

National Cultural Policy Submission

1472332

Public and anonymous

Individual



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Over the past two decades, I have primarily worked as an independent curator, art historian, and cultural producer across the public and private sectors. My academic research focuses on the relationship between contemporary cultural practice and urban development, and examines how access to cultural participation, cultural labour pathways, and institutional support is unevenly distributed across the sector.

Revive marked a necessary shift in recognising arts and culture as central to Australian public life. Its recognition of artists as workers, alongside the establishment of Creative Australia, has provided national visibility and some structural renewal. However, from a [REDACTED] perspective, the practical differences between the previous and current structures are not always clearly felt, especially at the level of independent practice and small-to-medium organisations. Despite some policy reform, significant structural challenges remain.

A pressing issue (Pillar 4) is the continued instability of Australia's cultural infrastructure, particularly material conditions, including workspaces. Across Australia, artists and cultural organisations experience increasing precarity through rising property costs, insecure tenure, redevelopment pressures, and the erosion of long-term creative spaces. Simultaneously, cultural activity is frequently mobilised within urban branding, tourism, and development frameworks, while these same processes undermine independent and experimental practice. This reflects a structural gap between cultural policy and planning systems, particularly in how cultural value is recognised beyond institutional and funding frameworks.

Cultural space should be understood as essential civic infrastructure rather than temporary or contingent use. Without this recognition, Australia risks further erosion of the conditions required for sustained cultural production, including independent spaces that enable innovation, critical discourse, experimentation, and pluralistic cultural expression, rather than narrowly instrumentalised framings of "social cohesion" that treat difference and contestation as problems to be managed.

Another key issue (Pillar 3) is under-investment in artists and cultural workers relative to population growth and international benchmarks. Sector analysis (including A New Approach) indicates that per-capita cultural investment remains comparatively low, and funding structures continue to favour large institutions over independent practice. Cultural policy should address this imbalance through fair remuneration, safer working conditions, and stronger protections for creative labour. It should support independent advocacy capacity within the cultural sector to respond to structural pressures.

Cultural policy should further strengthen cultural memory, research, archives, and critical discourse, including through partnerships with universities and research funding bodies, as these systems are essential to sustaining long-term cultural knowledge and understanding how artists and cultural organisations contribute to shaping Australian cities and public life.

Arts and culture are not peripheral to national development. They are central to community understanding, city formation, and sustaining democratic life. The next National Cultural Policy is an opportunity to strengthen these foundations by reshaping the systems governing cultural production, distribution, and value.