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A renewed National Cultural Policy (NCP) presents a once in a generation opportunity to reposition craft & design as a critical force within Australia's cultural landscape. As artificial intelligence reshapes creative production, sustaining the original, handmade, & materially grounded is increasingly important. This global shift is driving demand for the authentic & artisanal, with Australian makers gaining strong national & international recognition. However, the current NCP provides limited recognition of the significant contribution and future potential of craft & design practice.

As a leading centre for contemporary craft & design, Craft Victoria (CRAFT) plays a critical role in supporting visibility, professional development & market access for makers. CRAFT calls for the NCP to introduce & expand targeted measures that strengthen Australian-owned intellectual property & enable sustainable, locally produced craft & design practice.

Australia's craft & design sector is grounded in First Peoples knowledge systems, which underpin its cultural foundations & is enriched by diverse traditions. It contributes to social cohesion, identity & economic activity, particularly through micro & small businesses across local & regional economies. Policy must better recognise this intersection of culture, entrepreneurship & production.

Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist

Despite growing demand, makers & designers remain under-supported and underrepresented, shaped by fragmented pathways, declining skills development & limited access to training & studio infrastructure. Craft & design practitioners operate as both artists & small business owners but are insufficiently recognised and supported in either role in current structures.

Recommendations:

- Develop a 10-year national workforce plan

- Increase investment in technical skills, mentorships & studio infrastructure
- Introduce policy settings recognising makers as creative workers & micro-business operators

Strengthening pathways will grow the workforce, support local manufacturing & sustain creative careers.

Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Australia's craft & design infrastructure is fragile but essential. Organisations such as CRAFT provide platforms for exhibitions, retail, professional development & market access, yet remain under-supported.

Recommendations:

- Increase investment in craft & design organisations as core infrastructure
- Establish a dedicated craft & design body within Creative Australia
- Recognise & fund their role in sector-wide career development

Strengthening infrastructure will enable local production & sustain the ecosystems that support makers.

Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience

Craft & design engages audiences through participation, making & material innovation, contributing to wellbeing & social cohesion. There is significant untapped potential for exports, tourism & integration into civic environments.

Recommendations:

- Develop a national market development & export strategy
- Embed craft & design within tourism & place-based strategies
- Support international representation & exchange
- Introduce a national percentage-for-art procurement policy for Australian-made craft & design in public developments

A cross-portfolio approach is essential. Embedding the sector across industry, innovation, small business, education, health & tourism policy frameworks will position it as a driver of wellbeing, local manufacturing, entrepreneurship & global engagement.

A national percentage-for-art policy demonstrates how craft & design can be integrated into infrastructure, procurement & planning systems, creating sustained investment pathways while embedding culture in everyday public life.

With the right settings, craft & design can shape a sustainable, inclusive & creative future for Australia.