

Tourism Australia's submission to the consultation process on the next National Cultural Policy

Tourism Australia and its role in national culture

Tourism Australia is the Commonwealth government agency responsible for the international marketing of Australia as a destination for leisure tourism and business events. Our primary focus is attracting international visitors to choose Australia as a holiday or business events destination, helping to grow a competitive and sustainable tourism industry.

But more than that, Tourism Australia's work steps into our national and cultural identity: how Australia is perceived by visitors around the world; what we hold up as the strengths and drivers of our nation as a place to stay; and the experiences as what visitors tell their friends, family and colleagues when they return.

Australia's success as a destination has to date largely been built on the combination of our world-class natural beauty and unique wildlife as well as our welcoming people and exceptional food and wine.

Yet a strong national identity and cultural offering can help play a stronger role in driving and converting demand for international visitors, and a diversity of cultural experiences and attractions helps encourage visitors to disperse across Australia once they arrive. Dispersal is critical to the economic contribution to our regions, with international trip spending in regional Australia reaching \$5.7 billion in 2025, an increase of 21 per cent from 2024. 7.1 per cent of all filled jobs are tourism jobs (Source: *Tourism Research Australia/IVS*).

Cultural connection through tourism is an important soft diplomacy lever, enabling deeper people-to-people links, and offering a shared experience and dialogue transcending language.

Tourism Australia focuses on culture to drive identity, experience, and visitation is primarily through First Nations tourism and the cultural institutions and attractions.

First Nations

Tourism Australia supports First Nations tourism experiences in two ways. First, we spotlight First Nations cultures and talent in everything we do, from our global campaigns and experiences for media and content creators, to events for international and domestic tourism stakeholders.

Second, we developed Discover Aboriginal Experiences (DAE), a collection of authentic, high-quality First Nations guided tourism offerings that connects visitors directly to the world's oldest living continuous cultures through over 200 experiences across more than 48 businesses. The program provides training, mentoring, and business development support for regional Indigenous operators, ensuring high-quality experiences that strengthen regional tourism ecosystems.

Cultural Attractions of Australia

Cultural Attractions of Australia is an industry-led marketing collective under Tourism Australia's *Signature Experiences of Australia* program. It brings together the country's most iconic landmark cultural institutions, spanning galleries, performing arts venues, historic museums, and hallowed sporting grounds.

These immersive and authentic experiences offer a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the country's most formative, and transformative, attractions showcasing the passion and knowledge that define Australia's cultural story.

Tourism Australia's submission relates to two of the five *Revive* pillars

Pillar 1: First Nations First - Tourism experiences share and preserve First Nations culture

Tourism is a platform for embracing and celebrating the thriving cultures of First Nations peoples, which is central to our national identity. We are proud to advocate for and champion the resilience and diversity of the oldest living cultures on earth, and we help ensure their warmth, wisdom, and generosity are central to how we share the Australian story to the world.

Traveller demand for First Nations experiences is increasing, and with this a growing number of First Nations tourism operators has emerged, enabling travellers to have cultural experiences right across our nation.

For many First Nations tourism operators, delivering a cultural experience as a tourism product is an important way to preserve their cultural practices, to share it with the next generation, and to build a sustainable business that supports their communities.

Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience: Making sure our stories connect with people at home and abroad

Australia has some of the world's most diverse and dynamic creative organisations and iconic cultural attractions, but few are truly set up to promote their offerings to potential international visitors. Cultural Attractions of Australia, helps address this deficit. Regional cultural attractions are represented in this collective, but most members are located in or near major capital cities.

Opportunities

In line with the two pillars above, we see opportunities to strengthen the role tourism plays in Australia's cultural landscape:

Building a pipeline of First Nations tourism operators and creating and converting demand

The international and 'trade ready' First Nations tourism operators of tomorrow are those who today might be small, local, or just sitting on an idea. Many of these entrepreneurs and storytellers are in regional areas where access to customers, know-how, and capital is challenging.

While the State and Territory tourism organisations do some product development work in this space, the only remaining Australian Government program addressing this need (the Indigenous Tourism Mentor Program) ends this financial year.

The operators in the Discover Aboriginal Experiences Collective all started small, and now they're taking their experiences to the world.

With the right support, more First Nations tourism businesses, and the cultures and communities they nurture, can flourish. Similarly with additional marketing and promotion, demand for First Nations experiences can be generated and converted. Activities could include:

- Refreshing First Nations marketing assets, such as short film and new social media assets.
- Social media training programs for First Nations operators to extend their reach.
- Investing in paid social media to promote First Nations tourism to a wider audience.
- Creation of the National Indigenous Tourism Week to spotlight Australia's rich visitor-accessible cultural experiences for both domestic and international visitors.
- Extending the Indigenous Tourism Mentor program.
- Ensuring skilled tourism vocations, such as tour guiding, continue to be supported, including through the Australian Apprenticeship Priority lists.
- Developing skill pathways for Indigenous businesses, possibly through a First Nations Tourism Conference bringing operators together.
- Inclusion of First Nations tourism businesses in international trade delegations to ensure tourism as culturally important and relevant export is represented.

Regional cultural institutions as international visitor drawcards

The breadth and depth of Australia's cultural attractions around the country is impressive. Australia's regional galleries and cultural offerings are world class, but many of them do not have the resources or capabilities to promote themselves to international audiences. They might lack the sales and marketing expertise, or the understanding of the potential market available to them.

Targeted support to help these institutions and businesses engage with international audiences and distribution systems would bring more international visitors to the regions, support local cultural expression, and support the economic viability of our communities. Activities could include:

- Refreshing cultural attractions' marketing assets, including creation of specialist 'Asia-ready' assets.
- Investing in paid social media to promote cultural attractions to a wider audience.
- Profiling of regional art galleries
- Investing in paid social media and creator programs to promote cultural tourism to a wider audience.

Conclusion

Tourism, with appropriate support, can play an important role in Australia's cultural policy landscape. Tourism can widen the audience for our cultural attractions and can help transform culture into commercial opportunities, especially for regional and First Nations communities.

Tourism Australia is grateful for the opportunity to submit to the new National Cultural Policy. We welcome further engagement and collaboration in this process and would be happy to answer any questions.