

Office for the Arts
Department of Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development,
Communications and the Arts
Australian Government

8 June 2026

NAVA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation for the next National Cultural Policy and thanks the Department for granting an extension to the submission deadline. The additional time has been invaluable in enabling us to consolidate the breadth of input received from across the visual arts, craft and design sector.

The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) is the national peak body for the visual arts, craft and design sector. We bring together the many voices of the sector to improve the fundamental conditions of work and practice through advocacy, education and the Code of Practice for Visual Arts, Craft and Design (the Code).

Revive's endorsement of the Code has helped strengthen awareness and application of good practice across parts of the sector, including the payment of artist fees. The Code provides guidance on professional standards, ethical working relationships, access and inclusion, artists' rights and responsibilities, and fair payment for artists and arts workers.

In April 2026, NAVA hosted three national workshops to support artists, arts workers and organisations to engage with consultation on the next National Cultural Policy.¹ These sessions built on NAVA's extensive consultation during development of Revive in 2022² and provided opportunities for participants to discuss priorities, identify emerging issues and contribute ideas for the future of arts and cultural policy.

This submission draws on extensive consultation with more than 350 NAVA Members and industry colleagues, alongside NAVA's ongoing advocacy, research and policy work. It begins with NAVA's key recommendations across each policy pillar, followed by an appendix outlining the context and evidence informing those recommendations.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspect of this submission and are available to provide further information if required.

Sincerely,

Penelope Benton
Executive Director

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first artists and makers on this continent, and pays its deepest respects to all First Nations communities' ancestors and Elders.

Sovereignty was never ceded.

Revive restored national leadership in arts and cultural policy and established an important framework for future reform. For the visual arts sector, its recognition of artists as workers, commitment to First Nations self-determination in arts and culture, and endorsement of the Code of Practice for Visual Arts, Craft and Design have contributed to meaningful progress. The next National Cultural Policy provides an opportunity to build on this foundation.

Despite being among Australia's most widely practised and attended forms of cultural participation,³ visual arts, craft and design are not afforded visibility and policy attention proportionate to their scale and reach. Addressing this gap will require stronger national leadership, strategic planning and investment in the visual arts, craft and design sector.

More than twenty years have passed since the Myer Inquiry into the contemporary visual arts and craft sector.⁴ During that time the sector has changed significantly, yet Australia has not undertaken another comprehensive review of the visual arts, craft and design sector. Many of the structural challenges identified in 2002 remain unresolved. Artists continue to face low incomes, insecure work, rising costs and poor retirement outcomes.⁵ Galleries, museums, First Nations art and culture centres, artist-run initiatives, arts schools and service organisations face increasing financial challenges as operating costs continue to outpace funding.

Visual arts, craft and design contribute to education, tourism, local economies and Australia's international reputation, while supporting cultural participation and community connection in every part of the country. Yet the scale of the sector's contribution is not matched by the level of strategic attention, investment and leadership dedicated to its development. Given its significance, NAVA recommends a new national review of the visual arts, craft and design sector to inform long-term planning, investment and policy development. A contemporary evidence base is essential to understanding workforce needs, infrastructure and participation across the sector.

NAVA's recommendations are organised around the Government's five pillars. Across those pillars, the submission places particular emphasis on First Nations leadership and self-determination, artists' economic conditions, and the long-term sustainability of the visual arts, craft and design sector. While targeted arts investment remains important, many of the most significant opportunities to improve conditions for artists lie beyond arts funding programs. NAVA calls for reforms to taxation, superannuation and related regulatory settings that recognise how artists earn income, operate businesses and build careers.

NAVA also encourages the Australian Government to demonstrate its commitment to artists by commissioning and appropriately remunerating a living Australian artist or collective of artists to create the cover artwork for the next National Cultural Policy.

FIRST NATIONS FIRST RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Self-determination, leadership and workforce development

- 1.1.1 Develop a National First Nations Visual Arts Workforce and Leadership Strategy to support long-term career pathways across artistic, technical, curatorial, governance, management and senior leadership roles in urban, regional and remote contexts. This should include:
- mentorship and peer networks
 - accredited training and professional development
 - First Nations-led arts education and cultural leadership programs
 - paid internships, traineeships and employment pathways
 - cluster hiring and stronger institutional support structures
 - support for travel, networking, cultural exchange and leadership development.
- 1.1.2 Recognise lived experience, cultural knowledge and community authority as professional expertise and resource the full costs of First Nations-led practice and leadership, including:
- cultural protocols
 - translation and language-first communication
 - community engagement and relational labour
 - cultural governance and advisory work
 - delivery across multiple First Nations languages, cultural frameworks and ways of learning
 - remote and regional delivery contexts.
- 1.1.3 Formalise and remunerate partnerships with Elders, community educators, artists and cultural knowledge holders across education, mentorship, governance, advisory and workforce development contexts.
- 1.1.4 Develop and implement industry-specific cultural safety standards supporting First Nations staff, artists and arts workers, including recognition of cultural load, community obligations, workplace flexibility, burnout prevention, and culturally safer reporting pathways.
- 1.1.5 Reform public funding, commissioning and procurement processes to recognise and remunerate the cultural labour undertaken by First Nations artists, including consultation, cultural governance, concept development, community engagement, mentorship and knowledge sharing.
- 1.1.6 Strengthen pathways for young and emerging First Nations artists through mentorship, traineeships, intergenerational learning, youth arts participation and connection to cultural knowledge holders.
- 1.1.7 Expand access to professional development, business development and legal support delivered by sector service organisations to improve access to training relating to taxation, licensing, commissioning, contracts, copyright, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and small business development.

- 1.1.8 Support artist wellbeing and sustainable careers through culturally informed approaches that recognise cultural load, burnout, isolation, insecure work and community responsibilities.
- 1.1.9 Improve affordability and access for First Nations artists and art and culture centres participating in national and regional art fairs through targeted support for travel, accommodation, freight, staffing and booth costs.

1.2 Organisation sustainability and sector capacity

- 1.2.1 Maintain and expand Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support (IVAIS) as essential national infrastructure, including indexation that reflects inflation, sector growth and rising operational costs.
- 1.2.2 Establish a National Infrastructure Fund for First Nations art and culture centres recognising the significantly higher costs associated with remote and regional operations, including staffing, housing, freight, maintenance and service delivery.
- 1.2.3 Recognise and resource First Nations-led peak bodies, service organisations and collaborative sector initiatives as essential cultural infrastructure, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts and Culture Peaks Alliance.
- 1.2.4 Support First Nations-led touring, exchange and outward-facing cultural activity through dedicated funding streams recognising the additional time, travel, relational labour, language diversity and cultural coordination required for remote, regional and community-based practice.
- 1.2.5 Recognise and support the diversity of First Nations practice models.
- 1.2.6 Improve transparency and accountability in First Nations arts funding through clearer reporting on funding flows to artists, communities, organisations and sector infrastructure.

1.3 Planning for the next 50 years

- 1.3.1 Commission a national review of the visual arts, craft and design sector with a dedicated First Nations-led component to identify long-term workforce, infrastructure, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability needs across urban, regional and remote Australia.
- 1.3.2 Develop a co-designed National First Nations Visual Arts and Crafts Sustainability Strategy informed by this work, addressing:
 - workforce succession and leadership development
 - cultural knowledge sharing and support for Elders
 - climate resilience and adaptation
 - housing and workforce support in remote communities
 - infrastructure renewal and maintenance
 - digital access and connectivity
 - long-term sustainability of art and culture centres

- support for independent artists and diverse practice models.
- 1.3.3 Recognise art and culture centres as essential community infrastructure, supporting cultural continuity, language maintenance, education, employment, governance and community wellbeing, particularly in remote and regional communities.

1.4 Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)

- 1.4.1 Enact standalone ICIP legislation that provides enforceable protections and recognises First Nations authority over the use, interpretation, reproduction and contextualisation of cultural material.
- 1.4.2 Support implementation of ICIP protections through dedicated funding, legal assistance, contract support, education, advocacy, cultural governance resources and accessible guidance for artists, communities, organisations and institutions.
- 1.4.3 Embed stronger protections for First Nations languages, cultural knowledge and story, recognising that First Nations visual arts practice is inseparable from the continuation of language and community knowledge. Ensure artists are able to engage with cultural, political and historical issues without fear of censorship, political interference or institutional abandonment.
- 1.4.4 Ensure AI regulation addresses unauthorised scraping, training and reproduction of First Nations cultural material, with ICIP protections applying equally within digital environments and artificial intelligence systems.
- 1.4.5 Strengthen authenticity protections, ethical procurement standards and consumer awareness measures across arts, tourism, education and consumer policy frameworks.
- 1.4.6 Support culturally appropriate digital archiving systems, collections management and community-led protocols for the safeguarding and governance of cultural material.

1.5 Cultural safety and accountability

- 1.5.1 Require publicly funded arts organisations to demonstrate culturally safer workplace practices as part of funding eligibility, governance and reporting requirements.
- 1.5.2 Require publicly funded projects involving First Nations cultural material or Traditional Custodians to demonstrate appropriately resourced, community-led engagement and decision-making processes, including fair remuneration for cultural consultation and governance.
- 1.5.3 Invest in cultural competency, training and organisational capacity-building across galleries, museums and arts organisations, particularly within the small-to-medium sector.

- 1.5.4 Support truth-telling, contextualisation and review of First Nations collection management, interpretation and display practices within publicly funded galleries, museums and cultural institutions.
- 1.5.5 Extend eligibility for the Australian Government's Indigenous Repatriation Program to small-to-medium public galleries to support repatriation activities, community access and remedial conservation of collection items.
- 1.5.6 Co-design First Peoples Data Sovereignty and Collections Access standards with First Peoples to guide good practice in data governance, digital access, repatriation, interpretation and management of cultural materials within public galleries, museums and collecting institutions.
- 1.5.7 Improve participation pathways for First Nations artists and arts workers facing multiple barriers, including Disabled artists, justice-involved communities, young people and practitioners outside metropolitan centres.

2. A PLACE FOR EVERY STORY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Adopt a whole-of-ecology approach within the National Cultural Policy, embedding diversity, equity, access and inclusion across all policy areas, funding programs, investment frameworks and public institutions.
- 2.2 Continue and expand investment beyond the current four-year Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan to support long-term structural change across the visual arts, craft and design sector.
- 2.3 Provide dedicated accessibility funding in addition to standard grant caps, ensuring access costs do not compete with artist fees, production expenses or core project delivery.
- 2.4 Invest in sustainable employment, professional development and leadership pathways for d/Deaf and Disabled artists and arts workers across the visual arts, craft and design sector.
- 2.5 Develop and resource a national, industry-led Anti-Racism and Cultural Equity Strategy aligned with the Australian Human Rights Commission's National Anti-Racism Framework and the Multicultural Framework Review.
- 2.6 Require publicly funded arts organisations to implement anti-racism, cultural competency and equity training alongside equity action plans, accountability measures and transparent reporting processes.
- 2.7 Measure and publicly report on diversity across workforce, leadership, funding, programming, commissioning, collections and audience participation.

- 2.8 Align the National Cultural Policy with the National Urban Policy, recognising visual arts and cultural infrastructure, affordable creative space and place-based participation as essential to socially connected and culturally rich communities.
- 2.9 Ensure any future Visual Arts and Craft Australia body reflects contemporary Australia through diverse governance, lived experience and equitable representation across decision-making structures.
- 2.10 Strengthen gender equity across the visual arts, craft and design sector to ensure artists and arts workers of all gender identities have equitable access to opportunities, leadership, safety and career progression.
- 2.11 Support family-friendly arts policies and programs, including equitable access to residencies, caregiving support and flexible participation pathways.
- 2.12 Strengthen pathways into arts participation and public engagement with visual arts, craft and design for communities experiencing structural exclusion, including people impacted by incarceration, geographic isolation, disability and economic disadvantage.
- 2.13 Reform touring and development funding settings to better support nationally distributed visual arts participation and equitable visibility for regional, remote and outer-metropolitan artists and organisations.

3. THE CENTRALITY OF THE ARTIST RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Tax reform

NAVA has advocated for tax reform for more than 25 years. The next National Cultural Policy must recognise tax reform as one of the most direct and practical ways to improve artists' incomes, reduce precarity and support long-term practice.

