



Recognising Community Arts and Cultural Development

Darwin Community Arts is a member of the national alliance of Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) organisations and individuals, and strongly supports the alliance's submission. We argue that Australia's next National Cultural Policy must recognise and invest in CACD as essential cultural infrastructure. As outlined in the full submission, CACD operates at the intersection of creativity and community, delivering social cohesion, resilience and meaningful cultural participation across the continent.

Key Recommendations summary

1. **Formal Recognition**

Explicitly recognise Community Arts and Cultural development within the new cultural policy as a distinct and essential field of practice.

2. **Establish a National CACD Entity**

Embed a national body dedicated to CACD within Creative Australia to lead coordination, advocacy, research and sector development.

3. **Increased investment in CACD practice**

Supporting local arts initiatives that strengthen social cohesion and foster belonging in Australian communities

4. **Invest in Workforce & Practice Sustainability**

Support training, mentoring, wellbeing and trauma-informed practice frameworks specific to the needs of CACD practice.

5. **Reform Funding Models**

Shift to long-term, place-based and relational investment models for CACD practice.

6. **Embed CACD Across Policy Areas**

Position CACD across health, disaster management, climate adaptation, justice, education and regional development.

7. **Strengthen Research & Evaluation**

Further develop national CACD data, impact measurement and evidence frameworks.

8. **Equity of Access**

Ensure equitable access to funding, resources and participation nationwide.

Despite its national reach and impact, CACD is not explicitly recognised within the current REVIVE framework. This omission creates a critical policy gap. It limits visibility of a cross-sector practice that delivers on national priorities of equity, access and participation, and constrains the capacity of government to mobilise creative practice in response to compounding challenges including climate impacts, disasters, inequality and social fragmentation. Without CACD, the new Cultural Policy risks overlooking the primary mechanism through which many Australians engage meaningfully with arts and culture.

CACD is not a niche artform. It is a methodology embedded across disciplines and sectors including health, education, justice, disaster management and climate adaptation. Only 5–6% of national arts investment is explicitly attributed to CACD, this significantly underrepresents CACD's reach, as it is dispersed across multiple funding streams and not consistently measured. This systemic undercounting leads to undervaluation and misalignment with policy commitments to inclusion and cultural democracy.

CACD delivers outcomes across multiple domains. It strengthens social cohesion and belonging, improves wellbeing, builds local economies and workforce pathways, enhances civic participation, and supports environmental awareness and climate adaptation. Crucially, it provides the relational infrastructure that enables communities to respond to complex challenges and to participate in shaping their cultural futures.

CACD directly advances all five pillars of REVIVE. It supports First Nations self-determination, ensures diverse stories are visible, recognises

community-based artists as essential workers, and shifts engagement from passive audiences to active participation. Its impact is particularly significant for priority communities, including First Nations peoples, young people, culturally diverse communities, disabled communities, and those in regional and disaster-impacted areas.

To address this gap, this submission proposes formal recognition of CACD within the policy. At a time of increasing climate instability, social fragmentation and compounding disasters, Australia requires approaches that build trust, connection and collective capacity. These are not outcomes policy alone can deliver. CACD provides the creative and relational mechanisms to achieve them.

To realise the vision of REVIVE's pillar "a place for every story," CACD must be recognised, properly measured, and resourced as a cornerstone of Australia's cultural future. Without this, the policy risks falling short of its commitments to equity, participation and inclusion.

Let Us All Be Artists

Culture is bigger than the arts. The arts are bigger than the arts industry. A cultural policy needs to be bigger than just a policy on the arts industry. The 2021 census showed 714,632 people in Australia employed in the creative economy (creative production and creative services). But: More Australians don't make art in the arts industry.

Creative Australia research has found that:

In 2019, 9.3 million Australians created, produced or collaborated in the making of art, or 45% of the population aged 15 years and over – up from 32% in 2016.... This includes individual and collective activities, creating things for oneself or to share with others, and community collaboration. It includes all expressions of creativity – participation in organised lessons or classes, hobbyists creating things for fun, and professional artists creating things to sell.

Of the 9.3 million Australians who made art, there are fewer who work in the arts industry, or creative industries, or creative economy. If we focus only on the arts industry, creative industries, or creative economy then we exclude many of those in the arts who are not in the industry; we ignore what is happening to most of those who make and share art -- we will fail to understand the arts holistically.

Art is what makes us human. It is a human right. It is Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

This approach to advocating for the arts may or may not be effective with our governments, even if the Australian Government is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and even if Australia played a prominent role in its inception.

But one can hope. We need a National Cultural Policy also for those 9.3 million Australians.