



**Submission to the Review of REVIVE:  
Australia's National Cultural Policy**

## **Creative Recovery Network**

**Reimagining Cultural Infrastructure for a  
Climate-Impacted Future**

**Culture, Care, Connection and Community Resilience**

# Executive Summary

The Creative Recovery Network welcomes the review of REVIVE as a critical opportunity to deepen Australia's understanding of culture as essential civic, social and adaptive infrastructure.

Australia is entering an era defined by compounding disruption: climate disasters, ecological instability, social fragmentation, rising inequality, mental health strain and increasing pressure on community cohesion. These are not only environmental, economic or social challenges – they are cultural challenges. They affect how communities connect, make meaning, maintain identity, process grief, rebuild trust and imagine collective futures.

As the impacts of increasingly frequent and severe disasters continue to compound across regional, rural and remote communities, the need for integrated, people-centred recovery approaches has become urgent. While significant investment has been directed toward physical reconstruction and emergency response, there remains no dedicated Commonwealth mechanism to coordinate cultural and creative capability within disaster systems – despite strong evidence that social capital is one of the most critical drivers of recovery outcomes.

This submission responds directly to that gap.

To remain fit-for-purpose, Australia's National Cultural Policy must evolve to recognise the essential role of relational, community-led and place-based cultural practice in supporting resilience, preparedness, recovery and long-term social wellbeing.

Creative Recovery Network submits that Creative Recovery and Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) represent vital forms of cultural infrastructure that are currently under-recognised within national policy settings despite their long-standing contribution across Australia.

By relational practice, we refer to long-term, trust-based and community-led creative processes that build connection, participation, collective agency and cultural continuity. Grounded in the traditions of community arts and cultural development, this work strengthens social cohesion, amplifies diverse voices and supports community leadership across Australia.

Creative Recovery is not simply an emergency arts response. It is a relational and trauma-informed approach that strengthens communities before, during and after disruption. It supports preparedness, recovery, adaptation and long-term resilience through creative participation, storytelling, cultural continuity and collective care.

This submission calls for the next iteration of REVIVE to formally recognise and invest in:

- First Nations-led cultural continuity and place-based knowledge
- Creative Recovery and preparedness
- Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD)
- arts and culture as part of disaster resilience and climate adaptation systems
- long-term community cultural infrastructure
- sustainable creative employment pathways

- trauma-informed and care-based creative practice
- cross-sector collaboration between culture, health, education, disaster management and climate adaptation

This proposal directly supports Commonwealth priorities, including:

- National Principles for Disaster Recovery
- National Strategy for Disaster Resilience
- National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework
- Profiling Australia's Vulnerability (2019)
- Measuring What Matters: Australia's National Wellbeing Framework
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including:
  - SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing
  - SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
  - SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
  - SDG 13: Climate Action
  - SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

The proposal is grounded in principles of social justice, equity, self-determination and place-based leadership.

**To deliver on REVIVE's vision of "a place for every story," Australia must invest not only in cultural production, but in the relationships, practices and community infrastructure that enable people to remain connected, expressive and resilient through times of profound change.**

# Introduction

The Creative Recovery Network is a national organisation supporting a network of practitioners, organisations and communities working across arts, culture, disaster recovery, social wellbeing and community resilience.

Our work emerges from decades of Community Arts and Cultural Development practice alongside increasing experience responding to climate disasters, social disruption and community trauma across Australia.

We welcome the review of REVIVE and acknowledge the important contribution the policy has made in re-establishing culture as central to Australia's national life. The policy's commitment to "a place for every story, and a story for every place" provides an important foundation for recognising the diversity, complexity and richness of Australian cultural expression.

However, the accelerating realities of climate change, disaster impact and social fragmentation require the next phase of national cultural policy to move beyond cultural production alone toward a broader understanding of culture as essential social and civic infrastructure.

Culture plays a critical role in supporting connection, participation, wellbeing, preparedness, adaptation and collective imagination – capacities that are increasingly vital as communities face compounding disruption and uncertainty.

Embedding arts and culture within disaster resilience and community wellbeing frameworks is not an optional addition to recovery systems; it is a strategic investment in national resilience, social cohesion and community capacity.

***The future of Australian culture depends not only on what we create, but on our collective capacity to care, connect, adapt and imagine together.***

## The Policy Gap

While REVIVE has strengthened recognition of artists, institutions and creative industries, there remains limited recognition of the community-led relational practices that support cultural participation, social cohesion and long-term community resilience across Australia.

