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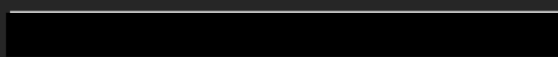
# **National Cultural Policy**

## *Culture and Creativity as Place Infrastructure*

Committee for Greater Hobart

May 2026

Cam Crawford, CEO



## About the Committee for Greater Hobart

The Committee for Greater Hobart (CFGH) is an independent, member-funded organisation that advocates for the long-term liveability, productivity, and economic vitality of Greater Hobart. We convene civic, government, business, and community leaders to drive evidence-based policy and invest in the city's future across urban renewal, housing, transport, education, energy transition, and place-based development.

Our work is grounded in a single conviction: that the most important challenges facing communities are interconnected, and that policy which treats them in isolation will consistently underdeliver. Culture and creativity sit at the centre of this interconnection, not as one policy domain among others but as the binding tissue that gives education, housing, health, economic development, and community life their meaning and their momentum.

We operate at the intersection of public policy and private capital, and we understand from direct experience that the most important role government plays in complex, long-horizon investment is rarely as the primary funder. It is as the enabler of confidence: the institution whose policy settings, funding signals, and regulatory frameworks create the conditions in which patient private and philanthropic capital will commit at scale and for the long term.

This submission reflects our conviction that culture and creativity are not peripheral to city-building but foundational to it, and that a genuinely effective National Cultural Policy must be designed not as a framework that describes ambitions from the centre but as a place-based architecture that gives investors, communities, cultural organisations, and future generations the certainty they need to build.

[www.committeeforgreaterhobart.com.au](http://www.committeeforgreaterhobart.com.au)

*The Committee for Greater Hobart acknowledges and pays respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional and original owners, and continuing custodians of this land on which we gather, work and enjoy and acknowledge Elders past and present.*

## Executive Summary

Australia's next National Cultural Policy must treat culture and creativity as place infrastructure, and position government as its primary enabler rather than its sole funder. The most powerful thing government can do for the cultural sector is not to write larger cheques but to create the policy settings, financing structures, and long-term funding signals that give philanthropic capital, impact investors, community organisations, and future generations the confidence to commit at scale and over time.

This means treating cultural investment as a productive input to urban liveability, economic resilience, community identity, and social cohesion; structuring policy for place-based delivery; aligning it explicitly with the National Urban Policy and other national frameworks; and building the blended finance architecture through which government leverage multiplies into sustained, diversified investment.

This submission is structured around the five pillars of the current policy, Revive, and identifies where the next policy must go further. Its central contention is that culture is long-term community infrastructure in the same foundational sense that roads, schools, hospitals, and housing are infrastructure: it is what communities are built on, not what they are decorated with after the fact. The cultural life we invest in today, the stories we tell, the spaces we create, the pathways we open or close, will determine the communities and the economy that the next generation inherits.

Social cohesion sits at the heart of our submission: the capacity of cultural investment to lift community, build belonging, reduce disadvantage, connect people across difference, and create the conditions for shared identity is not a secondary benefit of good cultural policy but its primary purpose, and it can only be fully realised when cultural investment is connected deliberately to the education, housing, economic development, health, and urban policy frameworks alongside which it must operate.

CFGH makes seven substantive recommendations:

- Embed First Nations cultural sovereignty, including recognition of Country and truth-telling, at the centre of place-based policy rather than treating it as a programmatic add-on.
- Centre young people as leaders and future generations as the primary beneficiaries of cultural investment, with governance and funding structures that reflect this.
- Recognise culture and creativity as place infrastructure, with commensurate capital treatment and governance.
- Establish Blended Cultural Capital Facilities to attract philanthropic and impact investment alongside government funding.
- Align the National Cultural Policy with the 2024 National Urban Policy and relevant industry, education, and housing frameworks.
- Reform the DGR regime and multi-year funding structures to reduce barriers to cultural investment and organisational sustainability.
- Properly value and celebrate the artist as economic contributor, ending the culture of unpaid or under-compensated creative labour.

## 1. First Nations First: The foundation, not a pillar

### Country as the starting point for all cultural policy

We acknowledge and respect the palawa/pakana peoples of lutruwita, the Aboriginal people of Tasmania, as the Traditional Owners of Country, and we recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture. Their stories are not a chapter in Tasmania's cultural history; they are its foundation, predating European settlement by at least 40,000 years and carrying within them an understanding of place, ecology, and community that no subsequent cultural tradition has matched.

