

Australia's [Next] National Cultural Policy**National consultation****24 May 2026**

Submission title:

Creative Connections

Submission author:

Dr Jane Miskovic-Wheatley

Sparkly Brains Psychology

www.sparklybrains.com.au

I recognise and pay respect to the Elders and communities—past, present, and emerging—of the lands that I live and work, Dharug and Gundungurra people. For thousands of years, they have shared and exchanged knowledge across innumerable generations for the benefit of all.

I acknowledge all people with lived and living experiences of health and mental health concerns, their families, carers, and supporters, and am committed to research and clinical practices that continue to learn from your stories.

This is a personal submission, prepared without funding or organisational support.

Executive summary

Australia has the world's oldest history of storytelling and is a world leader in innovation and excellence across every aspect of creative practice. But our creative future is at risk. Professional creative practice is economically unsustainable, not just for institutions but for creative practitioners; our performing arts industries face the highest mental health risk of any industry; and arts education as the foundation for future prosperity, sustainability, and viability of the creative industry is in crisis.

Revive, Australia's National Cultural Policy (2023-2027) has been very successful in establishing peak bodies, including Creative Australia, sector workforce initiatives and First Nations arts investments. Gaps have already been identified in Revive's published outcomes, including the need for investment in music education. My personal review of Revive has highlighted additional gaps, including the need for greater focus on theatre, visual arts, and dance; a translation gap between policy and implementation; and the need for substantial investment in our people.

These gaps should be addressed in the next national cultural policy, but that alone will not be enough to effect substantive change now or in the future.

The well-being of our creative industries needs action now, but without concurrent investment in health, well-being, career viability and arts education, we have no future. Addressing these gaps has the potential to make creative practice safer, more sustainable, and more inclusive, but also to serve a much higher purpose and deliver wider-reaching societal value. Integration of creative practice across broader policy areas and industries could significantly improve other areas of our lives, including health, mental health, education, innovation, industry, technology, the environment, community...our humanity.

We are facing multiple challenges within our society, all of which impact creative industries and society more broadly, including insecure casual employment, cost-of-living and housing pressures, the decline of small businesses and local venues, digital disruption and AI, a growing mental health crisis, and educational inequality, particularly gaps in understanding neurodiversity.

However, there is unlimited, largely untapped potential at the intersection of creative people and each of these challenges, and with the right knowledge, resource sharing, and translational support, there could be a reciprocal benefit now and well into the future. As a society, we have been looking at too many issues in isolation. Why? That is not how we create, innovate and prosper.

Proposed Pillar 6: Creative Connections - enhancing the intersectionality of creative practice with health and wellbeing, including education, research, translation and industry implementation.

The sustainability of creative industries requires more than isolated wellbeing initiatives, policies or finite funding. It depends on building a **connected ecosystem** where healthy creative careers,

education initiatives that extend knowledge and skills beyond creative practice, practical policy implementation, and research that reinforces sustainable systems, reinforce each other.

We need to make creative connections with other industries, not just for the health, viability, and sustainability of our creative industries now, but also to improve the state of health, education, and enterprise for our creative and collective future.

Authorship and Positionality

My name is Dr Jane Miskovic-Wheatley, and for more than 30 years, I have worked at senior leadership levels in Australia and internationally across both the creative and performing arts industries, and the psychology and mental health sector.

This rare dual perspective has given me direct insight into the opportunities, pressures and systemic gaps that exist between them.

- Currently, I am a **clinical psychologist**, and I specialise in clinical care for the creative and performing arts industry.
- **As an arts worker** – I have 25 yrs experience in national and international work in the creative and performing arts, including director roles in several Olympic ceremonies
- **As an arts educator** – I have 20 yrs experience teaching in secondary schools and tertiary performing arts institutions, including 15 yrs at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA)
- **As a clinical psychologist** – I have been a practising clinician for 15 years, and I have a significant understanding of public and private health systems
- **As a clinical researcher** – I have been a mental health researcher for 20 yrs, primarily at The University of Sydney and Sydney Local Health District, having authored over 80 clinical papers, and have a significant understanding of health research
- **As an arts wellbeing educator** – I have been a specialised wellbeing educator and advocate for the past 10 years and have presented workshops to over 50 arts organisations
- **As a parent** – I have been working directly with the schools my own children attend, advocating for more access to creative subjects, and know well the challenges and frustrations, especially at the secondary level
- **As a person with lived experience** – I have navigated illness, injury, and mental health challenges associated with my longstanding work in the arts, yet I also understand the passion of working in creative practice. It is a passion we are born with, which is why we fight so hard to protect it and trust with every inch of our being that creative engagement is of benefit to everyone.

