

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous

Organisation



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Dear Minister Burke,

[REDACTED] is a commercial gallery (CGs) based in [REDACTED]. It presents and sells contemporary art and provides public art commissioning services to government and non-government clients. We've worked for over a decade to support artists and strengthen Australia's visual arts ecosystem.

CGs are acutely focused on artists' incomes. We are risk-takers in this infrastructure, as small businesses are in every sector of our economy. CGs provide the predominant pathway for artwork acquisitions into public and private collections – they are vital cultural infrastructure. Through exhibitions and sales, they provide artists with income and long-term professional support. Unlike grants, the relationship between a gallery and artist can sustain a career over decades. CGs are central to the viability of Australia's visual arts sector and directly support Pillar 3 of the National Cultural Policy: Centrality of the Artist. CGs also play a unique role in connecting artists with public institutions, collectors, and audiences, and contribute to a diverse and interconnected visual arts infrastructure across Australia.

Despite their importance, the CGs sector has been largely absent from government research and policy development. The last major inquiry into the sector was Rupert Myer's Report of the Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry in 2002, and the last ABS research on CGs dates to 1999–2000. Updated research and data collection are urgently needed to understand the economic and cultural contribution of CGs and inform effective policy development.

While the national and state and territory galleries are the flagships of our country, regional galleries and their university counterparts are the most diverse, distributed and essential visual arts infrastructure connecting the nation's cultural fabric. One in three Australians live in regional Australia. Regional galleries have unique and regionally specific collections and contribute substantially to tourism and regional revitalisation. They provide an essential platform for regional artists, reflect local identity, and through public programs offer valuable social space for community connection. Post-pandemic reductions to acquisitions budgets have significantly weakened their capacity to build collections and support artists. To address this, the Australian Government should establish a national Regional Collections Development Fund. A dollar-for-dollar grant model would strengthen regional gallery collections and enhance the sustainability of the wider visual arts market.

Australia's art prizes and awards play an important role in the sector, providing career opportunities, and to identify emerging and established talent. However, artists and their representative galleries often incur considerable freight and travel costs to get to the presenting venue. Ask any Torres Strait Islander artist the costs to freight their work to the Walyalup Fremantle Print Award in Western Australia. The Government should establish an Art Prizes and Awards Travel and Freight Subsidy Scheme to support artist participation.

The Australian Government should:

1. Recognise CGs as Strong Cultural Infrastructure and include them in policy development.
2. Undertake urgent national research into the CGs sector.
3. Establish an Australian Regional Collections Development Fund.
4. Create an Art Prizes and Awards Travel and Freight Subsidy Scheme.

[REDACTED]