Across regional, remote, urban and disaster-impacted communities Creative Recovery and Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) play a vital role in helping communities navigate disruption, uncertainty and change.

These practices:

- strengthen community connection
- support participation and inclusion
- enable intergenerational exchange
- build trust and collective agency
- create spaces for diverse stories and identities
- support mental health and wellbeing
- assist communities to process grief, disruption and change
- foster preparedness and recovery following disasters
- strengthen civic participation and democratic engagement

This work is often long-term, embedded and place-responsive. It frequently occurs outside major institutions and market-facing frameworks, despite producing significant cultural, social and economic value.

Yet these practices remain structurally underfunded, fragmented and inconsistently recognised within national policy settings, resulting in missed opportunities to strengthen community capacity and social resilience.

***To realise REVIVE's vision, the government must recognise that cultural vitality depends not only on creative outputs, but on the systems of relationship, trust and participation that allow culture to flourish within communities.***

## Why Creative Recovery Matters

Climate change is reshaping communities across Australia through increasing frequency and intensity of floods, fires, heatwaves, droughts and extreme weather events, alongside long-term ecological, social and economic disruption.

Creative Recovery recognises that recovery is not linear and cannot be reduced solely to infrastructure rebuilding or economic metrics. Disasters erode not only infrastructure and economies, but also the social ties, trust and networks that enable communities to cope, adapt and recover.

Research consistently identifies social cohesion as a key predictor of long-term recovery outcomes<sup>[1]</sup>, yet disaster systems remain heavily focused on physical reconstruction and short-term relief. As disasters become more frequent and complex, the absence of investment in social and cultural infrastructure deepens isolation, inequality and community fatigue over time.

Arts and cultural practice support communities to reconnect, process grief and uncertainty, strengthen collective agency and imagine shared futures. Creative participation can provide inclusive spaces for dialogue, reflection, wellbeing and community-led decision-making – all essential conditions for resilient recovery.

[1] *Social, Not Physical, Infrastructure: The Critical Role of Civil Society in Disaster Recovery* Daniel P. Aldrich. Paper prepared for the 2011 American Political Science Association (APSA) annual conference in Seattle, Washington 31 August – 3 September

The Creative Recovery Network is already working in partnership with communities, the creative sector, local government and state agencies across multiple disaster contexts. However, current demand significantly exceeds resourcing capacity.

Australia currently lacks a funded mechanism to coordinate Creative Recovery nationally. Sustainable national coordination is now required to scale effective models, strengthen cross-jurisdictional collaboration, build workforce capability and capture evidence of long-term social and wellbeing outcomes.

This represents a significant policy gap and a substantial missed opportunity for national resilience building.

***Embedding arts and culture within disaster preparedness, resilience and adaptation systems would strengthen Australia's ability to respond to future challenges while supporting healthier, more connected and resilient communities***<sup>[2]</sup>.

## Climate, Culture and National Resilience

Climate adaptation is not only a technical and environmental challenge; it is also a cultural one. It requires shifts in values, behaviours, relationships and collective imagination – areas in which arts and culture play a critical role.

Creative practice helps communities engage with complex change in locally meaningful ways, strengthening participation, knowledge sharing and community-led adaptation. Australia has an opportunity to demonstrate international leadership by recognising the role of culture within climate adaptation, resilience and community transition.

At the same time, the cultural sector itself faces growing climate pressures, including damage to infrastructure, disrupted livelihoods, rising insurance costs, travel emissions and growing demands on artists and cultural workers responding to community need.

Through climate literacy, sector-wide adaptation planning and the interation of climate risk, mitigation and resilience into policy delivery, funding frameworks and evaluation processes the cultural sector can help drive meaningful systemic change.

This also requires stronger cross-sector collaboration between culture, science, health, education and disaster management.

The next National Cultural Policy must therefore support not only artistic production, but also the sustainability, wellbeing and adaptive capacity of the cultural workforce itself.

***We call for climate to be embedded as a cross-cutting imperative across all pillars of REVIVE—positioning arts and culture as essential infrastructure for climate adaptation, community resilience and regenerative futures.***

<sup>[2]</sup> National Taskforce for Creative Recovery <https://creativerecovery.net.au/initiatives-and-resources/national-taskforce-for-creative-recovery/>

# Relational Practice and Community Wellbeing

At the heart of Creative Recovery and Community Arts and Cultural Development is relational practice - long-term, trust-based creative processes that prioritise participation, listening, collaboration and shared authorship.

