

**National Cultural Policy Submission**

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Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

Cultural heritage plays a vital role in Australia's identity, social cohesion, and resilience. As natural hazards become more frequent and severe, there is an urgent need for a more coordinated, nationally consistent approach to protecting cultural heritage and strengthening its capacity to withstand and recover from disasters.

Our shared cultural heritage, encompassing First Nations cultural knowledge, historic buildings, collections, archives, libraries, and our varied and rich multicultural heritage, is not only a record of our past, but a living and evolving part of community life. These assets are increasingly exposed to risks from a range of hazards.

Within the disaster risk reduction system more broadly, galleries, libraries, archives, museums play a vital role in risk reduction, resilience building and recovery by supporting preparedness planning, providing restoration assistance for damaged personal heritage, offer art therapy for trauma coping, offer safe spaces to gather, provide research and archival support and preserve disaster memories. Protecting these assets is therefore not only about preserving heritage, but also about sustaining the social infrastructure that underpins resilient communities.

Despite this, cultural heritage is not yet consistently embedded within disaster risk reduction, emergency management, or resilience frameworks. There is an absence of risk data and coordinated efforts to understand the disaster risks to cultural heritage hindering effective mitigation and inclusion in policy considerations.

A key priority for the next National Cultural Policy should be the development of a coordinated national framework to protect cultural heritage from natural hazards.

This framework should align with existing disaster risk reduction strategies and support integration across all levels of government, cultural institutions, and the emergency management sector. It should provide clear guidance on risk assessment, preparedness, response, and recovery for cultural heritage, supported by appropriate governance, funding, and capability-building initiatives.

Importantly, this framework should recognise the unique and central role of First Nations cultural heritage. Protecting and supporting the continuation of these living cultures must be an element of any national approach.

Beyond their physical and historical value, cultural heritage assets play a significant role in building social connection and community resilience. Participation in cultural activities, whether through local libraries, museums, festivals, or community arts, strengthens social capital, fosters a sense of belonging, and supports mental wellbeing. These are critical factors in how communities build resilience to and prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

In conclusion, protecting cultural heritage is not a niche concern - it is central to Australia's resilience. A coordinated, well-resourced national framework is needed to ensure that cultural heritage is safeguarded for future generations while also supporting stronger, more connected, and more resilient communities today.