

Consultation on Australia's National Cultural Policy

Submission by the Federation of Camera Clubs

Background

In 2023, the Australian Government released its first National Cultural Policy “*Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*”.ⁱ It resulted in significant organisational and funding changes for arts and culture in Australia.

The Government now seeks input to its second National Cultural Policy.

This submission is on behalf of the 9,500 professional, retired, student, and enthusiast photographers who are members of 270 community-based photography clubs across Australia. These clubs are supported by the peak photography organisations in Australia: the Federation of Camera Clubs (covering NSW and the ACT), Victorian Association of Photographic Societies, Photographic Society of Queensland, South Australian Photographic Federation, and the WA Photographic Federation.

It recommends the next Culture Policy recognises:

- (i) photography is a key contributor to Australia's identity, culture and heritage
- (ii) the community-based, not-for-profit sector is a crucial part of Australia's cultural infrastructure.

1. Photography is a key contributor to Australia's culture

Revive rarely mentions the role of the visual arts in Australia's culture.

Although it is not clear why, this may be because visual art initiatives are addressed in the separate Visual Art, Craft and Design Partnership Framework (VACDPF) endorsed by State, Territory and Australian Government Cultural Ministers in 2023.ⁱⁱ

Unfortunately, what is arguably the most ubiquitous form of visual arts in Australia – photography – is not mentioned at all in the VACDPF and only mentioned three times in passing in *Revive*. Photography is an integral part of Australia's cultural expression, being a primary medium for historical documentation, artistic expression and the exploration of Australia's national identity and heritage.

As a result, photography and photographers are a major gap in the Australian Government's culture strategy. This has resulted in the exclusion of the 14,200 professional photographers in Australia; and the 9,500 professional, retired, student, and enthusiast photographers who are members of 270 community-based photography clubs across Australia.ⁱⁱⁱ

This is especially problematic for policy makers as photography is at the forefront of many of the issues of concern to *Revive*: the effect of AI on artistic practice, remuneration and content creation; artist income (which is especially apposite to professional photographers of whom the majority are women mostly working part-time); and the role of rural and regional artists promoting participation and creativity in their local communities.

Recommendation 1: The next National Cultural Policy clearly acknowledge the importance of the visual arts to Australia’s culture, and clarify the relationship between the Australian Government’s Culture Policy and the Visual Art, Craft and Design Partnership Framework.

Recommendation 2: The next National Cultural Policy explicitly recognise the significance of the photography sector as a key participant in creating and promoting Australia’s identity, culture and heritage.

2. The not-for-profit arts sector is a key part of Australia’s cultural infrastructure

Revive recognises the importance of cultural infrastructure – the policies, funding, education and training, workshop places, exhibition spaces, audience development, and so on – which support the creation, production, exhibition and enjoyment of arts and culture.

However, *Revive* only focusses on two types of cultural infrastructure: that provided by governments and that provided by the private sector.

The crucial role of not-for-profit providers of cultural infrastructure is mentioned twice, and only in passing. This is a significant gap in the policy because many state-based peak bodies provide the insurance, education resources, judge training, regional collaboration, exhibition opportunities and other support which is essential to the maintenance and development of 270 community-based photography clubs across Australia which have 9,500 professional, retired, student, and enthusiast photographers as active members.

Unlike most government and private sector infrastructure, the state-based peak bodies for photography and video-maker clubs support clubs, the majority of which are in non-urban regions.

Recommendation 3: The next National Cultural Policy explicitly recognise the cultural infrastructure provided by not-for-profit, community-based peak organisations, and identify ways to collaborate with these organisations to enable Australia’s cultural and creative sector to flourish.

Contact

For more information, contact Dr Don Munro, Secretary, Federation of Camera Clubs



ⁱ See <https://www.arts.gov.au/what-we-do/revive-place-every-story-story-every-place>.

ⁱⁱ The Visual Art, Craft and Design Partnership Framework 2025-2028, <https://creative.gov.au/sites/creative-australia/files/documents/2025-05/Visual-Art-Craft-and-Design-Framework-2025-28.pdf> Accessed 14 April 2026

ⁱⁱⁱ Why you should join a camera club in 2025, <https://www.australianphotography.com/photo-tips/why-you-should-join-a-camera-club-in-2025>. Accessed 12 April 2016