

**National Cultural Policy Submission**

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am a Digital Asset Officer working within a national collecting institution, where I manage the organisation, accessibility and reuse of digital cultural collections. My work sits at the intersection of collections, technology and audience access, and has highlighted both the opportunities and challenges facing the sector.

A key challenge is the gap between what institutions hold and what audiences can actually discover and use. Significant portions of Australia's cultural collections remain difficult to access online due to inconsistent metadata, unclear rights information, and limited reuse permissions. At the same time, audience expectations have shifted. People increasingly expect to find, share and interact with cultural content digitally.

Open access, supported by clear rights frameworks such as Creative Commons, presents a practical opportunity to address this.

From my perspective, open access is not about removing control, but about enabling appropriate use. When collections are openly licensed and supported by consistent, high-quality metadata, they become significantly more discoverable across search engines, educational platforms and emerging technologies. This supports broader audience engagement and allows publicly funded collections to deliver greater cultural, educational and economic value.

There is also an opportunity to strengthen Australia's cultural infrastructure through clearer national guidance. Many institutions are currently managing fragmented systems and resource-intensive manual processes. Establishing shared approaches to rights labelling, metadata standards and licensing would improve efficiency, reduce duplication, and support more sustainable digital practices. It is important that open access frameworks continue to respect cultural protocols, particularly for First Nations material and other sensitive content. These considerations should sit alongside open access approaches, ensuring that increased access does not come at the expense of cultural responsibility. Emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, also highlight the need for clear and accessible cultural data. Restricting access to metadata does little to prevent its use. In contrast, open licensing supports attribution, context and more responsible reuse.

I would like to see the next National Cultural Policy recognise open access as a standard practice for appropriate materials, aligned with broader public sector "open by default" principles. This would support discoverability, strengthen engagement, and ensure Australia's cultural collections are not only preserved, but actively used and understood.