

**National**  
**Art School**  
**Submission:**  
**New National**  
**Cultural Policy**



The National Art School acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the Traditional Owners on whose Country we meet, share and create. We pay our respects to all Gadigal Elders past and present. We celebrate the diversity, history, knowledge and creativity of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia.

## National Art School: made by artists for artists

The National Art School is a leading independent art education institution with a recognised legacy of more than 100 years shaping the art and culture of Australia. The next national cultural policy is an opportunity to invest in this iconic institution and create a dedicated national art school to ensure a thriving future for the next generation of artists.

This investment benefits the arts and is fundamental to growing the creative economy, sharing the unique stories of Australia with the world, and building social and cultural inclusion.

This would advance *Revive's* aims by:

- increasing First Nations creative opportunities, leadership capacity, and Closing the Gap education outcomes
- strengthening pipelines and open-access pathways into the arts for young people
- building capacity and skills growth in the visual arts to enable workforce sustainability in the creative economy
- growing cross-sector collaboration and partnerships to effectively utilise resources in a constrained economic context.

At its core, studio-based education underpins strong art careers and a thriving arts and cultural sector. Universities continue to deliver excellent visual arts graduates; however, structural shifts, competing institutional pressures and other complexities can make it harder to sustain intensive studio-based pedagogy at scale.

As an independent and wholly dedicated art school, the National Art School has been able to maintain and lead with this proven pedagogical approach. Made by artists for artists, it is in a strong position to scale up its activities.

The National High School is a registered Higher Education provider currently delivering four degree courses to over 580 students. The BFA commences with a foundation year across all studio disciplines alongside core study in Drawing, Professional Studies and Art History & Theory. From second year, students select their disciplinary specialisation from Ceramics, Drawing, Painting, Photomedia, Printmaking and Sculpture, with further opportunities for interdisciplinary and expanded practices. Postgraduate courses BFA(Hons), MFA and DFA, support artists to extend skills, deepen their specialised knowledge, and develop individual and interdisciplinary approaches to contemporary fine art practice.

The School also offers non-award Short Courses to over 1700 adult learners a year covering an array of workshop and studio specialisations (107 on campus courses and 14 online courses).

In addition the School provides art workshops for almost 1000 High School students each year, increasing access to visual arts specialist education, alongside workshops for teachers. These are offered through a partnership with the Dobell Foundation.

The National Art School is ready to adapt, grow, and contribute at a national scale. Recognised in NSW as a State Significant Organisation, the School is a leader in art education and a cornerstone of Australia's arts ecology. It is the provider of choice for fine art study in NSW.

National Art School alumni include many of Australia's leading artists, recognised cultural leaders, and innovators shaping contemporary discourse.

A dedicated national art school would strengthen the conditions that help artists and the sector thrive by supporting high-level artistic and professional development, strong talent pipelines, and inclusive, accessible frameworks.

*continues* →

## National Art School: made by artists for artists

This would strengthen the creative sector through:

- expanded student pathways into visual arts study, enabling cultural transfer to the next generation
- broad access to studio-based practice across higher education
- access to specialised studios, workshops, and staff for practising artists
- stronger governance capability across arts institutions and organisations
- greater space for youth voices in decision-making
- enhanced leadership capacity in the arts.

Like *Revive*, cultural policy frameworks around the world are moving towards more integrated ecosystems. UNESCO's 2024 *Framework for Culture and Arts Education* identifies arts learning as central to cultural sustainability. Together, these directions present an opportunity for Australia to strengthen the arts landscape for the benefit of all Australians.

The visual arts are central to how Australia sees itself, expresses its identity, tells its stories to the world and builds social inclusion. The National Art School plays a leading role, and Federal investment would turn its existing strengths into a lasting national asset.

**This is a once in a generation moment for the Australian Government to contribute a significant legacy project recognising excellence in Australian visual arts education.**

[REDACTED]

## Structures to achieve a National Art School

Australia already has a proven national model for excellence in specialist arts training through the Arts8. The Arts8 demonstrates the strength of working collectively and the value of recognising both intersections across the arts and deep specialisation, while allowing each member to retain its independence. Adding a visual arts education institution that offers degree and non-accredited programs strengthens the Arts8 and better reflects the full breadth of Australia's creative ecology.

