

Submission to the National Cultural Policy Review 2026

The House That Dan Built

The House That Dan Built welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the review of Australia's next National Cultural Policy.

The Australian Youth Arts sector has been at the frontline of cuts and efficiencies implemented for over a decade, being overlooked by successive governments. This was exemplified in the development of the current National Cultural Policy, which not only failed to address the dire issues impacting the sector, but exacerbated them.

The youth arts sector was assured by the executive team at Creative Australia and Government representatives involved in drafting the policy, that this had heard and acknowledged, however the policy completely failed to prioritise young Australians as key consumers and participants in cultural activity, nor allocate funds to address the desperate needs of those companies specialising in youth engagement.

Youth Arts is the practice of creating opportunities for children and young people to participate in, experience, and contribute actively to Australia's cultural life. Youth Arts organisations sit at the intersection of culture, community, and the professional arts sector, ensuring young Australians have access to working artists, artistic participation, creative expression, and pathways into Australia's cultural future.

Importantly, Youth Arts should not be conflated with education, which has its own very separate issues regarding resourcing and acknowledgment commensurate with impact. While Youth Arts can produce profound educational outcomes, it is an industry fuelled by adult professional artists working collaboratively with young people. Funding to youth arts companies flows to professional artists.

This review must recognise the cultural rights of children and young people explicitly. Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises the right of children and young people to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. Youth Arts must be understood in reference to Australia's responsibility to ensure children and young people can access and contribute meaningfully to cultural life.

Despite chronic underinvestment, Australia continues to demonstrate international leadership in Youth Arts practice through the work of organisations nationwide and through Australian representation globally, including leadership within ASSITEJ International, the world's peak body for performing arts for children and young people.

In 2025, The House That Dan Built engaged 2,033 participants nationally and internationally, including 623 young people under 18. Across its programs, 74 original songs were

composed and performed, 42 emerging artists aged 18–30 were contracted, and 84% of regional and remote participants received their first music lesson through the organisation. Additionally, 586 regional participants accessed fully subsidised programs.

To ensure the future sustainability and accessibility of Australia's cultural sector, we recommend:

- Including children and young people as a priority within the National Cultural Plan.
- Establishing multi-year national funding dedicated specifically to Youth Arts organisations.
- Creating separate cross-portfolio funding streams supporting youth arts participation across Health, Education, Employment, Youth Justice and Social Services.
- Establishing an independently managed standing Youth Advisory Committee for Creative Australia.

If Australia is serious about cultural participation, artistic excellence and the sustainability of the arts sector, Youth Arts must be recognised, embedded and sustainably funded within the next National Cultural Policy.