NAVA recommends that the Australian Government:

- 3.1.1 Exempt art prizes from taxable income.
- 3.1.2 Provide artists with the option to treat fellowships and government grants as exempt income or assessable income where associated deductions need to be claimed.
- 3.1.3 Exempt professional artists from Non-Commercial Loss rules where they meet the ATO's "in business" test under TR 2005/1.
- 3.1.4 Improve access to income averaging through plain-language guidance, MyTax prompts, case studies and outreach to artists, accountants and tax professionals.
- 3.1.5 Allow reasonable living cost deductions for artist residencies of up to 12 months.

- 3.1.6 Introduce more flexible GST settings for artists whose income only occasionally exceeds the registration threshold.
- 3.1.7 Recognise ICIP-related expenses as legitimate deductible costs.
- 3.1.8 Strengthen tax settings for giving and philanthropy by:
- maintaining and expanding the Cultural Gifts Program; and
 - reforming rules that prevent artists from claiming appropriate deductions when donating their own work to fundraising initiatives.
- 3.1.9 Develop a National Affordable Artist Studio Strategy and reform property tax settings to support affordable creative space, including:
- tax relief for below-market leases;
 - incentives for adaptive reuse;
 - vacancy measures; and
 - GST exemptions on studio leases for non-GST-registered artists.

3.2 Specialist production infrastructure

- 3.2.1 Recognise specialist visual arts, craft and design facilities as essential cultural infrastructure and support long-term investment in the spaces, equipment and technical expertise required to sustain both traditional and emerging artforms, and Australia's visual arts, craft and design workforce.

3.3 Superannuation reform

- 3.3.1 Amend the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act to ensure artists receive superannuation on a broader range of income streams, including exhibition fees, paid talks, workshops, residencies and research and development activity.
- 3.3.2 Require dedicated superannuation line items within publicly funded grant applications.
- 3.3.3 Develop streamlined administrative systems for artist superannuation contributions, reducing duplication for artists and arts organisations while maintaining full superannuation entitlements.
- 3.3.4 Reform restrictive 2011 self-managed super fund (SMSF) regulations to reduce unnecessary storage, insurance and compliance associated with investment in artworks.

3.4 Income support

- 3.4.1 Strengthen social security, welfare and income support systems for artists and arts workers operating outside traditional employment frameworks, including consideration and trial of basic income and living wage models.
- 3.4.2 Expand direct investment in individual artists through a significant increase in fellowship programs, residencies and long-term support for professional practice.

3.5 Freedom of expression

- 3.5.1 Recognise artistic freedom and freedom of expression as core principles of National Cultural Policy.
- 3.5.2 Review and strengthen legal protections for lawful artistic expression, including ensuring that hate speech, hate symbol and related legislation provide clear and workable protections for artistic practice.
- 3.5.3 Affirm the importance of arm's-length decision-making, institutional independence and procedural fairness within publicly funded arts and cultural organisations.
- 3.5.4 Support sector-led development of guidance and resources relating to artistic freedom, freedom of expression and the management of controversial work.

3.6 Copyright and AI

- 3.6.1 Maintain copyright settings that support consent, licensing and remuneration for artists in relation to AI training and use of creative works.
- 3.6.2 Develop a national arts strategy addressing AI, creators' rights, online harms and misuse of artists' work in digital environments.
- 3.6.3 Develop government procurement standards, funding conditions and transparency requirements supporting ethical AI development and publicly funded AI systems.

3.7 Resale Royalty

- 3.7.1 Review and strengthen the Resale Royalty Scheme.

3.8 Arts education and workforce pathways

- 3.8.1 Embed arts education as a key commitment within National Cultural Policy.
- 3.8.2 Strengthen collaboration between arts and education portfolios to support long-term pathways into visual arts, craft and design practice, arts education and creative workforce development.
- 3.8.3 End the Job-ready Graduates (JRG) program and reinvest funding into tertiary arts education and training providers.
- 3.8.4 Reduce tuition fees and abolish indexation on student loans.
- 3.8.5 Invest in paid internships, mentorship, technical training and professional development across all career stages.

- 3.8.6 Protect and invest in specialist visual arts infrastructure, including university workshops, art school facilities, community studios and shared production spaces that support traditional, contemporary and emerging artforms.
- 3.8.7 Recognise specialist visual arts facilities as essential cultural infrastructure within higher education, vocational education and community settings, and support their renewal, operation and long-term sustainability.

3.9 Gender equity, care and sustainable careers

- 3.9.1 Introduce targeted strategies addressing gender inequity in acquisitions, exhibitions, leadership and career progression.
- 3.9.2 Support family-friendly arts policies, including equitable access to residencies, caregiving support and flexible participation pathways.

3.10 Climate change, disasters and cultural resilience

- 3.10.1 Recognise artists, studios, archives, collections and cultural infrastructure as part of national climate resilience planning.
- 3.10.2 Establish dedicated disaster preparedness, recovery and resilience funding for artists and visual arts infrastructure affected by climate events and natural disasters.

3.11 Touring

- 3.11.1 Reform touring and development funding to support artists to develop and present work nationally and internationally, strengthen touring infrastructure and partnerships, and improve opportunities for regional, remote and outer-metropolitan artists and audiences.

4. STRONG INSTITUTIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 National coordination, research and sector planning

- 4.1.1 Establish Visual Arts and Craft Australia to provide national leadership in long-term sector planning, workforce mapping, infrastructure needs, data collection, economic analysis, international engagement and investment attraction, while working alongside and strengthening existing sector organisations.
- 4.1.2 Establish a funded national coordination framework connecting advocacy organisations, First Nations-led bodies, service organisations, public galleries, museums and regional networks to support joint strategy development, workforce planning and sector advocacy.
- 4.1.3 Commission a comprehensive national review of the visual arts, craft and design sector, including workforce conditions, infrastructure, funding, regional access, education

pathways, audience engagement, economic and social contribution, with a dedicated First Nations-led examination of the long-term sustainability of the First Nations visual arts and crafts sector.

- 4.1.4 Develop national indicators and reporting frameworks relating to workforce sustainability, arts education, public participation, regional access and cultural infrastructure to support evidence-based policy and investment.

4.2 Sustainable institutions, infrastructure and workforce conditions

- 4.2.1 Apply indexation to IVAIS and all forms of multi-year operational funding to reflect rising wages, artist fees, compliance obligations and operating costs.
- 4.2.2 Develop a coordinated funding framework across Federal, State/Territory and Local Government recognising the shared responsibility for sustaining galleries, museums, artist-run initiatives, art and culture centres and community-based visual arts infrastructure.
- 4.2.3 Progress industrial reform for the visual arts, craft and design sector, including improved award coverage, classification structures, pay and conditions, superannuation protections and portable entitlements for arts workers.
- 4.2.4 Expand support for visual arts touring infrastructure, including freight, production, staffing and regional venue partnerships, and align Visions of Australia more closely with Playing Australia through greater flexibility, contingency support and multi-year programming.

4.3 Workforce development and education

- 4.3.1 Embed arts education as a core commitment within National Cultural Policy through sustained investment in tertiary arts education, vocational pathways, arts teaching, research and professional development.
- 4.3.2 End the Job-ready Graduates program and reinvest funding into tertiary arts education and training providers.
- 4.3.3 Invest in paid workforce development pathways across the visual arts, craft and design sector, including internships, traineeships, graduate-to-sector pathways, technical and installation training, curatorial development and partnerships between universities, TAFEs, galleries, councils, artists and small-to-medium organisations.
- 4.3.4 Recognise and support diverse workforce development models, including First Nations Elders, artist-run initiatives, peer-led residencies, community-based training and self-directed professional development.
- 4.3.5 Embed self-employment, business and entrepreneurship training within arts education and professional development pathways.

4.4 Tax reform and organisational sustainability

- 4.4.1 Introduce an Exhibition Production Incentive to support artist fees, commissioning, production, touring and public-benefit exhibitions.
- 4.4.2 Strengthen tax settings for giving and philanthropy by improving DGR access for arts organisations.
- 4.4.3 Extend Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) concessions to arts not-for-profit organisations with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status.
- 4.4.4 Allow volunteers across museums, galleries and other visual arts organisations to claim reasonable out-of-pocket expenses as tax deductions.
- 4.4.5 Increase investment in local visual arts infrastructure, including public galleries, council-owned exhibition spaces, artist studios, regional arts networks, community artmaking spaces and Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) initiatives.
- 4.4.6 Recognise local government galleries, museums and community arts facilities as essential components of Australia's cultural infrastructure and support local governments to develop arts and cultural policies, infrastructure plans and long-term cultural development strategies.
- 4.4.7 Establish a National Collection Digitisation Fund supporting preservation, cataloguing reform, culturally appropriate collection management and public access to collections.
- 4.4.8 Strengthen partnerships between the arts, education, health and community sectors through dedicated support for artist residencies, public programs and community-based projects.
- 4.4.9 Recognise public galleries, museums, Aboriginal arts and cultural centres, artist-run initiatives and community-based visual arts organisations as essential cultural infrastructure within National Cultural Policy.

4.5 Climate resilience and disaster preparedness

- 4.5.1 Recognise visual arts infrastructure within national climate adaptation and resilience planning.
- 4.5.2 Establish a National Cultural Disaster Recovery Fund supporting artists, collections, studios, archives, art and culture centres and cultural infrastructure affected by climate events and natural disasters.
- 4.5.3 Develop climate-conscious touring, freight and collection management strategies supporting long-term sector sustainability.

5. ENGAGING THE AUDIENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Audience infrastructure

- 5.1.1 Recognise public galleries, museums, Aboriginal cultural centres, art and culture centres and small-to-medium visual arts organisations as essential audience infrastructure and invest in their long-term capacity to connect artists, artworks and audiences.

5.2 Touring and audience access

- 5.2.1 Develop a National Visual Arts Touring and Transport Strategy to strengthen national access to visual arts, craft and design through investment in touring infrastructure, freight, transport and audience development.
- 5.2.2 Expand and reform Visions of Australia to:
- address rising freight, travel, staffing and artist fee costs;
 - support longer-term touring and multi-venue programming;
 - improve access for regional, remote and outer-metropolitan communities; and
 - improve equity between National Collecting Institutions and the small-to-medium sector.
- 5.2.3 Establish dedicated international touring, exchange and market development programs for the visual arts, including support for biennales, residencies, reciprocal exchange, international partnerships and export opportunities, without reducing support for domestic touring and regional access.
- 5.2.4 Establish multi-year operational funding partnerships for visual arts touring organisations and NETS agencies.
- 5.2.5 Recognise mentoring, education, skills development and sector capacity-building as core components of touring and development funding.

5.3 Accessibility and participation

- 5.3.1 Recognise accessibility as essential audience infrastructure and invest in accessible and culturally safer exhibition spaces, public programs, communications, digital engagement and audience development initiatives that strengthen cultural participation, social connection and community wellbeing.

5.4 Education and audience engagement

- 5.4.1 Invest in visual arts education and public engagement through galleries, museums, artists and cultural organisations, including support for gallery educators, school engagement, lifelong learning and visual arts literacy.

5.5 Digital engagement and collections access

- 5.5.1 Establish a National Collection Digitisation Fund and dedicated audience development funding to improve public access to visual arts collections and support experimental, First Nations, regional, digital, craft and community-led visual arts practice.

5.6 Regional audience development and cultural tourism

- 5.6.1 Increase support for regionally developed exhibitions, festivals, triennials, art fairs and cultural initiatives to strengthen local leadership, community connection and national visibility.
- 5.6.2 Support the development of arts trails, open studios and cultural tourism initiatives that connect local communities and visitors with visual arts, craft and design.
- 5.6.3 Support pop-up spaces, small galleries and temporary exhibition models through commercial lease subsidies, tax incentives and planning reform, enabling artists to present work and reach new audiences.

Appendix

FIRST NATIONS FIRST

First Nations artists, arts workers, cultural practitioners, art and culture centres, galleries and organisations make a significant contribution to Australia's visual arts, craft and design sector. First Nations visual arts and crafts are internationally recognised and play an essential role in cultural maintenance, truth-telling, community wellbeing, economic development and public understanding of the histories, cultures and continuing presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Attendance and participation are strong, with one in five Australians attending First Nations visual arts and craft events or festivals. Creative Australia's latest national participation data shows that First Nations respondents are substantially more likely to attend visual arts and craft events and festivals than non-First Nations respondents, at 70% compared to 42%.⁶

Major First Nations visual arts events also demonstrate the sector's cultural and economic significance. The 2025 Cairns Indigenous Art Fair attracted 14,909 attendees and generated a \$6.19 million gross economic stimulus for the Cairns region.⁷ The 2025 Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair attracted more than 28,000 participants and recorded \$5.1 million in sales, with revenue returned to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and art and culture centres.⁸

Despite this strength, significant challenges remain relating to workforce succession, support for Elders, cultural knowledge sharing, infrastructure, climate impacts and the long-term sustainability of art and culture centres.

