

creativeclimate

Submission to the National Cultural Policy

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Submitted by: Creative Climate — Australia's national peak body for culture-led climate action

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Who We Are

Creative Climate is Australia's national peak body for culture-led climate action. We are a First Nations and artist-led consortium, funded by Creative Australia, bringing together Green Music Australia, A Climate for Art (ACFA), Centre for Reworlding, and pvi collective, alongside facilitators and environmental specialists.

Our consortium members are practitioners: musicians, performance-makers, visual artists, First Nations writers and cultural workers. We understand from experience what it means to make art under escalating climate pressure, to tour a production into a smoke-choked city, to programme outdoor events when heatwave forecasts are routine, and to hold community grief in a river valley that has flooded three times in four years.

More importantly, we represent the national arts and culture sector - a mycelium of thousands of artists and organisations across the country - undertaking their practice within this same environmental context.

This submission draws on the sector's leadership, advocacy, and capacity building in climate action and is informed by Creative Climate's ongoing consultation with artists, cultural workers, and First Nations communities across Australia. It builds on Creative Climate's advocacy in the Revive submission (2025), EPBC Review submission, 2025 Federal Election advocacy campaign, and our just published Risk Management of Climate Change Impacts report (2026).

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the unceded lands on which we meet, gather, and work. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

OUR CALL: CULTURE AS CLIMATE INFRASTRUCTURE

The new National Cultural Policy arrives at a critical juncture. Australia has already passed an average global warming level of 1.5°C since the pre-industrial period. As the National Climate Risk Assessment (2025) makes clear: climate adaptation will

fail without governance built on collaboration, trust, inclusion, equity and imagination. These are not aspirational values — they are the practical foundations of arts and cultural practice, developed and refined across decades and, in the case of First Nations cultural practice, across millennia.

The escalating frequency of climate events — floods, fires, heatwaves, and drought — is compounding an already fragile social cohesion. Communities are being separated from place, from each other, and from the stories that hold them together. The mental health and wellbeing impacts are profound and growing: climate anxiety, ecological grief, disaster trauma, and the chronic stress of sustained uncertainty are now features of everyday life for millions of Australians. Young people are disproportionately carrying this burden — they are inheriting a crisis they did not create, and they know it. The cultural sector has a specific, irreplaceable role in rebuilding those connections — as a practical community infrastructure, driving preparedness, recovery, adaptation, and systems change.

“Artists are not decorating the edge of the climate crisis. They are working in its centre, in communities, in grief, in imagination, making the cultural change that science and policy alone cannot.”

— Creative Climate, Federal Election Advocacy Statement, 2025

Creative Climate submits that a properly resourced culture sector is the missing link in Australia’s climate strategy. The new National Cultural Policy must do more than acknowledge the climate emergency and its impact on culture and the arts. It must embed and resource culture and community-led climate action as a structural priority — naming it explicitly across all five existing pillars, and committing to support of First Nations leadership in climate actions with dedicated funding, cross-portfolio coordination, and sector-wide accountability frameworks to ensure it is delivered.

CULTURE-LED CLIMATE ACTION ACROSS THE FIVE PILLARS

Creative Climate’s previous submissions to Revive, the EPBC Review, and in the lead-up to the 2025 Federal Election have consistently demonstrated how culture-led climate action cuts across all of Revive’s five existing pillars. We urge the new policy to reflect this explicitly in each pillar.

First Nations First	Country is the original cultural infrastructure. First Nations knowledge keepers have maintained living ecological relationships across more than 65,000 years and 250 language groups. The National Climate Risk Assessment (2025) affirms: working with and learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can guide adaptation towards positive social outcomes. Leadership from and
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	genuine co-design with First Nations artists, Elders, and knowledge keepers is a governance imperative.
A Place for Every Story	Climate stories are stories of place. In coastal communities facing inundation, in fire-scarred regions rebuilding after disaster, in cities renegotiating relationships with extreme heat — artists are the storytellers our communities need most right now. Culture holds what data cannot: grief, resilience, possibility, and the emotional truth of what is at stake. The cultural sector is the only sector with both the trust and the tools to hold these stories and transform them into community building and action.
Centrality of the Artist	Artists are not peripheral to climate response — they are frontline workers, future speculators, and leaders of the cultural change our communities need. Yet most artist income is precarious. Dedicated resourcing for artists sustain their practice and to engage in sustained cultural climate action — in communities, schools, public spaces, and governance processes — will ensure their irreplaceable contribution.
Strong Cultural Infrastructure	Theatres, galleries, rehearsal spaces, archives, and outdoor venues are all under mounting physical threat. Creative Climate's Risk Management of Climate Change Impacts report (2026) documents cascading vulnerabilities across all domains of the cultural sector: heatwaves damage instruments and archives, flooding destroys sets and collections, and bushfire smoke cancels seasons. Community spaces frequently become places of refuge when disaster strikes and recovery longer term. Investment in cultural infrastructure is investment in community safety infrastructure.
Reaching the Audience	The cultural sector reaches every demographic, every geography, across generations. UK research shows 75% of arts audiences expect the sector to take climate action. No other sector has this combination of community trust, emotional reach, and mobilisation capacity. Touring of creative works in all art forms and practices is the connective tissue of our shared imaginations. This reach is especially powerful with young people: artists and arts organisations can meet young Australians where they are — in schools, online, in community spaces — offering creative processes through which climate anxiety is transformed into agency and collective action. A properly resourced culture sector is the missing link in Australia's climate strategy.