Including the National Art School in the Arts8 makes effective use of an existing structure and ensures that investment in visual arts education could be catalysed immediately. It offers both institutional independence and a structure to enhance collaboration.

The rigorous studio-based approach at the National Art School is focused on practice-led education and aligns with the approaches of Arts8 members including AFTRS, NIDA, and NAISDA. This is a proven pedagogy for developing artistic excellence through training, mentoring, and hands-on experience. It builds next-generation leadership, equips graduates with workforce-ready skills, and develops transferable skills for working across creative disciplines.

This would strengthen practice-led, industry-ready pathways for emerging artists and create upskilling opportunities for those already working in the sector. It would also support the development of training products that connect education to employment and foster cross-industry collaboration.

*A National Centre for Professional Practice in Visual Arts* could also be established at the National Art School. Open to current and future artists across Australia, the centre would draw on expertise from a range of art schools and industry organisations to build professional capability and strengthen the creative workforce. It would provide structured skills development, industry collaboration, and ongoing career support to strengthen the creative economy and support sustainable long-term careers.

# A National Art School for visual arts education and cross-sector collaboration.

*Revive* recognises creativity as a vital cross-industry capability that underpins sectors including AI, design, manufacturing, research, and games, while also contributing to health, wellbeing, and employment. It acknowledges that many professional artists apply their skills beyond the arts. Creativity is therefore not only an outcome, but also a critical driver of innovation, problem-solving, and adaptability.

The refreshed policy presents an opportunity to position the visual arts more centrally within Australia's creative ecosystem. As both a specialist discipline and a foundation for transferable skills, the visual arts foster creative thinking, human-centred capabilities, adaptability, critical inquiry, innovation, and visual literacy. These capabilities are increasingly vital to the future workforce and to emerging job skills, as recognised in the Job and Skills Report 2025.

### Recommendations

**Build the next generation of artists, including First Nations artists, through a dedicated national visual arts training institution to ensure an ongoing talent pipeline for a thriving future art ecology.**

**Position the visual arts more centrally within the arts ecosystem, recognising the transferable skills they foster in creative thinking, human-centred capabilities, adaptability, critical inquiry, innovation, and visual literacy.**

**Support arts education pipelines to nurture and build the next generation of artists to bolster the creative economy.**

# Revive Pillars

The following outlines opportunities for the next policy, the arts sector, and Australia. It identifies how the National Art School can amplify its contribution with Federal Government support.

## Pillar 1 First Nations First

Darani Ngalawada, the First Peoples Centre at the National Art School, presents First Nations-led programs that build leadership, shape curriculum and forge cross-sector partnerships to deepen engagement with First Nations knowledge and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, while delivering broader social impact.

The National Art School aims to be a platform for all stories and discourse, celebrating and enabling the diversity of First Nations creative practice and cultural expression in the visual arts across Australia. We are a trusted and respected partner for First Nations artists and creatives, recognised for our knowledge, skills, and commitment to being a culturally safe space. We continue to seek opportunities to grow and deliver best-practice experiences through Darani Ngalawada, our deep commitment to our Reconciliation Action Plan, and our support for First Nations artists and creatives.

This work is already producing results:

- curriculum renewal across all degree levels
- scholarships for equitable opportunity pathways, removing barriers to education, and achieving Closing the Gap outcomes
- partnerships with health organisations to improve wellbeing and health outcomes for First Nations patients
- career pathways that employ graduates and support leadership development
- internship opportunities with organisations in Central and Western Australia, including First Nations-identified internships at Martumili Artists, WA
- building reciprocal First Nations-led public and gallery programs featuring creatives from across Australia, including fostering the next generation of arts leaders, artists, and arts workers through projects such as the exhibition *The Neighbour at the Gate*.

At the National Art School, we have made significant progress in meeting Closing the Gap aims: 3% of our students identify as First Nations, reflecting participation in art at levels comparable to national tertiary benchmarks across all fields of study. These high levels of participation contribute to broader equity, enabling self-determination and First Nations success.

By strengthening First Nations leadership, enabling self-determination, expanding training pathways, and creating culturally safe learning environments, arts education plays a critical role in building professional practice opportunities and strengthening pathways into the arts. The School is also building these pathways through partnerships such as Campbelltown Arts Centre to expand opportunities for First Nations high school students.