The next National Cultural Policy must move beyond the symbolic first-placing of First Nations content and embrace something more substantive: a recognition that all cultural activity in this country takes place on Country, and that genuine cultural policy must begin with the question of how we relate to that Country and to the peoples whose custodianship of it spans millennia. To place First Nations at the top of a policy document while continuing to treat First Nations cultural practice as a program line rather than a governance principle is to misunderstand the weight of the commitment being made.

Hobart-based Palawa educator and cultural practitioner Trish Hodge, a proud descendant of Manalakina, Chief of the Truwulway people of Northeast Tasmania, has spent more than two decades documenting and sharing Aboriginal ecological knowledge. Her 2025 work, *Palawa Tunapri: Knowledge of Our Ancestors*, organises over 300 Tasmanian plant species according to their cultural roles as foods, medicines, and tools, drawing on knowledge transmitted across generations through living practice rather than academic record. As Trish has observed, "culture is sacred, not secret", and the work of making that culture visible and respected is work that serves the whole community, including and especially the young people who will carry it forward.

### Social cohesion begins with reconciliation

Social cohesion is one of the most powerful outcomes that cultural investment can generate, but it cannot be conjured through programming alone. A community's capacity to build genuine belonging, shared identity, and mutual trust depends on the quality of the stories it tells about itself, including the stories it has historically avoided.

Research consistently demonstrates that social cohesion, educational attainment, health outcomes, housing stability, and economic participation are mutually reinforcing: communities with strong cultural life and genuine belonging produce better outcomes across every one of these domains. Culture is not the reward for getting the other things right; it is part of what makes getting the other things right possible.

Greater Hobart is a city with a profound and incompletely resolved history: the Black War, the forced removal of Aboriginal people to Flinders Island, and the deliberate erasure of First Nations identity that led Trish Hodge and her peers to be told in primary school that there were no Tasmanian Aboriginal people left. These are not footnotes from another era. They are active inheritances that continue to shape the social fabric of our city and its capacity for genuine inclusion.

CFGH has been developing a sustained argument about the importance of real social cohesion for the future prosperity and productivity of place. In their 2025 piece 'Let's Make Tasmania Friendly AND Welcoming' ([committeeforgreaterhobart.com.au/friendly-and-welcoming](https://committeeforgreaterhobart.com.au/friendly-and-welcoming)), Dr Pooja Shah and CFGH CEO Cam Crawford draw a distinction that is deceptively simple but profound in its policy implications: friendliness is waving to your neighbour, while being welcoming is making space for them at your table. Tasmania, as Brand Tasmania's own research found, is friendly but not yet genuinely welcoming, and the gap between those two things is where social cohesion either takes root or fails to.

Storytelling that glosses over the truth of a community's history is not cultural investment but reputational management; it produces tourism narratives rather than community and generates product rather than meaning. Communities cannot build shared story without shared history, and a National Cultural Policy that does not make truth-telling and reconciliation central to its place-based investment

framework will consistently underperform against its social cohesion ambitions, regardless of the quality of the infrastructure it funds.

Social cohesion, inclusion, and community opportunity are not the soft edges of cultural policy; they are its measurable outcomes. When cultural investment is designed well and delivered in community, it lifts participation, reduces disadvantage, celebrates diversity, builds bridges across difference, and creates the conditions in which people feel invested in the places where they live. The next National Cultural Policy should make this explicit, framing social cohesion as a primary policy objective to be measured, reported on, and resourced accordingly.

## 2. Young People and Future Generations: Cultural Infrastructure for the Long Term

Young people are not the future of culture. They are its present.

Cultural policy has a persistent tendency to treat young people as future audiences and emerging participants rather than as current leaders, creators, and decision-makers whose engagement with culture is already shaping communities and industries.

The evidence points firmly in the opposite direction. Across Greater Hobart and across Australia, young people are creating festivals, running labels, curating events, building communities of practice, and demanding that the systems around them catch up. The question, as The Push has framed it in its National Plan for Young Australians and Music, is not whether young people can lead, but whether systems will recognise, resource, and share power with them.

The Push, Australia's pre-eminent organisation for young people and music, consulted widely across the country in 2025, from Busselton to Brisbane, with young people, educators, artists, and industry leaders, to understand what it would take for every young Australian to participate and thrive in music.

