

Formal Submission: Walkatjurra Cultural Centre National Cultural Policy

1. Identity and Purpose

Walkatjurra Cultural Centre (WCC), the arts and cultural arm of the Tjupan Ngalia Tribal Land Aboriginal Corporation (ICN 2148), is an Aboriginal-led organization guided by the motto *Yamarr Kanyira*—"to be the custodian of culture and traditions". The term Walkatjurra describes inscribing the story of Country, culture, and ancestors through artistic practice. WCC serves as a sustainable enterprise for the Ngalia family, developing livelihoods through continuous cultural practice and knowledge sharing.

- Art centre name: Walkatjurra Cultural Centre (WCC)
- Location: Leonora, in the Northern Goldfields region of Western Australia
- Language Group: Ngalia people
- How many artists: The Centre is Aboriginal-led and governed by Tjupan Ngalia Traditional Owners, supporting Ngalia artists, cultural custodians, and Elders. All management and project development are currently undertaken by volunteer Directors and artists.
- What kind of artwork/cultural work: WCC translates Ngalia Ninti (knowledge) into physical art forms including painting, textiles, fibre arts, jewellery, printmaking, and digital media. Key cultural work includes the Walkatjurra Ranger Group (cultural maintenance) and digital language projects (e.g., Mamutjitji Story and app).

2. Vision, Mission, and Strategic Goals

Walkatjurra Cultural Centre operates on a Professional Mastery Model, aiming to transition from a volunteer-led initiative into a professional, development-focused arts centre that nurtures Northern Goldfields artists.

Vision

To support Ngalia artists in creating enduring bodies of work through deep skills development and culturally grounded arts projects.

Mission

To build the professional capacity of our artists through long-term engagement in high-quality arts projects by:

- Facilitating project-based learning that prioritises skill acquisition and technical excellence.
- Supporting the creation of significant artworks that tell enduring cultural stories.
- Providing resources, access to Country, and mentorship necessary for artists to sustain a professional practice.

- Strengthening curatorial practice and digitisation, so works and stories are preserved, understood, and recognised at regional, national, and international levels.

Strategic Goals

- Protect Ngalia Country and Culture.
- Ensure traditional knowledge is embodied through art and cultural expression.
- Be a sustainable and effective enterprise.
- Create employment and income opportunities for Ngalia people.

3. Strategic Foundation: The Professional Mastery Model

WCC transitions from a volunteer-led initiative to a Professional Mastery Model. This model shifts focus from operational survival to artistic mastery and legacy creation through three key components:

- **Decentralised Studio Model:** The WCC uses a three-part studio structure—the Remote Desert Studio (Origin Camps), the Agnew Bush Studio (Connection & Materials), and Town-Based Practice (Refinement Studio)—to ensure culturally grounded practice and access to Country. This model ensures the art is driven by Ngalia Ninti (knowledge) and bypasses the limitations of relying on a single, fixed facility.
- **The Manager/Curator Role:** The critical strategic goal is securing an IVAIS-funded Art Centre Manager/Curator position in 2026. This professional role is essential to managing the flow of knowledge from Country to Enterprise, acting as a Creative Producer/Mentor, Curatorial Lead, and Legacy Steward, overseeing digitisation, cataloguing, and IP protection.
- **The Five Pillars of Development:** The WCC's work is delivered through five Core Developmental Projects (*Social Fabric*, *Yunin Munku*, *Grandmothers Country*, *Ngalia Birds*, *Ngurrura Yiwarra*). These projects focus on intergenerational knowledge transfer, deep skill acquisition (e.g., scientific illustration, fibre arts), and creating museum-quality, collection-level bodies of work, which justify the centre's mission to support art as an expression of culture.

Our Needs and How Government Can Support

Walkatjurra Cultural Centre's Strategic Goals aim to ensure traditional knowledge is embodied through art and cultural expression and to be a sustainable and effective enterprise. Realising these goals, however, is being actively hindered by systemic barriers that penalise our culturally informed business model. Securing IVAIS operational funding is the critical investment required to dismantle these obstacles. Specifically, it enables us to professionalise our operations through the Manager/Curator role, directly supporting the next generation of cultural knowledge holders, and validating our Decentralised Studio Model which ensures access to Country without requiring a fixed, capital-intensive facility.

The Walkatjurra Cultural Centre needs support to address the following challenges:

Biggest Challenges

- Next generation of members, who are degree and cultural knowledge holders are feeling stymied. There is no clear pathway supported by Government within the art centre for their skills and talents.
- Systematic barriers. Penalised for operating outside the conventional systems. For instance no funding support for our professional mastery and decentralised studio model
- Seems the funding support is focussed on art centres needing a building to receive certain funding but we operate in a different model. Walkatjurra Cultural Centre is culturally informed, locally governed, structured the way community feels are right and grants should support all variations of aboriginal business models and governance structures.
- **Pathway Stagnation:** Next-generation members feel stymied by a lack of clear pathways. **Solution:** The IVAIS-funded Manager/Curator serves as a Creative Producer and Mentor, guiding artists toward "collection-quality" work and professional careers.
- **Infrastructure Bias:** Funding often favors fixed buildings. **Solution:** Our Decentralised Studio Model (Town, Bush, and Remote) ensures art is driven by Ngalia Ninti (knowledge) and access to Country, bypassing the need for capital-intensive facilities.
- **Cultural Risk:** The real risk is the loss of cultural knowledge transfer. **Solution:** The Five Pillars of development (core projects) prioritize intergenerational knowledge transfer and technical excellence to record Ngalia stories for future generations.
- Grant deeming Aboriginal governance as high risk and favouring shire or traditional corporation-based models.
- Grant deeming Aboriginal governance as high risk and favouring shire or traditional corporation-based models.
- Funding process is designed for third party needs not for first nations people. Cultural lens and nuance are not present.
- Funding process is designed for third party needs not for first nations people. Cultural lens and nuance are not present.
- The risk for funding is not different Aboriginal business model the risk is not funding important cultural maintenance and knowledge transfer and risking loss of that culture before our eyes.

Kind of Support Needed

- The risk for funding is not different Aboriginal business model. The real risk is not funding important cultural maintenance and knowledge transfer and risking loss of that culture before our eyes.
- Walkatjurra Cultural Centre haven't felt the actioned changes under First Nations First regarding grants and application processes, such as First Nations First Creative Australia changes. We would like to see the true change and impact of this. For us, it doesn't feel that this is working or not working yet.
- Walkatjurra Cultural Centre would like to see an uplift on IVAIS operational funding for all arts centres, not a competitive basis, but similar to Operational funding received by Native Title Prescribed Body Corporates in this case to support our cultural work and art as an expression of culture. This could be directed through representative bodies like Aboriginal Art Centre Hub of WA, similar to Native Title Service/Representative Bodies that receive the the PBC support funding and distribute to their region. This essential funding can then cover operational costs, we need annual funding of \$150,000 + 30% for insurances and incidentals.

Call to Action: Support for Walkatjurra Cultural Centre

'First Nations First' is the foundational pillar of the Australian Government's National Cultural Policy, Revive, which aims to prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creative control, self-determination and integration of Indigenous stories at the heart of the nation's culture. Art Centres are crucial to realising these outcomes.

Walkatjurra Cultural Centre

██████████

████████████████████

www.walkatjurra.org.au