

National Cultural Policy Submission

Ausdance National Education Committee

Submitted: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation and an arts peak body

**What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you?
Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:**

First Nations

In traditional Aboriginal culture, dance is the core, like a kind of sacred medicine. Dance is grounded, connected to the spirit of Mother Earth. Unless you surrender to the dance you can't hunt quietly. It is an integral part of human existence.

(Stephen Page, artistic director, Bangarra Dance Theatre, International Dance Day Message, 2004)

Defining First Nations Peoples and Culture as central to all policymaking is essential to providing opportunities for:

- All non-indigenous Australians to learn about First Nations artists and artworks and develop an understanding and appreciation of First Nations cultures.
- First Nations artists to participate in education and mentoring processes, and pass on invaluable cultural knowledge to new generations.

A Place for Every Story

Dance is the original most ancient form of human expression. Through the body and physical language, dance has a powerful connection with the emotional and spiritual worlds.

(Stephen Page, artistic director, Bangarra Dance Theatre, International Dance Day Message, 2004)

Equity of access to arts (dance) and cultural experiences and activities including education, classes, performances, and events is critical to building tolerance and respect in an increasingly divided world. Opportunities should be provided to:

- Enable all Australians, no matter their geographic location and cultural backgrounds, to have access to dance in schools through sharing diverse cultural experiences. This could lead to lifelong engagement and is beneficial for physical and mental health, wellbeing and social engagement.

- Allow all stories to be told for the breadth of all learners – children, teenagers, adults and older citizens ensuring equity of voice.

The Centrality of the Artist

Building a cultural policy that nurtures a comprehensive arts (dance) education is essential to develop key creative skills where:

- Children and young people work as artists (makers, choreographers, performers, theatre-makers) whose achievements are recognised by their peers. They collaborate with teachers as co-artists and learn about being dance artists as they create, perform and respond to their own work and that of others.
- Dance artists in school programs provide opportunities and vital connections with creative processes and ways of working.
- Economic, social and cultural benefits of supporting and employing artists and arts professionals across the creative industries are recognised for their broader contribution to all aspects of community.

Strong Institutions

The challenges faced by the reduction of access to tertiary arts education and the inconsistent implementation of arts (dance) education in school settings requires attention to:

- Strengthen access to arts (dance) education at all levels, early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education, to ensure continuity in creative processes for all teachers and artists across the curriculum.
- Build a strong and sustained valuing of the arts (dance) in curriculum to overturn a currently devalued and under-resourced position.
- Strengthen teacher education courses in the arts/dance across the tertiary sector to ensure that Australian students have access to high quality dance education and Arts experiences and pathways into creative industries and creatives in other industries.
- Provide resources to support delivery of a rigorous curriculum that builds consistency and supports teachers at all levels and in all arts disciplines.

Reaching the Audience

Thriving creative industries, enhanced by a comprehensive arts education at all levels and embedded in a future-focused national cultural policy would advocate for:

- Children and young people as the audiences of both today and of tomorrow to be key deliverers of cultural knowledge and understanding.

- All learners to be an informed and culturally aware audience.
- Access to arts and cultural experiences that are appropriate for development and learning to build the creatives of the future.
- Access to digital technologies that provide platforms that allow delivery of arts and cultural experiences to all communities (metropolitan, regional, rural and remote) and allow a reciprocal sharing across diverse locations.

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:

First Nations

Dance is recognised for its key contribution to Australian culture, and this is articulated well in The Australian Curriculum. Dance in schools builds respect for and knowledge of diverse cultures, traditions, histories and purposes through:

- Focusing on local and global cultures, particularly the cultures of First Nations Australians.
- Developing students' empathy for multiple perspectives and understanding of personal, local, regional, national and global histories and traditions.

[Reference: ACARA (2022) The Arts Dance F-10 Version 9.0]

Dance intersects very proactively with the Cross-Curriculum Priority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures and the Intercultural Understanding General Capability. Dance in schools actively:

- Examines the cultural diversity of the First Peoples of Australia and the First Nations Peoples of the Torres Strait, including their unique ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing.
- Recognises Australia's First Peoples as belonging to the world's oldest continuous cultures and acknowledges the many historic and enduring impacts on the cultures of First Nations Australians.
- Clarifies that the cultures of First Nations Australians are not static and have internationally enshrined special rights that ensure they can be maintained, controlled, protected and developed.

[Reference: ACARA (2022) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures Version 9.0]

- Students develop intercultural understanding [through dance in education] as they consider the influence and impact of cultural identities and traditions on the practices and thinking of [dance] artists and audiences.

