

Revive: National Cultural Policy

2026 Review Submission

CircuitWest is a membership-based service organisation for the performing arts sector in Western Australia. We advocate for producers, presenters and artists. The performing arts sector is an ensemble of organisations, individuals, mechanisms, roles and functions which need to continuously and consistently develop together to deliver enduring impact for Australian audiences.

Western Australia's performing arts sector is shaped by its very engaged outer-metro, regional and remote audiences and organisations, and its reliance on strong connections between artists, venues and audiences. Through our diverse membership CircuitWest understands the systemic challenges and opportunities of the sector.

This submission reflects regular and ongoing consultation with our members and stakeholders, and members of our national peer network of Performing Arts Presenter Associations (PAPA) – made up of CircuitWest, NSW ACT Performing Arts Centres Association (NAPACA), Performing Arts Connections Australia (PAC Australia), Stage Queensland and Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres (VAPAC).

Revive: Australia's Cultural Policy

The arts seep into Australian lives every day via music we listen to, architecture and design we live in and use, books we read, jewellery we wear, concerts and theatre show we attend, immersive experiences we immerse ourselves in, museums we visit, dance we join in on or watch in awe.

Unfortunately, it also seeps out of our lives with potential artists and artworkers discouraged by career guidance counsellors, with children underserved as art is excised from the school curriculum, high costs and lack of a living wage, with artworkers stretched beyond their capacity, infrastructure and equipment allowed to age without maintenance and upgrades and only restored to working order when it becomes impossible to ignore.

The arts sector is a complex system made up of a myriad of disciplines, functions, roles, infrastructure and support mechanisms. For this interconnected system to function for the full benefit of the nation, it is imperative that all components are universally supported to be well governed, well resourced, and their complexity understood and esteemed by the audiences it serves.

A Vision for Performing Arts, Venues and Audiences across a Lifetime

We seek a policy that delivers arts participation from the cradle to the grave, building audiences, artists and artworkers from their first steps to lifelong participation.

This vision requires:

- Educational institutions to be properly resourced to immerse students in creative experiences from kindergarten through high school whether through excursions, incursions, or innovative in-class programs and with arts firmly re-established in the curriculum.
- Performing arts centres to be recognised as vital hubs where creativity, culture and connection thrive; to be resourced such that each centre is fully functional, with a clear baseline of resources that ensures artists, staff, and audiences can make the most of every performance, every workshop, every visit, and every engagement.
- Investment in cultural infrastructure with a definition that includes social infrastructure, creating secure employment, attracting skilled and experienced technical and marketing resources, with resources for programming, operations, governance, with strong networks, touring systems, data and digital capability, and productive local, regional and national connections.
- Planning for physical infrastructure that is based on a strategic approach addressing the needs and capacity of the community in which it is built with long-term maintenance, programming and management plans. Bespoke art spaces with programming support, skilled workers and community connection help realise the social, health and lifestyle aspirations of its community.
- The appropriate valuing of the work of artists and creatives with appropriate remuneration for their labour and creative outputs, and access to creative producers, marketers and administrators, appropriate rehearsal and creative development resources and presentation opportunities.
- An increased emphasis on audience development with bespoke strategies and support for different performing artforms including First Nations and culturally diverse performing arts, theatre, contemporary dance, circus & physical theatres, children's theatre and contemporary music.
- Recognition of the positive impact to the Australian community and public budgets of the health, social and economic contribution of the performing arts sector.

Arts and culture are integral to the individual, family, community, societal, economic, democratic and national health of Australia and Australians. A thriving arts sector is the source of innovations, creative solution making and positive civic pride.

Recommendations

1. Position performing arts as a priority learning area in the Australian education system

The education system is the foundation ground for future artists, artsworkers and audiences. However, the arts sector is existentially impacted by the declining enrolments in arts subjects across many years,

A national educational framework that invests in the teaching and assessment of performing arts, recognises the complexity and skill level in the ATAR subject scaling and removes the barriers to school excursions to experience live performing arts, with connections to industry through work placements, internships and school-based traineeships will start to redress the long-term significant decline in arts career development and audience participation.