The resulting National Plan, a ten-year vision built on the voices of young people themselves, articulates something that deserves to be at the centre of the next National Cultural Policy: that music, and cultural participation more broadly, is not a luxury or an extracurricular activity but everyday place infrastructure that keeps communities strong, connected, and capable of building their future. Young people imagined every town having spaces to rehearse, perform, and gather, not as special facilities but as a natural part of community life, as ordinary as ovals, courts, and libraries.

### **The Push National Plan: Five principles**

Every young person means every young person: designing for regional, remote, and underrepresented communities from the start, not as an afterthought.

Connection to Australian music strengthens communities: music as everyday infrastructure where friendships are made, confidence grows, and belonging is fostered.

Always make Australian music the headliner: for young people to see a future in music, they need to see Australian artists leading the way.

Young people lead, systems must follow: embedding young people in governance, policy, program design, and evaluation.

Collaboration means we move to the same beat: a national movement where governments, industry, education, philanthropy, and community work in concert around a shared purpose. ([thepush.com.au/the-push/our-strategy](https://thepush.com.au/the-push/our-strategy))

## The long-term infrastructure argument

The cultural life we invest in today will determine the communities and economy that the next generation inherits.

Young people who grow up with access to cultural participation develop stronger capacities for creativity, empathy, collaboration, and civic engagement, capacities that are increasingly central to economic productivity and community resilience.

Communities that invest in music, storytelling, performance, and creative making for young people produce better educational outcomes, lower rates of social isolation, and stronger intergenerational cohesion. Conversely, communities that systematically deny young people access to cultural life, through age restrictions, cost, geography, or the absence of safe and welcoming spaces, pay a long-term social and economic cost that far exceeds the investment they avoided.

The Push's research found that belonging should not depend on geography, and opportunity should never rely on luck. These are principles that the next National Cultural Policy should make its own.

In Greater Hobart, the geography challenge is real: for example young people in Huonville, Sorell, Brighton, Bridgewater, Gagebrook, and the Northern Suburbs face structural barriers to cultural participation that their peers in the inner city do not, and the communities they live in are precisely the communities where the social cohesion and belonging benefits of cultural investment are most needed and least available. A policy framework that funds cultural infrastructure without a deliberate strategy for reaching young people in these communities will reproduce the inequity it is meant to address.

## Young people as leaders, not recipients

The next National Cultural Policy should be designed with young people, not for them. This means embedding young people in the governance and advisory structures of cultural institutions and funding bodies, as The Push's plan recommends, and treating youth co-design not as a consultation gesture but as a genuine transfer of decision-making power. It means creating funding pathways accessible to young people and youth-led organisations, not just to established institutions with the administrative infrastructure to navigate complex grant processes. It means treating the programs and spaces through which young people already exercise cultural leadership, small venues, community radio, open mic nights, youth-led festivals, digital platforms, creative co-working spaces, as the infrastructure they are, and funding them accordingly.

CFGH's work on youth civic leadership, reflects our conviction that young people's engagement with community, culture, and place is not a training ground for future participation but a form of substantive civic contribution happening now. The next National Cultural Policy should reflect the same conviction, and the institutions it creates and funds should be held to account for the degree to which they genuinely share power with young people rather than merely consulting them.

### Tasmania as a sanctuary for young creators

Greater Hobart's emerging identity as a sanctuary for creativity is particularly significant for young people. A city with the Hedberg, the Frying Pan Studio, and the international creative platform that MONA and Dark MOFO provide should offer young Tasmanians access to world-class creative infrastructure in a community of manageable scale, where the distance between aspiration and opportunity is shorter than in any of the major capitals. That proposition is worth investing in deliberately, as a strategy for retaining young creative talent in Tasmania and for attracting young people from across the country who want to make things in a place that takes making seriously.

CFGH recommends that the next National Cultural Policy:

- Establish young people as a named priority cohort across all five pillars of the policy, with dedicated funding streams, equity targets, and youth co-design requirements attached to all major cultural investments.
- Adopt The Push’s call for a whole-of-government approach that recognises music and cultural participation as essential to young people’s wellbeing, social cohesion, and educational outcomes, establishing a National Youth Cultural Taskforce with representation across music, youth, health, social cohesion, and education sectors.
- Remove the structural barriers that prevent young people from accessing cultural life, including age restrictions on live music venues, cost barriers to participation, and the absence of safe and welcoming all-ages spaces, recognising these as place infrastructure failures with measurable social costs.
- Invest in youth-led cultural organisations and programs, including through DGR reform and accessible funding pathways, ensuring that young people’s existing cultural leadership is resourced rather than merely celebrated.
- Require major Commonwealth-funded cultural institutions to publish youth participation data and demonstrate meaningful progress against youth co-governance and co-design commitments.

### 3. A Place for Every Story: Storytelling, Placemaking, and the Economics of Identity

#### Storytelling as productive investment

Place identity, the stories a community tells about itself, its history, its possibilities, and its people, is a critical economic asset. It shapes where people choose to live and invest, determines whether a city attracts or loses talent in an era of distributed work, and provides the substrate on which tourism, creative industries, and knowledge economy clustering all depend.

Storytelling that is vibrant, honest, and genuinely representative of a community’s diversity is also one of the most powerful mechanisms available for building social cohesion, because it allows people, including young people finding their place in the world, to see themselves reflected in the shared life of the place they inhabit.

The National Cultural Policy should explicitly recognise storytelling, community narrative, and cultural memory as productive infrastructure investments rather than simply cultural goods, and fund them on that basis.

This means: investing in First Nations cultural expression and Country-based storytelling, which represents a non-replicable asset of global significance that remains chronically under-resourced. Supporting community-based cultural production that documents and animates local identity, particularly in cities and regions undergoing rapid change where the risk of community disconnection is highest. Growing the investment in digital and screen-based storytelling that carries local voice and identity to national and international audiences, building the kind of cultural visibility that generates both economic returns and social pride.

#### Placemaking as a social cohesion and urban development strategy

Placemaking, understood as the deliberate use of arts, culture, activation, and community programming to create meaningful and valued public spaces, is increasingly recognised by urban developers and city governments as a value-creation strategy rather than a social services function.

Quality placemaking increases land values, accelerates urban renewal, improves perceptions of safety, and reduces the social costs of disadvantage, but its most important function may be the one least easily quantified: it creates the conditions in which people, across generations, feel a genuine sense of belonging to the places they share.

The next National Cultural Policy should establish placemaking as a legitimate and well-resourced use of cultural funding, with outcomes frameworks that capture economic and urban renewal co-benefits alongside cultural participation metrics. It should require cultural impact assessment as a component of major urban renewal proposals supported by the Commonwealth, and support the development of cultural precincts as mixed-use, blended-finance place infrastructure assets rather than treating them as publicly-funded amenity that can be deferred when budgets tighten.

## 4. Centrality of the Artist: Recognition, Fair Value, and the Creative Economy

### The artist as economic contributor, not cultural volunteer

Artists are skilled workers whose labour creates tourism product, activates public space, anchors place identity, generates export income, and drives the emotional and aesthetic dimensions of a city's brand and its social life.

Greater Hobart's international reputation, its appeal to visitors, investors, and new residents alike, is inseparable from the creative work of the people who live, make, and perform here. The relationship between artistic vitality and economic development is not metaphorical; it is direct, measurable, and significantly underacknowledged in the way national policy currently treats creative labour.

Yet the dominant transactional relationship between cultural industries and artists in Australia remains one of extraction:

- Musicians are routinely asked to play at festivals, launches, and civic events for the promise of exposure rather than payment.
- Visual artists are often commissioned for public realm projects at rates that fail to cover materials, let alone time.
- Performers animate tourism precincts and corporate events while the economic value they generate flows to venues, promoters, and property owners rather than to the creators whose work made the activation possible.

The music industry offers perhaps the sharpest illustration of this dynamic: streaming has restructured the economics of recorded music in ways that benefit platforms far more than creators, while live performance, once the artist's economic fallback, is increasingly dominated by large-scale promoted tours that crowd out smaller venues and reduce the entry points available to emerging and young artists.

### Tasmania as a sanctuary for creativity

In an era of noise, speed, and digital saturation, Tasmania, and Greater Hobart in particular, has something increasingly rare and genuinely valuable to offer: space. Physical space, acoustic space, and the temporal space in which serious creative work gets made.

Greater Hobart is emerging as what might legitimately be described as a sanctuary for sound and creativity, a place to compose, create, and make in a world that is otherwise relentlessly loud and uncertain, and this proposition is grounded not in aspiration but in real and growing infrastructure. CFGH has explored this proposition directly in its piece 'Sanctuary for Creators' ([committeeforgreaterhobart.com.au/sanctuary-for-creators](http://committeeforgreaterhobart.com.au/sanctuary-for-creators)), which makes the case that Tasmania's distinctive environment, its scale, its quiet, its distance from the centres of commercial creative pressure, is itself a competitive advantage worth investing in as deliberate policy rather than leaving to chance.