These approaches are particularly important in communities experiencing disruption, exclusion or trauma because they strengthen trust, belonging and local leadership through shared cultural participation.

This work frequently engages communities underrepresented within mainstream cultural systems, including first nations communities, regional communities, young people, disabled communities, migrant and multicultural communities, older Australians and communities impacted by disaster or social disadvantage.

***Investment in relational cultural practice is not only a cultural investment, but an investment in public wellbeing, social resilience and democratic participation.***

## First Nations Leadership

Any future cultural policy must continue to prioritise First Nations leadership, sovereignty and cultural authority.

Creative Recovery Network acknowledges the leadership of First Nations communities in sustaining cultural continuity, collective care, intergenerational knowledge systems and relationships to Country over tens of thousands of years.

As Australia faces increasing climate instability and social disruption, First Nations cultural knowledge offers essential leadership for thinking relationally about place, responsibility, reciprocity and regeneration.

***Policy settings must support self-determined First Nations cultural practice, care for Country approaches and intergenerational knowledge sharing, fostering cultural safety and authority that grows long-term community-led investment.***

# Aligning Creative Recovery with the Five Pillars of REVIVE

## Pillar 1 - First Nations First

### **REVIVE Priority**

Recognising and respecting the crucial place of First Nations stories at the centre of Australia's arts and culture.

### **Creative Recovery Network Alignment**

As Australia faces increasing climate disruption and social fragmentation, First Nations cultural leadership provides critical guidance for regenerative futures, community resilience and relational ways of working.

### **Policy Opportunities**

- Support First Nations-led creative recovery and cultural continuity initiatives.
- Invest in place-based cultural leadership and intergenerational knowledge sharing.
- Embed care for Country approaches within cultural resilience and climate adaptation frameworks.

### **Proposed Outcome**

A cultural policy framework that centres First Nations authority, cultural continuity and relational knowledge systems as foundational to Australia's future resilience and cultural wellbeing.

## Pillar 2 – A Place for Every Story

### **REVIVE Priority**

Reflecting the breadth and diversity of Australian stories and experiences.

### **Creative Recovery Network Alignment**

Creative Recovery and Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) create pathways for participation, inclusion and representation for communities often excluded from mainstream cultural systems.

### **Policy Opportunities**

- Formally recognise Creative Recovery and CACD within national cultural policy.
- Invest in long-term community-led cultural participation.
- Support trauma-informed and care-based creative practice.
- Strengthen local cultural infrastructure and grassroots cultural leadership.
- Develop evaluation frameworks that recognise social cohesion, participation and wellbeing outcomes.

### **Proposed Outcome**

A more equitable and participatory cultural ecosystem where all communities have the capacity, support and infrastructure to contribute to Australia's cultural life.

## Pillar 3 – Centrality of the Artist

### **REVIVE Priority**

Supporting artists as workers and creators central to Australia’s cultural future.

### **Creative Recovery Network Alignment**

Artists and cultural workers operating in community, recovery and resilience contexts provide essential social, cultural and emotional labour that remains significantly under-recognised and under-supported, frequently operating within insecure and short-term funding environments.

### **Policy Opportunities**

- Recognise relational and socially engaged practice as core cultural labour.
- Introduce funding incentives and training to support low-emissions creative models and build climate literacy across the sector
- Invest in long-term workforce development and mentoring.
- Support trauma-informed training and ethical practice frameworks.
- Improve workforce wellbeing supports for practitioners operating in disaster and high-stress contexts.
- Expand funding models beyond project-based outputs toward sustained community engagement.

### **Proposed Outcome**

A more sustainable, supported and future-ready cultural workforce capable of responding to the growing social and environmental challenges facing Australian communities.

## Pillar 4 – Strong Cultural Infrastructure

### **REVIVE Priority**

Building and protecting Australia’s cultural institutions and infrastructure.

### **Creative Recovery Network Alignment**

Creative Recovery Network proposes a broader understanding of cultural infrastructure – one that includes relationships, participation, trust, community networks and local cultural ecosystems alongside physical institutions.

