

My name is Ivana Jirásek. I am based in [REDACTED], and work as a freelance curator and writer specialising in contemporary glass. For over 35 years my work in the arts sector spanned private and public galleries, craft and design centres, policy, funding and development. In 2001 I was Craft Policy Officer at the Australia Council for the Arts, where I then continued in ArtSupport Australia for nearly 10 years.

The craft and design communities have been the foundation of my professional and academic life. In 1989 I completed a post-graduate internship with the distinguished Curator of Decorative Arts and Design, [REDACTED], who staged a series of Australian International Craft Triennials. These were truly landmark events with accompanying symposia, that celebrated the cultural power of contemporary craft and design and valued its social, creative and technological contributions. I also had the privilege to be a Contemporary Craft Curator, an Australia Council initiative in the 90s.

I understand the enormous investment craft and design practitioners make in education and studio set-up for their practice, and the ecosystem they need for their development and commercial success. The loss (through funding cuts) of leading organisations that supported them e.g. Craft Australia, and imminently, the Australian Design Centre, seriously erodes national and international opportunities for presentation and development. Diminishing critical discourse and reduced skills education devalues this rich cultural expression further.

The craft and design sector is critical for advancing and sustaining knowledge of creative and industrial material use. Australian practitioners are world-renowned creative innovators and address consumer needs and enrich our cultural life and identity across jewellery, fashion, furniture, lighting and in media-specific art forms such as fibre, ceramics, glass, paper, wood, metal among others.

I support the three asks made by the Australian Craft and Design Centres (ACDC) network in their submission to this consultation: a 10-year workforce development plan that addresses skills and training shortages for craftspeople and designers; the establishment of a dedicated craft and design structure within Creative Australia, with its own mandate to advocate for the sector, develop funding pathways, and coordinate across government; and an export and tourism development strategy that positions Australian makers in international markets, including at showcase events like Milan Design Week.