



# Children's Ground

## Submission to the Australian Government's National Culture Policy public consultation

*Art and culture have carried knowledge for thousands of years through painting, artefacts, song, and other forms of expression. They are not only creative practices; they are ways of teaching, remembering, and passing on what matters.*

*Culture comes from people and country, and it is holistic – it comes from and is part of individuals' and community's health, social and economic wellbeing. It is very difficult to separate art and culture from the person, from country, and from language.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

**Submitted:** 24 May 2026

## Introduction

Children’s Ground welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Australian Government’s consultation on *Towards a New National Cultural Policy*. We strongly support the development of a national cultural framework that recognises First Nations cultures, languages, arts and creative practices as foundational to Australia’s identity, history and future.

Children’s Ground works alongside First Nations communities over generations to support systems change led by community aspirations, culture and knowledge. Across our work with Elders, artists, young people and cultural practitioners, we see both the extraordinary strength of First Nations creative expression and the persistent structural challenges faced by those working within arts sectors.

We recognise that for First Nations culture to genuinely be “at the centre of our national life” and positively shape Australia’s wellbeing, identity and future prosperity, governments must move beyond recognition and valuing First Nations language and culture in the arts.

To realise the full cultural, social and economic benefit, governments must ensure First Nations peoples have equitable access to language, culture and Country as a fundamental right and as essential to individual and collective wellbeing. Cultural connection strengthens identity, belonging, healing, intergenerational knowledge transfer and community resilience. Access to culture is inseparable from health, education, justice and economic outcomes.

This requires policy design, decision-making and delivery to be led by First Nations peoples, Nation-by-Nation, recognising the distinct authority, knowledge systems and cultural governance of each community.

A truly transformative national cultural policy must embed First Nations leadership across all areas of public policy and investment, ensuring culture is not treated as a standalone sector, but as central to the wellbeing and future of the nation as a whole.

This submission primarily relates to Pillar 1: First Nations First. It outlines key issues affecting First Nations artists, while also highlighting the resilience, leadership and profound contribution of First Nations peoples to Australia’s national cultural life. This submission is based on the experiences and views of Children’s Ground’s First Nations community leaders and staff.

## Children's Ground Response

For any national cultural policy to be meaningful and transformative, it must be grounded in truth-telling, self-determination, cultural authority and long-term investment in First Nations leadership. As noted in the discussion paper, our First Nations peoples hold the oldest continuing cultures in the world, and their creative expression is central to the social, cultural and wellbeing of First Nations and all people across Australia. Despite this, First Nations artists continue to experience systemic barriers, inequity and exclusion across Australia's arts and cultural sectors. While there have been improvements in some systems, many First Nations people remain excluded and disempowered in within arts sectors where their knowledge and skills continue to be exploited.

### ***The strength and contribution of First Nations arts and culture***

First Nations peoples have sustained and evolved complex systems of art, storytelling, dance, music, design and ceremony for tens of thousands of years. These are not only artistic traditions but living systems of knowledge connected to Country, kinship, governance and identity.

Despite the impacts of colonisation, forced displacement, language suppression and systemic discrimination, through sophisticated teaching, learning and transmission systems, First Nations cultures continue to thrive through remarkable resilience, innovation and cultural continuity. First Nations artists make a significant contribution to preserving language, maintaining cultural practices and strengthening communities, as well as shaping contemporary Australian culture.

Across music, theatre, literature, fashion, digital media, film and visual arts, First Nations artists are creating internationally recognised work that challenges assumptions, advances truth-telling and broadens Australia's understanding of itself and its history. They contribute enormously to Australia's cultural reputation globally while also strengthening local community wellbeing, identity and pride.

A key strength of First Nations arts practice is its collective and intergenerational nature. Elders pass knowledge to younger generations through artistic and cultural practice, while young people continue to innovate using contemporary forms of art and storytelling. This demonstrates the adaptability and vitality of First Nations cultures and is central to the continuity of First Nations language, cultural knowledge, systems and practices and connection to Country.

Importantly, First Nations artistic practice is holistic. Art is not separate from individual and collective health, education, language, healing, identity or wellbeing. Cultural

participation strengthens social cohesion, mental health and intergenerational connection, teaching and learning.

