

SKEEHAN


skeehan.com.au

Canberra, Fyshwick ACT 2609

Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation

As the founder of a design studio based in Canberra, I've spent the past decade working across furniture, manufacturing, education and exhibitions. Through this work I've seen firsthand how important creative infrastructure is to the future of Australian craft and design.

A lot of contemporary Australian design practice now exists between traditional craft, advanced manufacturing, cultural institutions and commercial industry. Independent studios increasingly rely on networks of fabricators, workshops and public institutions to develop and produce work locally.

Spaces like Canberra Glassworks play an incredibly important role within this ecosystem. Beyond exhibition outcomes, they create opportunities for experimentation, technical learning, collaboration and material research that would otherwise be inaccessible to many independent practitioners.

Alongside professional practice, I've also spent many years working in design education and mentoring emerging designers through universities and independent initiatives such as Friends & Associates. Increasingly, I see talented young designers struggling to find clear pathways into industry, manufacturing and long-term creative practice. Many of the specialist skills and knowledge that underpin Australian craft and design are becoming harder to access and sustain.

I strongly support the development of a long-term workforce plan for craft and design, alongside stronger representation for the sector within Creative Australia. Support should not only focus on finished cultural outcomes, but also the infrastructure, education and collaborative environments that allow creative practice to develop in the first place.

I've also seen firsthand the value of international design platforms. Earlier in my career, and now again through professional practice, I've had opportunities to exhibit work internationally, including in Milan. These experiences shaped my understanding of the potential for Australian design internationally. Australian designers and makers are already producing work that is globally relevant, particularly where it combines strong cultural identity, material innovation and local manufacturing. Greater support for international visibility and export pathways could have a major long-term impact on the sector.

Australia already has an incredible community of designers, makers, educators and independent studios doing meaningful work with limited resources. Continued investment in creative infrastructure, education and industry pathways will be critical to ensuring these practices remain sustainable and continue contributing to Australia's cultural identity into the future.

Sincerely,
Thomas Skeehan
Director, SKEEHAN Studio
23/05/2026