It is the intersectionality of these experiences that has allowed me to see multi-systemic gaps, as well as potential multi-systemic solutions.

Over the last 10 years, I have explored these ideas in my practice as an arts wellbeing advocate, educator and practitioner. I have been providing bespoke employee assistance programs to national arts organisations (many of whom receive funding from Creative Australia), consulting on psychosocial safety protocols and translation, and providing clinical care for employees who have been physically or psychologically injured in the workplace, coordinating multidisciplinary treatment and safe return-to-work plans. I have also led professional development for clinicians working in the creative industries through the Australian Psychological Society over the past decade.

The companies and organisations I have and continue to provide mental health care for include:

Accessible Arts
Alternative Facts
Arts On Tour NSW
Arts Wellbeing Collective

Ausdance National
Australian Society for Performing Arts
Healthcare
Bangarra Dance Theatre

Bell Shakespeare
 Belvoir St Theatre
 Casting Guild of Australia
 Contemporary Asian Australian
 Performance
 CDP Theatre Producers
 Darlinghurst Theatre
 Disney Theatrical Productions Australia
 - *Beauty and the Beast*
 Ensemble Theatre
 Entertainment Assist
 Erth Visual & Physical Inc.
 Force Majeure
 Griffin Theatre
 Healthy Conservatoires Network
 Inner West Creative Network

Michael Cassel Group - *& Juliet*,
Hamilton, *Harry Potter and the*
Cursed Child, *MJ the Musical*
 Monkey Baa Theatre
 National Institute of Dramatic Art
 Now We Collide
 Opera Australia
 Opera Australia - Young Artist Program
 Performing Lines National
 Red Stitch Actors' Theatre
 Screen Australia
 Shopfront Theatre
 Sydney Dance Company
 The Arts Wellbeing Collective
 TheatreBridge

One of the rare positive outcomes of the COVID pandemic was the ability to provide psychological care via telehealth since 2020. Consequently, over the last 5 years, I have delivered over 5000 clinical hours to over 250 clients, 99% of whom train and/or work in creative and performing industries at all levels and across all disciplines, from tertiary students to arts organisation leaders. I have prepared this submission for them, for arts workers beyond my care, and for those in the future.

On a personal note, I am submitting this on my 50th birthday, 24 May 2026. Caring for creative people is my professional passion, and I am committed to improving the well-being of not only the creative industries but also creative young people as my life's work.

Thank you for the opportunity to consult on Australia's National Cultural Policy. I hope these ideas are of benefit to the process.



www.sparklybrains.com.au

Revive Review – Key Findings and Recognised Gaps

In preparation, I have reviewed the published outcomes of *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*¹, due to conclude in 2027.

Firstly, thank you to all those involved, including artists, First Nations leaders, cultural organisations, unions, educators, community arts groups and industry bodies committed to Australia's first standalone federal cultural policy in a decade.

In considering the next National Cultural Policy, I considered potential gaps in *Revive*, emerging issues, and projected the policy settings needed for Australia's arts and cultural sector, referencing in particular, *Create Australia*, *Music Australia*, and *Creative Workplaces*.

Two key reports from Music Australia in 2026, *The Baseline*² and *More Than Notes on a Page – The Music Education Ecosystem in Australia*³, reported on the economic strength of Australia's music industry, particularly in music education. The report concluded that music education creates both economic and social value, contributing to lifelong engagement with music, audience participation, community connection, cultural continuity, and future career pathways.

The reality of music education in Australia is that it is not meeting its potential; in fact, it is in decline. Current challenges include unequal access to music education across the country, insufficient teacher training, declining arts enrolments, and institutional and funding cuts. The NSW Government has committed to improvement through the 10-year music education plan⁴, an amazing and much-needed commitment, but this is not nationwide; it is limited to primary education and does not yet apply to other creative art areas similarly requiring investment.

Creative Workplaces has been successful in improving legal literacy, workplace standards and business capacity, especially in supporting artists and arts workers operating as independent contractors⁵. However, the information is generic and applies to sole providers or small businesses across industries. There are many reasons why creative workplaces need bespoke consideration; more below.

¹ Progress under *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*, Australian Government, February 2026.

