

Submission to the Review of REVIVE – Australia’s National Cultural Policy

Introduction / Executive Summary

I welcome the review of REVIVE as an important opportunity to shape the future of arts and culture in Australia.

This submission responds to the review from the perspective of an arts educator and practitioner working within live production, scenic construction and arts training environments.

This submission calls for environmental sustainability, workforce sustainability and psychosocial safety to be recognised as interconnected priorities within Australia’s cultural sector.

Environmental sustainability is an essential and urgent focus within the arts. Alongside this important work, there is also a growing need to support healthier and more sustainable ways of working across creative industries. These conversations are deeply connected.

The following recommendations outline practical reforms to support a more sustainable and human-centred arts sector:

1. Strengthen workforce sustainability and psychosocial safety initiatives within national cultural policy.
2. Support sustainable production cultures and realistic production timelines.
3. Invest in education and early-career sustainability initiatives.
4. Recognise technical and production workers as essential cultural contributors.

Key Issues

Australia’s creative industries are facing increasing pressure from workforce instability, burnout and unsustainable production expectations.

Within live production and arts education environments, many practitioners are navigating compressed timelines, insecure employment, high workloads and increasing mental and emotional fatigue. While resilience and adaptability are valued within the sector, high-pressure working conditions can sometimes be experienced as part of production culture.

As environmental sustainability becomes more embedded within the arts, there is an opportunity to more closely connect this work with workforce sustainability and psychosocial safety initiatives. Unsustainable production models can undermine environmentally sustainable practices by reducing opportunities for planning, reuse, collaboration and reflective decision-making.

Emerging artists and students are often entering industries where high workloads and extended pressures are common. There is an opportunity for Australia’s National Cultural Policy to help support healthier and more sustainable creative careers into the future.

Technical and production-based roles also remain underrepresented within broader cultural policy conversations, despite their essential contribution to the delivery of artistic work.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen Workforce Sustainability and Psychosocial Safety Initiatives Within National Cultural Policy

National cultural policy should continue strengthening its recognition of workforce sustainability and psychosocial safety as important components of a healthy creative sector.

This could include:

- support for psychologically safe workplaces
- sustainable workload expectations
- wellbeing initiatives across arts organisations and educational institutions
- ongoing sector-wide conversations around burnout prevention and workforce retention

2. Support Sustainable Production Cultures

Sustainable production cultures benefit from realistic timelines, collaborative planning structures and greater support for environmentally responsible production methods.

This could include:

- funding models that support sustainable planning and delivery
- support for reuse and circular production practices
- production approaches that encourage long-term sustainability
- support for cross-sector collaboration and knowledge sharing

3. Invest in Education and Early-Career Sustainability Initiatives

Arts education plays an important role in shaping future industry culture.

This could include:

- embedding environmental sustainability and workforce sustainability into arts training
- preparing students for sustainable creative careers
- professional development opportunities focused on wellbeing and sustainable practice

4. Recognise Technical and Production Workers as Essential Cultural Contributors

Technical, workshop and production practitioners should be more visibly recognised within national cultural policy and funding conversations.

This could include:

- recognition of backstage and technical arts workers as key cultural contributors
- support pathways for production and technical careers
- investment in sustainable production infrastructure and training

Conclusion

Australia's cultural future depends not only on creative excellence, but on building sustainable, inclusive and psychologically safe environments where artists, educators, technicians and emerging practitioners can thrive long-term.

Environmental sustainability and workforce sustainability should be recognised as interconnected priorities within the future of Australia's arts and cultural sectors.