[Reference: ACARA (2022) Intercultural Understanding General Capability Version 9.0]

A Place for Every Story

Dance is recognised for its key contribution to Australian culture, and this is articulated well in The Australian Curriculum. Dance in schools builds expressive skills to communicate stories and ideas through movement including:

- Using elements of dance to explore and practise choreographic, technical and expressive skills for choreography and performance.
- Examining dance from diverse viewpoints to build their knowledge and understanding of dance, movement and the body.
- Exploring dance across diverse contexts, styles and forms, and building understanding of how dance uses the body and movement to communicate ideas and meaning.
- Communicating ideas and stories of personal and cultural identity through the body.
- Engaging, inspiring and enriching all students, exciting the imagination and motivating students to reach their creative and expressive potential.
- Developing a movement vocabulary with which to explore and refine imaginative ways of moving.

[Reference: ACARA (2022) The Arts Dance F-10 Version 9.0]

Through its intersection with the Personal and Social Capability, Dance develops Social Awareness in particular:

- Empathy – students recognise the emotions, abilities, needs and concerns of others. They develop their understanding about how respecting the perspectives, emotional states and needs of others is essential to social interactions.

The Centrality of the Artist

Dance is recognised for its key contribution to Australian culture, and this is articulated well in The Australian Curriculum. Dance in schools builds body awareness and personal confidence through:

- Using the body to communicate and express meaning through purposeful movement.

- Developing kinaesthetic knowledge and aesthetic understanding.
- Representing, celebrating, questioning and communicating personal, social, emotional, spiritual and physical human experience.

[Reference: ACARA (2022) The Arts Dance F-10 Version 9.0]

- As [dance] artists, students develop empathy by exploring their own cultural identities and those of others, learning to appreciate the diversity of cultures and contexts in which [dance] artists and audiences live.

[Reference: ACARA (2022) Intercultural Understanding General Capability Version 9.0]

Through its intersection with the Personal and Social General Capability, Dance develops Social Management skills which promote engagement with culture in particular:

- Communication – students learn to negotiate and communicate effectively with others through verbal and non-verbal means in a range of contexts.
- Collaboration – students cooperate in groups and constructively contribute to ways of working and outputs. They develop the ability to initiate and manage successful personal relationships through participation in a range of group activities.
- Leadership – students explore the ways that they can lead themselves and others. Students build their leadership capacity by examining a range of approaches and learn to select appropriate strategies in different situations.
- Decision-making – students choose from possibilities to solve problems. They develop their understanding around factors that influence decisions and learn to evaluate the outcomes of decisions.
- Conflict resolution – students develop and apply strategies to prevent, defuse and resolve conflict to reach constructive outcomes.

[Reference: ACARA (2022) Personal and Social Capability Version 9.0]

Strong Institutions

Dance is recognised for its key contribution to Australian culture, and this is articulated well in The Australian Curriculum. Dance in schools builds connection and communities by:

- Engaging with dance practice and practitioners in their own and others' cultures and communities.
- Promoting positive artistic, creative, cognitive, aesthetic and cultural benefits that can impact students' lifelong health, wellbeing and social inclusion.

[Reference: ACARA (2022) The Arts Dance F-10 Version 9.0]

Dance education as a basic entitlement in Years F-6 has its own pathways into specialised secondary and tertiary institutions. As well as building Personal and Social Capabilities, particularly in the areas of self-awareness and self-management, and in addition to social awareness and social management, strengthening students' preparedness for diverse pathways.

[Reference: ACARA (2022) Personal and Social Capability Version 9.0]

Reaching the Audience

Dance is recognised for its key contribution to Australian culture, and this is articulated well in The Australian Curriculum. Dance in schools builds active participants and informed audiences through:

- Using physical and verbal communication to recognise and represent ideas, thoughts and feelings.
- Using digital tools [to] enhance access to learning experiences for choreography, performance and responding.

[Reference: ACARA (2022) The Arts Dance F-10 Version 9.0]

- As audiences, students engage with arts works from diverse cultural sources, and are able to consider accepted roles, images, objects, sounds, beliefs and practices in new ways. They take opportunities to use their arts practice to respond to biases, stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination.

[Reference: ACARA (2022) Intercultural Understanding General Capability Version 9.0]

Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

- The role of Education in Australian arts and culture should be acknowledged through the addition of a sixth pillar of the new National Cultural Policy.
- Arts (dance) education in schools, tertiary institutions and in the community should be embedded in all aspects of a national cultural policy.
- Rigorous research that investigates the impact of dance upon young people's learning as part of a larger arts research project.