

Submission from Immerse Australia to Australian National Cultural Policy consultation

22 May 2026

Immerse Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of Australia's next National Cultural Policy. We support the Government's intention to build on *Revive: A place for every story, a story for every place* and to address emerging priorities across Australia's creative and cultural sectors. The consultation paper rightly recognises that digital tools and platforms are changing how creative work is produced, distributed and discovered, and that audiences are increasingly engaging across live, digital and hybrid experiences.

Immerse Australia is the national association for Australia's immersive technology sector. Our purpose is to provide a forum where industry, research and academic organisations, the public sector, and innovators working with immersive technologies can collaborate to accelerate innovation, research and development, scalability, company growth and creative culture. We define immersive technology as hardware, software, services or content developed for augmented reality, virtual reality, mixed reality or extended reality.

Our members include Australian companies and practitioners creating content, experiences, applications, services and solutions using immersive technologies. They work across sectors including screen and games, performing arts, cultural institutions, education and training, health, architecture and design, tourism, public engagement, as well as industry sectors such as defence, mining, infrastructure and manufacturing. Their work spans cultural, creative, technical and commercial fields, and is increasingly shaping how people experience stories, places, heritage, learning, work and live events.

Key recommendation

The next National Cultural Policy should explicitly recognise immersive and interactive digital practice as part of Australia's cultural and creative ecosystem, and establish practical mechanisms to support its development, presentation, export and long-term sustainability.

Immersive technology is not only a tool for distribution. It is a creative medium in its own right. Australian artists, studios, researchers and cultural organisations are already using augmented reality, virtual reality, mixed reality and extended reality to create new forms of storytelling, participation and audience engagement. These works can support First Nations cultural expression, expand access for audiences who cannot attend physical venues, create new cultural infrastructure, and build globally competitive creative businesses.

Pillar 1: First Nations First

Immersive technologies offer significant opportunities for First Nations-led storytelling, language preservation, cultural education and place-based interpretation. However, these opportunities must be developed within strong cultural governance frameworks. The next policy should support First Nations leadership in immersive practice, including First Nations-led commissioning, protocols for cultural intellectual property, and investment in skills, infrastructure and distribution pathways.

This should be a cultural rights agenda, led by First Nations artists, knowledge holders, communities and organisations.

Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story

Immersive practice can help broaden who gets to tell stories, where stories are experienced, and how audiences participate in them. It can connect audiences to regional places, local histories, migrant stories, disability-led practice, youth culture and community knowledge in ways that are interactive, spatial and accessible.

The next policy should recognise emerging modes of expression, including interactive, immersive and hybrid works, as legitimate cultural practice. Funding guidelines, commissioning models and assessment panels should include people with expertise in immersive media so that these works are not excluded because they do not fit conventional categories such as screen, visual arts, live performance or games.

Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist

Artists and creative workers using immersive technology often work across disciplines and employment models. They may be artists, developers, designers, producers, sound artists, performers, coders, researchers, technologists and cultural workers. Existing support structures do not always recognise this blended practice.

The next policy should support fair and sustainable working conditions for immersive practitioners, including:

1. grant and investment programs that support research and development, prototyping and iteration, not only final presentation;
2. clearer recognition of digital creative labour, including technical and design labour, as creative work;
3. support for copyright, moral rights, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, data rights and fair remuneration in immersive and AI-enabled environments; and
4. education and lifelong learning pathways that connect artists, technologists, cultural organisations and industry.

Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Australia needs cultural infrastructure that is fit for digital, hybrid and immersive practice. This includes not only buildings and venues, but also labs, production facilities, equipment

pools, test spaces, distribution platforms, digital preservation systems and cross-sector partnerships.

Many immersive works require specialist hardware, software, technical support and exhibition conditions. These costs are often difficult for small companies, independent artists and cultural organisations to absorb. The next policy should support shared infrastructure models, including national and regional immersive labs, partnerships between cultural institutions and universities, and programs that allow museums, galleries, libraries, festivals and performing arts organisations to commission and present immersive work.

Public investment in immersive infrastructure would also support innovation beyond the arts, including education, skills, tourism, health, disaster preparedness and civic participation. Cultural policy can therefore play a practical role in connecting creative practice with national innovation capability.

Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience

Immersive technologies are changing audience behaviour. Audiences increasingly expect to engage with culture across physical, digital and hybrid environments. Younger audiences in particular are creating, collaborating and participating through digital platforms and interactive media.

The next policy should support Australian cultural organisations and creators to reach audiences through immersive formats, including augmented reality trails, virtual exhibitions, interactive performance, digital twins, immersive documentary, spatial audio, location-based experiences and mixed reality public programs.

This requires investment not only in production, but also in discoverability, marketing, distribution and evaluation. Australian immersive works need pathways to reach domestic audiences and international markets. Without coordinated support, Australia risks losing creative talent, intellectual property and market opportunities to jurisdictions with stronger digital creative industry strategies.

Proposed actions

Immerse Australia recommends that the next National Cultural Policy:

1. explicitly include immersive, interactive and extended reality practice within the definition of Australian cultural and creative activity;
2. create targeted funding for immersive cultural research, development, prototyping, production and presentation;
3. support First Nations-led immersive practice through culturally governed funding and commissioning models;
4. build shared immersive infrastructure through partnerships between government, cultural institutions, universities, industry and regional organisations;
5. strengthen rights frameworks for immersive and AI-enabled creative work, including copyright, data, moral rights and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property;

6. develop export and market pathways for Australian immersive works, including support for festivals, trade missions, showcases and international co-production; and
7. ensure policy design, funding assessment and advisory structures include people with immersive technology expertise.

Conclusion

Australia has an opportunity to position immersive practice as a core part of its cultural future. The next National Cultural Policy should recognise that culture is now created and experienced across physical, digital and hybrid environments. By supporting immersive technology as both creative practice and cultural infrastructure, the Government can strengthen Australian storytelling, expand audience access, support artists and creative workers, grow new businesses, and ensure Australian cultural expression remains visible and competitive internationally.

Immerse Australia would welcome further consultation with the Government on how these recommendations can be implemented in partnership with industry, artists, cultural organisations, researchers and First Nations leaders.

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