The Hedberg and Theatre Royal, Hobart's world-class performing arts venue and conservatorium precinct, provides facilities for musical education, performance, and creation that are exceptional by any national standard. The Frying Pan Studio has established Hobart as a serious destination for recorded music

production, attracting artists from across the country who come not only for the facilities but for the creative environment the city provides. MONA and Dark MOFO have demonstrated that cultural ambition at genuine scale is possible in a smaller city, creating a platform of international recognition that emerging and mid-career artists can leverage in ways not available elsewhere. For young artists in particular, Greater Hobart offers something rare: a city where the distance between aspiration and opportunity is short, where the creative community is accessible, and where the cost of living does not immediately price creative practice out of reach.

A city that positions itself as a global destination for creative residency, production, and making can attract and retain talent, generate export income, build durable creative industries employment, and sustain the kind of cultural vitality that feeds back into social cohesion, liveability, and investment attraction. Tasmania's sanctuary proposition is a competitive advantage of real economic significance, and the next National Cultural Policy has an opportunity to invest in it as such.

### Policy recommendations: properly valuing the artist

CFGH recommends that the next National Cultural Policy establish minimum fair pay standards for artists engaged in publicly-funded or Commonwealth-supported cultural activities, and extend those expectations to events and programs supported by Commonwealth grants.

Cultural infrastructure grant recipients should be required to demonstrate compliance with fair remuneration standards as a condition of funding. Investment in artist residency infrastructure in smaller cities and regions should be treated as an economic development priority, recognising Tasmania's particular advantage in this space.

The policy should also support the development of artist-led economic models, including cooperative structures, revenue-sharing platforms, and collective bargaining frameworks, that allow artists, particularly young and emerging artists, to capture a fairer share of the value their work generates for the broader economy.

## 5. Strong Cultural Infrastructure: Government as the Enabler of Long-Term Capital

### The government's role is to create the conditions for confidence

The most significant constraint on cultural investment in Australia is not the absence of capital. It is the absence of the policy conditions that give long-term capital the confidence to deploy.

Philanthropic foundations, impact investors, family offices, and patient institutional investors hold substantial pools of capital that are actively seeking opportunities to generate durable social and cultural returns alongside financial ones. What prevents that capital from flowing into cultural infrastructure at scale is not unwillingness but uncertainty: uncertainty about regulatory settings, funding continuity, deal structures, and the long-term policy commitment of government as a co-investor and systems partner.

Government's role in this ecosystem is not to fund everything, nor to compete with private and philanthropic capital for the same assets. Its role is to act as the architect of confidence, setting the policy and regulatory conditions that make cultural investment legible and attractive to a much broader range of funders than have historically been engaged.

This means:

- Establishing stable, multi-year funding commitments that give organisations the planning horizons to attract co-investment.

- Creating financing vehicles that allow government capital to be structured as first-loss or concessional, unlocking higher tranches of private and philanthropic funding on commercially acceptable terms.
- Reforming the tax and regulatory settings that currently make philanthropic giving to cultural organisations more difficult than it needs to be.

When government gets these settings right, the returns extend well beyond the quantum of public dollars deployed, because every dollar of well-structured public investment can credibly signal and catalyse multiples of private and philanthropic commitment.

The current settings fall substantially short of this standard. Compared to the UK, the United States, and Canada, Australia has a shallower and more fragmented philanthropy sector, a DGR framework that is inconsistent and slow to recognise emerging cultural forms and organisations, limited institutional precedent for impact investment in the cultural sector, and poor alignment between Commonwealth cultural funding and the place-based development programs where cultural investment could generate its strongest co-benefits. Each of these is a solvable problem, and this review is the right moment to solve them.

### Recommendation: Blended Cultural Capital Facilities

CFGH recommends the establishment of Blended Cultural Capital Facilities (BCCF) as the primary mechanism through which government leverage catalyses long-term private and philanthropic investment in cultural infrastructure.

The logic of the BCCF is simple: by deploying government capital in a first-loss or concessional position, the Commonwealth absorbs the risk that currently prevents philanthropic and impact investors from entering the cultural sector at scale, and in doing so creates a market signal that draws in substantially more capital than government could deploy directly.

Modelled on precedents including the UK's Better Society Capital, Arts Council England's investment programs, and Canada's Social Finance Fund, the BCCF would provide subordinated capital to reduce the risk profile of cultural investment for philanthropic and impact investors, establish a standardised deal structure and due diligence framework that lowers transaction costs and makes cultural investment legible to sophisticated private capital, and operate as a revolving facility so that repaid capital re-enters the system for new investment.

Critically, it would be accessible to cultural organisations across all states and territories, with a weighting mechanism ensuring that smaller cities, regions, and youth-serving organisations are not systematically disadvantaged.

### DGR reform and the philanthropy agenda

DGR reform is among the most direct levers available to government for increasing the flow of philanthropic capital into cultural organisations, and the groundwork for meaningful reform has already been laid.

The Productivity Commission's 2024 report, *Future Foundations for Giving*, commissioned under Assistant Minister for Charities Dr Andrew Leigh, described the existing DGR system as not fit for purpose after finding that it had grown in an ad hoc way over decades with no coherent policy rationale, and that many organisations creating clear community benefits were being excluded.

The report's 19 recommendations, directed at the government's stated goal of doubling philanthropic giving by 2030, represent the most comprehensive blueprint for philanthropy reform Australia has seen in a generation. Since its release, the government has taken initial steps: removing the minimum threshold for tax-deductible donations, streamlining the DGR application process for cultural organisations, and establishing a new DGR category for community foundations to support place-based and community-driven giving.

These are meaningful first steps, and Dr Leigh’s leadership in driving them deserves recognition. But as Philanthropy Australia has noted, they do not yet constitute the comprehensive DGR system overhaul the Productivity Commission identified as its central recommendation, and the cultural sector, particularly its youth-serving and smaller-city organisations, remains significantly constrained.

The next National Cultural Policy has both an opportunity and an obligation to build on this reform momentum. CFGH recommends extending DGR eligibility to the full range of cultural and creative organisations, including those engaged in placemaking, community storytelling, youth music and creative development, and creative industries development, and establishing a streamlined and principles-based DGR pathway for organisations with demonstrated community benefit.

The new community foundations DGR category is particularly relevant: community foundations are precisely the vehicle through which place-based and youth-focused cultural philanthropy can be structured, grown, and directed to where it is most needed. Enabling cultural organisations to hold endowment capital in giving fund-equivalent vehicles would allow the sector to build the long-term financial sustainability that transforms organisations from grant-dependent program deliverers into durable community infrastructure with the capacity to plan, invest, and attract co-investment over genuine time horizons.

The shift from competitive project grants to multi-year core funding agreements reinforces all of this. The signal that multi-year funding sends to philanthropic and impact investors is qualitatively different from that sent by annual competitive grants: it communicates that government is a committed, long-horizon partner in the cultural ecosystem rather than a funder whose support is contingent on the next budget cycle.

When that signal is combined with a well-designed DGR framework, a community foundations pathway, and a Blended Cultural Capital Facility operating as a first-loss co-investor, the conditions for a genuinely transformed cultural investment ecosystem become achievable. Government does not need to fund the entire system; it needs to design the system so that others can fund it with confidence, and so that the benefits flow to communities and future generations rather than concentrating in established institutions.

## 6. Policy Alignment: Culture, Cities, Education, and the National Urban Policy

### From national framework to local landing

One of the most persistent failures of national cultural policy is the gap between framework and delivery. Well-intentioned frameworks that describe the importance of culture, community, and place are regularly produced, but what is consistently missing is the institutional architecture, co-investment mechanisms, and place-based delivery models needed to translate those frameworks into real outcomes in specific communities for specific people, and particularly for young people whose engagement with cultural life is shaped by the infrastructure available to them where they grow up. The next National Cultural Policy should be explicitly designed around a foundational question: how does this land in community, in concrete and measurable ways, for real people in real places?

The most recent federal budgets make the structural gap between policy ambition and investment reality visible. The 2026–27 Budget announced \$1.1 billion in arts and culture spending across the forward estimates, but the \$22.9 million in genuinely new measures was directed almost entirely at capital maintenance of existing Commonwealth assets: wharf repairs for the Australian National Maritime Museum and nitrate film storage for the National Film and Sound Archive.