² The Base Line: Charting the economic contributions of Australia's music industry, Music Australia, May 2026.

³ *More Than Notes on a Page – The Music Education Ecosystem in Australia*, Music Australia, May 2026.

⁴ NSW Government Response to the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in NSW, NSW Government, March 2025.

⁵ *Creative Workplaces Survey*, Creative Workplaces, February 2026.

There has been a dedicated focus on improving health and safety at work by initiating and improving regulations, including Work Health and Safety Regulations (2011, 2023), Code of Practice on sexual and gender-based harassment at work (2023), Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan (2024) and Managing Psychosocial Hazards at work (2024). However, there remains a massive gap between policy and implementation. Standard implementation approaches that may apply to other industries are incredibly difficult to apply in creative industries, and, to date, implementation there is patchy at best.

While so much has been achieved in the National Cultural Policy since its inception, there is much more to do, and we must broaden our focus for the benefit not only of the arts sector but also of wider society. There are so many challenges we face that could be improved through the integration of creative practice, especially in health and education. There is an imperative to implement meaningful, practical and sustainable supports now, but a much more urgent need for immediate investment for future growth and survival.

We have been looking at too many issues in isolation. Why? That is not how we create.

Australia's [Next] National Cultural Policy

Proposal – Creative Connections

Creativity comes from collaboration and connection. In theatre, we bring together specialist practitioners from creative, production, technical, craft, management, operations, marketing and administration to make magic. In music, we bring together different voices, instruments, styles and engineering to create amazing sound. In art, we bring together expression, ideas, materials, techniques, skills and hours of work to capture the human experience. We need to move from isolation to collaboration. We need to make creative connections with industries well beyond creative ones for cultural survival and prove such connections to be mutually beneficial.

With further consideration of the Revive pillars, next steps for Revive 2.0 are clear:

*Pillar 3: **The centrality of the artist:** supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture.* Only 9% of artists and arts workers are in regular employment in the creative industries⁶. They need support between industry work, as this is where they are most vulnerable.

*Pillar 4: **Strong institutions:** providing support across the spectrum of institutions — funded, philanthropic and commercial — which sustain our arts and culture.* Without implementation support for healthier and safer work practices, our industry is not getting any safer^{7,8,9}; in fact, the risk is increasing as strategic implementation falls into the 'too hard' basket.

*Pillar 5: **Reaching the audience:** ensuring our stories reach the people at home and abroad.* The most reliable audience member is the lifetime audience member, so investment in secondary and tertiary arts education will ensure not only a future industry but also a future audience.

Moving forward, there is a case for a 6th Pillar in Arts Education, as comprehensively proposed by the National Advocates for Arts Education¹⁰. While this clearly needs to be fully

⁶ Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia, Creative Australia.

⁷ Raising their Voices. MAPN Consulting. 2022

⁸ Working in the Australian Entertainment Industry. Entertainment Assist. Victoria University. 2016; 2025

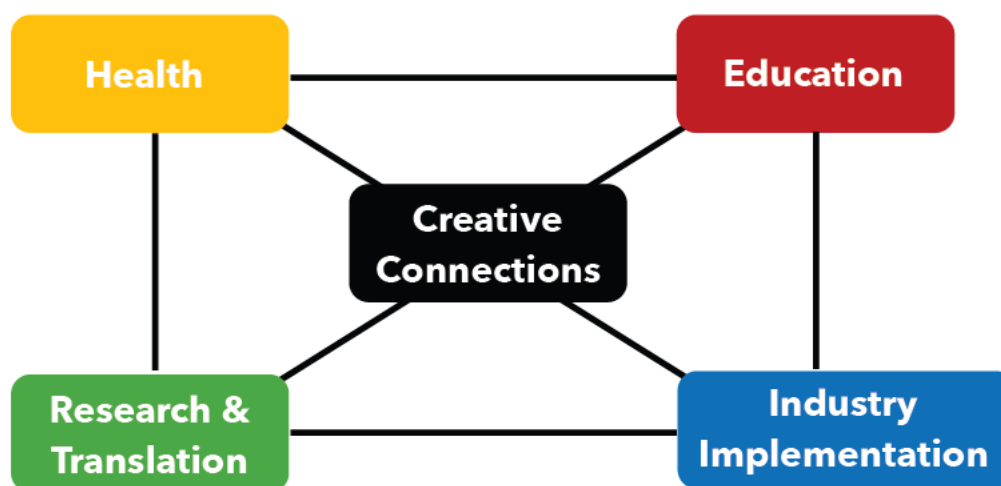
⁹ Art Sector Wellbeing, Mental Health % WHS Report. Arts Industry Council of South Australia. 2024.