Investment in First Nations arts is therefore an investment in justice, healing and nation-building.

### ***Inequitable access to funding and resources***

One of the most significant barriers facing First Nations artists is inequitable access to sustainable funding and infrastructure. Current funding models are often short-term, competitive and administratively burdensome, privileging organisations and artists with existing institutional access.

Many First Nations artists, particularly those in remote and regional communities, face barriers navigating funding systems that are not culturally responsive and can be inaccessible for people without high level English and/or digital literacy.

Arts funding frameworks often privilege Western concepts of individual authorship, project-based outputs and economic return, failing to recognise the collective, relational and cultural responsibilities embedded within First Nations artistic practice.

Funding insecurity limits artists' ability to sustain careers, transfer knowledge and build long-term creative enterprises. Many artists undertake significant unpaid 'cultural labour', including mentoring young people, maintaining ceremony, preserving language and supporting community wellbeing. This work is vital yet rarely adequately resourced. This demonstrates the need for First Nations culture to be privileged and embedded in services, systems and life, beyond the arts – ensuring that First Nations people have opportunity to work in paid employment that is based on their cultural knowledge, roles and responsibilities. This would significantly contribute to the individual and collective health, wellbeing, economic, social and cultural strength of First Nations people and strengthen the contribution of First Nations arts locally, nationally and internationally.

*I know many First Nations cultural artists that consistently get asked to provide advice, sit on a panel, come to a meeting or represent their mob in some way and not get paid for it. Many of them feel obligated to do this for community and there is a promise for future benefit or they are told it is good experience for them. White people would not be asked to do the same thing for nothing – provide cultural expertise and experience much the same way a consultant does.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

**We recommend** that a new National Cultural Policy should establish long-term, flexible and culturally responsive funding models that support First Nations-led organisations, artists and communities over generations rather than through short-term project cycles.

### ***Economic insecurity and exploitation***

Despite generating significant cultural and economic value nationally and internationally, many First Nations artists continue to experience financial insecurity.

Within the arts, persistent inequities exist in payment, royalties, access to markets and long-term career sustainability. Artists in remote communities remain particularly vulnerable to exploitative practices by unethical dealers and intermediaries.

Economic justice is essential to cultural sustainability. First Nations artists must be fairly compensated for their work, knowledge and cultural contribution.

*There is nothing wrong with making money from art and culture. In many ways, it is about independence, creating business opportunities, and supporting people to earn a living. Art and culture can and should create jobs and contribute to the economy.*

*At the same time, there is a fine line between fair income and exploitation... even where work is sold properly, artists are often not receiving a fair return. I have family who are artists and work with galleries, and too often the artist receives only a small amount while the price rises significantly once the work is resold.*

*I do not understand why stronger legal protections have not been put in place. Even if an artwork sells for a very large amount, a royalty should continue to go back to the artist or their family.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

This highlights a major gap in protection. Without stronger protections, individuals and families can miss out entirely, even when works later become very valuable. That is especially wrong when an artist has passed away and their family receives none of the benefit from the continuing sale of their work.

**We recommend** that the Australian Government strengthen industry regulation, establish fair pay standards and invest directly in First Nations-owned creative enterprises and cultural economies.

Economic insecurity also relates to disparities in income and financial resources for individuals, families and collectives, particularly compounded for people living in rural and remote communities.

With First Nations people experiencing poverty at more than double the rate of non-First Nations Australians<sup>1</sup>, many artists do not have the financial resources for materials and spaces to create their art. This is limiting the opportunities and pathways of many First Nations artists to contribute to the local, national and international landscape and culture.

*Since moving here [away from home] I have not been painting, mainly because I left my materials behind... Having the right resources matters, and I am sure there are many other talented people who also need access to materials and support to develop their work.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

Economic insecurity, inequality and inequity cannot be addressed by one government department alone.

**We recommend** that the Australian Government apply a whole of government (and bipartisan) approach to reforming and re-imagining policy, funding, systems from a cultural base, led by people from communities/areas experiencing such inequities.

### ***Geographic and infrastructure inequality and inequity***

Remote and regional First Nations communities are often rich in cultural knowledge and artistic excellence but lack access to infrastructure, digital connectivity, rehearsal spaces, exhibition opportunities and professional development pathways.

Artists living on Country frequently carry the responsibility of cultural preservation and intergenerational teaching while receiving limited financial or institutional support. Geographic isolation can also restrict access to markets, training opportunities and industry networks.

*There is a lot of hidden talent out there. We need to support communities to grow the art and cultural strengths that are already there. If someone in community has talent or a strong interest in art and culture, we should be thinking about how to help them develop that, whether that means creating more opportunities, building confidence, or helping them turn that work into an income.*

*We know there are strong artists in community. The challenge is creating ways to identify and support them. That could include more art activities*

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary\\_business/committees/senate/community\\_affairs/completed\\_inquiries/2002-04/poverty/report/c13](https://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/senate/community_affairs/completed_inquiries/2002-04/poverty/report/c13)

*and classes as part of our programs, especially for younger children, so their interests and abilities can be nurtured early.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

**We recommend** that the Australian Government target investment in cultural infrastructure that prioritises community-controlled creative spaces, digital access and regional creative arts development. First Nations artists should be able to create, exhibit and share work on their own Country without being forced to relocate to major or metropolitan centres for recognition or opportunity.

### ***First Nations cultural and intellectual property protection***

First Nations artists continue to experience widespread misuse, appropriation and exploitation of cultural knowledge, stories, symbols and artistic practices.

Existing copyright and intellectual property laws do not adequately protect collective cultural ownership or First Nations cultural authority. Fake Aboriginal art and unauthorised reproduction continue to undermine both cultural integrity and economic justice for artists and communities. The early days of Artificial Intelligence is contributing to and perpetuating such exploitation.

*Any use or sale of artwork in different and any form must happen with the permission of the artist, because the work belongs to them and carries their story. Sometimes sacred stories would not be shared in some ways.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

**We recommend** that the Australian Government develop stronger legislative protections for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights. These protections must recognise collective custodianship, cultural authority and community consent.

ICIP protections should be embedded across all arts funding frameworks, institutions, educational settings and commercial industries to ensure First Nations peoples maintain control over how their cultures are represented, shared and commercialised.

### ***Underrepresentation in leadership and decision-making***

While First Nations stories and artistic works are increasingly visible, First Nations people remain underrepresented in leadership and governance positions across major cultural and creative institutions, galleries, festivals, funding bodies and screen organisations.

Too often, decisions about First Nations culture continue to be made without inclusion of and leadership from First Nations artists and communities' representative of the many Nations across Australia and representative of First Nations people from diverse demographic and geographic groups.

**We recommend** that a new National Cultural Policy should support genuine self-determination by embedding First Nations leadership across all levels of cultural governance. This includes long-term investment in First Nations-led arts organisations, curators, producers, educators and institutions.

Mainstream organisations must also be held accountable for moving beyond performative inclusion towards meaningful redistribution of power and resources.

### ***Truth-telling, cultural safety and national identity***

First Nations artists have long led truth-telling about colonisation, forced removals, intergenerational trauma and systemic injustice. Through art and storytelling, they create spaces for dialogue, healing and national reflection. However, many institutions still struggle to confront difficult histories or redistribute cultural authority in meaningful ways.

Many First Nations artists continue to face racism, tokenism and stereotyping within the arts sector. Artists are often pressured to conform to narrow or outdated expectations of “authentic” First Nations art.

Contemporary and experimental First Nations artists may be excluded when their work challenges non-First Nations assumptions about identity and culture. Artists engaging in truth-telling or political commentary often face institutional resistance or public backlash.

*No one else can tell our culture for us. That is what makes it unique.*

*Each clan group has its own stories, its own art, and its own ways of expressing culture. There may be connections across songlines, but each group still holds its own distinct knowledge, style, and meaning. That difference needs to be recognised and respected.*

*Too often Aboriginal art and culture are grouped together as if they are all the same, but they are not. A dot painting from one place is not the same as art from another, and contemporary Aboriginal art also has its own place and meaning. It is important to recognise both the diversity and the specificity of different cultural traditions rather than collapsing them into a single category.*

*When people can tell their own stories in the right way, it also helps educate non-Indigenous audiences. There has been a lot of ignorance in the past, but more people are beginning to listen and learn. We are seeing more public recognition now, including in media, where there is greater respect for Country and more visible acknowledgement of whose Country people are on.*

*But it needs to go beyond acknowledgement. It is about building real understanding, and it is encouraging to see the next generation engaging more deeply with this.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

First Nations artists are frequently expected to educate audiences and institutions about colonisation, trauma and cultural safety without adequate support or remuneration.