As a signatory to the Indigenous Art Code, the National Art School embeds respect for cultural knowledge and ethical practice across the whole organisation. This commitment shapes how the School works with First Nations art, culture and artists, and it is fundamental to how all artists are trained.

### Recommendations

**Create a national community of practice across tertiary providers to adopt best-practice approaches to the protection of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property in art education. This could be hosted by the National Art School and include peak bodies such as the First Nations Expert Working Group and the Indigenous Art Code.**

**Strengthen First Nations leadership, enable self-determination, expand training pathways, and create culturally safe environments through art education pathways.**

## Pillar 2

### A place for every story

Revive identifies physical, programmatic and digital barriers to participation to ensure the sector is inclusive for all Australians. In the visual arts, this means ensuring access to high-quality art education and supporting diverse learners, experiences and career pathways.

#### **Establishing a National Art School would be a legacy investment that expands access to practice-based education and strengthens participation across the sector.**

The National Art School supports emerging and established artists through:

- tertiary education
- high school programs and teacher workshops reaching over 1,000 students a year.
- short course workshops and studio classes for adult education reaching over 1,700 people a year.
- creating pathways into arts training and sustainable careers for creatives from diverse backgrounds.

These activities are all delivered by well-known practising artists. They deliver critical benefits in building thriving art cultures and can be scaled nationally through partnerships with local and state governments.

The National Art School is already advancing this work through partnerships with Campbelltown Arts Centre, the Dobell Foundation, and Desert art centres. This demonstrates how targeted collaboration can maximise existing spaces, widen participation, and strengthen pathways into the visual arts.

The National Art School recognises that **access must be matched by institutional transformation**. This work aligns with broader sector reform, reflected in the recent reports and plans including:

- *Equity: The Arts and Disability Associated Plan*
- *Respect@Uni: Study into Antisemitism, Islamophobia, Racism and the Experience of First Nations People*
- *Expert Council on University Governance - Final Report and Principles*
- *National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence*.

**Education plays a critical role in building inclusion, trust, and respectful public discourse across the arts sector.** Through First Peoples leadership, lecturer development, sound governance, and structured teaching, the National Art School is working to create an environment of respectful dialogue in which everyone feels welcome. The sector has an opportunity to demonstrate how the arts can enhance social inclusion and provide ways to engage respectfully with diverse perspectives so that all Australians feel included, welcome, and able to participate.

The sector would benefit from a dedicated national community of practice on this topic, supported by sector-wide symposia, to share best-practice approaches to governance, respectful discourse, and arts education. This could be convened through existing peak bodies and include university, independent, and private art schools. A national, cross-sector approach would strengthen participation, build leadership, and maximise shared strategies and skills across the sector.

**The National Art School has an ongoing commitment to building a diverse workforce and strengthening cultural literacy to create respectful and inclusive spaces.** This requires best-practice actions to ensure diverse learners and communities are included in the arts, including professional development in teaching strategies for neurodivergent artists and trauma-informed practice. The School could host a nationwide symposium to share strategies and best-practice pedagogical approaches.

continues →

**Pillar 2**  
**A place for every story**

The National Art School is working with Create NSW to improve mobility access across its heritage site and make its education and gallery programs more accessible. These are sector-wide challenges, especially for small- and medium-sized organisations and those managing heritage sites, creating a clear need for practical models that can be shared. This gives the National Art School an opportunity to lead best practice in accessible studio-based visual arts education and governance.

**Recommendations**

Secure national recognition for the visual arts to strengthen diversity in how Australia tells its stories and expresses its cultural identity.

Build capacity in governance and mentoring for the next generation of arts leaders.

Develop a dedicated national community of practice on inclusion and respect in the arts, supported by sector-wide symposia, to share best-practice approaches to governance, respectful discourse, and arts education.

Support the National Art School to pilot best-practice, sustainable models in accessible studio-based visual arts education and governance.



Employing 200 artists a year the **National Art School creates direct employment and career opportunities for artists** through lecturing, curating, arts management, and support roles.