¹⁰ [Submission to the National Cultural Policy consultation, Revive 2.0](#)

implemented, it is still not enough, as Education requires research and translation to achieve effective and sustainable implementation. It is also challenging to argue the case for arts education without confidence in the sustainability of future careers, especially from financial and well-being perspectives.

Proposed Pillar 6: Creative Connections: enhancing the intersectionality of creative practice with health, including education, research, translation and industry implementation.

Below, the case for Pillar 6 will be expanded from the perspective of each of these key areas, cross-referenced with one another, showing intrinsic links. I have taken this intersectional approach with over 250 clients across all areas of the creative industries over the past 5 years. I have not had funding to do the research, I have not had time to write the book, and I do not have the capacity to lobby the government. I have 5000 hours of working directly with people to support them in repairing educational deficits, recovering from psychological and physical injuries, trying to balance well-being with occupational and financial instability, etc. These ideas come from their lived experience, and my confidence comes from the sustainable well-being practices we have achieved. It's time to scale up.



The sustainability of creative industries requires more than isolated well-being initiatives, policies or finite funding. It depends on building a **connected ecosystem** where **healthy** creative careers, **education** initiatives that extend knowledge and skills beyond creative practice, practical policy **implementation**, and **research** that reinforces sustainable systems, reinforce each other.

Evidence-informed **research** is needed to demonstrate what improves safer practice, career longevity, inclusion, and creative outcomes. Policy must be **translated** into accessible, everyday strategies that organisations, educators, freelancers, and small businesses can realistically **implement within industry conditions**. This intersection has broader economic benefits, supporting innovation, entrepreneurship, tourism, and local economies, while also fostering the adaptable and imaginative thinking increasingly needed in a future shaped by AI. As automation expands, human creativity, emotional intelligence, collaboration, and storytelling become even more valuable skills. This should be celebrated in **educational** systems now, which are already struggling to attract enrolment in artistic subjects at the secondary and tertiary levels and pose a direct threat to our creative future and audiences. Subsequently, the sector must respond to rising mental health pressures by embedding physically and psychologically safer practices, informed by health systems, and there is strong evidence that creative strategies can improve **health** and **mental health** outcomes in the community. In addition, in the health fields of psychology and psychiatry, there is a rapidly emerging need to reconceptualise neurodivergent brain types, and artists could be the key to this work, as there is a significant crossover between creativity and neurodivergence that has been barely explored, informing not only health but also **education**. **Research** is essential to explore these connections and consider multi-system **implementation**...see the patterns emerging?

This is only the start; the potential benefits of **creative connections** are almost endless and could not only lead to a more sustainable and creative Australia but also to a more innovative, connected and compassionate society.

*To note, a separate section for **Research and Translation** has not been included at this stage of the proposal, because R&D is essential across all stages, as noted throughout.*

Health

Physical and Psychological Safety

Challenges

We have very limited **research**, but what we have indicates that the sector continues to work within conditions that normalise psychological and physical strain, burnout, harassment, and

financial insecurity, and unsafe workplace cultures. These risks affect the **health** of not only artists but also all arts workers across the sector, especially those from marginalised communities. Creating safer performing arts practice within workplaces, project-based work, training institutions, audition processes, and between practices is not simply a well-being initiative. It is an industry-wide health and safety obligation, a creative practice sustainability issue, and a critical strategy for retaining expertise and protecting the industry's long-term future.

Opportunities

There are multiple strategies that could be **researched**, resourced and **implemented** to directly address these **health** risks. An efficient approach would be to form a **Creative Connections - Health Network** to centralise knowledge and training targeted to all industry levels. These could include:

