

National Cultural Policy Submission

1472793

Public

Individual

Susan Pavlovich



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Embedding Visual Arts Education in the Next National Cultural Policy

Visual arts education is core cultural infrastructure and underpins every pillar.

Visual arts education develops creative capability, critical thinking and cultural literacy, equipping young people to engage with complex social, technological and ecological challenges. It connects learners to Australian stories, identities and, crucially, to First Nations knowledges through processes grounded in respect, accountability and local cultural protocols. For many young Australians, schools are the most equitable point of access to arts and culture, making sustained investment in specialist visual arts teaching a long term cultural and economic strategy.

Access to quality visual arts education remains uneven, with many primary schools operating without specialist teachers and provision concentrated in higher socioeconomic contexts. Artist in schools programs provide valuable enrichment but cannot replace the continuity, equity and pedagogical depth of curriculum embedded learning led by specialist teachers. Addressing this requires coherent, cross portfolio policy that positions arts education as a shared national responsibility rather than a discretionary enrichment.

Pillar 1:

Visual arts education is a key site for First Nations led cultural transmission. The policy must fund recurrent partnerships between schools and First Nations communities, including Elders and First Peoples educators, to co design curriculum and professional learning. “Two way learning” must be explicitly supported, with local cultural protocols governing all arts in schools programs and First Nations authority embedded in teacher education and accreditation.

Pillar 2:

Without a coherent arts education pathway from early childhood to tertiary study, Australia’s capacity to tell its full range of stories is diminished. The policy should commission a national audit of visual arts pathways and embed story making residencies (artists plus students) within public schools, aligned to the Australian Curriculum – The Arts. This will ensure that diverse cultural, regional, disability inclusive and remote experiences are discovered, created and shared.

Pillar 3:

The policy must formally recognise visual arts educators and teaching artists as part of the creative workforce. A national Teaching Artist Wage Standard, referenced to the Fair Work Act and administered by Creative Australia, would guarantee fair remuneration for artists in education settings. HECS HELP forgiveness for artists who complete accredited teaching method courses and commit to low SES or remote schools would strengthen workforce sustainability.

Pillar 4:

Schools, particularly in regional, remote and outer urban communities, are vital cultural hubs. The policy should recognise them as such and enable access to arts capital funding, including regional “Art Tech Labs” co governed by schools and local galleries. Digital access initiatives must support visual arts education while carefully addressing the impact of AI on collections, authorship and credentialled learning materials.

Pillar 5:

Visual arts education builds future audiences and informed cultural participants. The policy should scale up youth led exhibition platforms and require major Commonwealth funded institutions to provide free, curriculum

linked visual arts resources and hybrid outreach to every Australian school. Students must be positioned as creators, curators and critics.