

## **Submission to National Cultural Policy – Australian UNESCO Creative City Network**

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to the development of Australia's new National Cultural Policy.

Australia's eight UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) members — Adelaide (Music), Ballarat (Crafts & Folk Art), Bendigo (Gastronomy), Geelong (Design), Hobart (Literature), Launceston (Gastronomy), Melbourne (Literature), Sydney (Film) — sit within a global network of 408 cities across more than 100 countries. That is a remarkable footprint for a country of Australia's size, and it is one that national cultural policy has consistently failed to make use of.

Cities that are designated as members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network commit to:

- Strengthen international cooperation between cities that have recognised creativity as a strategic factor of their sustainable development;
- Stimulate and enhance initiatives led by member cities to make creativity an essential component of urban development, notably through partnerships involving the public and private sectors and civil society;
- Strengthen the creation, production, distribution and dissemination of cultural activities, goods and services;
- Develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector;
- Improve access to and participation in cultural life as well as the enjoyment of cultural goods and services, notably for marginalised or vulnerable groups and individuals;
- Fully integrate culture and creativity into local development strategies and plans

However, designations have been celebrated locally and then largely left to individual cities to manage in isolation. Although Creative City designation has yielded great cultural and economic value to participating cities, better resourcing, coordination, and strategic intent at a national level would translate membership into meaningful international engagement, particularly in the current global setting.

We have two recommendations that aim to better coordinate and align cultural and creative activity and initiatives within UCCN member cities and networks with national cultural policy and foreign engagement priorities.

### **1. Integrate UCCN membership into Australia's foreign affairs framework**

Australia's Creative Cities all develop relationships and partnerships with cities around the world so aligning ACCN activity with national interest priority areas and projects would give Australia's designations real diplomatic weight rather than symbolic value.

Australian overseas posts in UCCN member cities are a natural vehicle for cultural programming, artist exchange, and relationship-building that currently goes unrealised. Likewise, Australia's Creative Cities are a practical delivery vehicle for UNESCO priorities, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Recommendation 1:**

**The new National Cultural Policy is an opportunity to better value-frame Australia's UNESCO Creative Cities through a whole-of-government approach that aligns Creative Australia and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade around shared international objectives. This would see UCCN membership integrated into Australia's foreign affairs framework in a substantive way.**

**2. Support for UCCN members to lead Australia's cultural engagement with the Asia-Pacific region**

The second area requiring attention is how Australia engages culturally with the Asia-Pacific. The aspiration has been stated before, but the honest assessment is that it has largely meant promoting Australian work outward rather than investing in genuine exchange. UCCN membership across the region has grown considerably to approximately 80 cities. Beijing, Shanghai, Jakarta, Bandung, Hoi An, and Penang are all members across literature, film, design, and gastronomy. Australia's own Creative Cities are well-placed to build substantive partnerships with them. What has been missing is the policy commitment and funding to make that happen.

Reciprocal residencies that bring Asia-Pacific practitioners to Australian cities, alongside proper mobility support for Australians travelling the other way, would be a practical starting point. So would co-production and co-publication initiatives developed jointly with regional UCCN counterparts, with multilingual outcomes considered from the beginning rather than added later.

**Recommendation 2:**

**Creative Australia and DFAT jointly resource a dedicated Asia-Pacific UCCN engagement strategy to align and support UCCN member cities to lead Australia's cultural engagement with the Asia-Pacific.**

In summary, the case for both recommendations' rests on the same observation: Australia has spent years accruing Creative Cities designations without ever deciding what to do with them collectively. The new National Cultural Policy is the right moment to make that decision, to treat the network not as a collection of local honours but as live infrastructure for how this country engages culturally with the rest of the world.

UNESCO Creative City  
Focal Point  
**City of Adelaide**  
Creative City of Music



Joe Hay

UNESCO Creative City  
Focal Point  
**City of Hobart**  
Creative City of Literature



Susan Hayes

UNESCO Creative City  
Focal Point  
**City of Ballarat**  
Creative City of Crafts  
and Folk Art



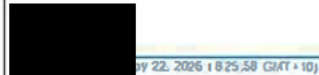
Tara Poole

UNESCO Creative City  
Focal Point  
**City of Launceston**  
Creative City of  
Gastronomy



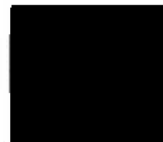
Andrew Pitt

UNESCO Creative City  
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Michelle Symes

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Creative City of  
Literature



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Creative City of  
Design



Tracey-Lea Smith








# Submission to National Cultural Policy - final for signing - Joe

Final Audit Report

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