

musicNT



**National Cultural Policy Submission to Revive:
A place for every story, a story for every place**

MusicNT, May 2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

MusicNT acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and communities throughout the Northern Territory and across Australia. We recognise the enduring connection between music, Country, culture and community, and pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For national cultural policy to be effective and equitable, it must respond to the realities of regional and remote Australia through long-term, place-based investment that reflects the country's geographic, cultural and economic diversity.

The Northern Territory is one of Australia's most geographically dispersed and culturally significant music regions. Distance, climate and seasonality fundamentally shape how music is created, shared and experienced.

Grounded in First Nations cultural practice and intergenerational knowledge, NT music contributes profoundly to Australia's cultural identity through artists, languages, stories and songs emerging from communities across the Northern Territory.

However, the sector also operates under sustained structural pressure. High delivery costs, limited infrastructure, workforce precarity and fragmented market access restrict participation and long-term sustainability, particularly in remote and regional communities. These pressures are further intensified by climate impacts, economic inequality and population change.

In the Northern Territory, music functions as essential cultural and social infrastructure, supporting cultural

continuity, youth engagement, wellbeing, regional identity and community connection.

National cultural policy must therefore move beyond short-term project funding toward coordinated, long-term investment in regional and remote music ecosystems.

Music across the Territory contributes directly to national priorities including Closing the Gap, regional development, education, health, tourism and cultural diplomacy.

The Northern Territory also delivers nationally significant First Nations music development through:

- Bush Bands
- Remote Music Programs
- First Nations Community Broadcasting
- Remote Music Rangers
- The National Indigenous Music Awards (NIMAs)
- Indigenous Women's Programs

Together, these initiatives create pathways for First Nations artists to develop, perform, record, tour and achieve national recognition in ways that do not currently exist elsewhere in Australia.

These programs also demonstrate the importance of long-term, community-led and culturally grounded models that connect music with education, tourism, health, cultural continuity and regional development.

The following responses to the *Revive* pillars are informed by international research through the Music Policy Resilience Network, and Territory-wide consultation through the NT Music Industry Roundtable, bringing together global best practice and regional and remote lived experience.

PILLAR 1: FIRST NATIONS FIRST

First Nations music pathways

Music sustains language, culture and knowledge. National policy must centre First Nations leadership across creation, production, presentation, broadcasting and distribution.

Priority actions:

- Embed First Nations governance across funding and decision-making
- Resource community-led music activity on Country
- Invest in pathways from community practice to national and international platforms
- Expand remote recording, broadcasting, production and touring infrastructure
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Case Study: Bush Bands

Now in its 22nd year, Bush Bands is a nationally significant development pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musicians from remote communities. Combining professional development, mentoring and performance, it builds skills, confidence and industry pathways, culminating in a major public performance in Mparntwe/Alice Springs. Artists have progressed to national festivals including BIGSOUND and Dark Mofo, demonstrating its long-term impact

PILLAR 2: A PLACE FOR EVERY STORY

Participation, access and community connection

Participation is the primary way music delivers value in the NT. In many remote communities, music is vital for connection, expression, learning and cultural continuity.

Priority actions:

- Fund ongoing, community-led music programs and local access to music activity
- Support music delivery across schools, youth services, health and community settings

- Address barriers to participation including transport, cost, equipment, digital access and workforce capacity
- Invest in community broadcasting and local media platforms that support connection, language, culture and artist development

Case Study: 8CCC Community

Radio

Broadcasting from Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, 8CCC is critical cultural infrastructure for Central Australia and the Barkly. With one-third local music content, it elevates local artists, languages and stories beyond the region.

Programming includes First Nations language broadcasting, local music, legal services, school radio and collaborations with organisations such as Winanjjikari Music Centre.

PILLAR 3: THE CENTRALITY OF THE ARTIST

Local roles in community, for community

Artists and music workers are often the infrastructure that sustains music activity across the Territory.

Long-term investment in people and networks is essential to reduce burnout,

increase capacity and empower local leadership.

Priority actions:

- Invest in locally embedded music and coordination roles through multi-year funding, including Remote Music Rangers
- Support regional leadership development, mentoring and career pathways
- Strengthen fair work, safety and wellbeing frameworks in regional and remote contexts
- Back community-led workforce models that improve sustainability and reduce income precarity

“When you leave the community, the music stops” - NT Music Roundtable participant

Case Study: Remote Music Rangers

MusicNT’s Remote Music Rangers program places community-based, Indigenous-identified workers across NT communities to support local musicians, organise performances, develop skills, support touring opportunities and maintain cultural music practices.

The program develops music capacity directly within communities rather than relying on centralised delivery, recognising music as an essential vehicle for cultural continuation and community wellbeing.

PILLAR 4: STRONG CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Distributed, mobile and climate-responsive systems

Infrastructure in regional and remote Australia must respond to distance, climate, mobility and community need, rather than replicate metropolitan models.

In the NT, music infrastructure often relies on shared spaces, mobile delivery, and community facilities, equipment and resources.

Priority actions:

- Support distributed and mobile infrastructure models suited to remote and regional contexts, including shared equipment, production resources and mobile infrastructure
- Develop place-based Music Hubs that integrate creation, recording, performance, broadcasting and training
- Embed climate resilience and adaptation into infrastructure planning and investment

Case Study: Fix 'Em Up Truck

The Fix 'Em Up Truck addresses one of the most persistent barriers to remote music-making: broken equipment with no repair pathway.

