

## Submission from the Australian Youth Orchestra Youth Council to the National Cultural Policy Review

Imagine with us, the socially harmonious and vibrant cultural landscape: Bustling streets filled with music, audiences engaged and enthusiastic, communities existing with respect and empathy. In this vision, diverse artists and audiences engage in shared experiences, encountering the unfamiliar, building understanding, and celebrating differences. Vibrant and diverse musics and perspectives are showcased, engaged with and celebrated. This is the cultural future we strive to make possible for all.

Arts, music and culture are the reflection of a society's lived experiences. They translate complex stories, relationships and history into something tangible to be understood and felt by an audience. Central to this is the ability for individuals to express their voice. Without this, culture cannot be meaningfully created, communicated, or sustained.

The opportunity to both develop one's own and experience and understand others' expressive voice is fundamental to building a culturally rich and socially harmonious society. To achieve this, the following interconnected areas must be strengthened: accessibility (to engage audiences), education (through a strong cultural infrastructure), and sustainable arts funding (centrality of the artist) and opportunities for diverse voices to engage with diverse audiences (a place for every story/First Nations first).

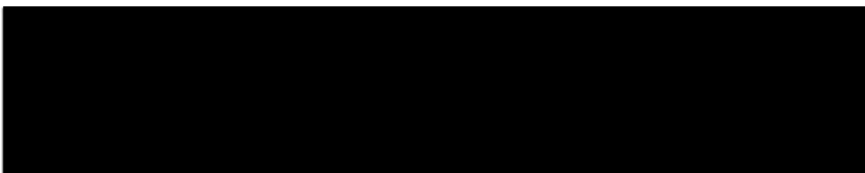
### 1. Accessibility - engaging the audience

Young artists must have access to both the opportunity to learn music, and to experience the arts. Inspiration is powerful, and allows culture to be passed down and developed. This requires investment in support to regional areas, free and affordable concerts, and the expansion of the traditional concert venues into community and public spaces. Bringing the arts into everyday environments strengthens audience engagement and fosters cultural participation. The creation of art is inseparable from its audience; both artistic development and cultural exchange are limited without widespread access.

### 2. Education - strong cultural infrastructure

To express one's voice and experience through music, one must learn the language to speak it. Honing my own artistic voice and use of this language has been life's greatest gift. It has allowed me to show my heart, and express what is impossible with words. Arts education is fundamental to developing this shared language and ability.

This comes in the form of arts organisations, schools, and private practices. The access to such education should be a right, no matter one's location, experience, or financial situation.



Access to high quality arts education across schools, community organisations and beyond, should be available regardless of geographic and/or financial capacity. It should be recognised as a fundamental right. Equitable access to arts education creates active contributors and participants in the Australian cultural landscape.

### 3. Funding and sustainable practice - centrality of the artist

Artists require ongoing financial stability in order to create work. One cannot write a symphony, and contribute to the cultural landscape, whilst spending their hours struggling to pay rent.

The number one issue I hear discussed among my peers is how to fund the creation of our art and afford to live at the same time. A sustainable arts sector must include: support for living wages during creative development, recognition of art-making as labour, and long-term investment in early-career and independent artists.

A basic income for artist has been proven to be possible and hugely beneficial for both artists, consumers, and the economy, with permanent programs such as Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts. Without this stability, many works are never realised, and countless cultural voices remain unheard. A lack of sustainable support limits not only individual careers, but the diversity and richness of the broader cultural landscape.

### 4. Reframing 'Social Cohesion' as Social Harmony - a place for every story, First Nations First

The AYO Youth Council notes the framing of arts and culture in relation to "social cohesion" in the current policy consultation. However, we suggest that this term may carry implications of assimilation or the minimisation of difference. We propose instead the concept of *social harmony*, which reflects coexistence, understanding, and empathy.

Arts and culture play a vital role in cultivating this. They create spaces where audiences can encounter unfamiliar perspectives, sit with discomfort, and develop deeper understanding. They allow for the expression of conflict, difference, and complexity – all essential elements of an empathetic, understanding and harmonious society.

Art is a powerful driver for change and reflection. It enables individuals and communities to engage with ideas that may otherwise remain inaccessible, fostering empathy through shared experience.

Social harmony is achieved through actively seeking the respectful engagement of diverse voices, and the embracing of dissonance and difference. This is supported by strong accessibility, education, and funding structures, which enable artists to create work that reflects contemporary society and allows audiences to meaningfully engage with it.

### 5. Musicians' rights - AI and LLMs

AYO's Youth Council stands strongly in support of the Australian government's stance to embolden artists in their fight to remain the soul producers of art, rather than LLMs. The real economic impact of using AI systems to "create music" practically instantaneously is a process that marginalises

Australian artists and musicians alike. According to [Creative Australia](#), our country's music industry creates \$8.78 billion in revenue per year, a substantial addition (GVA) of \$2.8 billion to the economy.

In removing humans from processes of production, composing, performing, touring and more, there is a substantial, lasting risk to Australia's economy.

**Centrality of the Artist:** The Youth Council is greatly concerned with the methodologies of training LLMs (AI models). It is clear to us that in training these models, many non-consenting musicians have their original work infringed upon to create the ability to remove the musician from what should be a human, musical process.

**First Nations First:** Finally, it is evident that AI training with the use of First Nations music is an infringement on the APRA AMCOS-associated First Nations musicians' wishes. In [APRA AMCOS's](#) late 2025 media release, they stated 89% of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members and 84% of Māori members said: "AI would increase cultural appropriation and make it harder to protect cultural rights".

To conclude, the Youth Council is highly concerned with the increased usage of AI in place of using real musicians, due to copyright infringement, economic impacts, and dispossession of First Nations cultural rights. We stand strongly with [the Attorney-General's office's media 2025 release](#), in calling to clarify/update how copyright law engages with newly generated content, and would like to see the next cultural policy include a policy on AI.