

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

Edwina Edwina



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

My name is Edwina Leeper. I am based in Canberra, and I work as a Freelance glass coldworker, multidisciplinary artist, illustrator and digital maker based in Canberra. I work at Canberra Glassworks supporting artists and production projects through coldworking, surface finishing, engraving, adhesive assembly, digital modelling and practical studio problem-solving. I also have formal training in painting, glass and game design, and run a small illustration and print practice..

Craft and design are where material knowledge, skill, problem-solving and imagination meet. For me, working in glass is not just about making an object look finished. It is about understanding what is happening at every stage of the process, from surface preparation and tool marks to polish, light, chemistry, structure and final presentation.

Craft is also a living chain of knowledge. I returned to glass after time away and have been struck by how much specialist knowledge can disappear when there are not strong training pathways or enough skilled people to pass it on. Coldworking in particular is often treated as secondary, but it is where many works become resolved, professional, safe, beautiful and ready for artists, clients and audiences.

Design and craft matter because they create objects, skills, careers and communities that cannot be replaced by generic manufacturing. They hold technical knowledge, cultural memory, material intelligence and human care.

Craft and design are not decorative extras. They are skilled, knowledge-rich practices that require training, infrastructure and long-term support. In my work as a freelance glass coldworker and multidisciplinary artist, I see every day how much specialist knowledge sits behind a finished object. A polished surface, a clean join, a resolved installation or a well-made object depends on years of accumulated skill.

Without proper investment, we lose that knowledge. We lose skilled makers, studio pathways, technical confidence and the ability to support ambitious Australian artists locally. I have seen firsthand how quickly specialist glass knowledge can disappear when training pathways weaken and craft skills are treated as secondary. Once that knowledge is gone, it is not easy to recover.

Craft and design need serious support because they keep material knowledge alive, create meaningful careers, and allow Australian artists and makers to produce work at a high standard here rather than relying on fragile, underfunded, informal networks.

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.