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2. Invest in workforce development, career pathways and arts organisations with direct investment and offsets

Under-investment in performing arts organisations and artists results in lower capability and effectiveness across the sector. It contributes to physical and mental safety risks.

Generous investment in the necessary technical, marketing, producing, management and administrative roles in the performing arts sector will enable career pathway development, succession planning and job security, attracting and developing highly skilled administrators, and resulting in properly governed and administered arts organisations. This will create a better serviced performing arts sector that focuses on creating beautiful and thought-provoking cultural offerings to the nation.

Tax offsets that encourage investment in the creation of performing arts and offset touring and regional investment costs will recognise the enormous investment required for the creation and touring of Australian works. It will ensure equitable investment and stronger regional cultural and creative infrastructure. It will contribute to the telling of First Nations stories from all parts of Australia, and particularly Western Australian stories hampered by the enormous costs imposed by the scale of the state.

Creative Workplaces at Creative Australia should be strengthened to provide further resources and support for the positive development of workplaces and career pathways.

3. Increase emphasis on audience development through support for sustained audience participation activities and programming support

Audience development is the process of creating habits of cultural access and participation in the population, removing barriers to access and embedding cultural participation as a conscious choice in people's lives. In concert with education institutions, presenters play a leading role in creating lifelong opportunities for participation and sustaining ongoing cultural engagement.

However, presenters operate within increasingly constrained financial environments and struggle to invest in long-term audience development. Investing in rolling multi-year audience development programs that support sustained investment in programming and associated audience participation activities will enable presenters to commission, co-present and program diverse work, and grow their audiences.

Focused audience development programs should deliver bespoke strategies and support for different performing artforms including First Nations and culturally diverse performing arts, theatre, contemporary dance, circus & physical theatres, children's theatre and contemporary music.

4. Prioritise safe and high-quality existing venues and their on-going maintenance and upgrades

Venues across Western Australia need upgrading, modernisation and reconfiguration for accessibility requirements. The lack of these create workplace safety issues, limit the work that can be programmed and reduce access to arts and cultural experiences for communities. Outdated infrastructure reduces staff morale, limits participation and creative development and reduces the ability to attract touring productions requiring contemporary technical capability, accessibility and flexible staging.

Targeted and ongoing infrastructure investment is needed to upgrade performance spaces, technical systems, accessibility (both front and back of house), digital capability and audience facilities, while also supporting long-term sustainability and resilience.

Commissioning of new venues must be linked to programming plans, and the long-term operating capacity by the venue owner.

5. Invest in state, national and international arts markets, and post-market outcomes

Performing arts markets are the single most impactful mechanism for artists, producers and presenters to collaborate and generate activity, support sustainable careers and deliver outcomes enabling audiences to participate in and experience the arts across our country.

Performing arts markets are part of the cultural infrastructure where producers and presenters network, connect, promote works, find opportunities to buy, sell, exchange and collaborate, combat sector silos and keep up to date with sector developments. They act as a curatorial mechanism for viable touring works. Without performing arts markets, there are limited methods and opportunities for artists and producers to build presenter networks and generate performance outcomes beyond the premiere season, therefore enabling audiences to participate in and experience the performing arts across our country.

Investment in arts markets across the country and increased investment directed at post-market outcomes will ensure a greater diversity of opportunity and representation, building the diversity of stories on our stages, reduce inequity of access by reducing participation costs often borne by artists and delegates and can deliver post-market mechanisms to support artists, producers and presenters after the initial opportunities to generate outcomes.

Needed

A cradle-to-grave cultural strategy, embedding the arts into daily life, education, community, and strengthening the sector to respond; and ensuring that every stage, every venue, and every artist has a productive, essential role in society's creative heartbeat.

Resources

This submission is also informed by the following reports:

[2026 The Polycrisis for Arts and Education in Australia](#)

[2025 The Art of Tax Reform](#)

[2024 Paying What It Takes Report](#)

[2026 Live Performance Australia Pre Budget Submission 2026 -27](#)

[2024 CircuitWest Technical Sector Resilience Report](#)

[2026 National Presenter Outlook PAC Australia](#)

[2025 Imagine 2035 A New Approach](#)