Self-determination, leadership and workforce development

First Nations peoples comprise around 3.8% of Australia's population yet account for less than 1% of people employed within the cultural and creative workforce, including only 816 people working in visual arts and craft.⁹ While visual arts and craft employs more First Nations people than any other artform, representation remains disproportionately low relative to population share and sector demand. Workforce shortages are intensifying as demand for First Nations expertise grows across galleries, museums and cultural institutions. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain underrepresented across many visual arts occupations and leadership roles,¹⁰ reflecting longstanding barriers in recruitment, training pathways, career progression and retention.

Barriers exist throughout the workforce pipeline. In 2022, only 29% of visual arts, craft and design organisations reported recruiting for First Nations identified roles, while 60% reported no explicit diversity recruitment intentions.¹¹ NAVA's National Cultural Policy consultation identified gaps in mid-career, technical, curatorial, governance and leadership pathways, alongside limited mentoring opportunities and insufficient long-term workforce planning.¹²

Many First Nations artists and arts workers also face structural barriers within taxation, superannuation and social security systems that do not adequately recognise intermittent creative labour, community obligations, cultural responsibilities and irregular income patterns. Within organisations, First Nations staff are frequently isolated as the sole identified employee and expected to undertake significant additional responsibilities including cultural advice, community liaison, mentorship, advocacy and internal education.¹³ These responsibilities are often unsupported, unrecognised and unpaid.

The shortage of mid-career First Nations arts workers limits progression into senior leadership and governance positions while placing disproportionate pressure on a relatively small number of individuals to provide cultural leadership across the sector. Long-term workforce development, peer support and leadership pathways are needed to support self-determination and succession planning.

The Australian Government's commitment through Revive to develop a First Nations Creative Workforce Development Strategy is strongly welcomed. However, stronger attention is needed to the specific workforce conditions and career pathways within the visual arts, including support for independent practitioners, technical and curatorial pathways, and culturally grounded leadership development.

NAVA's consultation emphasised the importance of First Nations-led education, mentorship and intergenerational knowledge transfer. Elders, artists and community educators play a critical role in maintaining language, story, cultural practice and community knowledge systems, yet these contributions are often inadequately recognised and remunerated.¹⁴ Lived experience, cultural knowledge and community authority must be recognised as forms of professional expertise within funding, governance, employment and assessment processes.

Long-term investment in First Nations-led education, workforce development, mentorship and culturally safer institutional practice is essential to strengthening self-determination and supporting sustainable careers across the visual arts sector.

Organisation sustainability and sector capacity

The Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support (IVAIS) program remains one of the Australian Government's most important investments in First Nations visual arts and crafts practice. Through support for art and culture centres, peak bodies and service organisations, IVAIS sustains cultural production, employment, governance, community connection and economic participation across urban, regional and remote Australia.

However, funding has not kept pace with sector growth or operating costs. IVAIS funding has increased by only 2% since 2015–16 despite substantial increases in wages, artist fees, operational expenses and service expectations. Analysis by Desart indicates that grant funding as a proportion of average art centre income has fallen to its lowest level since 2008,¹⁵ echoing concerns raised by the Productivity Commission that government investment has not kept pace with the growth and significance of the sector.¹⁶

Creative Australia research has identified declining rates of First Nations creative participation in some remote regions,¹⁷ while regional research points to ageing artist populations, limited pathways for younger practitioners and increasing pressure on existing infrastructure and workforce support systems. In many communities, visual arts practice remains one of the few sustainable pathways for both cultural and economic participation.

Art and culture centres and community-led organisations are essential cultural infrastructure. However, touring, exchange and public programming frameworks often fail to account for long travel distances, language diversity, limited infrastructure and the significant relational labour required to maintain culturally appropriate engagement. Many art and culture centres are operating

at capacity, limiting their ability to participate in touring and exchange opportunities without additional support.

NAVA's consultation also highlighted the diversity of First Nations practice models across Australia.¹⁸ While art and culture centres remain critical, many First Nations artists work independently, through collectives, within urban communities or through community-led organisations outside formal art centre structures. The Productivity Commission research identified at least 789 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual artists working independently in metropolitan and regional Australia, many of whom have limited access to the infrastructure, workforce development opportunities and support programs available to artists working within art and culture centre models.¹⁹

Participants emphasised the importance of sector service organisations including the Indigenous Art Code, Arts Law Centre of Australia and NAVA in providing advocacy, legal support, professional practice advice, business development and industry standards. Sustained investment in this broader ecology of organisations is essential to supporting artists, strengthening cultural governance and enabling self-determination.

Improved transparency around First Nations arts funding would also strengthen accountability and provide a clearer understanding of how investment supports artists, communities, organisations and sector infrastructure.

Planning for the next 50 years

The National Cultural Policy presents an opportunity to move beyond short-term funding cycles and establish a long-term vision for the First Nations visual arts and crafts sector.

Despite strong audience demand, major market growth and the ongoing cultural significance of art and culture centres, evidence points to sustainability challenges. Desert reports that the number of art centre artists is declining: in 2024/25, there were 5,360 artists across 91 art and culture centres, the lowest number in almost a decade, while the number of new artists entering art and culture centres was at its lowest level in almost fifteen years.²⁰ At the same time, many communities face ageing artist populations, workforce shortages, housing pressures, climate impacts and increasing infrastructure costs.

NAVA supports a national mapping exercise and co-designed strategy to identify future infrastructure, workforce, education and climate resilience needs across the sector. Such a process should examine workforce succession, ageing artist populations, housing and staffing pressures, climate impacts on remote communities, infrastructure renewal, cultural transmission and the future role of art and culture centres and community-led organisations.

In many communities, art and culture centres function as centres of cultural continuity, language maintenance, education, employment, governance and community wellbeing. They are not simply arts organisations, but essential community infrastructure. Long-term planning and investment are required to ensure these institutions remain sustainable over the coming decades and continue to support future generations of First Nations artists, cultural leaders and communities.

Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)

The Australian Government's commitment through Revive to introduce standalone legislation protecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) is strongly welcomed and represents a significant step toward recognising and protecting First Nations cultural rights within Australian law. For decades, First Nations artists, communities and advocates have identified major gaps in existing intellectual property frameworks, particularly the inability of copyright law to adequately protect communal cultural knowledge, oral histories, traditional designs, and ongoing obligations connected to Country, cultural expression, language and story.

NAVA's consultation participants identified the need for enforceable ICIP protections recognising First Nations authority over the use, interpretation, reproduction and contextualisation of cultural material. Cultural expression and ICIP extends beyond legal ownership and encompasses continuing responsibilities to community, Elders, Country and future generations.

The implementation of ICIP legislation will have significant practical and financial implications across the visual arts sector. Effective compliance will require organisations to undertake cultural consultation, engage Elders and knowledge holders, establish governance processes, document permissions, update contracts and manage ongoing protocols relating to the ownership, control and use of ICIP. These activities carry real costs and should not be absorbed by First Nations artists, communities or already stretched arts organisations. Dedicated implementation funding, guidance and sector capacity-building will be required to support compliance and ensure the intent of ICIP legislation is realised in practice.

Consideration should also be given to how publicly funded programs, collecting institutions and commissioning bodies budget for ICIP-related costs, including cultural consultation, permissions, governance, advisory services and remuneration for Elders and cultural knowledge holders. Without dedicated implementation funding, there is a risk that compliance costs will be shifted onto First Nations artists and communities or create barriers to the presentation and commissioning of First Nations work.

The rapid expansion of generative artificial intelligence has intensified these concerns. AI systems trained on scraped data create significant risks relating to the unauthorised reproduction, imitation and commercial exploitation of First Nations cultural material. Participants expressed concern about the generation of "Indigenous-style" imagery, fake art markets and the replication of culturally specific stories, symbols and visual languages without consent or cultural understanding.

These concerns are particularly significant for First Nations artists and communities where AI systems may reproduce or imitate culturally specific material without understanding cultural protocols, permission structures or community obligations. Copyright, ICIP protections, licensing and consent frameworks must work together to prevent further extraction and misuse of First Nations cultural material within digital environments.

Without adequate implementation support, education and sector capacity-building, ICIP legislation risk being difficult to enforce, particularly for independent artists, small organisations and communities with limited access to legal advice or advocacy.

Effective ICIP protection requires a combined approach involving legislation, education, advocacy, industry standards, legal support and long-term investment in First Nations-led implementation and

governance structures. Without this broader infrastructure, the intended protections of ICIP risk being difficult for artists and communities to enforce.

These issues extend beyond copyright and intellectual property. First Nations visual arts practice is inseparable from the continuation of language, cultural knowledge and community authority. Many First Nations artists work across multiple languages, cultural frameworks and knowledge systems, undertaking substantial translation, cultural interpretation and community engagement as part of their practice.

NAVA's consultation also raised the growing importance of culturally appropriate digital archiving systems and community-led protocols to safeguard cultural material as more artistic, historical and cultural content is digitised and circulated online. This includes ensuring communities retain authority over how cultural material is stored, accessed, interpreted and shared.

These responsibilities are rarely recognised within standard funding models despite being essential to cultural continuity, intergenerational knowledge transfer and community wellbeing. Public policy should recognise language maintenance, cultural protocols and knowledge sharing as core outcomes of First Nations visual arts practice rather than ancillary activities.

Cultural safety and accountability

While Revive commits to cultural safety and self-determination, many First Nations artists and arts workers continue to report experiences of cultural isolation, racism, extractive consultation processes and culturally unsafe workplaces.

NAVA's consultation participants identified cultural load as a major issue across the visual arts sector. First Nations staff and artists are frequently expected to undertake cultural translation, consultation, mentoring, advocacy and relationship management alongside their existing responsibilities. These expectations are often unpaid and unsupported, contributing to burnout, workforce attrition and difficulties retaining First Nations staff. Participants described situations where artists, Elders and Traditional Custodians were expected to provide substantial cultural advice and community engagement without adequate remuneration, authority or long-term benefit. Consultation is often introduced late in project development rather than embedded within governance and decision-making structures from the outset.

Participants also raised concerns that some organisations are becoming increasingly risk-averse in presenting politically challenging or culturally specific First Nations work. Stronger protections are needed to support lawful artistic expression connected to language, cultural continuity, truth-telling and community histories.

Meaningful truth-telling requires long-term investment in cultural competency, community relationships, contextualisation, curatorial practice and institutional accountability. Smaller organisations often lack the staffing, resources and training required to undertake this work effectively. Long-term support for cultural competency training, organisational development and community-informed engagement is essential.

A PLACE FOR EVERY STORY

Diversity, equity, access and inclusion affect who participates in the visual arts sector, who is employed, who receives funding, whose work is presented, who contributes to decision-making, and how, when and where people can create, participate in and experience arts and culture. The National Cultural Policy should adopt a whole-of-ecology approach that embeds these principles across funding systems, workforce development, governance, programming, audience engagement and cultural infrastructure.

The final report from four-year research project Visual Arts Work: sustainable strategies for the Australian visual arts and craft sector demonstrates that Disabled artists experience significantly higher levels of financial precarity and exclusion than the broader visual arts workforce. Twenty-one per cent of artists surveyed identified as living with disability. Among these artists, 78% reported moderate or severe financial stress, 40% experienced food insecurity, 47% had accessed support services such as foodbanks, financial counselling or emotional support, and 69% rated their mental health as poor or fair.²¹

The release of Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan marked an important step toward improving access and participation for visual artists, arts workers and audiences with disability across Australia. The plan, developed as part of Revive and Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031, has begun establishing foundations for sector-wide change through initiatives including employment pathways, accessibility programs and the development of national protocols for Arts and Disability.

Research from the Visual Arts Work report identified that 10.7% of arts workers in the sample identified as having a disability compared to 9.3% of the working-age population and 17.7% of the general population. Among our total survey population, 90% agreed that there are barriers to participation in the visual arts and craft sector. In the free-text responses, several barriers were identified, and examples of overt discrimination were given. "It is not possible to appropriately have work adjustments while working on projects and festivals. I have also requested adjustments whilst applying for jobs and been denied them or had contracts withdrawn".²²

Studio Space

Access to affordable creative space affects who can participate in the visual arts sector. Rising rents and insecure tenure disproportionately affect Disabled artists, artists with caring responsibilities, culturally diverse communities, regional practitioners and artists on low incomes.