Through curriculum reform and academic governance, the School is embedding stronger professional practice, leadership, and arts management training to prepare graduates for the post-study arts sector in Australia and globally. To enable a thriving sector, creative talent must be nurtured through industry standards and safe, inclusive work cultures. It is not only artistic outcomes that matter, but also how they are developed. Education institutions provide an important space for opening opportunities for First Nations artists and culturally diverse voices.

The National Art School is a trusted and sought-out partner, with a strong track record across arts, cultural and cross-sector organisations. It is also the “go-to” place for artists such as 2026 Sydney Biennale First Nations artist Carmen Glynn-Braun to realise major projects through access to workshops and specialised staff.

To maximise its resources and share expertise, the School currently collaborates with Arts8 providers NIDA and AFTRS on academic governance, workplace culture, staff development, and the wellbeing of First Nations and international students. It has also built a community of practice for postgraduate visual arts students with the University of Sydney and UNSW.

There is further potential here. The School has been in discussions to develop two critical platforms which would draw in expertise across the sector:

- a national post-study symposium with higher education and gallery partners for emerging artists
- a proposed Graduate Certificate in Creative Education co-delivered with AFTRS (and other providers) to expand career pathways for graduates and creative practitioners.

Australia needs stronger arts pipelines to sustain creative careers and lifelong learning. **Access to visual arts education should be available to all students across primary and secondary schools.** One practical opportunity is a national artists-in-schools framework for the visual arts.

The National Art School already engages around 30% of NSW high schools through workshops and teacher professional development. Expanding artist-led residencies, curriculum support, and teacher professional development would strengthen school-to-tertiary pathways, deepen student engagement, and create more employment opportunities for practising artists.

The NSW Government initiative on proposed tax reforms, raised at the Art of Tax Reform summit, is significant for the sector and would support working artists and creatives and help to build more sustainable careers.

### Recommendations

**Develop a national artists-in-schools framework to provide training and employment opportunities for artists and to expand access to specialist visual arts learning for school students.**

**Support the National Art School in its ambition to initiate a national post-study symposium and to develop postgraduate creative education qualifications to expand career opportunities for artists.**

*continues →*

**Pillar 3**  
**Centrality of  
the artist**

**Recommendations (continued)**

Address the barriers to arts education and expand access to high-quality, studio-based visual arts education.

Scale high school art workshops, teacher training, and adult education nationally through partnerships with the National Art School, other tertiary providers, and local and state governments.

Adopt recommendations from the NSW Government outcomes report on the Art of Tax Reform summit.



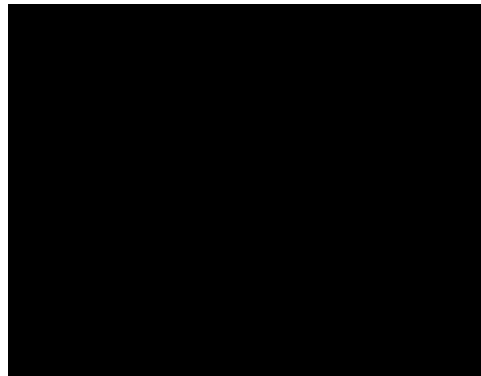
The National Art School  
employs 200 artists a year  
through lecturing, curating,  
arts management, and  
support roles.

## Pillar 4 Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Strong cultural infrastructure requires sustained investment in the facilities, people, and places that support artistic practice, education, and public engagement. Art schools are a critical part of this infrastructure, building workforce capability through studio-based education, employment opportunities, interdisciplinary learning, and industry connections. Persistent gaps remain in graduate preparedness, particularly in technical, digital, curatorial, production, managerial, and governance skills.

A **national centre for professional practice for visual artists** would help address these gaps through:

- structured skills development
- industry pathways
- ongoing career support, and
- strengthening the creative workforce pipeline.



The National Art School's campus is a nationally significant state heritage site on Gadigal Country. Located in the former Darlinghurst Gaol, built in the 1820s and one of Australia's best-preserved gaols, the campus has been a place of art, creativity, and education for more than 100 years. It is in the heart of the Rainbow Precinct near Taylor Square and Oxford Street. Loved by students and the community, it has a long history of inspiring artists and continues to be a place for artists, creatives, performers, and visitors to celebrate Australia's arts and cultural life.

Beyond being an art school, the campus is a vibrant venue that hosts events for the local and broader Sydney community, including arts festivals, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras events, media launches, charity fundraisers, and private events.

