

Music is for every
young person.

THE
PUSH

May 2026

The Push's Submission for the Australian Government's new National Cultural Policy

About The Push

The Push is Australia's youth music charity. For 40 years, we have been backing young Australians to find their sound, their people, and their voice. We're connecting millions of young people to music through all-ages gigs, workshops, studio access, and industry mentoring, from Busselton to Brunswick.

An opportunity for young people and music in Australia's National Cultural Policy

Across the country, young people are making music, organising shows, volunteering at festivals, and bringing their friends along. The talent and interest are already there. What is not keeping up is the system around them: the policy, funding and infrastructure that should make participation possible.

Right now, too much depends on chance: whether your school offers music, whether there is a venue in your town that lets under-18s through the door, whether you can afford the ticket, whether public transport gets you home. Australia invests in footy ovals and netball courts because sport builds confidence, friendship, identity and community. Culture deserves the same clarity.

95% of young Australians aged 15–24 listen to recorded music and 66% attend music events, but 33% of secondary students have no access to school music education, and 59% of young Australians aged 16–25 have under \$100 a week for all entertainment.

In 2026, The Push developed A National Plan for Young Australians and Music 2026–2036 - a ten-year sector-led framework to ensure every young person



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can participate and thrive in Australian music.

The plan was shaped through national consultation with young people, educators, artists, industry leaders, philanthropists and policy makers across Australia. It brings together what young people have told us, what the sector needs, and what government can do to make music more accessible, visible and viable for young Australians.

A National Plan for Young Australians and Music is built around one ambition: that every young person can participate and thrive in Australian music. Its four pillars are:

1. Music is for every young person
2. Music is a real career
3. Australian music is for young audiences
4. Music makes young people connected and well

Together, these pillars connect cultural policy directly to wellbeing, education, workforce development, regional access and social connection. The next National Cultural Policy should not create a small appendix for young people. It should embed young people across the whole policy and use the National Plan as the guide for coordinated action.

Response to the Five Pillars of Revive

Pillar 1: First Nations First

First Nations culture, leadership, language, story and self-determination must remain at the centre of Australian cultural life. For young people and music, this means programs shaped by First Nations artists, organisations and communities, not designed around them.

The Push does not speak for First Nations communities. Our role is to partner properly: supporting First Nations-led music programs, paid pathways for First Nations young artists, cultural safety across program design and evaluation, and partnerships that are resourced genuinely and early.



Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story

A place for every story must include a place for every young person, not only as audiences, but as creators, organisers, producers and leaders. Young people named age limits, cost, postcode, identity and safety as practical barriers to participation. The next National Cultural Policy should respond with practical action: live music in schools, all-ages youth events programs, and regional touring.

Cultural equity becomes real not in general statements, but in whether a young person can see themselves in Australian culture and take part in it on their own terms.

Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist

Young artists are artists. They should not have to wait until they are older, signed or established to be taken seriously. The next National Cultural Policy should recognise young artists and emerging music workers as part of the creative workforce now. That means backing the first steps: the first gig, first mentor, first placement, first invoice, first industry contact and first audience.

The music industry also needs this. New talent does not arrive fully formed. It needs mentoring, paid placements, all-ages performance opportunities, music business training and stronger links between education and industry.

Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure

All-ages music access is cultural infrastructure. Australia invests in footy ovals and cricket clubs because community sport builds confidence, identity and belonging. The same applies to music.

For young people, infrastructure is a lunchtime gig at school, an alcohol-free show at a local venue, a regional tour that stops in their town, and a small grant that lets them put on their first show.

It is also the system around those moments: stages, venues, mentors, councils, transport, equipment, local partnerships and the people who bring it



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together.

Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience

Young people are already music audiences. They are listening, discovering, sharing and showing up when access is possible. But the next generation of Australian music audiences will not grow by accident.

The National Plan is clear that Australian music needs to be more visible to young people: in schools, all-ages venues, festivals, regional towns, community spaces, playlists, public broadcasters and the places where young people already gather.

Audience development starts with access: affordable tickets, safe all-ages spaces, transport-aware design, school-based music experiences and more opportunities for young people to hear Australian music live, with their friends, in places they can actually get to.

Recommendations

The Push recommends that the Australian Government:

- 1. Adopt A National Plan for Young Australians and Music 2026–2036 as a framework for the next National Cultural Policy**

Use the plan to guide national action on young people's music participation, access, career pathways, audience development and wellbeing.

- 2. Fund the first stage of the National Plan through The Push's \$13.4 million pre-budget proposal**

Invest over four years in the High School Tour, All-Ages Events Teams and All-Ages Tour, reaching more than 160,000 young Australians with real-world pathways for music discovery, connection and participation.

- 3. Name youth music access as a cultural infrastructure priority in the next policy**

Recognise school music events, alcohol-free gigs, regional touring, local venues and youth event teams as infrastructure that enables young people to participate in Australian culture.



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4. Create a national youth music agenda with Music Australia, Creative Australia, states, territories, local government and industry

Coordinate policy, investment and partnerships to reduce cost, age, transport and location barriers, and to support safe, affordable pathways for young people.

The next National Cultural Policy can make a clear choice: leave young people's access to music to chance, or build the infrastructure that makes participation possible.

The Push has done the national consultation. Young people have told us what needs to change. The National Plan provides the framework. The pre-budget submission provides the investment pathway.

A young person's chance to participate in Australian music should not depend on their postcode, income, age, transport options, school or family connections.

The Push is ready to work with the Australian Government to change that.

Regards,



Kate Duncan
CEO, The Push – Youth Music Organisation

Attachments

1. [A National Plan for Young Australians and Music 2026–2036](#)
2. [The Push 2026–27 Pre-Budget Submission: National Youth Music Initiatives for Social Media Age Restrictions](#)
3. [The Push – Young Australian Music Audiences 2025 Report](#)

