



Monday 25th May, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

Drama Victoria is the peak body for drama education in Victoria, supporting teachers and educators who are committed to drama and theatre as a vital part of young Australians' learning and cultural lives. We write in strong support of the submission made by the National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE), and echo its call for arts education, including drama, to be recognised as a central and structural priority within the next National Cultural Policy. Any serious national arts education strategy must recognise educators as the critical workforce who translate cultural policy into practice.

The NAAE submission presents a compelling and evidence-based case for why arts education in Australia is in systemic decline, and why urgent, coordinated national action is required. The data is damning: enrolments in senior secondary Arts subjects have fallen by approximately 21% nationally between 2015 and 2023, with Drama seeing one of the sharpest declines of any subject — nearly 39% over the same period. These figures are not simply a matter of shifting student preferences. They reflect a structural failure where arts education has been acknowledged in policy, but not embedded within it.

Drama Victoria strongly supports the NAAE's key recommendation to establish a sixth pillar within the National Cultural Policy: Arts Learning, Training and Pathways. Drama, as both a curriculum subject and a powerful pedagogical approach, sits at the heart of what this pillar would protect and strengthen. Through drama, young people develop empathy, critical thinking, communication and cultural understanding. They explore human experience and social issues through story, role and performance. These are not incidental skills, but foundational capabilities for engaged citizens and a thriving cultural sector — capabilities that should not be determined by postcode, family income or geography.

Drama education, as with the Arts more broadly, is too often the first casualty of timetable pressure and under-resourcing, particularly in regional, rural and low socio-economic communities. Access to specialist drama teachers remains uneven, with a significant proportion of Arts classes taught out-of-field. Without intervention,

the path from school classrooms to tertiary study, professional practice and lifelong cultural participation will continue to weaken.

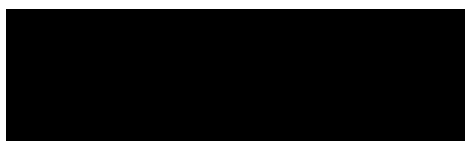
Professional arts teaching associations such as Drama Victoria are the connective tissue between education and the broader arts sector — supporting teachers, building professional communities and maintaining the standards that keep arts education vital and rigorous. Yet these organisations operate with chronic under-resourcing, often relying on volunteer labour to deliver what should be recognised as essential sector infrastructure. If governments are serious about strengthening arts education, they must fund the organisations that sustain the teachers who deliver it.

We endorse the full suite of actions recommended by NAAE and draw particular attention to the following priorities:

- A ten-year National Arts Education Strategy with clear national targets for participation, equity and workforce supply across all Arts subjects.
- First Nations leadership and cultural authority embedded across arts education, ensuring genuine decision-making power over how cultures and artistic practices are taught.
- Restoration of tertiary Creative Arts pathways, including reversing the damage done by the Job-ready Graduates policy, which has broken the pipeline from school classrooms into further study, arts careers and arts teaching.
- Sustained funding for arts professional associations and peak bodies critical to maintaining quality, coherence and professional learning across the sector.

Arts education is the foundation upon which Australia's cultural future is built. Drama Victoria urges the Government to act on the NAAE's recommendations and place arts education, in all its forms, where it belongs: at the centre of national cultural policy.

Sincerely,



Timothy Roach on behalf of the Drama Victoria Committee of Management