

24 May 2026

Submission to the public consultation on the next National Cultural Policy

To the Office for the Arts,

I write in an individual capacity in response to the public consultation on the National Cultural Policy.

I am a literary judge, interviewer and critic, as well as a current board member of Back to Back Theatre. I am also a PhD Candidate at the University of Melbourne researching the moral responsibility of the Australian book publishing industry during the climate breakdown. In 2023, I was one of Creative Australia's inaugural Creative Climate Fellows. Previously, I served on the boards of Melbourne Writers Festival (2019–2022) and Writers Victoria (2014–2018). My research, governance and professional experience mean I understand the gap between the arts, cultural policy and the climate.

My research focuses on the book publishing industry, and specifically, multinational book publishers. While publishers are not major emitters, they rely on structural conditions (including paper supply chains, global printing and shipping, energy use) that contribute to the climate breakdown. Their potential use of AI, as well as the unauthorised use of literature as AI training data, adds a new layer of environmental impact to an industry that already depends on intensive production and distribution. My research interrogates the moral responsibilities they have and considers the implications for future policy.

The consultation paper does not mention climate or the environment, and that omission is the starting point of this submission. It is time to embed climate and environmental considerations into Creative Australia operations and decision-making, as well as within Creative Workplaces, First Nations Arts, Music Australia and Writing Australia. Leaving climate and the environment out of *Revive* was a missed opportunity, and one we do not need to repeat. Climate and the environment are relevant to all five pillars and have a particular resonance with Pillar 1: First Nations First (in relation to Care for Country and cultural heritage) and Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure (including but not limited to networks of artists and the behaviour of arts organisations themselves).

I support Creative Australia's recent investment in Creative Climate, the consortium that brings together A Climate For Art, the Centre for Reworlding, Green Music Australia and pvi collective.¹ I strongly endorse their argument that 'culture is climate infrastructure',² as well as their six recommendations:

1. Integrate arts and culture into national and international climate governance.
2. Establish a National Culture and Climate Taskforce.
3. Increase and sustain funding for culture-led climate action.
4. Mandate climate risk management and environmental reporting.
5. Embed First Nations cultural and Care for Country knowledge in climate policy.
6. Invest in R&D for adaptive and sustainable creative practice.

The next National Cultural Policy has a rare opportunity to build on what came before. It must not omit the climate and environment a second time.

I welcome the opportunity to contribute further as the next National Cultural Policy is developed.

Sincerely,

Astrid Edwards

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¹ Creative Climate (2026). See www.creativeclimate.org.au.

² Creative Climate (2026) '2026 National Cultural Policy Submission'. See www.creativeclimate.org.au/moving-forward.