With further investment, the campus could become a world-class centre for visual arts education, scholarship, and public engagement, bringing together teaching, creative practice, and cultural participation in one nationally significant institution with first-class facilities.

The National Art School is already a trusted and accessible place for artists advancing their careers through major professional commissions, supported by specialist staff and access to equipment. With further investment, the facility could support even more practising artists.

### Recommendations

**Build sustainable workforce capability through a national centre for professional arts practice to deepen partnerships across government, education, arts organisations, and philanthropy.**

**Support the National Art School to become a world-class centre for visual arts education, scholarship and public engagement.**

**Pillar 5**  
**Engaging the Audience**

Engaging local audiences in meaningful ways depends on global connectivity. Thirty-two per cent of Australia’s population was born overseas. Culture is central to how Australia tells its stories, reaches new audiences, and builds a sustainable creative future. For the visual arts, this means ensuring Australian stories travel internationally while also connecting artists and students in Australia to contemporary global practice.

International connectivity is particularly important for emerging artists. Early access to global networks, exchange, collaboration, and international presentation enables artists to build professional capability, understand changing markets and contexts, and develop sustainable careers.

International student pathways are also an important part of this ecology, bringing diverse perspectives into Australian art schools, strengthening cultural exchange, and building enduring professional networks that connect artists and audiences with broad opportunities.

Touring exhibitions nationally is equally valuable. *The Neighbour at the Gate* is a groundbreaking exhibition of First Nations and Asian Australian artists that includes newly commissioned works presented by the National Art School. It is currently touring regional NSW, enabling a range of audience connections with the artworks and supporting curatorial panels and artist talks for further direct engagement.



The National Art School Gallery presents ambitious group and solo exhibitions by Australian and international artists that connect to its education programs and fosters critical appreciation of art and innovative practice. Through a program of talks, lectures, and workshops, it creates a rich space for engagement and attracts over 25,000 visitors each year. These activities have a significant impact on audiences, enabling deeper connections with the arts and artists through partnerships across the gallery and museum sector.

Australia has leading artists and ambitious exhibitions, often driven by small- to medium-sized organisations and art schools. Yet support for collaboration, international partnerships, and touring remains fragmented, forcing organisations to piece together multiple funding sources and limiting scale, reach, and long-term impact.

There is an opportunity to establish clear, coordinated approaches across all levels of government to enable organisations to extend the life of exhibitions, work more strategically, and connect broader audiences with the diversity of Australian art at home and abroad.

**Recommendations**

Enhance coordination across local, state, and federal governments for international and national engagement, touring, and partnership development.

Increase Australia’s cultural reach by connecting artists, students, and audiences to international and national networks, partnerships, and touring opportunities.

## National Art School Context

The National Art School receives 30% of its annual income through NSW Government State Significant Organisation funding, which supports operations and site maintenance in recognition of its leadership in the arts. The remaining 70% is self-generated through student fees, philanthropy, and commercial activities. The School receives no direct federal funding for either the institution or its students, beyond access to Commonwealth FEE-HELP loans for degree students, despite its national standing, academic rigour, and graduate impact.

### Key Points:

- Build the next generation of artists, including First Nations artists, through a dedicated national visual arts training institution to ensure an ongoing talent pipeline for a thriving future art ecology
- Build capacity in governance and mentoring for the next generation of arts leaders
- Secure national recognition for the visual arts, recognising transferrable skills across the arts, to strengthen diversity in how Australia tells its stories and expresses its cultural identity
- Address the barriers to arts education and expand access to high-quality, studio-based visual arts education
- Build sustainable workforce and skills capability through a national centre for professional arts practice
- Increase Australia's global cultural reach by increasing networks, partnerships, and touring opportunities.

**“At the National Art School you have artists speaking to artists...we share a connection...the environment is conducive to creativity and it thrives on this campus.”**

National Art School student

Federal investment in a National Art School would be a nation-building investment in Australia's cultural future. It would create a lasting public legacy for the Australian Government by establishing a nationally significant institution that strengthens visual arts education, supports Australian artists, and projects Australian creativity to the world. At a time when the visual arts need stronger national recognition and coordinated support, this investment would demonstrate a clear commitment to the enduring cultural life of the nation.