

NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY SUBMISSION

Towards a New National Cultural Policy - *Submission from the Centre for Arts, Sports & Technology (CAST) - May 2026*

About CAST

The Centre for Arts, Sports & Technology (CAST) is a membership organisation sitting at the intersection of entertainment and technology. The entertainment sector sits at the heart of Australia's broader creative and cultural economy. We exist to ensure that artists, athletes, venues, and the organisations that power Australia's cultural and entertainment industries are not left behind as technology reshapes every corner of the sector.

We bring the industry together, keep it informed, and create conditions for genuine collaboration between the people building culture and the people building the tools that support it. Our mission is to foster collaboration between the technology sector and entertainment industry to drive sustainable growth and success. Our vision is a resilient and prosperous entertainment industry, driven by those in the industry and empowered by technology adoption.

Why We Are Making This Submission

Cultural policy in Australia has historically focused on funding, preservation, and access. These remain essential. But the next National Cultural Policy has an opportunity to go further, to acknowledge that technology is now one of the most significant forces shaping how culture is created, distributed, discovered, and monetised, and to put in place the settings that ensure Australia's artists and cultural organisations are empowered by that shift rather than overtaken by it.

We are not a traditional arts organisation. We are the connective tissue between the industry and technology. That position gives us a distinctive perspective on where the gaps are, and where the opportunities lie. We are genuinely excited about what technology can do for the industry and equally clear-eyed about the gap that still exists between the two.

Our submission focuses primarily on three of the five pillars:

Pillar 3 - Centrality of the Artist.

Pillar 4 - Strong Cultural Infrastructure.

Pillar 5 - Engaging the Audience.

These are the areas where we believe a bold technology lens will have the greatest impact on sustainable careers, industry resilience, and Australia's global cultural footprint.

Centrality of the Artist (Pillar 3)

The Challenge: Technology Is Moving Faster Than Artists Can Absorb

The financial precarity facing Australian artists is well documented. What is less discussed is the compounding effect of a technology environment that moves faster than most artists or their professional teams can meaningfully engage with. AI tools are already reshaping how music is produced, how content is created, how contracts are negotiated, and how royalties are tracked. Yet

the majority of working artists and the managers who support them have had no structured pathway to understand, evaluate, or take advantage of these tools.

The unfortunate truth is many are using these tools in private instead of sharing and learning together. Leaving individuals trying to navigate these tools alone further compounding the length of time to derive true value from the technology. The concerns are real and worth naming directly. Many artists and managers fear that automation will reduce the need for human expertise. That voice cloning, AI-generated content, and models trained on an artist's own work without consent represent genuine threats to their livelihood and identity. That creativity, one of the most deeply human outputs of our culture, risks being homogenised.

Our view is that these concerns are legitimate, and they are best addressed not by avoiding the conversation but by equipping the sector to engage with it on its own terms. The next stage for the industry is to move beyond tools for creation and distribution to imagine what the future of the industry could look like.

How is CAST Looking to Solve The Challenge?

CAST's broader membership offering for artists and athletes will focus on unlocking technology-powered revenue from assets that are currently underutilised: likeness, intellectual property, taste, audience data, and professional networks. We are building the infrastructure that helps artists not just survive in a technology-driven economy but genuinely thrive in it.

CAST, is exploring the creation of an AI literacy and platform education program specifically designed for the arts industry. The program would be created in consultation with the industry to make sure all concerns are addressed and the appropriate practices are part of the program.

- AI literacy and structured learning across generative AI, music tech platforms, and workflow automation, built specifically for the realities of artists and artist managers.
- Platform currency, with quarterly briefings keeping managers current on emerging tools, platforms and AI developments.
- Board readiness, preparing artists and artists managers to take seats on the boards of music technology companies. Ensuring the industry shapes the tools being built, not just adopts them.

How Could the National Cultural Policy Contribute?

The next National Cultural Policy should recognise technology literacy as a professional skill for artists and arts workers. One that warrants the investment like traditional creative development. Specifically, we ask the government to consider: Expanding grant eligibility to include technology that can empower the arts industry and build the future. Tech that's built with the industry for the industry.

Examples:

- Supporting government arts events with technologies where they can select platforms to use at events that can drive greater revenues.
- Support for events that bring the arts together to share their challenge with those who can build products.
- Early stage grants for tech products that are creating the future of the industry.

Investing in cross-sector initiatives that bring technology founders and artists into genuine collaboration. Not as buyers and sellers, but as co-creators of the tools shaping culture's future.

Strong Cultural Infrastructure (Pillar 4)

The Challenge: Innovation Is Outside, Not Inside

Australia's cultural infrastructure, its arts organisations, boards, funding bodies, national institutions, and industry associations is largely disconnected from the technology ecosystem reshaping the industry. The result is that the sector has become reactive rather than proactive: responding to disruption once it has already arrived rather than shaping what comes next. Arts boards, by and large, do not include people with experience in technology, venture building, or digital product development. This is not a criticism, it reflects the way these organisations have historically been constituted and funded. But it is a structural gap that the next cultural policy has an opportunity to address.