Libraries, neighbourhood centres, regional arts organisations, community halls, galleries, cultural hubs and grassroots networks often become key gathering points during times of crisis and recovery.

### **Policy Opportunities**

- Recognise community cultural infrastructure within resilience and preparedness planning.
- Establish a national Creative Recovery and Resilience framework.
- Invest in regional and local cultural spaces as resilience infrastructure.
- Support regenerative and climate-responsive cultural infrastructure upgrades.
- Embed arts and culture within disaster preparedness and recovery systems.

### **Proposed Outcome**

A more resilient and adaptive cultural sector equipped to support communities through climate impact, disaster recovery and social change.

# Pillar 5 – Engaging the Audience

## **REVIVE Priority**

Deepening public engagement and participation in arts and culture.

## **Creative Recovery Network Alignment**

Creative Recovery and CACD practices engage people not simply as audiences, but as participants, collaborators, storytellers and co-creators. In times of disruption and uncertainty, participatory arts practice becomes increasingly important in helping communities process change and maintain social cohesion.

## **Policy Opportunities**

- Support participatory and community-led arts practice nationally.
- Invest in long-term local engagement models.
- Recognise arts participation as contributing to public health, resilience and wellbeing.
- Support cross-sector collaboration between culture, health, education and emergency management.
- Integrate climate engagement into audience development frameworks, strengthening public participation, climate literacy and community resilience
- Develop culturally inclusive and accessible engagement frameworks.

## **Proposed Outcome**

A culturally connected and participatory society where arts engagement strengthens community resilience, social trust and democratic life.

# Cross-Cutting Cultural Imperative - All Pillars

We call for climate to be embedded as a cross-cutting imperative across all pillars of REVIVE—positioning arts and culture as essential infrastructure for climate adaptation, community resilience and regenerative futures.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Creative Recovery Network recommends that the next iteration of REVIVE:

### **1. Formally recognise Creative Recovery and Community Arts and Cultural Development**

Recognise community-led, relational and socially engaged practice as essential national cultural infrastructure with the establishment of a CACD entity to support advocacy and development.

### **2. Embed arts and culture within disaster resilience and climate adaptation systems**

Support formal integration of creative practice within preparedness, recovery and community resilience frameworks across government along with Climate as a cross-pillar influence.

### **3. Invest in long-term community cultural infrastructure**

Provide sustained investment in place-based cultural participation, regional cultural networks and local creative leadership.

### **4. Establish a national Creative Recovery and Resilience framework**

Coordinate training, ethics, workforce development, knowledge sharing and evaluation nationally.

### **5. Support trauma-informed and regenerative cultural practice**

Strengthen workforce wellbeing, ethical practice and climate-responsive approaches across the cultural sector.

### **6. Strengthen First Nations-led cultural continuity and care for Country**

Support self-determined cultural leadership, intergenerational knowledge systems and place-based cultural authority.

### **7. Develop broader measures of cultural value**

Recognise social cohesion, wellbeing, participation and resilience alongside economic outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

Australia is entering a period of profound transition shaped by climate disruption, social change and increasing uncertainty.

In this context, culture cannot be understood solely as entertainment or economic activity. Culture is how communities sustain connection, meaning, identity and collective imagination during times of disruption and change.

Creative Recovery and Community Arts and Cultural Development provide essential relational infrastructure for resilient futures. Embedding arts and culture within disaster preparedness, recovery and climate adaptation is not an optional addition to public policy – it is central to rebuilding trust, strengthening participation and supporting community wellbeing.

The next evolution of REVIVE presents an opportunity for Australia to lead internationally in recognising culture as essential to resilience, preparedness and regenerative futures.

To realise the vision of “a place for every story,” Australia must invest not only in creative production, but in the people, relationships and community systems that enable those stories to emerge and endure.

***The Creative Recovery Network welcomes the opportunity to work with the Australian Government to support stronger, more connected and more resilient communities.***

***May 2026***

**Creative Recovery Network is proud to endorse the recommendations presented through:**  
**Creative Climate Action Alliance** - <https://tinyurl.com/CreativeClimateActionAlliance>  
**Community Arts and Cultural Development Alliance** -  
<https://revivecommunityarts.com/statement/>  
**Arts and Health Consortium** - <https://tinyurl.com/ArtsHealthSubmission>  
**Creative Climate** - <https://tinyurl.com/CreativeClimateSubmission>