Built around the idea of equipping communities with the skills and tools to repair and maintain music gear locally, the has become a practical model of mobile infrastructure to support remote music participation.

Case Study: Winanjjikari Music Centre

Operating as part of Barkly Regional Arts, the Winanjjikari Music Centre supports Indigenous musicians and technicians through recording, rehearsal, training and workplace learning.

PILLAR 5: ENGAGING THE AUDIENCE

From local networks to global reach

Sustainable music careers are built on the back of strong local audiences, alongside access to national and international markets.

Artists rely on connected touring pathways, visibility, local support systems and opportunities to build audiences over time.

Priority Actions

- Develop coordinated regional touring and cultural exchange pathways
- Invest in audience development, discoverability and digital visibility
- Strengthen export and market development opportunities, including APAC engagement

- Support community radio and local media as essential discovery and promotion infrastructure
- Integrate music into tourism, regional development and liveability strategies

“The Territory’s proud of our music acts - the Industry has some work to do in recognising the power of NT music” - NT Music Roundtable participant

Case Study: Sound Rewards

Sound Rewards is a Territory-wide audience engagement initiative rewarding audiences for attending live music events and venues.

Funded by the NT Government and delivered by MusicNT, the program incentivises participation and supports local venue activation through a demand-side approach to audience development.

POLICY AND INVESTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen regional and remote music ecosystems nationally, cultural policy must prioritise the following areas:

First Nations Music Pathways

Recognise and resource long-term, community-led development

- Invest in community-development programs such as Bush Bands
- Expand Remote Music Rangers and local coordinator roles in regional and remote communities
- Strengthen community broadcasting as cultural infrastructure
- Build recording, production and touring capability in remote communities
- Support reciprocal touring and APAC cultural exchange pathways
- Elevate national recognition platforms, such as the National Indigenous Music Awards
- Adopt nationally recognised best-practice music development models, including the Indigenous Women's Program, Australia's longest-running development program for First Nations songwriters.

Music Hubs & Cultural Infrastructure

Build a national network of regional music hubs

Regional Australia requires fit-for-purpose infrastructure that supports creation, production and participation in regions for communities.

- Establish a multi-year Regional Music Infrastructure Program
- Develop a coordinated national network of regional music hubs
- Invest in community broadcasting and digital production capability
- Expand access to rehearsal, recording and performance spaces
- Deliver climate-ready, multi-use infrastructure
- Support shared and community-access infrastructure models

“We need digital hubs, locally staffed with up-to-date tech” - NT Music Roundtable participant

People & Networks

Invest in locally embedded, regionally connected music workforces

People and networks are the critical infrastructure of regional music ecosystems.

- Fund embedded music roles through multi-year investment tied to hubs and/or local organisations to support stability, continuity and local capacity.
- Priority roles include Remote Music Rangers, regional coordinators, creative producers, community radio coordinators, regional music curators, and technical and production specialists.
- Investment should also support regional workforce development, training and career pathways to strengthen long-term sustainability across the sector.

Touring, Exchange & Participation

Shift from one-off touring to ongoing activity and regional mobility

Regional touring is fragmented, with funding and infrastructure concentrated around east coast touring routes and city centres. Policy must address the barriers that limit consistent regional circulation, mobility and cultural exchange across Australia.

- Activate and coordinate regional touring circuits
- Introduce multi-stop touring incentives
- Invest in venue activation and local delivery capacity
- Provide targeted travel and freight subsidies
- Expand reciprocal and First Nations exchange across regional Australia and APAC.

This investment should align and complement existing frameworks (Australian Music Touring Network, CMTP, Regional Arts Fund, State/Territory peak bodies) to support coordinated regional touring activity.

Digital & Export

Close the visibility and market access gap for regional artists

Regional artists face structural barriers to discovery, distribution and export. Policy must address the system failures that impact visibility and market access.

- Upgrade community radio as core discovery and promotion infrastructure
- Invest in regional live recording and digital production capability
- Strengthen digital distribution and export pathways
- Expand access to showcasing, markets and trade opportunities

REGIONAL MUSIC ECOSYSTEMS

INTERCONNECTED PRIORITIES FOR NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY

To strengthen regional and remote music ecosystems nationally, cultural policy must prioritise the following areas.



IMPLEMENTATION

Deliver coordinated, locally delivered long-term investment frameworks.

Effective implementation must reflect the realities of regional and remote delivery.

This includes:

- Multi-year funding cycles that provide continuity and stability
- Co-investment across federal, state and local governments
- Funding and policy measures that account for the higher costs of regional and remote delivery
- Investing in regional people, networks, and community-led organisations
- Climate resilience is integral to infrastructure investment
- First Nations-led governance and co-design across delivery

Implementation should prioritise sustained participation, cultural continuity and long-term ecosystem development rather than short-term project outcomes.

ABOUT MUSICNT

MusicNT is the Northern Territory's peak music industry body, working to support a connected, sustainable and inclusive music industry across the Territory.

Through advocacy, partnerships, programs and sector development, MusicNT supports artists and communities to create, share and experience music across the NT.

FURTHER READING

- The Music Policy Resilience Network - Darwin Report. 2025
- Future of Community Radio Report, 2025
- Regional & Remote Summit Event Report, Darwin 2024
- NT Music Industry Roundtable Report, 2024
- You Gotta See It To Be It - Strategic Directions For NT Women In Music

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