

State Library of Western Australia submission to the National Cultural Policy review

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of the next iteration of the National Cultural Policy to support a strong, connected and sustainable cultural ecosystem across Australia.

Strong Cultural Infrastructure

The State Library is a cornerstone of the nation's cultural infrastructure, playing a critical role in enabling equitable access to information, knowledge, culture and creative participation without censorship.

As the most visited cultural institution in Western Australia, we provide free and inclusive access to trusted information, lifelong learning opportunities, and safe and welcoming spaces that support community wellbeing, productivity and social inclusion.

Working in partnership with Western Australian local governments, the State Library strengthens Australia's library and information infrastructure by supporting the delivery of services across 233 public libraries.

Through the State Library's *Better Beginnings* program, we contribute directly to national priorities in early childhood development and literacy by providing free books, resources, programming and support to families with children aged 0–5, leading to improved educational and wellbeing outcomes.

Centrality of the Artist

The State Library is an active contributor to Australia's creative economy and cultural identity. We partner with writers, artists, film makers and organisations to enable creation, access and participation, and play a leadership role in supporting Australian writing and storytelling, including through delivery of the Western Australian Premier's Book Awards.

A Place for Every Story / First Nations First / Engaging the Audience

As the trusted custodian of Western Australia's documentary heritage, the State Library preserves and shares physical and digital collections of enduring national and international significance. Its collections, developed over more than 137 years, reflect the diversity of Australian stories—from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural knowledge to contemporary creative expression.

Increasingly, we work collaboratively to activate these collections for new audiences through innovative, accessible and culturally responsive approaches.

What you would we to see reflected in the next National Cultural Policy

- **Establish a national framework for measuring the non-market value of cultural infrastructure**, including social, educational and community wellbeing outcomes, to better inform policy, investment and evaluation.
- **Increase recognition and funding of libraries as essential democratic cultural infrastructure** that underpin discovery, literacy development, enterprise, recreation and development of creative talent.

- **Increase national investment in Australian writing, publishing and reading**, with a focus on supporting diverse voices, regional creators and export potential, to strengthen Australia's cultural presence domestically and internationally.
- **Invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples led collection infrastructure and storytelling initiatives in national and state libraries (for example the State Library of Western Australia's Storylines Archive)** to support Closing the Gap priorities and enable the protection, sharing and strengthening of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples knowledge systems, storytelling and cultural authority in culturally safe and community-led ways.
- **Establish a nationally consistent legislative framework for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)** to recognise and protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples' rights, support self-determination, and ensure the ethical stewardship and use of cultural materials across collecting institutions.
- **Recognise the geographic inequities impacting access to arts and culture**, particularly in Western Australia, and invest in scalable delivery models that leverage existing public infrastructure (such as libraries) to expand access to touring programs, exhibitions, performances and residencies in regional and remote communities.
- **Develop national benchmarks for the value and impact of cultural awards and prizes**, recognising their role in supporting, nurturing and rewarding creative careers, industry visibility and cultural excellence. Benchmarks would enable cultural organisations to assess the real impact of awards beyond symbolic recognition. Criteria such as artistic merit, impact, innovation, and public engagement, would increase transparency and increase public and institutional trust in awards.
- **Introduce tax-exempt status for cultural awards, prizes and grants**, aligning with international practice to maximise public investment in the creative sector, improve economic sustainability for artists and writers, and enhance the national and global standing of Australian cultural recognition programs.

The State Library is a member of National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) that has made a separate submission. The State Library strongly values NSLA in delivering the national cultural policy agenda and supports the NSLA submission.