

National Cultural Policy submission - National Capital Educational Tourism Project

National Cultural Institutions (NCIs) are owned by all Australians – for the good of our nation we must nurture and support them.

NCIs record and make available our shared history and identity, ranging from the nation's founding documents to the latest innovations in digital culture.

As the site of the oldest continuing cultures in the world, Australia owes people everywhere, the right to the highest possible level of engagement with its stories ancient and modern.

While NCIs enable the public to appreciate Australia's history and heritage; they play an even bigger role in educating Students about Australia's artistic and cultural heritage, through access to national collections and exceptional onsite, online and outreach education programs.

Successful collaborative programs such as VisitCanberra and the National Capital Educational Tourism Project (NCETP) are exemplars of cross-agency cooperation delivering powerful outcomes, proving the worth of cooperative endeavours.

Since 1999 the NCETP has encouraged and assisted Australian Students to visit Canberra on school excursions, to engage with NCIs.

Interstate school excursions are Australian Curriculum focussed and highly organised – on average including around 49 students visiting 12 NCIs over 3 days.

140,000 Students visited Canberra on an excursion in 2025, contributing over \$140 million to the economy!

This educational and cultural engagement fosters social cohesion, civics understanding, creativity and critical thinking skills.

The NCETP provides the following observations:

- NCIs support Teachers in delivering educational experiences related to learning areas in which they are less confident or knowledgeable.
- The Canberra excursion experience is a world class opportunity for Students to undertake experiential learning in civics and citizenship, arts and culture.
- In a 3-year cycle around 50% of all Australian Primary Students visit Canberra, accompanied by approximately 10,000 Teachers.
- Students who visit Canberra better understand their place in Australian society, participate more in civic activities, and understand the roles of government, law and democracy in a balanced society.

There is a direct correlation between the level of funding NCIs receive and how Students connect directly with stories told at these important cultural places.

Additionally, excursion costs related to travel, accommodation and catering are ever increasing, and are compounded by global events.

Investments should be made to build on the achievements of NCIs, preparing them for a world where the importance of digital engagement grows further.

Recommendation 1 of *Telling Australia's Story (2019)* was that NCIs should:

Articulate a shared narrative that directly connects them with Australia's story. That expression of shared value should underpin the work of all the national institutions, individually and in collaboration.

The NCETP strongly advocates the following:

- Extended opening hours so more Students can experience more NCIs while in Canberra.
- Additional educational delivery spaces for NCIs.
- A collaborative budget for program development and audience participation, particularly for younger people.
- Acknowledging the importance of PACER in enabling emerging generations to engage with NCIs and their collections, particularly disadvantaged Students.
- Extending PACER to offset Teacher travel costs.