

Artgold Submission – National Cultural Policy Consultation

About Artgold (Arts & Culture Goldfields Association Inc.)

Artgold is the peak body for arts and culture in the Goldfields–Esperance region of Western Australia. We support artists, organisations, and communities across a geographically vast regional and remote area where engagement in arts and culture is shaped by distance, workforce conditions and limited local infrastructure.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the next National Cultural Policy and acknowledge the progress made through *Revive*, particularly the recognition of artists as workers and investment in national cultural structures.

Artgold’s response focuses primarily on participation, artist development, and cultural infrastructure.

1. The challenge: participation is becoming harder despite strong creative capacity

From our perspective, the next phase of cultural policy presents an opportunity to move beyond supporting cultural activity alone and focus more deliberately on the conditions that allow cultural life to develop and endure.

In regional Australia, creativity is not the problem. People continue to create, volunteer, organise and contribute despite significant barriers. The challenge is that the supports and opportunities required to sustain cultural life are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain.

One of the strongest pressures we observe is time. In the Goldfields, long work hours, shift arrangements, workforce mobility and increasing pressure on volunteers reduce people’s ability to take part in cultural life. This affects artists maintaining practice, audiences attending events, organisations delivering programs and communities creating opportunities for one another.

This is not a lack of interest - it is increasingly a lack of time, energy, and pathways.

Participation is often measured through audiences, attendance, events, and promotion – through answering the question: “What’s on?”. These indicators matter, but they do not tell the full story. Regional communities do not necessarily need more things to attend. They need stronger conditions for creative and cultural involvement.

Engagement begins earlier than attendance. It begins with people having opportunities to gain experience, develop confidence, build skills, and imagine themselves as active contributors to cultural life. For regional and remote communities, success should not be measured only by how visible culture is, but by whether more people have the time, confidence, skills, and opportunity to participate and create.

2. The opportunity: invest in capability, participation and creative pathways

We encourage the next National Cultural Policy to place greater emphasis on capability building and cultural development alongside presentation and audience growth. Regional communities require opportunities not only to experience culture, but to create, develop and share it. This means investment in:

- opportunities to learn and develop creative skills
- mentorship and peer networks
- pathways for emerging, mid-career and established artists
- local leadership and coordination
- spaces and programs that support making, not only presenting

This feels particularly important in places like Kalgoorlie-Boulder. There is strong creative potential in the region, but limited time, infrastructure, and pathways to support artistic development across a lifetime. People need opportunities to move:

- from curiosity to engagement
- from engagement to practice
- from practice to leadership and mentorship

Without this, communities risk losing not only future artists but future organisers, teachers, volunteers, and cultural leaders.

Music provides a strong example. Unlike many forms of creative practice, music depends on sustained access to people, spaces, teaching, mentoring and repetition over time. In regional communities experiencing workforce pressures and time scarcity, opportunities to develop and sustain practice can weaken quickly.

Supporting regional culture should include investment in rehearsal, teaching, mentoring, shared resources, and opportunities for progression - not only performance and presentation. A healthy cultural ecosystem is not defined by what is visible today, but by whether more people are becoming capable of creating, participating, and contributing tomorrow.

3. What we would like reflected in the next National Cultural Policy: stronger infrastructure and longer-term investment

Infrastructure is broader than buildings. In regional communities, cultural infrastructure includes people, relationships, governance, coordination, organisational capability, and the time required to support ongoing engagement. These softer forms of infrastructure are often less visible than venues or events, but they are critical to long-term cultural outcomes.

Regional peak bodies play a key role in maintaining this capacity by connecting artists and organisations, supporting partnerships, building capability, and creating opportunities for creative development, connection, and cultural involvement. This work is continuous but is often funded in short cycles.

Short funding periods can unintentionally prioritise delivery over development and make long-term planning difficult. Cultural development occurs over longer timeframes. Building sustainable regional cultural capacity requires investment settings that extend beyond election cycles and provide organisations with sufficient certainty to retain workers, develop partnerships, and invest in local capability.

For some forms of cultural infrastructure and regional sector development, longer investment horizons with staged review points should be considered. We also encourage cultural policy to continue recognising that arts and culture do not sit outside broader community outcomes. Participation in arts and culture contributes to belonging, liveability, wellbeing, and community resilience. Cultural policy should work alongside regional development, education, and workforce settings to help build stronger and more connected communities.

Conclusion

The next National Cultural Policy presents an opportunity to build on the foundations established through *Revive*, move beyond short-term outputs, and strengthen the foundations that allow cultural life to flourish. Regional and remote communities do not lack creativity. They need the time, pathways, infrastructure, and long-term investment required to sustain cultural life. Long-term cultural outcomes depend not only on what is visible today, but on whether people have the time, confidence, skills and opportunity to engage, create and contribute.

Regional and remote communities do not simply need more cultural activity - they need stronger foundations for long-term cultural development.