts unable to provide sufficient financial support for its workers. When our population has a clearer perception of its creative abilities, when the majority of us identify as having the ability to think creatively, patronage and even philanthropy of the arts must follow.

### PILLAR 4

---

Workers with highly developed creative thinking skills are necessary to solve the challenges posed by technological influences on the design, maintenance and redevelopment of cultural infrastructure. Enhanced creative thinking skills will assist arts and culture workers to adapt to, or reject threatening technological advances with the potential to displace them.

### PILLAR 5

---

Creative thinking skills provide culture workers with the ability to match their outputs to changing pathways and modes of engagement. When audiences identify as creative they are more likely to seek out cultural stories and cultural experiences, be more receptive to pathways and modes of engagement that otherwise would have proved to be roadblocks to participation.

## WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO SEE REFLECTED IN THE NEXT NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY

---

A population with creative thinking skills and which identifies as creative is predisposed to higher levels of cultural productivity. To achieve a population with these attributes the following are recommended.

- *Fund training programs in generalist creative thinking skills for all levels and branches of education.*
- *Fund continuing research in the acquisition, development and maintenance of creative thinking skills.*
- *Fund the development and dissemination of promotional programs to help Australians identify as creative. Suggested avenues include advertising, television programs, mobile applications and games.*

---

Professor Richard Caladine PhD is a retired academic who has been researching creativity for over twelve years. One outcome of this research is Creativity Games, fun sessions of word and drawing games that enhance creative thinking skills. Creativity Games has been enjoyed by many audiences in New South Wales.

---

### Contact details

Richard Caladine  
Creativity Games

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
w. [creativitygames.org](http://creativitygames.org)

Creativity Games (rbn)

[REDACTED]  
WWC3217903E

## REFERENCES

---

- <sup>i</sup> Runco, M. (2023) *Creativity: Research, development and practice*. Academic Press, London U.K.
- Eagleman, D., and Brandt, A. (2017) *The Runaway Species: How creativity remakes the world*. Canongate Books, Edinburgh U.K.
- Sawyer, R. (2012) *Explaining Creativity: The science of human innovation*. Oxford University Press, Oxford U.K.
- Plucker, J., Makel, M. and Qian, M. (2019) Assessment of Creativity. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity*. eds. Kaufman, J. and Sternberg R. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge U.K.
- <sup>ii</sup> Robinson, K. (2006) *Do Schools Kill Creativity?* TED Talk. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG9CE55wbY> accessed 20 May, 2026.
- <sup>iii</sup> Vint, L. (2005) Fresh Thinking Drives Creativity and Innovation. Journal of the Queensland Society for Information Technology in Education. <https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au/items/bbd325ee-5f8f-5b2b-bce1-448d343fa4b9> accessed 20 May, 2026.
- <sup>iv</sup> Robinson, K. and Aronica, L. (2016) *Creative Schools: The grassroots revolution that's transforming education*. Penguin Books, New York U.S.A.
- Belsky, S. (2010) *Making Ideas Happen: Overcoming the obstacles between vision and reality*. Penguin Group New York U.S.A.
- <sup>v</sup> Conner, T., DeYoung, C. and Silvia, P. (2016) Everyday Creative Activity as a Path to Flourishing. Journal of Positive Psychology, November 2016. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/310764211\\_Everyday\\_creative\\_activity\\_as\\_a\\_path\\_to\\_flourishing](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/310764211_Everyday_creative_activity_as_a_path_to_flourishing) Accessed 20 May, 2026.
- Fancourt, D. (2026) *Art Cure: The science of how the arts transform our health*. Cornerstone Press London U.K.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2002) *Flow: The classic work on how to achieve happiness*. Rider Press London U.K.
- <sup>vi</sup> <https://creative.gov.au/research/creative-economy-australia-what-census-2021-tells-us> Accessed 15 Jan, 2026
- <sup>vii</sup> Ruthsatz, J., Ruthsatz-StephensK. and Ruthsatz, K. (2014) *The cognitive bases of exceptional abilities in child prodigies by domain: Similarities and differences*. Intelligence, Volume 44, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160289614000117> accessed 20 May, 2026.
- <sup>viii</sup> Haynes, B. (2020). Can Creativity be Taught? *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 52(1), 34-44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2019.1594194> Accessed 20 May, 2026.
- Lawrence, M. and D'Agostin, F. (2025) *Creating Schools Where Students and Teachers Want To Be*. Melbourne Books, Melbourne Vic. Australia
- <sup>ix</sup> Burkus, D. (2014) *The Myths of Creativity: The truth about how innovative companies and people generate great ideas*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco U.S.A.