

National Cultural Policy Submission

This submission is made on behalf of the not-for-profit arts organisation, FORM Building a State of Creativity Inc. (FORM), based in Perth. We congratulate the Australian Government on recognising the need for a new National Cultural Policy underlining the importance of the role the sector plays in forming Australia's national identity, and underpinning the productivity and happiness of our citizens.

Executive Summary

FORM supports the five pillars of the National Cultural Policy and posits that they are relevant not only for our work, but for the future success of the sector and the nation. In our submission we provide further reflection and context for each of the five pillars. We present actions and considerations addressing challenges and opportunities under each pillar, relevant to our work and at a national level.

We also **highlight two key strategic priorities** that are not overtly expressed by these five pillars. These priorities are; **Creative and Cultural Economy** and **Creative Learning and Education**. We posit that these should be central strategic priorities of the Policy and call for the following actions:

- Creative and Cultural Economy
 - Ongoing measurement of creative industry economic output;
 - Industry-specific methods of capturing and expressing the economic, social and cultural value of the sector;
 - A disaster recovery plan for the sector with supporting policy settings;
 - Leverage and value-add key industry relationships at home and abroad;
 - Collaboration between arts and tourism industries.
- Creative Learning and Education
 - Implement models of creative learning in primary and secondary schools;
 - Arts and culture degrees are financially accessible, viable and future-ready;
 - Strong pathways from tertiary education into the creative sector;
 - Affordable access to specialist business development knowledge to achieve greater financial sustainability.

Background

FORM is a leader in developing a vibrant creative economy for the benefit and wellbeing of all Western Australian communities. We deliver our mission through five main strategies: Aboriginal Partnership; Cultural Programming; Cultural Tourism; Sector & