



National Cultural Policy Submission
Tristan Meecham, All The Queens Men

My name is Tristan Meecham. I am an Artist, Performer, and the Artistic Director and Co-CEO of All The Queens Men. Through a relational engagement practice, All The Queens Men co-design creative projects that enable communities improved access, not only to arts experiences, but broader community health and social services. I believe that the arts, social health, and community wellbeing are indelibly intertwined.

As an artist working in community-engaged performance practice for more than two decades, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative role culture plays in people's lives. Art and performance create opportunities for visibility, expression, joy, healing and social cohesion. They provide spaces where people can gather across difference, share stories and imagine collective futures together.

Recommendation 1: Increase Investment in Independent Artists and Small-to-Medium Arts Organisations

The policy should address the increasing precarity facing artists and small-to-medium arts organisations. Artists are workers and should be recognised as such through sustainable funding models, fair pay standards and investment in long-term career pathways. Independent performance makers and small-to-medium arts organisations are among the most vital contributors to Australia's cultural ecology, often leading artistic innovation, experimentation and community connection, yet they continue to operate with limited infrastructure and growing financial instability. Increased investment and long-term organisational sustainability are urgently needed to ensure ambitious new Australian independent work can continue to thrive.

Recommendation 2: Protect Artistic Freedom and Freedom of Expression

The policy must defend artistic freedom and freedom of expression as fundamental democratic values. Artists must be able to create work that challenges, questions and reflects society without fear of censorship, political interference or disproportionate backlash. A healthy democracy depends on a strong and independent cultural sector where diverse voices, perspectives and lived experiences can be heard.

Recommendation 3: Ensure Equitable Access to Arts and Culture

A thriving cultural sector depends on communities being able to experience, participate in and learn from great art, regardless of financial barriers.

Free and low-cost ticketing plays a vital role in ensuring equitable access to cultural experiences, particularly for young people, older Australians, families, First Nations communities, culturally diverse audiences, LGBTQIA+ communities, people living with disability, and those experiencing financial hardship. These initiatives create pathways for participation, curiosity, learning and belonging, while helping audiences feel welcomed within cultural spaces that have not always felt accessible or representative.

Independent artists and small-to-medium arts organisations are often leading this work, presenting ambitious community-engaged projects in civic spaces, regional centres and neighbourhood venues, frequently at no cost to audiences. However, the financial burden of maintaining accessible ticket pricing is increasingly unsustainable without targeted government investment and support.

Recommendation 4: Recognise Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) as Essential Cultural Infrastructure

Australia's cultural policy should recognise that culture is not only produced in major institutions. It is created in community halls, public squares, aged-care homes, schools, festivals and neighbourhood gatherings. The policy should value Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD), participation and connection. As such, I support the submission from the national alliance of Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) organisations and individuals. We argue that Australia's next National Cultural Policy must recognise and invest in CACD as essential cultural infrastructure. As outlined in the full submission, CACD operates at the intersection of creativity and community, delivering social cohesion, resilience and meaningful cultural participation across the continent.

Recommendation 5: Formally Embed CACD Within the REVIVE Framework

Despite its national reach and impact, CACD is not explicitly recognised within the current REVIVE framework. This omission creates a critical policy gap. It limits visibility of a cross-sector practice that delivers on national priorities of equity, access and participation, and constrains the capacity of government to mobilise creative practice in response to compounding challenges including climate impacts, disasters, inequality and social fragmentation. Without CACD, REVIVE risks overlooking the primary mechanism through which many Australians engage meaningfully with arts and culture.

CACD is not a niche artform. It is a methodology embedded across disciplines and sectors including health, education, justice, disaster management and climate adaptation. Only 5–6% of national arts investment is explicitly attributed to CACD, yet this significantly underrepresents CACD's reach, as it is dispersed across multiple funding streams and not consistently measured. This systemic undercounting leads to undervaluation and misalignment with policy commitments to inclusion and cultural democracy.

Recommendation 6: Invest in Long-Term, Place-Based CACD Models and Workforce Development

CACD delivers outcomes across multiple domains. It strengthens social cohesion and belonging, improves wellbeing, builds local economies and workforce pathways, enhances civic participation, and supports environmental awareness and climate adaptation. Crucially, it provides the relational infrastructure that enables communities to respond to complex challenges and to participate in shaping their cultural futures.

CACD directly advances all five pillars of REVIVE. It supports First Nations self-determination, ensures diverse stories are visible, recognises community-based artists as essential workers, and shifts engagement from passive audiences to active participation. Its impact is particularly significant for priority communities, including First Nations peoples, young people, culturally diverse communities, disabled communities, and those in regional and disaster-impacted areas.

To address this gap, the submission proposes formal recognition of CACD within the policy; the establishment of a national CACD entity within Creative Australia; investment in workforce development; funding reforms toward long-term, place-based models; improved national data and evaluation systems; and embedding CACD across government portfolios including health, climate, disaster management and regional development.

Recommendation 7: Embed Arts and Culture Across Government Portfolios

At a time of increasing climate instability, social fragmentation and compounding disasters, Australia requires approaches that build trust, connection and collective capacity. These are not outcomes policy alone can deliver. CACD provides the creative and relational mechanisms to achieve them.

To realise the vision of REVIVE — “a place for every story” — CACD must be recognised, properly measured, and resourced as a cornerstone of Australia’s cultural future. Without this, the policy risks falling short of its commitments to equity, participation and inclusion.

Kind Regards,



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