

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Organisation

United Nations Australian Association

The United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) welcomes the National Cultural Policy consultation. As the peak civil-society body in Australia promoting the work and values of the United Nations, the UNAA brings a perspective seldom heard in arts policy debate: the policy's role in advancing the international frameworks Australia has shaped. Culture and the Sustainable Development Goals The 2030 Agenda recognises culture as both an enabler and a driver of sustainable development. We recommend the new policy explicitly link its outcomes to the relevant SDGs, particularly SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities, which includes safeguarding cultural and natural heritage) and SDG 16 (peaceful, inclusive societies). SDG target 16.10, which seeks to ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, has particular application to the stewardship of First Nations cultural knowledge — including songlines, Dreaming stories, ceremony, dance, visual arts, bark sculpture and practices such as cultural burning — and the systems used to manage and protect that information. Aligning the policy's measurement framework with the SDGs would allow cultural outcomes to be reported in Australia's Voluntary National Reviews and embed cultural participation in national wellbeing measurement. Honouring Australia's UNESCO commitments Australia is a State Party to the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The new policy can operationalise these obligations through transparent quadrennial reporting, support for artist and cultural worker mobility, and protections for cultural expressions in the digital environment. We encourage the policy to articulate how each pillar advances these treaty commitments. First Nations First and UNDRIP The "First Nations First" pillar is rightly placed at the centre of the policy. We urge it be explicitly framed within Australia's commitments under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly Articles 11, 12, 13 and 31, which protect cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, languages and the right to free, prior and informed consent over cultural materials. Embedding UNDRIP in the policy's design and measurement would strengthen Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property protections and align cultural investment with the principles of self-determination. Digital, AI and the global ethical frame The consultation paper recognises that digital tools and artificial intelligence are transforming creative work. Australia endorsed the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence in 2021. We recommend the new policy adopt the Recommendation's principles in addressing AI-generated content, fair remuneration for cultural workers whose work is used to train AI systems, and the protection of human authorship, with particular attention to First Nations creators whose cultural materials are at heightened risk of unauthorised use. A National Cultural Policy that locates Australian creativity within the international frameworks Australia has helped build will be both more durable and more globally credible. The UNAA welcomes further engagement and would support implementation through our national membership and state networks