- *Psychologically informed leadership* – psychosocial risk management (policy and practice), psychologically safe communication and conflict resolution, consent-based performance practices, burnout prevention, respectful feedback processes
- *Safer workplace translation* – inclusive and culturally safe workplaces, accessibility and neurodiversity-affirming workplaces, clear and confidential systems for reporting harm, training for other disciplines to better understand working with artists, safer return to work following illness or injury, sustainable touring conditions
- *Artist and arts worker wellbeing* – curriculum-based learning at the secondary and tertiary level, with professional training opportunities for those already in the industry, to learn how to take care of themselves, especially how to work within pre-existing health and educational systems not yet informed of artist and industry-specific health challenges.
- *Arts-informed health supports* – to support all the above, a multidisciplinary approach is needed, including general health, psychology/psychiatry, physical therapies, occupational therapies, dietetics, and educational support. However, these health industries also need to work collaboratively with arts workers and industry to ensure that suggestions and supports are specific, targeted, and implementable; otherwise, they are of little value. There also needs to be coordination within these systems, especially in

supporting artists who are working with pre-existing physical and/or mental health challenges, in treatment for injury and/or illness, in safe return to work practices, especially when arts workers are in-between employment.

Community health

Challenges

The Australian **healthcare** system is a world leader in innovation, **research** and development, and the provision of high-quality care, particularly for younger populations and in mental health. However, our healthcare system is facing growing structural problems, including regional and rural inequality, workforce shortages, extended wait times for care, and challenges with healthcare affordability and service engagement. Increasingly complex life circumstances, international instability, the cost-of-living crisis, and pandemic-related collective trauma have created increased workloads, unsafe working conditions, compassion fatigue, and increased risk of physical and psychological injuries for our healthcare workforce.

Could connections with creative practices and industries be of reciprocal benefit to our healthcare systems?

Opportunities

Yes! There is growing recognition that creative and arts-based practices could play an important complementary role in responding to increasing pressures on **health** and mental health systems, and provide a viable, flexible and community-engaged parallel career path for artists and arts-based workers. International research suggests that participation in all types of creative practice can support good mental and physical health, emotional regulation, social connection and trauma recovery. Creative approaches have proven to improve engagement and retention in health care, reduce stigma, strengthen prevention and early intervention, support long-term recovery and encourage community participation.

In addition, the wide variety of creative practices offers greater scope for individualised care and can provide different forms of non-verbal communication, exploration of identity, sensory regulation, and a sense of belonging that are difficult to access through traditional approaches

to healthcare. This alone may help to engage people who may experience barriers to mainstream health systems, such as First Nations peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, trauma survivors, and those with neurological differences.

As many creative people start their careers with gaps in **educational** attainment (which will only widen without future investment in arts education), there is currently no model for arts workers' therapeutic engagement in **health** systems without formal tertiary education in healthcare. There have been attempts in the past with the Arts Health Institute and the Clown Doctor program from The Humour Foundation, but the closure of such programs due to a lack of resources and health system integration highlights the fragility of the sector.

One of the main limitations to arts-based initiatives in health care is the lack of **research** and practical **implementation** strategies, but the main barrier is the absence of collaboration between these sectors. There is a proven paucity in training in mental health within medical training and professional development, let alone the possibility of creative complements to mental health and health interventions. Australia could learn from innovations in other countries, and with strategic support between these already world-leading sectors, Australia could become a global innovator.

Examples of recent research and implementation:

- Arts and cultural engagement slow the pace of biological aging¹¹ - University College London, 2026
- Arts participation increases social cohesion and enhances well-being¹² - review of research across 12 countries, 2025
- Drama classes reduced social isolation and improved the well-being of women with refugee backgrounds¹³ - Australia, 2025

¹¹ Fancourt, D., Masebo, L., Finn, S., Mak, H. W., & Bu, F. (2026). Does leisure activity matter for epigenetic ageing? Analyses of arts engagement and physical activity in the UK Household Longitudinal Study. *Innovation in Aging*, igag038.

¹² Sonke, J., Pesata, V., Colverson, A., Morgan-Daniel, J., Rodriguez, A. K., Carroll, G. D., ... & Karim, H. (2025). Relationships between arts participation, social cohesion, and well-being: an integrative review of evidence. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 13, 1589693.

¹³ Horsfall, R. (2025). "Just happy and laughing together": Wellbeing through drama classes for women with refugee backgrounds (Doctoral dissertation, UNSW Sydney).

Education

The challenges to arts education in Australia, especially the systematic decline in participation over the last decade, not only diminish the educational experience of our current students but also pose a critical risk to our future arts sector and audiences. The submission to the National Cultural Policy consultation by the National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE)¹⁴ has done a superb job advocating for investment in arts education, a position fully supported by this submission.