The 2025–26 Budget was similarly constrained, with \$8.6 million for Revive Live and \$2.5 million for community intercultural celebrations representing the totality of new social cohesion investment in the

cultural portfolio. The sector's response reflected a growing frustration that is well summarised by the Chamber of Arts and Culture WA: the challenge is no longer whether culture matters, but building deeper understanding across government of how investment in arts and culture delivers on the outcomes governments are actually trying to achieve, including social inclusion, productivity, wellbeing, liveability, and opportunity for the next generation. That is precisely the argument this submission makes, and it is the argument the next National Cultural Policy must resolve in its architecture rather than leaving to the sector to keep making.

### The interconnectedness of policy domains

Culture does not sit alongside education, housing, health, and economic development in the hierarchy of government priorities, it runs through all of them.

- Children who grow up with access to cultural participation perform better educationally and develop stronger capacities for empathy, creativity, and civic engagement.
- Communities with rich cultural life have measurably better health outcomes, lower rates of social isolation, and greater economic resilience.
- Neighbourhoods where cultural activation has been deliberately invested in attract and retain residents, support small business formation, and sustain the social infrastructure that makes housing density liveable rather than merely efficient.
- Young people who have access to music, performance, storytelling, and creative making as part of their everyday community life are more likely to stay in the communities where they grew up, more likely to contribute to them, and more likely to build the social capital on which those communities' long-term health depends.

A National Cultural Policy that does not make these connections explicit, and does not build the cross-portfolio governance structures to act on them, will continue to fund culture as if it were a standalone sector when it is in fact the connective tissue of the entire social and economic system.

### Alignment with the National Urban Policy

The 2024 National Urban Policy represents an ambitious statement of place-based development intent the Commonwealth. Its ambitions for liveable, productive, and sustainable cities will not be fully realised without a corresponding and co-designed commitment to the cultural dimensions of urban life.

Social cohesion, community identity, and the sense of belonging that makes people, including young people, invest in the places they inhabit are outcomes that cultural policy generates and that urban policy depends on; they cannot be created by housing supply, transport investment, or economic development alone.

CFGH recommends that the next National Cultural Policy explicitly reference the National Urban Policy and establish a formal coordination mechanism between cultural, urban, housing, education, and health policy at the Commonwealth level, with a joint accountability framework that requires these portfolios to plan and report together on the social cohesion and liveability outcomes that none of them can achieve independently.

Cultural infrastructure investment should be aligned with the Housing Australia Future Fund and urban renewal corridor planning, recognised as a value-creation and community-formation input to residential development.

Creative industries and cultural workforce planning should be incorporated within the National Skills Agreement and relevant industry strategies, recognising the creative sector's particular importance as a career pathway for young people.

A Cultural Infrastructure Mapping function should be established to identify gaps across functional economic areas, ensuring that investment decisions are driven by genuine community need.

### **Greater Hobart as a policy integration test case**

The Northern Suburbs Corridor presents a genuine opportunity to demonstrate integrated cultural, urban, and youth policy in practice. With the unlocking of housing density along this corridor, cultural activation, placemaking, and community storytelling investment can accelerate community formation, reduce social costs, and increase the long-term liveability and cohesion of new development, particularly for the young families who will make their homes there.

Greater Hobart's existing creative assets represent investment-grade opportunities that connect directly to the city's international brand positioning and to its emerging identity as a sanctuary for young creators. CFGH would welcome a partnership with the Commonwealth to develop Greater Hobart as a demonstrator for integrated cultural, urban, and youth policy delivery.

### **Recognising functional economic areas and investment-ready ecosystems**

Cultural policy, like urban policy, must move beyond the local government, state and territory boundary distinctions to recognise functional economic areas as the real geographic units within which people live, work, and participate in cultural life.

Greater Hobart is precisely such an area: a distinctive cultural ecosystem with investment-grade cultural assets, a compelling brand proposition, and the kind of civic ambition that is already generating national and international interest.

The next National Cultural Policy should establish a functional economic area lens for cultural infrastructure planning and funding allocation, and should explicitly recognise emerging creative economy clusters like Greater Hobart's sanctuary-for-creativity proposition as investment priorities within a place-based delivery framework.

## **7. Engaging the Audience: Participation, Equity, and Cultural Life for All**

Cultural infrastructure is only as valuable as the participation it enables, and the social cohesion benefits of cultural investment depend entirely on whether that investment reaches the people who need it most.

