

Next National Cultural Policy – submission



It is crucial that the forthcoming National Cultural Policy reflects current issues faced by artists and arts workers, as well as the arts sector at large. I am concerned by the prevalence of censorship, political interference and racism in the arts. As such, this submission is grounded in core values of and commitment to decolonisation, anti-racism, anti-discrimination; artists as the moral compass of the sector; freedom of artistic expression without limitations; and freedom from political interference in the arts.

- **Commitment to decolonisation, anti-racism and anti-discrimination** (Pillars 1: First Nations First, 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)
 - The National Cultural Policy must take a decolonial, anti-racist and anti-discrimination approach. It should respect and take leadership from those in the sector who are already working from a strong decolonial, anti-racist and anti-discrimination framework.
 - The IHRA definition of antisemitism must be removed from all arts, cultural and educational institutions and be replaced with the UN Core Stance of Values: “The UN asserts that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, without distinction of any kind, including race or ethnic origin. It maintains that no state, institution, group, or individual should make any discrimination in human rights and fundamental freedoms.”
- **Artists are the moral compass of the sector** (Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist)
 - The National Cultural Policy must support artists to continue to be ethical and values-driven leaders of the sector and broader community.
 - Artists must be able to speak freely, sign letters and participate in boycott actions without harming their reputation and livelihoods.
 - Arts and cultural institutions must respect cultural diversity, and support, champion and care for the diverse conversations that artists bring to their programs, particularly those who have been targeted in the media for speaking out against injustices.
 - Artists must not be instrumentalised by institutions, lobbyists, the media and politicians.

- **Freedom of speech and artistic expression** (Pillars 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)
 - Strong cultural infrastructure must be based on artistic freedom of speech. This is already enshrined in the Creative Australia Act (11.e “to uphold and promote freedom of expression in the arts”) and needs to be upheld in the National Cultural Policy.
 - In order to create strong cultural infrastructure, art must be able to facilitate critical discourse, address political issues and critique power and class structures.
 - In order to create strong cultural infrastructure, there must be an end to the culture of intimidation that prevents artists from expressing and creating art freely.
 - The National Cultural Policy must address the prevalence of censorship, targeting and cancellation of artists who speak out against injustices, particularly in relation to nations that have been condemned by the UN for acts of apartheid, genocide and war crimes.
- **Freedom from political interference in the arts** (Pillars 3: Centrality of the Artist & 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure)
 - In order to create strong cultural infrastructure, the arts must remain independent and free from political interference.
 - The National Cultural Policy must ensure independent and ‘arms length’ funding processes across federal, state and local government. This includes ensuring that politicians at all levels must not influence or give advice that results in the provision or removal of funding support of a particular project or artist. This is already enshrined in the Creative Australia Act (article 14.2) and needs to be upheld in the National Cultural Policy.
 - A key action for the National Cultural Policy must be to implement an inquiry into political interference in the arts, including through donations and board membership and lobbying.
 - Donors must not influence arts organisations and institutions.
 - Board members with connections to political parties or lobbyists must be removed.

Furthermore, to deliver on REVIVE’s vision of “*a place for every story*,” the government must invest in the people, practices and relationships that ensure those often-invisible stories are seen, heard and valued. Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) is that infrastructure and must be recognised, resourced and embedded as the cornerstone of Australia’s cultural future.

Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) is a nationally embedded, practice-led field of arts and cultural activity that leads to social cohesion, resilience and collective wellbeing.

Despite its national reach and impact, CACD is **not explicitly recognised within the current REVIVE policy framework**.

This absence limits:

- Visibility of a critical cross-sector creative practice
- Effectiveness of policy outcomes related to inclusion, access and participation
- Capacity to mobilise creative practice in response to compounding national challenges (social fragmentation, economic inequality, climate, disaster)

Without CACD, REVIVE risks overlooking the **primary mechanism through which many Australians meaningfully engage with arts and culture**.

Why This Matters Now

Australia is facing:

- Social fragmentation
- Increasing climate instability
- Rising inequality
- Compounding disaster impacts

These are not just policy challenges—they are **relational challenges**.

CACD provides the creative, relational and community-led infrastructure required to respond. Social cohesion is not a fixed outcome — it is an aspirational ongoing goal. CACD practice achieves outcomes across the cultural, social, environmental, economic, and

Through creativity, cultural practice and collective expression, CACD:

- Builds a sense of belonging and connectedness
- Deepens understandings and appreciation of others
- Strengthens trust
- Enables voice and agency

These are relational outcomes that represent the human infrastructure of a healthy society and ones that cannot be achieved by policy alone.

Key Recommendations

1. Formal Recognition

Explicitly recognise CACD within the new cultural policy as a distinct and essential field of creative practice and core cultural infrastructure.

2. Establish a National CACD Entity

Create a national body within Creative Australia to:

- Advocate for the CACD sector
- Develop and safeguard CACD practice frameworks
- Coordinate national collaboration amongst CACD practitioners
- Lead research, evaluation and data collection to further understand and communicate the impact of CACD
- Strengthen cross-sector partnerships
- Amplify community voice in policy

3. Increased investment in CACD practice

Invest in local place-based arts initiatives that:

- Strengthen social cohesion
- Foster belonging in Australian communities
- Build local capacity and agency
- Promote well-being and Inclusion

4. Invest in Workforce & Practice Sustainability

Invest in:

- Training, mentoring and professional development specific to CACD practice
- Support for emerging and established CACD practitioners
- Professional supervision and wellbeing frameworks specific to CACD practice
- Recognition of frontline, trauma-informed practice

5. Reform Funding and Measurement Systems

- **Introduce** cross-program tracking of CACD-aligned investment
- **Report annually on** total community-engaged funding (direct + embedded)
- **Shift from short-term project funding to** long-term, place-based investment models for CACD practice
- **Resource** the relational and ongoing nature of CACD practice

6. **Embed CACD Across Government Policy**

Position CACD as a **cross-government delivery mechanism** across:

- Health and wellbeing
- Disaster preparedness and recovery
- Climate adaptation
- Social services and Justice
- Regional development
- Education and community development

7. **Strengthen Research & Evaluation**

- Invest in and support activation of national CACD data collection and impact measurement
- Build Partnership with research institutions
- Align with national datasets (participation, equity, diversity)
- Ensure CACD informs evidence-based policy

8. **Equity of Access**

Guarantee equitable access to:

- Funding and resources
- Cultural participation opportunities
- Networks and infrastructure

Particularly for:

- First Nations communities
- Regional and remote communities
- Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Disabled and marginalised groups
- Children and young people