

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

My name is Gillian Morrison. I am based in Canberra, and I work as an Arts worker in the Craft and Design sector.

Craft and Design is a foundational human practice. Every society defines itself through the objects it makes: the tools it builds, the forms it invents and the aesthetic sensibility it encodes into them. From the moment we reach for a coffee cup in the morning to the chair we sit in at work, we are inhabiting a crafted and designed world. Its ubiquity makes it easy to overlook and dangerous to undervalue.

Australian designers and craft artists have demonstrated this sector's long cultural reach and economic consequence. For example, Grant and Mary Featherston, and Fred Ward, experimenting with modern furniture and textile forms in the 1950s, produced work still being referenced and replicated in the 2020s. Robert Foster and Gretel Harrison's Fink + Co. has been producing anodised aluminium artworks and products for over 30 years, evidence of the sector's capacity to generate enduring cultural and commercial value across generations, shaping industry aesthetics, manufacturing practice and consumer culture for decades.

As Craft and Design sits at the productive intersection of art, industry and community, when we invest in craft and design practice, we are building the human capital pipeline that feeds industrial design, manufacturing, architecture, fashion and the broader creative economy. The workshop, the studio, the market and the gallery are simultaneously commercial spaces and sites of community formation, supporting regional economies, First Nations practice and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

However, Craft and Design is routinely subsumed into broad \creative industries\, or \visual arts\, categories in government reporting and funding structures which masks the sector's specific needs, economic contribution and workforce characteristics, making it difficult to advocate for targeted support.

Without proper investment in the sector, we will lose skills and inhibit growth. Rather than artists and designers founding and contributing to industry, Australia will not have an ecosystem to develop and sustain the great talent and skill that has already been invested in Craft Artists and Designers' education and development.

When artists and designers cannot sustain viable careers, they leave the field. When they leave, they stop teaching, mentoring and innovating. When the ecosystem contracts, industry loses access to the creative talent it depends upon. Australia then becomes a net importer of the design culture its own makers were already producing with distinction.

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.