The National Urban Policy already recognises the importance of dedicated spaces for arts and cultural activities, First Nations cultural heritage and culturally rich communities.²³ The National Cultural Policy should build on this by embedding arts and cultural infrastructure, affordable creative space and place-based cultural participation within broader national planning and urban policy frameworks.

The submission discusses studio space in more detail under Centrality of the Artist.

Cultural diversity and anti-racism

The Multicultural Framework Review identified opportunities to harness the power of arts and culture and the talents of culturally diverse practitioners to promote inclusion, wellbeing, participation and social cohesion.²⁴ Diversity Arts Australia has argued that anti-racism, cultural equity and democratic participation should be treated as core cultural infrastructure and embedded across policy, funding and accountability frameworks. Within the visual arts sector, this requires targeted investment in culturally diverse-led organisations, leadership pathways, anti-racism initiatives and equitable participation in cultural production and decision-making.

Any future national coordinating structures should reflect the diversity of contemporary Australia through inclusive governance, lived experience and equitable representation across decision-making processes.

Arts education and participation

NAVA supports the submission of the National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE). Creative Australia's participation data confirms that visual arts and craft remain Australia's most common form of creative participation,²⁵ highlighting the importance of ensuring equitable access to high-quality visual arts education for all students. Access to arts education and cultural participation in Australia varies significantly across communities and is too often determined by geography, school resourcing and socio-economic circumstance rather than being available as a universal entitlement.

Australians who learned an artform during their school years are substantially more likely to value the arts (96% compared to 85%), recognise positive impacts of the arts (90% compared to 73%), attend arts events (80% compared to 58%) and create art themselves (50% compared to 22%). Almost half attend visual arts and craft events and festivals (49% compared to 26%).²⁶

Public participation in visual arts and craft continues to grow. More than two in five Australians attended visual arts and craft events and festivals in 2025 (43%, up from 39% in 2022), making visual arts and craft both Australia's most attended and most commonly practised artform. CALD seven in ten attend visual arts events and festivals (72% compared to 57%).²⁷ Intellectual disability almost half attend visual arts and craft events (48% compared to 34% of Australians overall).²⁸ These findings demonstrate the long-term value of equitable access to arts education, both in building future audiences and supporting lifelong participation in the arts.

Gender equity, parenting and caring responsibilities

Gender equity remains an unresolved issue within the visual arts, craft and design sector. The 2022 Countess Report found that progress has stalled across many areas of representation, with male artists continuing to dominate solo exhibitions in state galleries, commercial galleries and major museums. The findings demonstrate that gender disparities persist despite women representing the majority of visual arts graduates and a substantial proportion of the visual arts workforce, and significant public attention to the issue over many years.²⁹

Caring responsibilities also continue to affect participation and career progression across the sector. NAVA's recent consultations on parenting, carers and support workers identified barriers including childcare costs, inflexible timelines, travel requirements, limited access to residencies

and professional development opportunities, and workplace structures that do not adequately accommodate caring responsibilities. These barriers can affect artists' ability to sustain practice, access opportunities and remain engaged in the sector over the long term.³⁰

Strengthening gender equity requires more than equitable representation in programming. It requires policy settings that support equitable access to opportunities, leadership positions, safer workplaces, fair remuneration and sustainable careers for artists and arts workers of all gender identities. It also requires recognising parenting, caring and support relationships as ordinary parts of working life and ensuring that arts funding, employment practices and professional opportunities are accessible to people with caring responsibilities.³¹

Participation and access

In 2022 and again in 2026, NAVA's consultation identified the importance of supporting participation pathways for people facing multiple and intersecting barriers, including people impacted by incarceration, disability, geographic isolation and economic disadvantage.³² Community-based arts programs can provide opportunities for creative expression, skill development, connection and cultural participation for people who are otherwise excluded from many forms of civic and cultural engagement.

Organisations such as The Torch have demonstrated the value of long-term arts programs for people in prisons and following release, supporting cultural connection, professional development and pathways into creative practice. Evidence from the justice sector indicates that access to arts and cultural participation can reduce isolation, strengthen wellbeing and contribute to rehabilitation and community connection.³³

Regional, remote and outer-metropolitan participation

Touring plays an essential role in ensuring artists and communities outside major metropolitan centres are visible within national public engagement with visual arts, craft and design. Current funding and eligibility settings often privilege metropolitan production models and can limit opportunities for remote, regional and outer-metropolitan artists to reach broader audiences. Equitable cultural participation requires investment that reflects the geographic distribution of artists and communities across Australia and supports participation regardless of location. This includes touring, exhibition development, freight, staffing and partnership models that recognise the additional costs and logistical challenges of working across regional and remote Australia.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE ARTIST

NAVA has advocated for tax reform for more than 25 years because many parts of Australia's tax system were designed around predictable wages and conventional business models. Artists commonly earn irregular income, work across multiple jobs, undertake substantial unpaid labour and incur significant professional expenses before income is generated. Tax reform is one of the most practical and cost-effective ways government can improve artists' incomes, reduce precarity and support long-term cultural production.

Artists' incomes remain among the lowest in the Australian workforce. Recent research undertaken through the Visual Arts Work project³⁴ found that the average income earned from visual arts and craft practice was just \$13,937 per year, with a median income of only \$4,000. More than 60% of visual artists and craft practitioners earned less than \$10,000 from their practice, while only 11% earned more than \$50,000.

Most artists rely on multiple sources of income. Visual Arts Work found that only 25% of respondents spent all their working time as artists, while 82% received income from multiple forms of work within and outside the arts sector. The same research found that 63% of respondents experienced moderate or severe financial stress, while 35% identified financial pressure as the primary reason they may leave the sector within five years.³⁵

Artists' incomes are usually irregular and project-based, spread across grants, commissions, sales, residencies, casual employment, teaching and contract work. At the same time, artists carry significant professional costs, including studio rent, materials, freight, travel, documentation, administration, insurance and professional development. These costs reduce already modest earnings.

Economic insecurity is one of the greatest threats to the sustainability of Australia's visual arts, craft and design sector. National Cultural Policy cannot meaningfully centre artists without addressing the policy settings that affect artists' incomes, taxation obligations, retirement outcomes and access to affordable workspace.

Tax reform

Targeted tax reform would provide direct relief to visual artists and arts workers while recognising the way artists actually earn a living. The cost to government would be relatively small, but the impact on artists' ability to sustain practice would be significant.

Art prizes

NAVA recommends exempting art prizes from personal income tax. Art prizes are irregular, highly competitive and often career-defining forms of support. They are intended to recognise artistic achievement, support creative development and increase public visibility, rather than provide ordinary recurring income.

Across Australia there are an estimated 95 art prizes. This relatively small pool of awards suggests that exempting art prizes from income tax would represent a modest revenue measure for government while delivering significant benefits to artists, particularly those on low and irregular incomes.

Philanthropists and donors who fund prizes or contribute to grant programs receive tax concessions recognising their contribution to the arts, while the artist receiving the support is taxed on the full amount. This diminishes the public and philanthropic purpose of the investment.

The practical impact is substantial. A \$20,000 grant can be reduced by more than \$6,000 after tax, while \$100,000 prize can attract a tax liability of \$30,000 or more in tax, even for an artist on modest earnings.

There is clear precedent for reform. The Sidney Myer Creative Fellowships, for example, are already tax-free under CR 2015/76: Income tax – Sidney Myer Creative Fellowship grants. This demonstrates that targeted exemptions are administratively feasible.

Art prizes are the most straightforward starting point. They are generally awarded for an existing artwork or body of work, rather than to deliver a future project, which limits complications around deductible project expenses.

Fellowship and government grants

Government grants and fellowships also present a strong case for reform but require more careful design. Grants are taxed in the year they are received, even when project expenses fall in later financial years. This creates mismatches between income and deductions and can leave artists with tax liabilities before project costs have been incurred.

Group projects create further complications. One artist may receive a group grant for administrative ease but be taxed on the full amount, even where most of the funding is passed on to collaborators. This creates inequitable tax liabilities and discourages collective and community-based practice.

NAVA recommends that artists be given the option to either declare a grant or fellowship as assessable income and retain the ability to claim associated deductions or treat the grant or fellowship as exempt income and forgo related deductions. Alternatively, grants could be apportioned across project years or assessed based on actual retained income after collaborator payments and project expenditure.

Given the small scale of arts grant and fellowship programs compared with overall Commonwealth expenditure, these reforms would have limited fiscal impact while providing immediate and meaningful support to artists.

Non-Commercial Loss rules

NAVA recommends exempting professional artists from Non-Commercial Loss rules where they meet the ATO's "in business" test under TR 2005/1 Income tax: carrying on business as a professional artist.

The rationale for reform is reinforced by the structure of artists' incomes and working lives. Visual Arts Work found that only 25% of respondents spent all of their working time as artists, while 82% received income from multiple forms of work within and outside the arts sector.³⁶ The current Non-Commercial Loss provisions can penalise artists for relying on supplementary income to sustain professional practice.

The NCL rules were designed to prevent high-income earners from offsetting hobby losses against other income. However, they can prevent professional artists from claiming legitimate business expenses where creative income is irregular or where artists supplement their practice through teaching, arts work or other employment.

TR 2005/1 already recognises the distinctive characteristics of professional arts practice, including long lead times, irregular income and variable profitability.³⁷ The Non-Commercial Loss provisions also contain a specific concession for professional artists, acknowledging that artists commonly rely on supplementary income while developing and sustaining their practice.³⁸

However, the concession is limited by a \$40,000 non-arts income cap that has remained unchanged for more than two decades. While intended to support artists, the threshold is now unrealistically low and no longer reflects contemporary wage levels or living costs. Many artists rely on teaching, arts administration, technical work, hospitality, retail or other employment to subsidise their practice. Exceeding the \$40,000 threshold can result in legitimate business losses being quarantined, despite the artist operating a genuine professional arts business.

Requiring artists who already satisfy the ATO's "in business" test under TR 2005/1 to also satisfy the Non-Commercial Loss provisions duplicates an assessment that has effectively already been made. NAVA recommends either exempting professional artists who satisfy TR 2005/1 from the Non-Commercial Loss rules, or substantially increasing and indexing the \$40,000 non-arts income cap to reflect contemporary earnings and living costs.

When introduced in 2000, the threshold was intended to distinguish supplementary income from high-income earners. Today, \$40,000 is below full-time minimum wage earnings and well below average Australian earnings, making it an increasingly ineffective measure of financial capacity.

GST and one-off income spikes

Many artists earn well below the GST threshold but may occasionally exceed it because of a major sale, commission, prize or grant. Under current rules, exceeding the \$75,000 threshold can trigger GST registration and administrative obligations even where the artist's income falls below the threshold the following year. This creates cash flow problems and unexpected liabilities, particularly where GST was not charged at the time of sale.

NAVA's 2025 tax reform consultation has identified cases where one-off income spikes create compounding tax consequences. One artist reported earning approximately \$120,000 in a single year following several successful sales. This triggered GST registration and back-payment obligations, while also requiring repayment of their entire HECS/HELP debt. The artist faced an unexpected debt of approximately \$30,000 to the ATO despite their income falling substantially the following year, and was required to enter a payment plan over several years.³⁹

Irregular income is a defining feature of artists' work. One-off sales, commissions, grants or prizes can create temporary income spikes that do not reflect an artist's ongoing earning capacity. Tax settings should accommodate these fluctuations rather than treating a single high-income year as evidence of a permanently higher-income business.

NAVA recommends:

- Introducing a GST threshold averaging mechanism, where liability is triggered only if an artist's earnings exceed the \$75,000 threshold over a rolling average of five years.
- Calculating compulsory HECS/HELP repayments for artists based on an average of at least two consecutive years' income, rather than a single year's spike.
- Allowing partial or deferred HECS/HELP repayments in years where income is irregular or where repayment would cause hardship.

- Aligning GST and HECS/HELP reforms to prevent one-off income spikes from triggering disproportionate and compounding liabilities.

