

National Cultural Policy Submission – Creative Recovery Network

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The Creative Recovery Network is pioneering change at the intersection of arts and culture and Australia's disaster management systems – prioritising community, collaboration, capacity building, training, and advocacy. For nearly 10 years, the CRN, with support from creatives and arts organisations around the country, has created and continues to develop creative practice, skills, and approaches to help people cope with disaster, specifically:

- **Prepare and Imagine:** build community capability before disasters happen, incorporating Indigenous knowledges
- **Respond and Care:** create safe spaces for people to unpack trauma experiences, and make sense of unimaginable impacts and generate new thinking
- **Recover and Adapt:** support wellbeing and identity, driven by community-centred engagement, placemaking and reimagining new futures
- **Prevent and Grow:** educate and connect, facilitation of safe, accessible spaces to deliver important information, resources, and social cohesion

With our communities living the compounding impacts of climate change and the knowledge of difficult and unknown futures, culture and the arts remind us what it is to be human, to connect with empathy, care and curiosity. Culture and the arts play a deep, real role in supporting communities and individuals to tackle the shocks and challenges of our world and the potential of reframing life, landscape and connection as we move into an uncertain future.

Community arts and cultural development are a creative intersection that has developed long term partnerships across the nation with health, education, local government, regional development, community development and social cohesion for decades. We envision that a responsive Cultural Policy will build on this legacy and ensure that our focus is the integration and leadership of the arts in collaboration with all aspects of our communities and government.

The National Taskforce for Creative Recovery has released recommendations for the embedding of pathways for culture and the arts in disaster management. These recommendations can be found [here](#).

Response to the proposed Pillars of engagement:

First Nations: recognising and respecting the crucial place of these stories at the centre of our arts and culture

CRN acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been caring for Country since time immemorial. We acknowledge people and the environment are interconnected which is why we continue to listen to First Nations knowledge and advocate for the importance of that voice within the ecosystem of arts and disaster management. This enriches self-determination and community-led practices and is foundational for long term systemic change.

The rising number of environmental disasters has led to damage to and loss of cultural heritage across the nation. It is clear that the devastating effects such destruction can have on both

communities and individuals is instrumental to communities already suffering loss to culture, language and places of significance.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Invest in First Nations led education, training and mentoring to support the assimilation of culture and arts organisations and programs into a First Nations sensibility, knowledge context and relationship.
- Advocate for the embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Protocols across planning, organisational management and programs to highlight the value of First Peoples cultural heritage and the need for their acknowledgement, leadership, and creativity.
- Give precedence and support in recovery and mitigation programs to loss of sites of cultural significance from disasters and prioritise their recovery.

A place for every story: reflecting the diversity of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture

A people-centred approach is underpinned by a framework of respect, engagement and self-determination. Our work needs to recognise that individuals and communities have their own unique understanding of place, identity, risks and needs.

Community arts and cultural development engages people in the process of art making to explore their own ideas, to reflect on matters affecting them and their community, to dream a different future for their children, to unlock a spirit of play and discovery, to share stories and build community connections. The intrinsic value of the arts is to the fore in this approach with the personal satisfaction that arises from art making combining with the creative engagement of people's heads and hearts in addressing personal, community and social challenges. For us, this is what *participation* and *engagement* with the arts really mean and is the bedrock to achieving truly transformative local citizenship and cultural enrichment.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Formally recognise creative practitioners and culture and the arts, as an essential component of Australia's community development and disaster management capacity and a key component of the nation's preparedness, recovery and resilience capability, delivering trauma informed practice and helping people prepare for and cope with disasters.
- Establish a mechanism to support meaningful collaboration between and across government departments, organisations, agencies and sectors, within and beyond the arts ecology; and the intentional integration of arts and culture into efforts that advance comprehensive community development and whole of community wellbeing.
- Prioritise support for the embedding and professional development of arts and cultural officers within Local Governments to ensure the development of locally responsive cultural plans, the embedding of culture and the arts across all departments policy and planning, and support for the local cultural ecology.

The centrality of the Artist: supporting the artists as workers and celebrating their role as the creators of culture

Community arts practitioners work with and for communities that carry complex political, social and cultural scenarios, oftentimes through the experience of trauma - both direct and vicarious. They often work in isolation under stressful circumstances with tight timeframes and heavy expectations for successful outcomes. Community arts and cultural development, as a framework and a process, requires skilled facilitation, consistent support and resourcing. The context of this work places creatives at risk of stress, trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder and burnout. This is especially so for artists and artworkers who work in relative isolation in remote and regional communities.

Achieving sustainable working practices must be a shared responsibility between individual workers as well as the funding bodies and organisations contracting arts practitioners for socially engaged projects. Recommendations for such a change are presented in details through the [Creating Well: Working Sustainably In Communities Report](#)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Establish a Practice Framework and Code of Conduct for community engaged creative practice to support ethical and safe engagement with communities and across the sector.
- Prioritize and fund training programs building specific knowledge and awareness about entering and working with communities, especially in context of disaster impact and trauma informed practice.
- Establish and support a professional supervision network and peer-to-peer mentoring for creatives working with communities
- Prioritise and fund the embedding of wellbeing plans and professional supervision into all creative community engagement programs and projects

Strong Institutions: providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture

A deeper relational understanding about the value of public cultural sites and their contribution to the social lives of our community members, their role as place makers and connectors will grow an understanding of the intrinsic participatory value of the outreach programs and safe places these institutions can offer for social, cultural and wellbeing needs.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Support the design and implement of a responsive creative activation model and engagement framework to work within existing community development and disaster management systems.
- Support cultural institutions to instigate creative recovery preparedness plans, activating their civic role in the sustainability of local placemaking, identity and community connection

Reaching the Audience: ensuring our stories reach the right people at home and abroad

Creative Recovery is driven by principles of community-led, people centred engagement, empowering people through creative participatory practice, supporting and driving the necessity of place-making and reimagining new futures together. This approach recognises that individuals and communities have their own unique understanding of place, identity, risks and needs. It

ensures that people have a platform to tell their own story in the way they wish people to hear, see, smell and touch it. This process opens a space of dreaming and growing of new visions

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Invest in collective impact research to demonstrate the value of Creative Practice programs in community resilience and disaster management, for the wellbeing, preparedness and recovery of communities across Australia.

Arts and culture have a central role to play in the overall wellbeing of our nation, its communities and citizens. The scale and urgency of today's challenges requires us to do things differently, to be ambitious and innovative. To invest in relationships and to work together to find ways we as a nation can better cope with our uncertain future.

We are facing a pivotal time in our history, reinforcing the value of the role that culture and the arts plays as the key signifier of a just and caring world. We seek the support and influence of this Policy to embed the vital role culture and the arts play in building the nation's capability to grow a relational, ethical, and hopeful future.