Culture as Climate Infrastructure

We call on the new National Cultural Policy to formally recognise that the arts and culture sector is essential climate infrastructure. This means: dedicated funding lines for culture-climate integration within Creative Australia's remit; mandatory cross-portfolio coordination between the arts portfolio, OFTA, DCCEEW, and Treasury; and a clear accountability framework that tracks the sector's decarbonisation progress and climate adaptation investment. Through the new National Cultural Policy, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to position our creative sector as a global exemplar of culture-led intergenerational climate leadership.

Now Is the Time

The cultural and creative sector contributed \$67.4 billion to Australia's economy in 2023–24 — a 2.5% share of GDP. Our carbon footprint is a fraction of every other sector. We already have the community trust and the storytelling capacity to lead and build the social cohesion and community building necessary for collective climate action. What we do not yet have is the policy recognition and the resourcing to do it at the scale required.

The mental health and wellbeing of Australians — and particularly our young people and other equity denied communities — depends in part on whether they have access to culture and community that helps them make sense of the world they are inheriting. Deaf and Disabled, culturally and racially marginalised and/or underrepresented culturally and linguistically diverse creatives and communities, artists and arts organisations are already doing this work, without adequate recognition or resourcing. Intergenerational climate justice requires that we fund and sustain it. Artists and First Nations cultural leaders have been working at the intersection of culture and climate without adequate support for too long. The new National Cultural Policy has the opportunity to change that. We are ready to lead. We ask the government to resource us to do so.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations emerge from Creative Climate's sector consultation, advocacy, and capacity building. They are grounded in the lived experience of artists, cultural workers, and First Nations communities navigating the climate crisis across the country.

01**Integrate arts and culture into national and international climate governance**

Ensure arts and culture representation within the governance structures of Australia's National Adaptation Plan, Climate Risk Assessment processes, and COP planning. Establish formal pathways for cross-portfolio coordination between the arts portfolio, OFTA and Creative Australia, DCCEEW, DFAT and Treasury — to embed cultural sector climate perspectives into policy design across mitigation, adaptation, finance, and technology.

02**Establish a National Culture and Climate Taskforce**

Co-chaired with First Nations leadership, establish a national culture and climate taskforce, with responsibility for the creation of a sector-wide Culture Climate Charter. Following a national audit of climate readiness across the sector, the Charter will establish commitments to decarbonisation targets, adaptation strategies, accountability frameworks, capacity building programs that enable intergenerational community engagement in culture-led climate adaptation.

03**Increase and sustain funding for culture-led climate action**

A dedicated funding stream within Creative Australia for climate-culture programs, with a minimum 10% of core funding for all funded organisations allocated to decarbonisation and climate adaptation (currently less than 1%). Sustained and extended investment in Creative Climate as the national peak body. New programs of support for artists doing climate engagement work in communities, schools, and public processes and dedicated investment in equity denied, intergenerational and youth-focused culture-climate programs — recognising that arts organisations are among the most trusted and effective spaces for young Australians to develop climate literacy, adaptive practices and connect to Country and First Nations custodians of Country.

04**Mandate climate risk management and environmental reporting**

Require all Creative Australia-funded organisations to develop climate risk and adaptation management plans, drawing on Creative Climate's 2026 Risk Management Framework. Align with mandatory Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions reporting under the Corporations Act (2027). Resource a sector-wide capacity building program to build literacy and capacity within organisations and institutions.

05**Embed First Nations cultural and Care for Country knowledge in climate policy**

Formally recognise and resource First Nations cultural knowledge keepers as leaders in climate adaptation. Dedicated funding for community-based cultural care for Country practices, protection of Country-based knowledge systems, and genuine self-determination in how First Nations communities engage with and respond to climate impacts on culture and Country. Financially support existing First Nations-led initiatives including Knowledge Keepers and Common Threads and promote the growth of new initiatives.

06**Invest in R&D for adaptive and sustainable creative practice**

Ambitious R&D programs, co-designed with artists, arts organisations, tertiary institutions and funding bodies to better understand our communities and audiences needs, innovate in decarbonisation management, new touring, exhibition and production models, community engagement and training for artists as culture and sustainability community leaders with sector-specific accreditation schemes.

Creative Climate welcomes the opportunity to provide further information or to appear before the consultation panel.

We endorse the intersecting climate action and climate justice strategies of the sector including in the submissions of:

Arts on Tour

Performance and Ecology Research Lab, Griffith University

Creative Climate Action Alliance

Theatre Network Australia

Diversity Arts Australia

Creative Cultural Diversity Network

Arts and Disability Network Australia

National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA)

Green Music Australia

A Climate For Art

Centre for ReWorlding

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