

**National Cultural Policy Submission**

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Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

The direction of the new National Cultural Policy is broadly right. Framing culture as something structural, not just “the arts”, is the correct starting point. That shift already happened with Revive, and it is one of its strongest contributions. Treating culture as part of how a country thinks, works, and represents itself, rather than as an add-on, is long overdue.

That said, the document still feels like it is describing a landscape that has already moved on. There is a clear acknowledgement that digital platforms are reshaping how work is made, distributed and discovered. But it stops short of addressing the uncomfortable part: control. Right now, most cultural production sits on infrastructure owned by a handful of global platforms. They control discovery, monetisation, and increasingly even the inputs through AI systems. If the policy does not engage directly with that layer, it risks solving the wrong problem.

The five pillars are still solid, but they need to be pushed further.

First Nations First is non-negotiable and correctly positioned. The next step is enforcement. Cultural rights in a digital context, especially around data, training sets, and reproduction, need to be protected in practice, not just acknowledged in principle. Otherwise extraction just becomes more sophisticated. A Place for Every Story sounds right, but access is not the same as visibility. You can fund diverse work all day, but if distribution is governed by opaque algorithms, most of it will never be seen. Policy needs to deal with discovery, not just production.

Centrality of the Artist is where the gap is most obvious. Calling artists “workers” is important, but the underlying economics are still broken. Streaming already weakened revenue models. Generative AI is about to do the same to authorship and ownership. If there is no serious intervention around rights, licensing, and compensation in digital environments, this pillar becomes symbolic.

Strong Cultural Infrastructure needs to be redefined. It is not just buildings and institutions anymore. Infrastructure now includes pipelines, storage, compute, and the systems that host and distribute work. If Australia does not invest here, it remains dependent on external platforms that shape both access and outcomes.

Engaging the Audience is correctly identified as changing, especially with younger people creating as much as they consume. But engagement is no longer just about reach; it is about participation and literacy. People are not just audiences, they are nodes in the system.

One thing that feels underdeveloped is how culture connects to broader capability. The paper points to the sector’s economic contribution and role in innovation, but it still treats culture as adjacent to industry. In reality, creative practice sits upstream of design, storytelling, and user experience across tech, media, and even policy. If you ignore that, you underinvest in something that quietly drives a lot of value elsewhere.

In short, the policy is heading in the right direction, but it needs to be more explicit about power, ownership, and infrastructure. Revive re-established why culture matters. This next version needs to deal with who controls it in a platform and AI-driven environment.

That is the real question now and Australia is in a position to lead, not follow.