Greater Hobart's world-class cultural assets, including MONA, the Hedberg, the Festival of Voices, and Dark MOFO, reach some audiences exceptionally well, but far from all of them. Young people, particularly those from lower-income households, from regional and outer-suburban communities, and from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, face the most significant barriers to cultural participation and stand to gain the most from investment that genuinely removes them.

Addressing these barriers requires investment in participation equity programs that specifically target communities with low cultural engagement, including through community arts, activation, and storytelling initiatives that meet people where they are.

It requires major federally-funded cultural institutions to publish participation data by geography, income, age, and cultural background, and to set and report against meaningful equity targets that specifically address youth participation. It requires sustained investment in the small and mid-tier cultural organisations that provide the genuine entry points to cultural life for most Australians, recognising that the strength of the ecosystem as a whole depends on the health of its most under-resourced participants.

The creative sanctuary proposition for Greater Hobart is not in tension with this equity agenda; it depends on it. A city that attracts artists, composers, and makers from around the world will only sustain that reputation if it also sustains the local creative community, particularly its young people, from which authentic vitality emerges.

## Conclusion: An Enabling Policy for the Next Generation

Australia has an extraordinary opportunity before it. The next National Cultural Policy can be the framework that finally treats culture not as a budget line to be defended but as a productive force to be invested in: a driver of talent attraction, economic productivity, social cohesion, and community wellbeing that, when properly resourced and structurally connected to the other domains of public policy, generates returns that compound across generations. The question this review must answer is not whether to be ambitious, but how to build the architecture that makes ambition deliverable.

Young people are the answer to that question. Across Australia, a generation of creators, advocates, and community builders is already doing the work: making music in bedrooms and recording studios, curating events in community halls, telling stories that their communities have never heard told, and demanding that the systems around them recognise, resource, and share power with them. As *The Push* has found in its national consultation, these young people are not waiting for permission. They are not asking to be considered in some future policy review: they are present, capable, and ready. The cultural policy that serves Australia best will be the one that meets them where they are, removes the structural barriers that stand between them and full participation, and builds the governance and funding structures that treat their leadership as an asset rather than a category to be served.

Equity is inseparable from this argument. Belonging should not depend on geography, opportunity should not rely on luck, and access to the creative life of a community should not be rationed by postcode, income, age, or identity. The next National Cultural Policy must be designed from the margins inward rather than from the centre outward, and its success must be measured against the experiences of the young person in Brighton who wants to make music, the First Nations community in lutruwita whose cultural knowledge is the oldest living tradition on the continent, and the newly arrived family in the northern suburbs whose sense of belonging to this place will be shaped, more than almost anything else, by whether the cultural life around them makes space for them at the table.

The productivity and talent attraction case for cultural investment is equally clear, and equally undervalued in the current policy framework. Cities with strong, distinctive, and accessible cultural life attract and retain the skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and creative professionals who drive knowledge economy growth.

Greater Hobart's potential as a sanctuary for creativity, a place where serious creative work gets made in a world that is otherwise relentlessly loud, will not be incidental to its economic development story; it will be central to it. The Hedberg, the Frying Pan Studio, the festival ecosystem, and the city's distinctive character as a place that takes making seriously are competitive advantages that no amount of business incentive or infrastructure investment can replicate. National cultural policy that recognises and invests in these propositions is also national economic policy, and it should be designed and evaluated accordingly.

None of this is achievable through cultural policy alone. The next framework must be built on genuine cross-portfolio integration, with formal coordination mechanisms that connect cultural investment to housing, education, health, urban development, and economic policy, and with a joint accountability architecture that holds these portfolios to account for the social cohesion, liveability, and productivity outcomes they share but currently pursue in isolation. Government's role in this integrated system is not to fund everything but to design the conditions of confidence in which communities, investors, philanthropists, and young people themselves can commit at scale and over time, knowing that the policy ground beneath them is stable.

Trish Hodge's observation is the right place to end: "The knowledge of our past is the future for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people living on country." A policy framework that takes this seriously, that begins with First Nations, centres young people, connects across portfolios, invests in the conditions of confidence, and measures its success by the cultural life it creates for the communities of the future, is not only achievable. It is exactly what this moment calls for.

The Committee for Greater Hobart welcomes the opportunity to work with government on the development of the next National Cultural Policy, and to contribute to the design of implementation mechanisms that make its ambitions real in communities, for all generations.

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