Australia's national identity cannot be fully realised without acknowledging the truth of its history and the ongoing strength of First Nations peoples.

**We recommend** that a transformative National Cultural Policy must embed truth-telling across Australia's cultural and creative institutions and support repatriation, community-controlled keeping places and culturally accountable storytelling.

Cultural institutions must create environments that are genuinely culturally safe, trauma-informed and accountable to First Nations communities. This requires structural change, not symbolic inclusion.

### ***Art as intergenerational healing and wellbeing***

For First Nations peoples, art is deeply connected to healing, identity, culture and belonging. Artistic and cultural practices are not separate from everyday life; they are central to maintaining connection to Country, language, kinship and community.

Through storytelling, music, dance, painting, weaving, ceremony and contemporary creative expression, First Nations peoples continue to strengthen cultural continuity and collective wellbeing despite the ongoing impacts of colonisation, dispossession and intergenerational trauma.

Art creates spaces for truth-telling, cultural renewal and emotional healing. It enables individuals and communities to express grief, resilience, survival and hope in ways that reconnect people to culture and to one another. For many First Nations young people, engagement in arts and cultural practice strengthens identity, pride and self-determination, supporting positive social and emotional wellbeing outcomes.

Importantly, healing through art is both individual and collective. Cultural practice reinforces intergenerational knowledge transfer, bringing Elders and young people together through shared creative expression. It strengthens community cohesion and reaffirms cultural authority and belonging.

*Health and healing are a major part of culture. Bush foods, bush medicines, being on country, speaking language, sharing knowledge across generations, and maintaining men's and women's places are all connected. It is not just about physical health; it is about social connection, identity, and cultural strength.*

*When I paint, I focus deeply and think about my grandmother's stories and about Country. It makes me feel settled and connected, and it becomes a way of expressing what I carry inside. I learned by sitting with my grandmother and aunts when I was young, watching them paint and listening as they explained what they were doing. Over time I began doing my own work, but that learning came from them.*

*The stories are a big part of it. My grandmother would paint Country, the places we come from, the waterholes, the soaks, and the paths people travelled. Those stories are not just about art - they hold knowledge about survival, where to find water, where to find bush tucker, and how to move through Country. In that sense, the paintings are like maps as well as expressions of culture and memory.*

*So, the paintings you create are not just pretty images. They are beautiful, but they also carry meaning and deep significance because they come from stories that have been passed down through my grandmother and family.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

*One area I would particularly like to think more about is healing centres. We need more spaces like that here, because too many of our people are unwell. My vision has been to see how those centres operate and what we might adapt for our own communities - places out bush that bring together good food, bush medicine, culture, and connection to improve health and wellbeing.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

Investment in First Nations arts is therefore not simply cultural investment - it is investment in healing, resilience and community wellbeing.

**We recommend** that the Australian Government target strategies that increase the contribution of First Nations art to the National Culture Policy by supporting access to

culture, language and artistic expression that focuses on health and healing to enable strong and thriving First Nations communities and futures.

*Even just sitting here yarning about all of this feels good. It reminds me how powerful language and culture are when we keep them active through everyday practice.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

### **Creative pathways for young people**

Young First Nations people are contributing to shaping Australia's cultural future through music, fashion, film, digital media, visual arts and performance.

Across communities, young people are using creative expression to strengthen identity, challenge stereotypes and imagine new futures grounded in culture and pride.

However, many face barriers accessing creative industries due to educational inequities, lack of mentoring opportunities and limited access to equipment, training and professional networks.

Digital technology has created new opportunities for First Nations artists to share stories globally and connect with younger generations. However, many communities continue to face limited internet access, inadequate infrastructure and digital exclusion.

Digital platforms also create risks relating to cultural theft, unauthorised circulation of cultural materials and misuse of imagery and knowledge.

Furthermore, the ways in which First Nations young people receive and engage with cultural knowledge have changed significantly over time due to colonisation, urbanisation, technology and changing social environments.