Artists below the GST threshold also cannot claim input tax credits, meaning GST on studio rent, equipment and materials directly increases production costs. This is a significant issue in a sector where most artists operate as sole traders and earn below the threshold. Cunningham and McCutcheon's 2020 submission⁴⁰ to the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts reported that 76.2% of creative industry ABN holders were not GST-registered, compared with 62.9% in other sectors. It also found that creative industries have a high concentration of sole traders, at 72.3% compared with 45.8% in other industries, and that 91.6% of ABN holders in the category "Creative Artists, Musicians, Writers and Performers" were not GST-registered.

NAVA recommends introducing more flexible GST settings for artists, including allowing GST registration to be triggered only where income consistently exceeds the threshold over multiple years. Artwork sales and studio leases should also be exempt from GST where artists are not registered for GST at the time of the transaction. This would reduce administrative pressure and prevent one-off income spikes from creating disproportionate tax liabilities.

Income averaging

Income averaging is one of the few existing tax mechanisms that recognises the irregular nature of artists' earnings. It allows eligible artists to spread the tax impact of fluctuating income across multiple years, reducing the financial consequences of one-off sales, commissions, prizes or grants.

However, NAVA's 2025 Tax Survey indicates that the scheme is significantly underutilised. Of more than 300 artists surveyed, 80% had never used income averaging and 67% had never heard of it. Free-text responses suggested many artists were unaware they were eligible, did not understand how the scheme operated, or had been advised by accountants that it was not available to them.

The low uptake of income averaging highlights a broader problem: a tax concession specifically designed for artists is failing to reach many of the people it was intended to support. This is particularly concerning given the prevalence of irregular income across the visual arts sector.

NAVA recommends that the ATO improve awareness and accessibility of income averaging through plain-language guidance, practical case studies, video explainers, MyTax prompts and automated calculation tools. Targeted outreach to artists, accountants and financial advisers would help ensure eligible artists can access existing tax relief and make informed decisions about managing fluctuating income.

Artist residency expenses

Artist residencies are an important part of professional development in the visual arts, craft and design sector. They provide opportunities for research, experimentation, collaboration, cultural exchange and the development of new work. Residencies often lead to future exhibitions, commissions, sales, publications and other professional opportunities, while also contributing to regional cultural activity and Australia's international cultural presence.

Unlike many other forms of professional development, residencies frequently require artists to temporarily relocate and absorb significant living costs, often while undertaking unpaid research and creative work. Artists commonly fund accommodation, meals, transport and other living expenses themselves in order to participate.

Under current tax rules, travel and accommodation deductions do not adequately accommodate the longer-term, immersive structure of many residencies, particularly those in regional, remote or international locations. As a result, self-funded artists undertaking residencies are often unable to claim living costs, even where those costs are directly connected to professional research, development and the creation of new work.

For example, an artist undertaking a three-month residency interstate or overseas may incur thousands of dollars in accommodation and living expenses directly related to their professional practice, yet be unable to claim those costs despite the residency leading to future exhibitions, commissions, publications or other professional outcomes.

NAVA recommends allowing reasonable living cost deductions for artists undertaking residencies of up to 12 months, including accommodation, meals and incidental expenses. These deductions could be administered through a simplified claiming mechanism, such as daily rates aligned with existing ATO travel allowance schedules.

Artist residencies should be recognised as legitimate professional development and research activities that contribute to future income generation and the production of artwork. Supporting participation through the tax system would reduce financial barriers and improve access to important career development opportunities.

NAVA also supports recognising ICIP-related expenses as deductible professional costs for First Nations artists. Travel to Country, consultation with Elders, obtaining cultural permissions and participation in cultural practices can form an essential part of artistic research, development and production, and should be recognised as legitimate professional expenses within the tax system.

Studio space

NAVA recommends a suite of reforms to improve access to affordable workspace and specialist production infrastructure for artists, including:

- A National Affordable Artist Studio Strategy to support long-term access to affordable workspace, including adaptive reuse of vacant buildings, integration of artist workspaces into cultural infrastructure planning, and support for studio, live/work and residency models.
- Property tax concessions for landlords leasing below-market or subsidised space to artists and arts organisations.
- GST exemptions on studio and gallery leases for artists and creative tenants who are not GST-registered.
- Planning and tax incentives for the adaptive reuse of vacant and underutilised buildings as creative workspaces.
- Accessibility incentives to support upgrades in galleries, studios, and cultural facilities.
- Home-based studio deductions.
- Recognition of specialist visual arts facilities as essential cultural infrastructure, supported through long-term investment in equipment, workshops and technical expertise.

Access to affordable creative space is a major barrier for artists and small arts organisations. Rising rents, short-term leases and the loss of industrial and community spaces directly affect artists' capacity to produce, store and present work.

A recurring issue identified through NAVA's 2024 Membership Survey was the lack of affordable studio space, particularly in metropolitan areas. Establishing or leasing suitable workspace can involve significant costs, including rent, building modifications, planning approvals, insurance, compliance requirements and other operating expenses. These costs are beyond the reach of many artists. Research shows that 61% of visual artists earn less than \$10,000 annually from their practice, while only 11% earn more than \$50,000.

Addressing these challenges will require coordinated action across all levels of government. NAVA recommends a National Affordable Artist Studio Strategy supported by tax, planning and regulatory reforms that encourage the provision of affordable workspaces, the adaptive reuse of vacant buildings, long-term tenancy arrangements and investment in specialist visual arts facilities. Artist workspaces should be recognised as an important component of Australia's cultural infrastructure.

Many artists work from bedrooms, dining rooms, garages and backyards because dedicated studio space is unaffordable or unavailable. Home-based workspaces are a significant part of Australia's visual arts, craft and design sector, particularly for those on low incomes. Artists incur significant costs associated with producing, storing, documenting, transporting and presenting artworks, whether working from home, in shared studios, community facilities or dedicated production spaces. At the same time, artists report difficulties obtaining or maintaining home and contents insurance when visual arts, craft or design activities are regarded as business use of the property.

Accessibility should be embedded within this work. Many studios, workshops, galleries and production facilities operate from older or industrial buildings where accessibility upgrades can be costly. Targeted incentives for accessibility improvements, including physical access, amenities and assistive technologies, would improve participation for Disabled artists, arts workers and audiences while supporting broader inclusion objectives.

NAVA also recommends reviewing home-based business deduction rules to ensure they appropriately recognise visual arts, craft and design work undertaken within domestic settings. Consideration should also be given to encouraging the development of insurance products that accommodate artists working from home and provide appropriate cover for artworks, materials, equipment and studio activities.

Cultural Gifts Program

The Cultural Gifts Program (CGP) has been one of Australia's most successful cultural philanthropy initiatives since its introduction in 1978. The program provides significant tax incentives for donors, including market-value tax deductions, the ability to spread deductions across up to five income years, and exemption from capital gains tax for eligible gifts.⁴¹

NAVA strongly supports the continuation and expansion of the Cultural Gifts Program.

While the program is highly effective, several barriers remain, particularly for living artists and smaller collecting organisations. Key issues include:

- Artists donating their own work must demonstrate that artworks have not formed part of their trading stock for at least 12 months in order to access concessions available to other donors.
- Professional valuation costs can be prohibitive for lower-value works, discouraging donations by early-career and less commercially established artists. These costs can disproportionately affect women artists whose work has historically attracted lower market valuations.
- Smaller organisations may be unable to accept gifts because of the conservation costs associated with long-term care and storage.
- The program currently focuses on provenance and authenticity but does not consider whether artists were fairly treated or remunerated when works originally entered the market.

NAVA recommends:

- Permitting a 125% deduction for gifts of new works by contemporary Australian artists to public collecting institutions, as recommended by the Myer Inquiry.⁴²
- Improving access to valuation services and reducing valuation costs for artists
- Allowing conservation expenses associated with gifts to attract tax concessions.
- Reviewing acquisition requirements to ensure the program does not inadvertently legitimise works acquired through unfair or exploitative practices, particularly those involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

Artwork donations to fundraisers

Artists are frequently asked to donate artworks to fundraising campaigns conducted by galleries, museums, festivals, charities and community organisations. These donations have generated millions of dollars for cultural and charitable causes and represent a significant philanthropic contribution by artists.

Unlike donors of cash or purchased artworks, artists who donate their own work generally receive little practical tax benefit. Under current arrangements, deductions are often limited to production costs that may already have been claimed as business expenses.

A major barrier is the requirement for artists to undertake an “income adjustment” process before claiming a market-value deduction for donated work. This requires artists to reconstruct and declare original production costs as income before accessing a deduction. The requirement is poorly understood, administratively burdensome and frequently impractical.

Visual artists rarely track material costs on a work-by-work basis. Materials are purchased and used across multiple artworks over many years. An artwork donated to a fundraiser may have been produced years or decades earlier, making accurate reconstruction of production costs impossible.

NAVA has received tax advice indicating that the simplest and most effective reform would be to remove the income adjustment requirement entirely.

NAVA recommends:

- Removing the income adjustment requirement for artists donating their own work.
- Allowing artists to claim a market-value deduction for works donated to endorsed DGR fundraising activities.
- Recognising auction sale prices achieved through properly conducted DGR fundraising auctions as evidence of market value.
- Providing clearer guidance to artists, charities and advisers regarding tax treatment of donated artworks.

The revenue implications of these reforms are likely to be modest. In practice, many artists, galleries and advisers are unaware of the current rules, and artists rarely maintain records capable of accurately allocating production costs to individual works. Reform would simplify administration while recognising the substantial philanthropic contribution artists make to Australia's cultural and charitable sectors.

Specialist production infrastructure

Access to affordable space alone is not sufficient to sustain Australia's visual arts, craft and design sector. Many forms of visual arts, craft and design work depend on specialist facilities, equipment and technical expertise that cannot be replicated in homes or general-purpose studios.

Ceramics, printmaking, sculpture, foundry work, glass, textiles, jewellery, photography, digital fabrication and emerging interdisciplinary practices often require access to workshops, kilns, presses, fabrication facilities, specialised software, technical staff and dedicated production environments. These facilities support both traditional and evolving artforms and play a critical role in skills development, experimentation, research, making and exhibition.⁴³ In many regions they provide the only access to specialised equipment and technical knowledge.

The closure of creative arts courses, reductions in tertiary arts provision and ongoing restructuring within universities have contributed to the loss of specialist workshops, technical staff and discipline-specific infrastructure. Community-based workshops, independent art schools, artist-run facilities and specialist production centres face similar pressures from rising operating costs, ageing infrastructure and insecure funding. Recent national research has identified a continuing decline in creative arts courses and training opportunities across higher education and vocational education sectors.⁴⁴

These facilities support artist development, technical training, research, cultural transmission and workforce development. They are also important sites of community participation, intergenerational knowledge-sharing and innovation. In many locations they provide the only pathway for artists, students and communities to access specialised equipment and develop technical skills.

Once specialist facilities are lost, they are costly and difficult to replace. The loss of equipment, workshop space and technical staff can take decades to rebuild and may result in the disappearance of particular skills, knowledge and production methods. This is particularly significant for material-based practices that require ongoing access to specialised infrastructure.

National Cultural Policy should recognise specialist visual arts, craft and design facilities as essential cultural infrastructure and support long-term investment in the spaces, equipment and

technical expertise required to sustain both traditional and emerging artforms, and Australia's visual arts, craft and design workforce.

Superannuation Reform

Expand superannuation coverage for visual artists, craft practitioners and designers

Current superannuation settings create significant uncertainty regarding when visual artists, craft practitioners and designers are entitled to superannuation contributions. Unlike many other workers, artists frequently operate within a regulatory grey area where superannuation obligations are inconsistently interpreted and applied.

As a result, artists undertaking similar work may receive different treatment depending on the contracting arrangements, the type of engagement, or the interpretation adopted by individual organisations. This inconsistency contributes to lower retirement savings, administrative confusion and unequal treatment across the sector.

The current framework can also produce inequitable outcomes within the same project. Visual artists who engage studio assistants or other workers in the production of artworks are generally required to pay superannuation contributions for that labour. However, the artist themselves may receive no superannuation contribution when they are paid for the commission, exhibition, residency or other professional engagement that generated the work. The person creating and directing the work can therefore be excluded from protections that apply to others involved in its production.

NAVA recommends amendments to the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992 (Cth) to provide greater clarity and ensure visual artists, craft practitioners and designers receive superannuation for their labour on a more consistent basis. This includes replacing “display” with “exhibition” in section 12(8)(a), removing paragraph 84 of SGR 2005/1, and expanding the circumstances in which artists engaged as contractors are deemed employees for superannuation purposes.

