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25 May 2026

Consultation submission: Australia's new National Cultural Policy

Theatre Kimberley welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of Australia's next National Cultural Policy.

We wholeheartedly support building on the foundations established through *Revive*, particularly its recognition of First Nations cultural leadership, and how important culture is to Australian identity and community life. However, the next policy must move beyond broad aspirations and more directly and tangibly address the realities and challenges of arts practice and delivery in regional and remote Australia.

Based in Broome, Theatre Kimberley is a small regional arts organisation working in community arts with a focus on circus and puppetry. Alongside local programming, we deliver residencies, workshops and performances across remote and very remote Aboriginal communities throughout the West Kimberley.

The Kimberley is one of Australia's most culturally significant regions. It is home to nationally recognised organisations and cultural leaders including Marrugeku, Magabala Books, Goolarri Media Enterprises, Nagula Jarndu Designs, Shinju Matsuri and a strong network of Aboriginal Art Centres and independent artists. Theatre Kimberley is a multi-year funded organisation (WA CITS AOIP/Creative Organisations 4 year) Yet regional and remote Western Australia remains underrepresented in national cultural conversations and policy design.

Geographic inequity continues to shape - but not hold back - almost every aspect of arts delivery in the Kimberley. Small organisations face significantly higher operating costs than metropolitan counterparts, including flights, freight, accommodation, food, fuel, insurance and venue-related expenses. Bringing professional artists and arts workers to the Kimberley is increasingly difficult and expensive, while attracting and retaining skilled local arts workers is also becoming harder due to housing pressures and cost of living. Unlike many government agencies and larger organisations operating in the region, small arts organisations have no capacity to offer housing, relocation or travel subsidies.

At the same time, regional arts organisations particularly those located as remotely as we are - 2300 kms from Perth - experience reduced access to professional development, industry networks, mentoring, technical training and peer exchange opportunities that metropolitan artists often take for granted.

It's also important to note that climate change is already having a direct and growing impact on arts delivery in northern Australia. Theatre Kimberley's outreach work to

remote communities already operates within a seasonally restricted seven-to-eight month window, and increasingly extreme weather events, flooding, heat and disrupted wet seasons are narrowing that timeframe further. Despite this, environmental sustainability and climate adaptation remain insufficiently embedded within the current National Cultural Policy.

This gap is increasingly out of step with the sector itself. Research from the Performance and Ecology Research Lab at Griffith University found that 94% of arts workers are concerned about the climate crisis, while 74% believe the performing arts sector has a responsibility to respond. The arts sector has a unique role to play in building resilience, community connection and cultural responses to climate disruption.

The next National Cultural Policy should explicitly recognise environmental sustainability and climate resilience as core cultural infrastructure issues, particularly for regional and remote communities already experiencing frontline climate impacts.

We also support stronger national recognition of arts education and workforce development as long-term cultural capability strategies. Recent reporting has highlighted declining enrolments in creative arts education nationally and growing concerns about the future creative workforce. For regional organisations, these workforce shortages are amplified by distance and limited local training pathways.

We recommend that the next National Cultural Policy:

- Continues to prioritise long-term investment in First Nations arts participation, training and leadership pathways. Wherever possible, professional training, mentorship and national cultural leadership support should be delivered within regional and remote communities so First Nations people can develop careers while remaining living in the Kimberley so benefits can flow directly back into local communities;
- Ensure stronger regional and remote representation within both consultation processes and policy implementation;
- Recognise the true costs of arts delivery in regional and remote Australia through more equitable funding structures;
- Embed environmental sustainability and climate resilience across all pillars of the policy;
- Increase investment in regional workforce development, training, housing support and professional development access;
- Recognise arts and culture as essential social and civic infrastructure that contributes to community wellbeing, regional liveability and cultural resilience.



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Culture in regional and remote Australia is not peripheral to the national story. It is foundational to it. The next National Cultural Policy must better reflect the realities, strengths and contributions of places like the Kimberley and ensure that regional voices are not simply consulted, but genuinely represented in Australia's cultural future.

Again, thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Please feel free to get in touch if you have any questions by email or by phone - ██████████

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Best wishes,

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Executive Officer Business