

Submission to the National Cultural Policy

Introduction / Who I Am

I welcome the development of a new National Cultural Policy and the opportunity to contribute to a national vision for Australia's cultural future.

I am a visual artist, educator, public art producer, curator, and placemaking practitioner working across Greater Sydney. My practice operates across local government, public art, and community cultural development, at the intersection of creativity, community, public space, and cultural participation.

Through this work, I have observed the essential role arts and culture play in supporting wellbeing, social cohesion, local identity, and economic resilience, alongside the structural conditions that currently shape the sustainability of creative practice in Australia.

1. What Matters in Practice

My multidisciplinary practice spans artistic production, education, curatorial work, and public program delivery. Across these contexts, I consistently observe strong and sustained community demand for creative participation and arts-based engagement.

I work with diverse communities across ages, cultural backgrounds, and lived experience. Participants regularly articulate a strong desire for greater access to creative programs, cultural expression, and meaningful participation in public and civic space.

In delivering programs in public environments, I have also observed experiences of disengagement, including perceptions of exclusion, diminished safety, or lack of recognition within the built environment. These experiences highlight the importance of inclusive public space design and the need for representation of diverse community narratives within infrastructure.

At present, there is limited systemic capacity to meet demonstrated community demand. This includes constraints in funding, access to space, and resourcing for sustained cultural programming. This gap reflects a structural misalignment between community interest in cultural participation and the infrastructure required to support it.

The built environment and public space present a significant opportunity to reflect Australia's diverse social and cultural narratives. When people see their histories, identities, and lived experiences reflected in place, it strengthens belonging, civic connection, and cultural recognition.

Public art and cultural infrastructure should be developed in close dialogue with existing communities and broader urban and housing contexts. Cultural investment must be carefully considered to avoid contributing to displacement or the aestheticisation of place in ways

that exacerbate gentrification. Instead, it should support continuity of local identity and cultural presence over time.

2. Challenges and Opportunities in the Cultural Sector

The next National Cultural Policy should recognise that culture is not only experienced in major institutions, but also in local streets, libraries, neighbourhood centres, parks, temporary spaces, built environments, festivals and community-led projects. Many meaningful cultural experiences occur at a local level through artists, local government, grassroots organisations and Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) practitioners working directly with communities.

Arts and cultural activity generates significant public value, including economic activity, local vibrancy, tourism, social cohesion, and improved wellbeing outcomes. However, this value is not consistently translated into sustainable income or working conditions for the artists and arts workers who produce it. This structural imbalance between public benefit and individual remuneration contributes to ongoing precarity within the sector.

The principle of “Centrality of the Artist” should remain a core priority. Artists must be able to earn liveable and sustainable wages for their work. Too many artists continue to work within financially insecure conditions despite making significant cultural and social contributions to Australian communities. Artists require not only project funding, but also long-term investment in sustainable careers, affordable and accessible spaces to work and create, professional development opportunities, mentorship and pathways into secure employment. Support should extend across all career stages, recognising that artists require ongoing opportunities for growth, collaboration and participation throughout their working lives.

A key structural challenge within the cultural sector is the precarity experienced by artists and creative workers, driven in part by funding models that are misaligned with the actual labour required for cultural production.

There is a persistent funding gap in which artists are expected to generate significant cultural, administrative, and developmental labour without corresponding financial remuneration. This includes unpaid work embedded in Expressions of Interest (EOIs), competitive application processes, and speculative project development undertaken prior to any confirmed engagement. These conditions contribute to financial insecurity, inequitable access to opportunity, and long-term attrition within the sector. There is a clear opportunity to address this through more sustainable commissioning models, strengthened remuneration frameworks, and funding structures that properly recognise the full scope of creative labour.

A further critical issue is limited access to cultural infrastructure, particularly for materially based visual arts practice. As a visual artist working across printmaking, ceramics, textiles, and papermaking, I do not have access to a permanent studio and regularly rely on distributed facilities across Sydney to access essential equipment and production space. Affordable, accessible, and permanent studio infrastructure remains limited and increasingly out of reach for many practitioners.

This fragmentation has systemic implications. When artists lack consistent access to the means of production, cities experience a reduced capacity to generate diverse contemporary visual culture and place-based storytelling. Cultural infrastructure must therefore be understood not as an ancillary service, but as a core civic system that supports cultural production, identity formation, and public value.

Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) practice represents a further area of significant opportunity. CACD plays a vital role in enabling participation, inclusion, and community-led cultural expression. However, it remains under-recognised within broader cultural systems and would benefit from sustained investment, clearer career pathways, and stronger integration with government cultural planning and delivery frameworks.

After more than two decades of study and professional practice, the ongoing viability of a career in visual arts and community cultural practice remains increasingly difficult to sustain under current structural conditions. This reflects broader systemic pressures across the cultural and creative industries.

3. What Should Be Reflected in the National Cultural Policy

The National Cultural Policy presents a significant opportunity to recognise arts and culture as essential public infrastructure, embedded across planning, transport, health, education, and community development systems.

1. Strengthening fair, transparent, and sustainable remuneration frameworks for artists and creative workers, including reform of Expressions of Interest (EOI) and commissioning processes to reduce reliance on unpaid speculative labour and ensure payment for development work.
2. Increasing long-term investment in Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) and grassroots cultural practice, with clear career pathways, secure employment opportunities, and sustained structural support across sectors and career stages.
3. Ensuring equitable access to cultural participation across all communities, ages, and regions through a coordinated cultural infrastructure and programming review that maps existing provision, identifies gaps, and guides targeted investment in under-served communities.

4. Recognising arts and culture as core civic infrastructure, embedded across planning, transport, health, education, and urban development systems, including the establishment and expansion of “percent-for-art” policies (e.g. 1% for public art) to ensure cultural outcomes are integrated into major infrastructure projects from inception.
 5. Investing in affordable, accessible visual arts studio infrastructure and materially based production facilities, including long-term, secure, and distributed studio models that support sustainable artistic production.
 6. Strengthening cross-jurisdictional delivery of cultural policy through coordinated partnerships with local and state governments, ensuring place-based cultural development is effectively resourced, aligned, and embedded within national cultural systems.
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Closing Statement

Arts and culture are essential civic infrastructure, both physical and social, shaping how people experience place, identity, and belonging. This system is sustained by artists and arts workers whose contribution must be supported through fair, stable, and sustainable career conditions.

This Policy is a critical opportunity to strengthen the sustainability, accessibility, and coherence of Australia’s cultural ecosystem, ensuring it reflects contemporary practice and delivers meaningful outcomes for communities across the country.