

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

There needs to be a 6th pillar added to the Policy: Arts Education.

As a high school Media Arts teacher, I see every day how essential arts education is to students' learning, wellbeing, and future opportunities. Media Arts is not simply about creating films or digital content; it is where students learn to think critically, communicate effectively, and navigate an increasingly complex media landscape. In a world shaped by social media, artificial intelligence, and constant information flow, media literacy is fundamental to democracy. It equips young people to interpret, question, and contribute to the world around them as informed, active citizens. Without arts education there is no dedicated media literacy curriculum.

There is a growing gap between the recognised value of arts education and what is actually happening in schools. Participation in arts subjects has declined significantly over the past decade, particularly in Media Arts. In practical terms, this often means fewer classes, reduced subject availability, and ongoing pressure on schools to prioritise other areas. Access is also uneven, with students in regional, rural, and lower socio-economic communities often having fewer opportunities to engage in high-quality arts learning.

From a classroom perspective, this reflects a broader crisis. Pathways from school to further study and careers in the creative industries are narrowing, even as those industries report growing skills shortages. This creates a disconnect: the very capabilities students develop through arts education (creativity, collaboration, problem-solving, critical thinking) are increasingly in economic demand, yet opportunities to build them are diminishing.

A key issue lies in how arts education is positioned within national policy. While it is widely acknowledged as important, it is not embedded as a central priority with clear accountability, coordination, or sustained investment. This results in a disconnect between policy intent and reality. Teachers are expected to deliver rich and meaningful arts programs, often without the consistent support, resourcing, or strategic direction needed to do so effectively.

Recognising arts education as essential national infrastructure would be a critical step forward. A stronger, more coordinated focus on Arts Learning, Participation and Pathways would better align education and cultural policy, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, have access to quality arts learning. This would support not only schools, but also the long-term sustainability of Australia's cultural and creative sectors and a stronger democracy.

We need sustained investment in programs, resources, and professional learning. We need to support and retain specialist teachers in Arts. We need stronger pathways into tertiary study and creative careers so students can see real futures in these areas. Most importantly, we must ensure that access to arts education is equitable, not determined by postcode or circumstance.