Superannuation should apply where artists are being paid for their labour, skills, knowledge and professional expertise, including commissions, exhibition-related work, artist talks, workshops, public programs, residencies, research and development activity, and other professional engagements.

These reforms would reduce uncertainty for artists and organisations alike, improve compliance and support fairer long-term retirement outcomes across the visual arts, craft and design sector.

Streamline Payday Super administration for artists and arts organisations

NAVA supports artists receiving superannuation for their labour and supports the objectives of Payday Super. As superannuation coverage expands across the visual arts, craft and design sector, implementation should recognise the distinctive payment patterns of the sector, where artists commonly receive one-off payments from multiple galleries, museums, festivals, councils, universities and arts organisations throughout their careers.

Artists are often required to repeatedly provide the same superannuation information to different organisations, while galleries and arts organisations must repeatedly collect, verify and process those details for large numbers of short-term engagements. This can create significant administrative work for both artists and organisations, particularly small and medium-sized organisations that may engage hundreds of artists annually through exhibition fees, artist talks, workshops, commissions, residencies and public programs.

NAVA recommends that the Australian Government investigate streamlined administrative mechanisms that maintain artists' full superannuation entitlements while reducing duplication and improving efficiency. This could include a centralised digital system that allows artists to securely nominate and maintain their superannuation details once, enabling authorised organisations to access verified information when making contributions.

More efficient administrative systems would support compliance, reduce costs and help ensure artists receive superannuation contributions consistently across multiple engagements and organisations.

Artwork investment through self-managed superannuation funds

NAVA recommends that the Australian Government review the treatment of artworks within self-managed superannuation fund (SMSF) legislation and assess the impact of the 2011 collectables reforms on artists, galleries and the broader visual arts market.

The 2011 reforms introduced strict conditions governing the ownership, storage, insurance and related-party use of artworks held by SMSFs. These measures were designed to address concerns regarding compliance with the sole purpose test and the treatment of collectables within the superannuation system. However, they also created significant disincentives for investment in artworks by SMSFs.

Artworks differ from many other collectable assets. Their cultural significance and market value are often linked to exhibition, scholarship, public access and ongoing engagement. The visual arts market also supports living artists, galleries, conservators, framers, art handlers and a wide range of associated cultural activity.

NAVA recommends that any future review consider whether artworks warrant treatment distinct from other collectables and personal-use assets, recognising their dual role as cultural assets and investment assets. Consideration should also be given to whether reforms to professional standards, regulation and transparency within the art market could address compliance concerns more effectively than measures that discourage investment in artworks.

A review of the current settings would provide an opportunity to balance the integrity of the superannuation system with support for cultural production, public access to artworks and investment in Australia's visual arts, craft and design sector.

Income support

Current welfare and income support systems often treat periods of artistic development, research, experimentation, rehearsal and project preparation as unemployment rather than legitimate professional labour. The visual arts sector is characterised by freelance, self-employed, contract

and project-based work, with many artists moving between multiple forms of employment and unpaid labour in order to sustain their practice. Income support settings are generally designed around predictable wages and ongoing employment relationships rather than irregular creative income, intermittent contracts, grant funding and long project development cycles.

Artists frequently undertake substantial periods of unpaid labour while developing work, preparing exhibitions, undertaking residencies, applying for grants and building future income-generating opportunities. These activities are central to cultural production but are often poorly recognised within welfare and employment systems. Artists may also experience significant fluctuations in income between financial years, creating instability in income reporting, taxation and eligibility assessments.

NAVA supports stronger social security, welfare and income support systems for artists and arts workers, including approaches that better recognise intermittent income, self-employment and project-based creative labour. This should include consideration of improved access to income support during periods of project development and career transition, alongside exploration of basic income, living wage and guaranteed income models for artists.

International experience demonstrates the potential benefits of these approaches. Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts pilot provided direct income support to artists and creative workers in recognition of the structural precarity of creative labour. Government evaluation found improvements in financial stability, reduced reliance on supplementary employment, increased time available for creative work and reduced levels of anxiety. A cost-benefit analysis estimated that for every €1 invested in the scheme, Irish society received approximately €1.39 in social and economic benefits through increased productivity, cultural activity, economic participation and reduced reliance on other forms of social support. The scheme was subsequently made permanent by the Irish Government.⁴⁵

NAVA welcomed recent work by the Australian Government under Revive to improve recognition of creative practice within Workforce Australia and mutual obligation systems. As part of this work, NAVA collaborated with Workforce Australia, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and the Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide guidance on how the Points Based Activation System (PBAS) and lump sums apply to visual and creative artists.⁴⁶

This work provided important clarification that activities such as grant applications, commissions, exhibition preparation, residencies, research and professional development may constitute legitimate employment-related activity. However, inconsistency remains in how these arrangements are applied in practice. Many aspects of PBAS remain subject to interpretation by individual providers. Artists continue to report inconsistent advice, confusion regarding eligible activities and pressure to undertake inappropriate job search requirements.

NAVA supports stronger national consistency and clearer guidance across employment services to ensure professional arts practices are recognised appropriately and consistently within mutual obligation systems. More broadly, National Cultural Policy should recognise that artistic development, research, experimentation and project preparation are forms of productive labour that contribute to Australia's cultural, social and economic wellbeing.

In addition to reforms to income support systems, artists require greater access to direct investment that supports creative practice over extended periods. Fellowships, multi-year funding

and residency programs provide artists with time, stability and resources to undertake research, experimentation and the development of new work. These forms of support are particularly important in a sector characterised by irregular income, project-based employment and long development cycles.

Freedom of expression

Contemporary visual arts practice plays an important role in enabling public discussion, truth-telling, political critique and cultural reflection. Visual artists frequently engage with political, social and historical issues, including racism, colonialism, gender, inequality, environmental destruction and human rights. National Cultural Policy should recognise that artists must be able to contribute to public discourse without fear of censorship, political interference, disproportionate law enforcement action, reputational intimidation or withdrawal of institutional support.

Across the visual arts sector there is growing concern about increasing censorship, particularly in relation to politically sensitive, controversial or experimental work. Artists and organisations are increasingly navigating online harassment, complaints campaigns, reputational pressure and legal uncertainty without access to clear guidance or sector support. Artists from marginalised communities whose work challenges dominant narratives, institutional structures or state power can be particularly affected.

Recent federal and state legislative reforms relating to hate speech and hate crimes have raised concerns across the visual arts sector about the potential impact of these laws on lawful artistic practice. Even where artistic exemptions may ultimately apply, artists and small organisations often lack the legal and financial capacity to withstand police investigations, prosecution risk or sustained public controversy. The prospect of legal action alone may discourage artists, curators and organisations from presenting politically challenging, satirical or critical work. Greater legal certainty, clearer guidance and stronger protections for lawful artistic practice are needed so artists and organisations can confidently present challenging work in the public interest.

Publicly funded cultural institutions have legitimate responsibilities to provide safe, inclusive environments and to comply with anti-discrimination and human rights obligations. These responsibilities must be balanced with the important role that artistic freedom and freedom of expression play within a democratic society.

Recent cases involving the investigation, seizure or prosecution of artworks under hate speech and hate symbol laws demonstrate the practical challenges facing artists and arts organisations. In several instances, artworks presented as political commentary, satire or historical reference have been subject to police investigation, seizure or criminal proceedings before questions of artistic purpose or lawful exemption were resolved. In at least one case, charges were ultimately withdrawn after lengthy legal proceedings. The existence of an artistic exemption does not necessarily remove the significant legal and financial consequences associated with investigation and prosecution.

Recent controversies across Australia's cultural sector have also highlighted broader questions about artistic freedom, institutional independence and decision-making within publicly funded cultural organisations. While governance arrangements differ between jurisdictions and institutions, the issues raised are not confined to any single organisation or government. Decisions affecting artists' participation in publicly funded arts activity should be based on transparent, proportionate

and consistently applied principles rather than subjective assessments of political controversy or perceived reputational risk.

National Cultural Policy should recognise artistic freedom as a foundational condition for a healthy arts and cultural sector and affirm the importance of arm's-length cultural decision-making. Governments have an important role in establishing legal frameworks that protect lawful artistic expression and support institutional independence. The development of detailed guidance and good practice frameworks should remain sector-led and responsive to the diverse contexts in which artists and cultural organisations operate.

Copyright and Artificial Intelligence

Rapid developments in artificial intelligence are creating significant challenges for artists and the broader visual arts sector. Generative AI systems are frequently trained using copyrighted artworks without artists' knowledge, consent, attribution or remuneration. Artists are increasingly reporting unauthorised scraping, unauthorised use of their work in AI training, imitation of artistic style, reputational harm and reduced opportunities for paid creative work. NAVA has serious concerns regarding copyright, consent, transparency, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP), online harms and the long-term sustainability of artistic labour.

NAVA supports the development of a national arts strategy addressing AI development, copyright, transparency requirements for AI developers, consent and remuneration mechanisms, protections for ICIP and the misuse of artists' work in digital environments. National Cultural Policy should recognise that artists must retain meaningful rights and agency in relation to the use of their work.

NAVA welcomes the Australian Government's continued resistance to proposals that would weaken Australia's copyright framework in favour of broad AI training exceptions. Maintaining clear copyright protections provides a stronger foundation for ethical licensing models, consent-based use of creative work and fair remuneration for artists as AI development continues to evolve.

Australia has an opportunity to support AI innovation within a framework that recognises creators' rights rather than treating artists' work as freely extractable data. Licensing systems and negotiated permissions remain among the most effective mechanisms for enabling the lawful use of creative content while ensuring artists retain agency over how their work is used and are appropriately compensated. Copyright should remain central to this framework.

While licensing approaches are still developing, National Cultural Policy should also support non-legislative measures encouraging ethical AI development and deployment. This could include procurement requirements for government-supported AI systems, transparency requirements, funding conditions attached to publicly supported AI development, and stronger standards relating to consent, attribution and remuneration.

The international nature of AI development also creates significant enforcement challenges for Australian artists. Much AI training activity occurs offshore, particularly in jurisdictions where copyright law remains uncertain or subject to ongoing litigation. Australian artists currently have limited practical capacity to challenge unauthorised use of their work overseas, even where substantial economic harm occurs.

These conditions are creating immediate economic disruption for artists whose work has already been scraped, reproduced or imitated without consent, attribution or payment. Given the highly precarious nature of artistic labour, National Cultural Policy should support measures that strengthen creators' rights, facilitate ethical licensing, improve transparency and ensure artists retain meaningful control over how their work is used as AI technologies continue to evolve.

Resale Royalty Scheme

The Resale Royalty Scheme recognises that artists retain an ongoing economic relationship to their work beyond its first sale. It provides artists and their estates with a royalty when eligible artworks are resold through the commercial art market, helping artists participate in the long-term value generated by their work.

The scheme is particularly important in the visual arts sector, where artists often sell works early in their careers for modest sums and may not benefit from later increases in value. It also provides an important source of income for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and their families, supporting intergenerational cultural and economic outcomes.

NAVA supports the continued operation and strengthening of the Resale Royalty Scheme. The scheme is an important mechanism for recognising artists' ongoing contribution to Australia's cultural and economic life and ensuring artists share more fairly in the value generated through the secondary art market.

NAVA supports recommendations made by the Copyright Agency to review aspects of the scheme over time, including measures to improve compliance, strengthen artist and estate participation, review the resale threshold, and ensure the scheme continues to operate effectively in contemporary domestic and international art markets.

Arts education and workforce pathways

Arts education is foundational to the development of artists, arts workers and future cultural leaders. The sustainability of Australia's visual arts ecology depends on accessible pathways into creative practice, technical training, curatorial development, arts administration, cultural leadership and education. Arts education also supports broader cultural participation, creative literacy and lifelong engagement with arts and culture.

Artists and arts workers increasingly face barriers to education and professional development due to rising education costs, declining access to arts learning and reductions in arts programs across schools, TAFEs and tertiary institutions. Rising tuition fees, student debt and the ongoing impacts of the Job-ready Graduates (JRG) reforms are reducing access to visual arts education and contributing to long-term workforce instability. The JRG reforms substantially increased the cost of many arts and humanities degrees while failing to address workforce shortages. For visual arts students, higher tuition costs have increased barriers to participation without improving employment outcomes, while contributing to declining enrolments and financial pressures across arts faculties and creative disciplines.