*One of the challenges is that young people do not always have the same opportunities to sit with their grandparents and elders, hear stories, and learn language and culture in everyday ways. In the past, that kind of learning happened naturally through listening, watching, and being present.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

Traditionally, cultural transmission occurred through daily life on Country, with knowledge shared through language, ceremony, storytelling, art, dance, songlines and close relationships with Elders and community. Colonisation disrupted these systems through forced removals, displacement from Country, suppression of language and the impacts of assimilation policies.

Today, many First Nations people (particularly young people) continue to experience barriers to accessing culture, language and traditional knowledge. However, cultural transmission remains strong and adaptive. Young people are engaging with culture through both traditional and contemporary forms, including digital storytelling, music, film, social media, visual arts and community-led cultural programs. Elders continue to play a critical role in passing on knowledge, while technology has created new opportunities for connection across generations and communities.

*Young people are influenced by many other forces these days, like mainstream Australian culture, American culture, social media, the internet, and popular media - so we need to make sure language and culture remain active, visible, and meaningful in their lives.*

*We need to make language and culture feel relevant and important to the next generation. Often, as people get older, they become more reflective about what they missed and feel a stronger responsibility to reclaim and pass on what they can. That feeling can become even stronger once people have children of their own. It makes you think seriously about what might be lost if we do not act now.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

Importantly, cultural transmission today reflects resilience and innovation. First Nations young people are reclaiming language, strengthening identity and continuing cultural practices in ways that are relevant to contemporary life while remaining deeply connected to Country, community and ancestry. However, for many young people the passing of Elders means opportunities for cultural learning can be limited.

To ensure and protect cultural transmission and sovereignty, government investment in digital inclusion must support First Nations digital sovereignty and community control over cultural materials, archives and storytelling. Technology policy and cultural policy must work together to ensure digital innovation strengthens rather than undermines cultural authority.

**We recommend** that the Australian Government ensure a strong National Cultural Policy by including a focus on long-term pathways for emerging First Nations creatives, including mentorship, scholarships, apprenticeships, youth arts hubs and culturally safe creative education programs – led by relevant First Nations artists and cultural authorities and Elders.

## **Strengthening language and cultural continuity**

First Nations languages are central to cultural identity, artistic practice and intergenerational knowledge transmission. Many artists are leading important language revitalisation work through music, storytelling, dance, literature and film.

However, language and culture programs remain significantly underfunded and are often treated separately from mainstream arts investment. Such funding is critical to ensure active teaching, learning and transmission with the current and future generations.

*Relearning language and culture can be an individual and a collective journey, especially for people living in places where so much has already been taken away. In some parts of New South Wales, Sydney, Melbourne, and Queensland, language and culture has been hit hard, and many people are living within dominant Western systems.*

*Relearning language and culture in that context can take real time, energy, and capacity. Often it is people who are already relatively secure in life who are able to do that work, while many grassroots community members are simply focused on getting through each day. Learning language later in life is not easy - it can feel almost like going back to school.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

*In some places, language is really at risk... By contrast, when you go to other places you hear multiple languages all around you, and that difference is really noticeable.*

*For adults, it can be much harder to learn language. When I spent time in Alice, I got to the point where I could understand a lot, but I still could not speak it properly. If people spoke quickly, I would lose track, and that can be frustrating, especially when older family members expect you to retain more than you can. If you have been away for a long time, it is not easy to come back and pick it up straight away.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

*It shows how important it is to start with young children, because they pick language up so quickly. I see that even with my young daughter who's four. She does not say much back yet, but she understands what I am saying and will answer me in simple ways. That tells me the learning is there, and it is much easier to build when children are young.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

*My paintings carry important meaning connected to Country, family, and cultural knowledge. For example, I have created a large painting about the four seasons, based on what my grandparents and aunties taught me about when different bush tucker is ready and where to find it. In that way, the painting is not only an artwork - it also holds practical knowledge about place, season, and survival.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

*Through art and culture, stories can be shared in ways that are engaging, meaningful, and grounded in the right context. It is often a more powerful way of learning than simply sitting in a classroom and being told information. There is beauty in it, but also joy, connection, and a way of sharing knowledge with the right people at the right time.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

*As a singer-songwriter, music has also become a way for me to hold onto language. I do not speak it fluently, but writing songs helps me interpret and remember words, and that process strengthens my own learning.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

*Children's Ground has shown how teaching those stories can be carried into books and music, giving children more ways to connect with language - even something as simple as listening to songs on the bus can help keep it alive. So, there is a role for organisations like Children's Ground, but also for government, because real investment is needed if we are serious about not losing languages and knowledge.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

Language is inseparable from culture, identity and belonging.