No industry can survive solely on government funding, every industry needs private and public investment to thrive. We see a future where private investment not only matches government investment but outpaces it. The future isn't less entertainment, it's more of it.

How is CAST Looking to Solve The Challenge?

CAST is creating a talent pipeline for those from the entertainment industry to find their way into tech to shape the future of the industry from the inside out. These can be contract, part-time, full-time roles or advisory. On the other side we are starting discussions with music orgs and governments to consider including tech aware board members who can help the boards and orgs understand tech itself and where it's going.

How Could the National Cultural Policy Contribute?

Strong cultural infrastructure for the next decade means infrastructure that is built to absorb and direct change, not just preserve what exists. We ask the government to consider:

- Encouraging arts organisations to embed technology and innovation expertise at the board level, and funding governance development programs that build this capacity.
- Tying funding to continuous improvement of business models. Lets reward those orgs who are trialling new tech and new ideas that could support the creation of the new industry.
- Creating structured pilot and adoption pathways that allow cultural organisations to trial new technologies developed by Australian startups with government support for the risk that comes with early adoption.
- Expanding the definition of cultural infrastructure to include the organisations and ecosystems that support technology adoption and innovation within the arts, recognising that digital tools, platforms, and the companies building them are now part of the sector's foundational infrastructure.

Engaging the Audience (Pillar 5)

The Challenge: Discovery and Participation Are Being Reshaped by Technology

Audience behaviour has fundamentally shifted. Fans discovering music, attending events, engaging with art, and supporting artists through digital environments all feels relatively new but it's important to understand that where we are now as an industry didn't just happen, these shifts started 20 years ago. The mistake we've made is to not engage in their creation earlier, we now find ourselves putting band-aids over a much larger issue. Tech is built with a 10 year vision, arts survival feels like it's a

daily struggle. When this imbalance exists, we find ourselves in the position of reaction vs being proactive.

The conversation needs to shift from thinking about what we have available to us now, to what will be available to us in the future and how we can start to create that future now. Yes we need to adjust what we can now but we can't have all our time taken up with the 'now', we need to put aside time to work on the future.

How is CAST Looking to Solve The Challenge?

CAST shares quarterly innovation reports with our members that spotlights 3-5 platforms that are working on what this future may look like. Awareness is the first step to start imagining what's possible. We turn up to industry events (BIGSOUND, Asia-Pacific Venue Managers Congress) to bring tech to where the industry already meets.

We've also created a startup page on our website that can be viewed by anyone for free. Our hope from these moments we are creating is to help those in the industry see what could be possible through what is already being created. In total we've mapped out 5 steps we believe will shift the trajectory of the industry towards one where culture and tech sit side by side.

1. **Awareness:** Show the industry what technology exists and is being built. Meet the industry where they are to start imagining what's possible with technology.
2. **Education:** How does it work? How does it benefit me? How can it make my life better? No more talk, there needs to be actionable takeaways and real products need to be seen.
3. **Connection:** How can we better connect so those within entertainment can help direct new products? How can they feel like they're contributing to the future? How do we see more tech people on arts boards to help with this transition?
4. **Pathways:** The products need to meet the needs of the industry and when they do, the industry needs to support them. Founders need to be invited to build within the industry because there is money to be made for investors. Philanthropic donations and feel good contributions will only go so far. The industry needs to be appreciated for the contribution to society along with the return on investment to match.
5. **External investment:** Once the industry believes in itself and founders choose to build within entertainment because pathways to customers exist, external money follows.

How Could the National Cultural Policy Contribute?

The next cultural policy to treat audience engagement as an infrastructure challenge as much as a creative one. We ask the government to consider:

- Investing in Australian-built platforms and tools that are working on creating that future, not only creating products that artists may need now.
- Supporting the development of data literacy and audience insight capabilities within arts organisations, so that cultural institutions can understand and engage their audiences with the same sophistication as commercial entertainment operators.
- Facilitating international market access programs for Australian entertainment technology companies, recognising that a strong domestic creative tech sector strengthens the global reach of Australian culture more broadly.

A Final Word: The Future Should Be Built Together

The cultural and creative sector's story has always been written by the people inside it. The artists, the managers, the producers, the venue operators, the promoters, and the audiences. Technology is now a central character in that story. The question is whether Australian cultural policy gives the people inside the industry the tools to write that character themselves, or whether they continue to watch it being written for them from outside.

We want to see a world where the knowledge that comes from years in the entertainment industry and the experience that comes from building in the tech world can come together to create a thriving local industry. One that supports culture and embraces collaboration with tech because of its contribution to the industry. The gap between what technology can do and what the arts and entertainment sector understands is widening. Sitting it out is no longer a neutral position.

The next National Cultural Policy has an opportunity to close that gap by investing in education, cross-sector infrastructure, and the conditions for genuine collaboration between builders and creators. We are already working on shifting the conversation with action and deepening our relationships with industry organisations across Australia. We hope we can contribute to reshaping the conversation to one that is hopeful for a better future, one where artists feel empowered and one where arts and technology are building the future together.