

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Consolidating the Revive Cultural Policy. From aspirations to evidence.

Andrew T. Barnum

Since the launch of Revive in 2022, we've seen a quantifiable surge in the visibility of First Nation's art and culture across Australia. This is as the result of Pillar One 'First Nations First.' In my specialist area of Australian songwriting and music, the challenge for a Revive reboot is to consolidate and convert Pillars 2 (A Place for Every Story) and, 5 (Engaging the Audience), into a sustainable, long-lasting result that generates broader patronage and livelihood.

In my view, the Revive reboot is confronted by both *cultural* and *sociological* choke points, shackling Australia's ability to achieve the goals of its current policy. A wholehearted national effort is required from individuals as well as 'collectively' from individuals. 'A place for every story' needs a fair go, it must receive sustainable mainstream media inclusion, 'engaging the audience' to promise patronage and livelihoods.

In Australia's current digital music eco-system, the commercial mainstream audience is spoon-fed the result of pan-global streaming data analytics. This results in a musical diet short on Australian cultural nutrition and ambivalent in expressing local cultural citizenship.

For Australia to shift our 'no surprise' inertia (Herd in Griffiths 2025), we will have to confront the *cultural* grim reaper of our tall poppy syndrome. This, along with the *sociological* pathology of 'leaving ourselves out' (Lawrence 1929).

The Australia Institute's recent compendium of essays should be our collective call to action: 'A Time for Bravery. What happens when Australia chooses courage?' (Australia Institute 2025). I believe we cannot reliably establish Pillar 3 (Centrality of the Artist) and 4, (Strong Cultural Infrastructure) without, a creative leap in Australian curiosity, discovery, and mainstream inclusion.

During the last two decades of digital music in Australia, the heavy lifting of local discovery has been the domain of the ABC, i.e. TripleJ Unearthed, TripleJ, and Double J Radio, and, their associated websites, podcasts and YouTube channels. As noted by the pernicious lack of Australian chart results by ARIA, the choke point remains – mainstream TV and Radio networks are failing the Cultural Policies' objectives by sustaining the wicked problem that restricts access to 'a place for every story.'

ARIA's and APRA-AMCOS's operations are also governed by music streaming data, and this business model, by its global nature, crowds out the aspiring Australian cultural voice's bandwidth.

Since the arrival of digital music with the Apple iTunes Store in 2005, their commercial remit has not included the conversion of aspiring Australian voices to wider commercial consumption (Griffiths 2025).

If Australia is honest about breaking the current cultural and sociological choke that holds 'a place for every story' and 'engaging its audience' in freefall, we need to answer the hard questions individually and, collectively.

'The only way to turn the problem around is for music fans and the local industry to get behind its talent' (Herd in Griffiths 2025).

Are we ready to spare the heads of our tall poppies, and by doing so, unconditionally prove our love for Australian voices?

A Time for bravery: What happens when Australia chooses courage? - store - The Australia Institute (2025) Australia Institute Press. Available at: <https://australiainstitute.org.au/store/a-time-for-bravery> (Accessed: 27 March 2026).

Lawrence, D, H (1929) Kangaroo, Penguin, London

Griffiths, N. (2025) *Aria CEO weighs in on lack of Aussie acts in year-End Charts*, *The Music Network*. Available at: <https://themusicnetwork.com/unfortunately-not-new-news-aria-ceo-weighs-in-on-lack-of-aussie-acts-in-year-end-charts-yet-again/> (Accessed: 27 March 2026).