Visual arts education depends on access to specialist facilities, including studios, workshops, fabrication spaces, digital production facilities, kilns, foundries, printmaking workshops and technical equipment. Practice-based disciplines rely on studio-based teaching, materials and technical support that cannot be readily replaced through online delivery or generic teaching spaces. These facilities are essential cultural infrastructure and require ongoing investment if training pathways are to remain viable. The financial pressures created by the JRG reforms have further reduced the capacity of some institutions to maintain arts programs, staffing and specialist facilities.

As reported by RMIT, the visual arts workforce is highly skilled and highly educated, with more than one-third of surveyed artists holding postgraduate qualifications. Research also demonstrates the critical role arts education plays in sustaining artists' careers and supporting workforce stability across the sector.⁴⁷ Paid internships, graduate-to-sector pathways, technical training, mentorship and regional access to professional development are essential to sustaining the future visual arts workforce. The sector also requires stronger specialist training pathways in areas such as installation, conservation, fabrication and arts technician skills, which are increasingly difficult for organisations to recruit.

Many artists sustain professional practice through portfolio careers spanning creative practice, education, facilitation, public programming, digital work and community engagement. As a result, arts education and professional development pathways should include stronger support for professional practice skills, including self-employment, business management, copyright, contracts, taxation, fundraising and digital literacy.

National Cultural Policy should recognise arts education as a core cultural infrastructure issue. Sustained investment is needed across tertiary visual arts education, vocational and technical training, paid internships and mentorships, regional access to arts learning, specialist facilities and ongoing professional development opportunities across all career stages.

Gender equity, care and sustainable careers

Gender inequity remains a persistent feature of Australia's visual arts sector. While women make up the majority of the visual arts workforce, significant disparities continue across income, acquisitions, exhibition representation, leadership positions, awards, commissions and career progression. Women, non-binary and gender-diverse artists continue to experience some of the largest gender pay gaps in the Australian workforce, while insecure employment, caring responsibilities and uneven access to leadership opportunities continue to shape participation and career outcomes.

Recent workforce research found that women comprise approximately 74% of the visual arts workforce, yet artists experience a gender pay gap of approximately 47%, while arts workers experience a gender pay gap of approximately 23%.⁴⁸ These disparities demonstrate that representation alone has not translated into equitable economic outcomes.

Gender inequity is also reflected in institutional and career structures. Research including the Countess Report has identified ongoing disparities in acquisitions, exhibitions, leadership roles and professional recognition. These patterns affect artists' visibility, earning potential and long-term career sustainability.

Many artists and arts workers balance professional practice with caring responsibilities, including parenting, disability support, elder care and community obligations. However, residencies, professional development opportunities, travel requirements, exhibition schedules and networking activities are often designed around assumptions of unrestricted availability. This can limit participation and career progression, particularly for women and primary carers.

These inequities are often compounded for First Nations women, culturally diverse women, Disabled women and gender-diverse artists, who may experience multiple and intersecting forms of structural exclusion. Addressing gender equity therefore requires attention not only to representation, but also to income, career sustainability, leadership pathways and access to professional opportunities.

National Cultural Policy should support targeted measures to address gender inequity across the visual arts sector, including equitable representation in acquisitions, exhibitions and leadership opportunities, alongside family-friendly policies, caregiving support and flexible participation pathways that enable artists and arts workers to sustain long-term careers.

Climate change, disasters and cultural resilience

Climate change is increasingly affecting artists across Australia. Floods, bushfires and extreme weather events have damaged studios, artworks, archives and collections across metropolitan, regional and remote communities. Artists are often among the least financially protected workers during disasters due to insecure income, limited insurance coverage and the project-based nature of arts employment.

The impacts of climate-related disasters extend beyond individual livelihoods. Damage to studios, archives, collections and community cultural infrastructure can result in the loss of cultural knowledge, creative capacity and local cultural activity. These impacts are particularly significant in regional and remote communities where cultural infrastructure may be limited and difficult to replace.

At the same time, artists play an important role in helping communities respond to climate change through storytelling, cultural preservation, public engagement and community recovery. First Nations artists and communities also hold important cultural knowledge and practices that contribute to resilience, adaptation and care for Country.

Climate resilience should not be treated solely as an emergency response issue. Long-term investment is needed to support disaster preparedness, recovery and resilience across the visual arts sector, including support for artists, studios, archives, collections and locally run arts organisations affected by climate-related events.

National Cultural Policy should recognise artists, studios, archives, collections and cultural infrastructure as important components of Australia's climate resilience and disaster recovery planning. Sustained investment is needed to strengthen preparedness, recovery and long-term resilience across the visual arts sector.

Touring

Touring plays an important role in supporting artists to build sustainable careers and develop audiences beyond their local communities. Touring enables artists to reach new audiences, generate exhibition opportunities, earn income and develop professional networks across Australia and overseas.

However, opportunities for nationally and internationally distributed practice are increasingly constrained by rising freight, travel and staffing costs, short funding cycles and growing administrative requirements. This can reduce opportunities for artists, particularly those based in regional, remote and outer-metropolitan communities, to participate in touring programs and develop audiences beyond their immediate location.

Touring should be recognised as a critical pathway for artist development, professional visibility and career sustainability. Touring programs frequently support mentoring, education, skills development and professional exchange that strengthen both the artist and the broader visual arts ecology.

National Cultural Policy should support touring models that place artists at the centre, improve access to exhibition opportunities across Australia and strengthen pathways for artists to engage with diverse communities and cultural contexts. The broader role of touring in audience development, cultural access and sector infrastructure is discussed in the Engaging Audiences section.

STRONG INSTITUTIONS

National coordination, research and sector planning

The visual arts sector currently lacks dedicated mechanisms for workforce planning, infrastructure mapping, economic analysis, audience data, international strategy and long-term investment attraction. Existing organisations such as NAVA, First Nations-led bodies, public gallery networks, service organisations and touring agencies hold substantial expertise and should form the foundation of any future national coordination framework. However, responsibility for national planning remains fragmented and there are limited resources available for sector-wide research, coordination and long-term strategy. Greater investment in mechanisms that support collaboration across existing organisations would strengthen sector capacity while avoiding unnecessary duplication.

NAVA supports the establishment of Visual Arts and Craft Australia, a national body with responsibility for long-term sector planning, workforce mapping, infrastructure analysis, data collection, international engagement and investment attraction, working alongside and strengthening existing sector organisations.

More than two decades have passed since the Myer Inquiry into the contemporary visual arts and craft sector⁴⁹ and the establishment of the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy. Despite significant changes in technology, workforce composition, cultural participation, education, funding models and the broader economy, Australia has not undertaken another comprehensive review of the visual arts, craft and design sector. Existing research provides valuable insights into specific issues

and subsectors, but no equivalent whole-of-sector analysis has been commissioned to inform long-term policy, investment and workforce planning. NAVA recommends that the next National Cultural Policy begin by addressing this evidence gap through a comprehensive national review of the visual arts, craft and design sector.

Existing national datasets substantially undercount the visual arts workforce because many artists derive income through multiple jobs and occupations. Recent research suggests that current statistical approaches fail to capture a large proportion of practising artists and arts workers, limiting government's ability to accurately assess workforce needs, infrastructure requirements and economic contribution.⁵⁰ At the same time, visual arts and craft remain one of Australia's most widely engaged-with artforms. Creative Australia's 2025 National Arts Participation Survey found that 43% of Australians engage with visual arts and craft, while 24% actively participate in making visual arts and craft.⁵¹

Despite this significant level of public participation, Australia does not have a contemporary national evidence base capable of informing long-term policy and investment decisions for the visual arts, craft and design sector. Significant gaps remain in relation to workforce conditions, infrastructure needs, audience participation, career pathways, regional access, economic contribution and long-term sustainability. While studies such as the Productivity Commission's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visual Arts and Crafts report⁵² and Visual Arts Work⁵³ provide valuable insights, no recent national review has examined the sector as a whole.

A new national review is needed to establish an evidence base for future cultural policy. Such a review should examine the economic, social and cultural contribution of the sector, workforce trends, income patterns, career progression, infrastructure needs and emerging challenges. It should also provide a foundation for international benchmarking and future planning.

Beyond a one-off review, the sector requires ongoing national data collection and reporting. National indicators relating to workforce sustainability, arts education, public participation, regional access, infrastructure and investment would support evidence-based policy development and enable governments to assess the long-term impact of cultural policy settings.

Sustainable institutions, infrastructure and workforce conditions

Public galleries, museums, Aboriginal arts and cultural centres, regional galleries, artist-run initiatives, touring agencies and community-based visual arts organisations preserve and interpret collections, support artists and arts workers, provide public access to culture, deliver education programs and contribute to local economies, tourism and community life. In many regional, outer-metropolitan and remote communities they are the primary publicly accessible cultural institutions.

Despite these responsibilities, investment has not kept pace with inflation, wage growth and rising operating costs.⁵⁴ Most visual arts organisations continue to operate under funding arrangements that have remained static or declined in real terms. Rising insurance costs, freight, utilities, compliance obligations, rent, staffing costs and artist fees are placing increasing financial strain on organisations already operating with limited resources.

The consequences are visible across the sector. Organisations are expected to deliver the same or greater levels of activity with diminishing purchasing power. Workforce capacity is constrained,

burn-out is increasing, infrastructure investment is deferred, and resources available for artist fees, experimentation, education and public programs are reduced.

Industrial coverage remains an unresolved issue. NAVA has advocated through the Fair Work Commission's Modern Awards Review for clearer recognition of visual arts work, improved award coverage, appropriate classification structures and stronger protections for arts workers.⁵⁵ Sustainable institutions require sustainable employment conditions, including fair pay, superannuation, leave entitlements and clear industrial standards. Continued reform is needed to ensure gallery, museum, technical and studio-based work is properly recognised within Australia's industrial relations framework.

Local governments are responsible for a substantial proportion of Australia's publicly accessible visual arts infrastructure, including galleries, museums, exhibition spaces, community arts facilities and public programs.⁵⁶ In many regional and outer-metropolitan communities, local government services provide the primary point of access to arts and culture. However, councils face increasing financial constraints and limited access to dedicated cultural funding. Greater support is needed to assist local governments to undertake cultural planning, infrastructure development and long-term investment in visual arts services.

Touring infrastructure must be recognised as cultural infrastructure. Touring agencies, freight systems, production partnerships, collection-sharing frameworks and regional venue networks enable the circulation of artworks, exhibitions and ideas across a geographically dispersed nation. They also create opportunities for artists to reach new audiences and communities. Rising freight costs, limited specialist logistics capacity and increasing operational demands are reducing the sustainability of existing touring models, particularly in regional and remote Australia.

Galleries and museums face increasing challenges with storage capacity, conservation requirements, digitisation and collection management. Many institutions are approaching storage limits, while significant portions of collections remain inaccessible to the public due to limited digitisation. Collection digitisation is fundamental to public access, research, education, cultural participation and the long-term stewardship of collections.

Workforce development and education

Workforce challenges are also linked to long-term decline and instability within arts education. Arts learning provides the primary pathway through which artists, educators, curators, technicians, conservators, arts workers and future audiences emerge. However, contraction of tertiary arts programs, declining participation, rising student costs and uncertainty across creative arts education are contributing to workforce shortages throughout galleries, museums, arts organisations and the broader creative industries.⁵⁷

Workforce development must also recognise the contribution of artist-run initiatives, peer learning, First Nations cultural knowledge, mentorship and community-based models of professional development.

There is a growing need for paid and accessible workforce development pathways, including internships, traineeships, graduate-to-sector programs, technical and installation training, curatorial development and partnerships between universities, TAFEs, galleries and small-to-medium

organisations. Workforce development pathways must be paid, geographically diverse and accessible if they are to address existing barriers to participation.⁵⁸

Tax reform and organisational sustainability

Strong institutions require diverse and sustainable revenue sources. Alongside public investment, philanthropy, taxation settings and workforce support play an important role in strengthening organisational sustainability, expanding public access to culture and improving the capacity of visual arts organisations to support artists and communities.

Exhibition Production Incentive

NAVA recommends establishing an Australian Exhibition Production Incentive for charitable and publicly funded organisations presenting visual arts, craft and design exhibitions, modelled on the UK's [Museums and Galleries Exhibition Tax Relief](#) and adapted to Australia's cultural and taxation settings. Introduced in 2017, the UK scheme supports museums and galleries to develop exhibitions and present collections to broader audiences. A 2026 review found that UK cultural tax reliefs improved organisational resilience, increased cultural activity and delivered wider social and economic benefits.⁵⁹

As Australia considers production incentives and tax settings for other cultural industries, including recent calls from the performing arts sector for Australian cultural tax reliefs, similar consideration should be given to the visual arts. Unlike screen production, and unlike proposals currently being advanced by the performing arts sector, visual arts organisations have no equivalent structural incentive to support exhibition development and presentation.