Neurodiversity and Learning Differences

To extend this call, the opportunity to fully revolutionise how we understand, support and celebrate different neurotypes within **educational** systems depends on **research** with creative people and industries, and this is one of the most substantive outcomes of an integrated approach. Hold on, here we go....

Challenges

There is growing recognition that medicine, psychiatry, psychology and education need more neuroaffirming approaches to understanding, treatment and support that move beyond deficit-based models of ADHD and autism and instead, recognise neurodivergence as not only part of natural human variation but essential not only to the wellbeing of our society but indeed the survival of our species. The ‘explosion’ of ‘cases’ is not evidence that these ‘conditions’ are overrepresented, but reflects improved recognition, increased public awareness, consideration of lived experience, and long-overdue identification of women and adults who have been historically overlooked or misdiagnosed¹⁵.

Opportunities

Although there has been little to no **research**, artists, clinical practitioners and **educators** in the arts understand that neurodivergent brain types are highly prevalent in creative people. Artistic practice celebrates originality, divergent thinking, emotional intensity, hyperfocus, improvisation,

¹⁴ Submission to the National Cultural Policy consultation, Revive 2.0, from National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) (2026)

¹⁵ The real story behind rising ADHD and autism diagnoses, Hunter Medical Research Institute (2025)

pattern recognition, non-linear cognition, and working under pressure, all qualities common to neurodivergent brain types¹⁶. In fact, the industry not only relies on but WAS BUILT on people who see the world differently, and the lack of awareness, recognition, and support for different ways of learning and working reinforces the psychosocial risks within the industry.

Creative sectors are the perfect environments to **research**, understand and support the strengths, vulnerabilities and safe and sustainable adaptations for neurodivergent brains! This work could also help improve understanding of the strong associations among **health** and mental health concerns and **educational** differences. Research that genuinely engages with all types of creative people could fundamentally reshape our understanding of cognition, learning, communication, resilience and mental health. Rather than viewing neurodivergence through the lens of pathology, an ineffective and essentially harmful model, studying and supporting creative populations may help reveal how different cognitive styles contribute to empathy, innovation, and human adaptability, with implications for well-being within creative industries, **healthcare**, **education**, the future of work, and community well-being. The potential of this work is not only powerful, it is critical.

Again, an efficient approach would be to form a **Creative Connections - Education Network** that could centralise knowledge and training targeted at all industry levels, with this much-needed knowledge shared with **health** systems that are just beginning a reconceptualisation of neurodivergent people. This understanding also radically changes the value of arts **education**, not only by providing opportunities for all to experience the benefits of creative practice, but also by playing a fundamental role in supporting learning differences and celebrating our most unique and special people, our creative folk. Game changer!

¹⁶ Stolte, M., Trindade-Pons, V., Vlaming, P., Jakobi, B., Franke, B., Kroesbergen, E. H., ... & Hoogman, M. (2022). Characterizing creative thinking and creative achievements in relation to symptoms of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and autism spectrum disorder. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 13, 909202.

Industry Implementation

Support arts workers to attain sustainable practice

Challenges

A common challenge seen in clinical practice is the negative impacts of trying to merely survive as an independent artist and arts worker. While Creative Workplaces provides information for people who operate as independent contractors or small creative businesses, the information is generic and applies to sole providers or small businesses across industries. It seems difficult to implement, often causing significant stress and anxiety, and widespread financial instability within the sector remains.

Arts workers are different, as they rely on the gig economy, grants, seasonal events, royalties, freelance work, and a wide range of working conditions. The value that creative industries bring is often more cultural than commercial, including contributions to cultural and community identity, social education, tourism, and national storytelling. There are abstract 'trade' negotiations in identity, intellectual property, creative concepts and artistic reputation. Creative workers are often juggling multiple roles, operating in one week as an artist, an auditionee, a marketer, a producer, an educator, a barrister, a yoga teacher, a care worker....juggling a 'patchwork' of a career that can be so overwhelming to negotiate.

In addition, emotional and identity investment in the work is usually much higher than in other industries, regularly leading to rejection, exploitation, burnout and psychological strain, especially for diverse and marginalised arts workers. Much of the work cannot be monetised and even incurs costs, such as research, skill development, grant preparation, auditioning, networking, etc. Standard administrative systems can disadvantage creative people due to differences and negative judgments about their educational attainment and administrative abilities, especially those with neurodivergent brains or who are already economically disadvantaged¹⁷, as many of our arts workers already are.