Therefore, First Nations language and culture should not be funded and supported solely through arts programs. First Nations language and culture are not simply creative

expressions. They are foundational systems of identity, wellbeing, knowledge, governance and belonging.

Language and culture are central to a child's development, shaping how young people understand themselves, their relationships, their responsibilities and their connection to Country and community.

Children learn culture through everyday experiences, through language, stories, song, movement, time on Country, relationships with Elders and participation in community life. Limiting funding to arts-based initiatives fails to recognise the holistic role culture plays in lifelong wellbeing and development.

For cultural continuity to be sustained across generations, investment must begin in early childhood and extend across education, health, family support, employment and community development systems.

**We recommend** that long-term government investment is needed to ensure First Nations children have consistent access to language and cultural learning from birth.

A National Culture Policy must recognise language revitalisation as core cultural work and support all community-led programs that enable artists, Elders and young people to create in and through their languages.

Supporting cultural continuity strengthens identity, resilience, mental health, educational engagement and community cohesion, while ensuring the survival and strength of the world's oldest living cultures for future generations.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Children's Ground believes Australia stands at a critical moment. A new National Cultural Policy presents an opportunity to reshape the nation's cultural landscape so that it reflects the truth of this country's history, the richness of its living cultures and the rights of First Nations peoples to lead their own cultural futures.

*If governments are serious about strengthening First Nations voices, maintaining language and culture, and supporting revitalisation where needed, then every First Nations grant should include a language and culture component. This is essential for social and emotional wellbeing, cultural continuity, cultural safety, identity, and passing knowledge on to the next generation. The UN Decade of Indigenous Languages has also highlighted how important this work is, but it still is not being elevated enough.*

Children's Ground First Nations staff member

We recommend that a new National Culture Policy:

- Establish long-term, flexible and culturally responsive funding models that support First Nations-led organisations, artists and communities over generations rather than through short-term project cycles.
- Strengthen industry regulation, establish fair pay standards and invest directly in First Nations-owned creative enterprises and cultural economies.
- Target investment in cultural infrastructure that prioritises community-controlled creative spaces, digital access and rural and remote creative arts development.
- Establish stronger legislative protections for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights that recognise collective custodianship, cultural authority and community consent.
- Support genuine self-determination by embedding First Nations leadership across all levels of cultural governance, including long-term investment in First Nations-led arts organisations, curators, producers, educators and institutions.
- Embed truth-telling across Australia’s creative institutions and support repatriation, community-controlled keeping places and culturally accountable storytelling.
- Target strategies that increase the contribution of First Nations art to the National Culture Policy by supporting access to culture, language and artistic expression that focuses on health and healing to enable strong and thriving First Nations communities and futures.
- Focus on long-term pathways for emerging First Nations creatives, including mentorship, scholarships, apprenticeships, youth arts hubs and culturally safe creative education programs – led by relevant First Nations artists and cultural authorities and Elders.
- Ensure long-term government investment to ensure First Nations children have consistent access to language and cultural learning from birth.
- Apply a whole of government (and bipartisan) approach to reforming and re-imagining policy, funding, systems from a cultural base, led by people from communities/areas experiencing such inequities.

First Nations creativity has always existed at the heart of this continent. It has survived invasion, exclusion and systemic inequality while continuing to evolve with extraordinary strength and innovation.

A National Culture Policy must recognise language revitalisation as core cultural work and support all community-led programs that enable artists, Elders and young people to create in and through their languages.

Supporting cultural continuity strengthens identity, resilience, mental health, educational engagement and community cohesion, while ensuring the survival and strength of the world's oldest living cultures for future generations.

Australia's cultural future will be stronger, richer and more truthful when First Nations artists are fully supported in genuine and equitable ways to lead, create and thrive on their own terms.