

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Organisation

The Guardian

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Guardian Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the new National Cultural Policy. As a leading, independent news publisher that reinvests all profits back into journalism, we are deeply embedded in Australia's creative ecosystem. We deliver extensive arts and culture coverage, including across the First Nations cultural sector. As a proud cultural partner to more than 60 major arts and cultural organisations nationwide, we not only report on the cultural conversation; we actively help shape and sustain the sector. To quote Black Inc Books "We rely on independent media outlets like the Guardian to provide our authors with a platform they might not otherwise have access to, and this support helps ensure our authors' books and ideas reach a wider audience - which they deserve!" This deep cross-industry integration drives our commitment to contributing meaningfully to this policy framework.

Guardian Australia plays a vital role in fulfilling Pillar 5 (Engaging the Audience) by connecting local stories with people at home and abroad. Reflecting our broad reach, we achieved an average of 9.4 million page views per month in 2025. There is a massive international appetite for our national narratives with a significant percentage of page views to Guardian Australian-produced journalism coming from overseas audiences each year.

However, the infrastructure enabling this success faces a severe threat. Few issues are more fundamental to the strong cultural infrastructure referenced in Pillar 4 than robust intellectual property protections. We welcome this opportunity to share a position shared across the media and cultural sector: that copyright protections are essential to journalism and the creative sector. Independent journalism and digital creative outputs form a unified framework; weakening copyright settings undermines the economic bedrock of our entire cultural economy.

Generative artificial intelligence systems exacerbate this challenge by extracting value from creators and publishers at scale, often ignoring explicit reservations of rights. If copyright protections fail, the remaining policy pillars inevitably collapse. Pillar 3 (Centrality of the Artist) erodes when creators lose the power to control, share, and monetise their work. This directly compromises Pillar 1 (First Nations First) and Pillar 2 (A Place for Every Story). Without copyright, the artist is disempowered, and the integrity of the story is threatened. To counter this, meaningful transparency mechanisms must be mandated so rights holders can track how AI developers scrape content. This is especially vital for protecting First Nations stories from exploitation. Without copyright, the artist is disempowered and the integrity of the story is threatened.

A mutually beneficial licensing market is both feasible and desirable. Protecting creative rights ensures that as audience behaviours evolve, creators can engage with new technologies and audiences through a fair value exchange. Existing frameworks like APRA AMCOS demonstrate that commercial solutions flourish when intellectual property is respected, offering certainty to innovators while ensuring rights holders receive fair compensation. Grounding the National Cultural Policy in robust copyright protections ensures Australia's stories remain vibrant, secure, and sustainably our own.