¹⁷ Burrell, D. N., Askarova, S., Morin, S. L., Mondala-Duncan, M., Springs, D., Aridi, A. S., & Finch, A. (2025). Exploring how the lack of inclusive approaches to neurodiversity and invisible disabilities in the workplace creates significant health disparities. *Brazilian Journal of Business*, 7(1), e76666.

Financial and workplace stress is an all-too-common concern of my clients, career instability is standard, burnout is very regular, and negative self-affect is standard. These stressors not only significantly impact quality of life but also contribute to poor mental **health**, increase reliance on public welfare, and increase the risk of premature career cessation. This has a lasting impact on an individual's life, but also limits their creative contribution to the community and contributes to a systemic shortage of arts workers and industry experience¹⁸.

Opportunities

Our nation needs sustainable creative industries for cultural richness, history-keeping, innovation, tourism, and community-building. Successful creative economies internationally often provide direct artist investment, tax incentives, subsidised spaces and specialised business support [e.g., Canada Council for the Arts, Intermittent du spectacle scheme in France, the K-content strategy in South Korea, and the Basic Income for the Arts in Ireland,¹⁹ which returned 1.39 Euros for every 1 Euro invested]. Other incredible outcomes from this initiative included improved quality of life, higher artistic productivity, improved sector retention, less reliance on welfare supports, reduced financial stress and anxiety, and increased audience engagement with the arts!

These cases clearly indicate the multifaceted value of not only direct arts engagement but also the need to consider creative industries as unique and provide bespoke, targeted strategies for creative entrepreneurs. Such programs would inherently require appropriate multidisciplinary **research** to create bespoke business pathways and streamlined administrative practices, in consultation with neuroaffirming **health** practitioners and **educators**, to ensure that **translation** pathways are accessible and viable.

However, guidelines and pathways are not enough. **Education** should be provided at multiple career points to implement *Creative Workplaces* frameworks. For current practitioners, targeted short courses could be provided at TAFE, via Services Australia/Centrelink training opportunities and support programs, under Capacity Building via the National Disability Insurance Scheme, or via online training. Small business and administrative skills should be provided as standard practice in all tertiary institutions, so all graduates enter the industry with this knowledge,

¹⁸ Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia, Creative Australia, 2024.

¹⁹ Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts, Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, Government of Ireland, 2026.

resources and skills. In turn, the more viable and sustainable creative careers are proven to be, confidence will flow into exploring creative practice in secondary and tertiary **education**.

Creative and arts workers readily offer skills and strengths valuable to many sectors. Creative brains can generate original ideas, experiment, innovate, invent, and produce more with less. They are often flexible in changing conditions, can solve problems quickly, are resilient, and work under pressure. It is common for arts workers to have experience in multiple roles and work settings, so they can be adaptable and self-managing. While some creative brains work introspectively, such as writers, designers, and editors, many thrive in collaboration and teams, have strong communication and storytelling abilities, and work with empathy and inclusion. Promoting artists' strengths and opportunities could encourage secondary and tertiary students across disciplines to include creative study to build varied, transferable skills, highlighting the value of the arts across sectors and continuing to build arts participation and lifelong audiences.

Creative people and practice will only become increasingly important in the future AI-shaped economy. As automation increases, creativity becomes even more valuable for determining direction, defining meaning, understanding lived context, and holding moral and emotional responsibility. Innovation depends on imagination, not just optimisation, and human connection is irreplaceable, especially in **health**, **education**, community and culture.

Creative Connections

In conclusion, the sustainability of creative industries in Australia requires more than isolated well-being initiatives, physical infrastructure, published policies or finite funding. It depends on building a **connected ecosystem** where **healthy** creative careers, **education** initiatives that extend knowledge and skills beyond creative practice, practical policy **implementation**, and **research** that reinforces sustainable systems, reinforce each other. Significant changes could be made within 5 years to establish the groundwork for future growth. We already have so many of the ideas, the evidence is there, and working models are already within the system, such as wellbeing workshops within the industry and neuroaffirming clinical practices for creative people, resulting in significant health outcomes.

We are a community filled with creative, inventive, adaptable and solution-oriented people. Let's connect beyond our sector and meaningfully engage to advance the well-being and sustainability of the creative arts, and, in the meantime, to benefit multiple other sectors and the wider community.

Let's put on a show!

*Thank you for the opportunity to submit these ideas.
I wish you all the best in the consultation program.
Here if you need.
Jane*

END OF DOCUMENT