

Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation

Recognising live event production as essential cultural infrastructure

Prepared for submission in response to the public consultation paper, Towards a new National Cultural Policy

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Summary position

Live event production should be formally recognised as essential cultural infrastructure within Australia's next National Cultural Policy.

Artists, performers and cultural organisations are central to Australia's creative life, but their work reaches audiences through a skilled production ecosystem. Audio engineers, lighting designers, video technicians, stage managers, riggers, production managers, site crews, broadcast operators, accessibility providers and technical suppliers make cultural experiences visible, audible, safe, accessible, memorable and scalable.

This workforce is often treated as a back-of-house operational cost, rather than as part of the cultural workforce itself. In practice, technical production directly shapes the audience experience. The quality of sound, lighting, staging, vision, show control, accessibility, safety and delivery can determine whether a cultural event succeeds.

The next National Cultural Policy should broaden the definition of cultural infrastructure to include the people, equipment, venues, systems and technical capability required to deliver live, digital and hybrid cultural experiences across Australia.

Why this matters to the policy pillars

The consultation paper identifies changing audience behaviours, live, digital and hybrid experiences, rising costs, resilient infrastructure, safe workplaces, creative rights, skills development, participation and access as important policy considerations. Live event production sits directly across these areas.

This submission is most relevant to Pillar 3, Centrality of the Artist, Pillar 4, Strong Cultural Infrastructure, and Pillar 5, Engaging the Audience. It also supports Pillar 2, A Place for Every Story, because local and place-based cultural activity depends on local production capability.

The missing layer between artist and audience

Culture does not reach audiences by intention alone. It needs skilled people, reliable systems, safe infrastructure and practical delivery capability. A musician needs a sound system and an engineer. A theatre work needs lighting, staging, cueing and safety systems. A festival needs site planning, power distribution, weather planning, crowd flow, communications, staging and production management. A hybrid cultural event needs cameras, streaming workflows, audio routing, captioning, recording, switching, platform management and technical support.

These elements are not peripheral to culture. They are part of how culture is experienced. Production professionals translate creative intent into audience experience. They make the story clear, the performance safe, the room accessible, the event repeatable and the work capable of reaching larger or more diverse audiences.

For this reason, future cultural policy should avoid separating “creative work” from the technical systems that deliver it. The production ecosystem is not merely a supplier category. It is a cultural delivery system.

Workforce development and career pathways

Australia has a significant opportunity to strengthen career pathways into live event production. Many people enter the industry informally, through volunteering, casual work or chance exposure to events. This produces passionate workers, but it does not create a stable, visible or equitable skills pipeline.

The next policy should support clearer pathways into technical production careers, including audio, lighting, staging, vision, streaming, production management, event safety, accessibility and site operations. This could include school-to-industry programs, TAFE partnerships, paid traineeships, micro-credentials, mentorships and structured placements with venues, festivals, production companies and cultural organisations.

This is particularly important for young people, regional workers, First Nations communities and emerging practitioners who may not have existing industry networks. If Australia wants strong local cultural participation, it also needs local people who can safely and professionally deliver that participation.

Regional capability and touring resilience

Regional cultural activity depends heavily on local production capacity. When regional venues, festivals and communities lack equipment, trained operators or technical support, touring becomes more expensive, riskier and less accessible. This can limit the ability of artists and cultural organisations to present work outside major cities.

A stronger national approach could support regional technical capability through equipment access programs, venue upgrades, shared production resources, touring-ready systems, local training and partnerships between metropolitan suppliers and regional organisations. This would strengthen cultural access while also building regional employment and resilience.

Accessibility as a practical production requirement

Access and inclusion must be treated not only as values, but as real production requirements. Captioning, Auslan integration, hearing support, audio description, sensory-aware lighting and sound, accessible site design, remote participation and hybrid attendance all require planning, equipment, skilled operators and adequate budget.

When accessibility is not recognised as a production cost, it is often under-scoped, added too late or omitted entirely. Future policy and funding settings should encourage cultural organisations to budget for access from the earliest planning stages and to engage technical specialists who can deliver it properly.

Digital, hybrid and future audience engagement

Audience engagement is increasingly shaped by live, digital and hybrid experiences. These formats can extend cultural access to people who cannot attend in person, including regional audiences, disabled audiences, carers, parents of young children, older Australians and international viewers. They also create opportunities for Australian work to be recorded, archived, marketed and distributed beyond the original event.

However, high-quality digital and hybrid delivery does not happen automatically. It requires production knowledge, capture infrastructure, audio and video standards, platform workflows, rights awareness and trained operators. Policy settings that encourage hybrid access should therefore also support the technical capability required to deliver it well.

Recommendations

- Formally recognise live event production professionals and suppliers as part of Australia's cultural workforce and cultural infrastructure.
- Include technical production capability in cultural infrastructure planning, particularly for venues, festivals, touring, regional participation and hybrid delivery.

- Support training pathways, paid traineeships and micro-credentials for audio, lighting, staging, vision, streaming, production management, event safety and accessibility.
- Invest in regional production capability through venue upgrades, shared equipment access, local training and touring-ready technical systems.
- Treat accessibility as a funded production requirement, including captioning, Auslan integration, hearing support, audio description, sensory-aware design and hybrid participation.
- Include technical production workers, freelancers and suppliers in future consultation panels, workforce policy design and funding program development.

Closing statement

A resilient cultural sector requires more than funding creative works alone. It requires investment in the production ecosystem that brings those works to life. Artists create the work, but production professionals make that work visible, audible, safe, accessible and capable of reaching audiences at scale.

The next National Cultural Policy should recognise live event production as a core part of Australia's cultural infrastructure, and ensure future policy, funding, workforce and access settings reflect its essential role.