Exhibitions are a primary means through which artists connect with audiences and communities. They support employment for artists, curators, technicians and arts workers, while generating benefits across education, tourism, public engagement and local economies. However, many museums and galleries face increasing costs associated with exhibition development, artist commissions, freight, installation, touring, accessibility and public programming without corresponding growth in operational funding.

In Australia, most public galleries and not-for-profit arts organisations are income tax exempt. For this reason, an Exhibition Production Incentive would be most effective as a refundable offset or direct payment, similar in principle to the Producer Offset in the screen sector.

Eligible expenditure could include artist fees, commissions, freight, installation, accessibility measures, public programs, collection display costs and regional touring. Providing support for these costs would increase the capacity of galleries and museums to commission new work, present ambitious exhibitions, support more artists and expand public access to visual arts, craft and design.

An Exhibition Production Incentive would increase investment in exhibitions and cultural programming, support regional and local government galleries facing rising costs, generate employment opportunities for artists and arts workers, increase public access to visual arts and strengthen cultural tourism and local economic activity.

The scheme would provide direct benefits to artists while strengthening the institutions responsible for commissioning, exhibiting, collecting and touring visual arts, craft and design across Australia.

Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR)

Philanthropic giving remains an important source of support for artists, arts organisations and cultural activity. However, many visual arts organisations, particularly small and volunteer-run organisations, face barriers in accessing DGR endorsement and attracting philanthropic support.

NAVA recommends streamlining and expanding access to DGR endorsement for cultural organisations by:

- Allowing an organisation's existing governing body to oversee DGR administration;
- Providing legal and administrative support for small and volunteer-run organisations to register as charities and obtain DGR status.

DGR endorsement for cultural organisations is now administered by the ATO and requires charity registration with the ACNC. Recent reforms reduced duplication of reporting and red tape. While these changes improve efficiency, small organisations still face barriers in navigating charity registration and meeting compliance obligations, particularly the "responsible person requirement" for Gift Fund Committees.

The ATO's current definition of a "responsible person" includes examples such as church authorities, teachers, judges, solicitors, doctors, mayors, councillors, MPs, and members of professional bodies with a code of ethics (e.g. accountants, engineers, health practitioners). Many arts organisations are governed by artists and arts workers, who may not meet these definitions despite their recognised expertise. Consideration should be given to broadening the interpretation of the responsible person requirement to better reflect governance structures commonly used within the arts sector.

Targeted reforms of this kind would improve equity of access and strengthen the capacity of smaller cultural organisations to attract philanthropic giving.

For individual artists, the Australian Cultural Fund (ACF), administered by Creative Australia, provides an important mechanism for receiving tax-deductible donations. Greater promotion, training and support would help more artists successfully access philanthropic giving through the ACF.

Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) concessions

Arts organisations face chronic workforce retention challenges due to low wages, long hours and limited career progression. Small-to-medium arts organisations often cannot compete with salaries offered by larger institutions, government or the private sector.

Extending Fringe Benefits Tax salary-packaging concessions to arts not-for-profit organisations with DGR status would increase take-home pay without increasing organisational salary costs, helping retain experienced arts workers and support sustainable career pathways.

NAVA recommends that all arts not-for-profit organisations with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status be granted eligibility for FBT concessions related to salary sacrificing, similar to those available to Public Benevolent Institutions (PBIs).

Staff retention has become increasingly challenging across the sector. The Creative Workforce Scoping Study from Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) found low pay, long hours, and limited career progression continue to exacerbate recruitment and retention issues across the sector. Small-to-medium (S2M) arts organisations report that they struggle to offer competitive salaries, making it challenging to attract and retain staff compared to larger cultural institutions or commercial businesses. As a result, high turnover rates affect organisational stability, especially for those providing essential platforms for early-career artists.

FBT concessions are a proven tool for attracting and retaining talent in competitive markets and can provide employees with greater financial security. This reform would enable arts organisations to offer stronger workplace benefits and remuneration packages, reducing taxable income and increasing employees' take-home pay. Given traditionally lower salary levels in the arts sector, this measure is essential for maintaining workforce stability and supporting professional development pathways.

Volunteer expenses

Volunteer-led organisations, artist-run spaces, festivals and small galleries are critical parts of the visual arts ecology. They provide entry points for early-career artists, support experimentation and enable community access to contemporary art. However, volunteers often personally absorb costs for travel, materials, training and equipment.

NAVA recommends allowing volunteers across museums, galleries, festivals and other visual arts organisations to claim reasonable out-of-pocket expenses as tax deductions. This would reduce barriers to participation and better recognise the economic contribution of volunteer labour.

Volunteer-led organisations make up approximately 76% of the NSW cultural sector and contribute substantial economic and social value.⁶⁰ National research found that volunteers contributed more than 382,688 hours of labour, valued at approximately \$15.9million, to public galleries in 2019.⁶¹

Volunteer-led galleries and artist-run spaces are critical entry points for early-career artists, often presenting first exhibitions and creating pathways into larger institutions. Declining volunteer capacity, due to burnout or financial strain, directly reduces programming, shortens opening hours, or forces closures, diminishing opportunities for artists and audiences, and eroding sector diversity and resilience.

While the ATO currently allows deductions for certain expenses incurred while volunteering for registered charities and not-for-profits (such as uniforms, protective gear, or travel), these provisions are limited and often poorly understood. A broader and clearer approach to volunteer expense deductions would reduce financial barriers, formally recognise the economic contribution of volunteer labour, and help retain skilled volunteers, particularly in under-resourced and regional communities.

Climate resilience and disaster preparedness

Climate change is creating additional risks across the sector. Extreme weather events, floods, bushfires and other natural disasters present increasing risks to collections, archives, studios, cultural facilities and community infrastructure. Many small organisations, volunteer-run institutions and regional organisations lack the resources necessary to undertake disaster preparedness, climate adaptation and recovery planning. Climate adaptation will also require consideration of freight, touring and collection management practices to ensure the long-term sustainability of a geographically dispersed visual arts sector.

Climate adaptation also presents an opportunity to reconsider freight, touring and collection management models. Future policy should support lower-emissions touring approaches, shared logistics, improved collection storage and transport systems, and other strategies that reduce environmental impacts while maintaining public access to visual arts, craft and design.

ENGAGING THE AUDIENCE

Audience infrastructure

Public galleries, museums, First Nations art and culture centres, festivals, artist-run initiatives and a broad range of small-to-medium (S2M) organisations are central to how audiences encounter visual arts, craft and design. These organisations commission and exhibit new work, care for collections, deliver public programs and education, support artists and arts workers, and create opportunities for communities to engage with contemporary and historical practice. In many regional, remote and outer-metropolitan communities they are the primary source of visual arts programming and public access to exhibitions.

Major public institutions attract millions of visitors each year and play a critical role in collection stewardship, research, education and national cultural visibility. At the same time, regional galleries, Aboriginal arts and cultural centres, artist-run initiatives and S2M organisations provide essential pathways for artists, audiences and communities, often delivering the primary source of visual arts programming outside major metropolitan centres.

Public galleries and S2M organisations are not simply presentation venues. They provide commissioning, education, workforce development and community engagement infrastructure that connects artists, artworks and audiences. Victoria's public galleries attract more than 7.4 million visitors annually,⁶² while Contemporary Arts Organisations Australia (CAOA) members reach more than one million people each year through exhibitions, public programs, touring, publishing, education and community engagement.⁶³

Despite their significance, many organisations operate with limited staffing and resources. Funding settings often fail to reflect the costs of delivering exhibitions, public programs, education activities, collection management and audience development. Greater investment in audience infrastructure would increase public access to visual arts activity while strengthening support for artists and arts workers.

Touring and audience access

Touring remains one of the most effective mechanisms for connecting audiences with visual arts across Australia. In many communities, touring exhibitions provide the only opportunity to experience contemporary visual arts, nationally significant collections and work by artists from outside the local region.

Touring supports artist employment, public engagement, arts education, cultural tourism and regional programming while extending the life and reach of exhibitions. Touring programs also create opportunities for mentoring, skills development, professional exchange and sector capacity-building across the gallery network. Throughout 2025, National Exhibition Touring Support (NETS) agencies toured 43 exhibitions to 76 regional and 11 remote venues, reaching more than 350,000 people. Museums and Galleries NSW benchmarking found that 32 public galleries engaged more than 5,000 artists and reached audiences of over 940,000 people in a single year.⁶⁴ These figures demonstrate the reach and impact of relatively modest investment in public gallery and touring infrastructure.

However, rising freight, travel, staffing and production costs are reducing the number of exhibitions able to tour and limiting access for regional and remote communities. Existing funding programs do not adequately reflect the costs of moving artworks, exhibitions, artists and audiences across metropolitan, regional, remote and international contexts. The absence of dedicated support for freight, transport and long-term touring partnerships is placing increasing strain on organisations responsible for delivering national access to visual arts.

A coordinated National Visual Arts Touring and Transport Strategy is needed to strengthen audience access, improve sector sustainability and ensure communities across Australia can continue to engage with visual arts, craft and design regardless of location. Such a strategy should support freight and transport costs, touring infrastructure, regional venue partnerships, multi-year programming and professional development across the national touring network.

International engagement remains constrained by the absence of a dedicated visual arts touring fund. Opportunities to participate in biennales, residencies, touring exhibitions, exchanges and international partnerships often depend on short-term project funding and the capacity of individual organisations.

Small-to-medium organisations frequently provide the pathways through which Australian artists build international careers, audiences and professional networks.⁶⁵ More strategic investment in international touring, exchange and audience development would enable Australian artists and organisations to strengthen global connections, expand export opportunities and increase Australia's cultural visibility internationally without reducing support for domestic touring and regional access.

Education and public engagement

Public galleries and visual arts organisations are significant sites of education and lifelong learning. Hundreds of thousands of school students engage with galleries each year through excursions, workshops and public programs. Many public galleries deliver curriculum-linked education

programs, artist talks, public lectures, workshops and lifelong learning opportunities that connect contemporary artistic practice with formal and informal learning environments.

Galleries contribute to visual literacy, creative learning and engagement with First Nations histories and cultures. However, many organisations have limited education staffing and insufficient resources to meet demand. In Victoria, only 39% of galleries employ qualified education staff.⁶⁶ Greater investment in gallery educators, school engagement programs and public learning initiatives would strengthen visual arts literacy and expand access to arts education for audiences of all ages.

Accessibility and participation

Audience development is inseparable from accessibility. Physical access, accessible communications, captioning, audio description, Auslan interpretation, digital access and culturally safer engagement practices all affect whether people can participate fully in visual arts activity.

Accessibility should be recognised as essential audience infrastructure rather than an additional project cost. Investment in accessible exhibition design, communications, public programs and audience development initiatives would improve participation while strengthening social connection, inclusion and cultural engagement.⁶⁷

Digital engagement and collection access

Digital engagement is becoming increasingly important, particularly for regional, remote and Disabled audiences. Yet access to public collections remains limited by low levels of digitisation across many institutions.

Victoria's public galleries hold more than 900,000 collection items, yet only 58% have been digitised.⁶⁸ Significant portions of Australia's public collections remain inaccessible to audiences, educators, researchers and communities who are unable to visit in person. A National Collection Digitisation Fund would improve public access, support education and research, strengthen collection preservation and expand opportunities for engagement regardless of location.

Regional audience development and cultural tourism

Visual arts and craft remain among Australia's most widely engaged-with artforms. Creative Australia's 2025 National Arts Participation Survey found that 43% of Australians engage with visual arts and craft and 24% actively participate in making visual arts and craft.⁶⁹ Regionally developed exhibitions, festivals, triennials, art fairs, arts trails, open studios and community-led initiatives create additional opportunities for audiences to engage directly with artists and creative practice. These models strengthen local leadership, contribute to regional economies, attract visitors and increase the visibility of artists and organisations outside major metropolitan centres.

Continued investment in regional audience development initiatives would ensure more Australians can access visual arts, craft and design activity wherever they live while strengthening cultural tourism, community participation and local creative ecosystems.

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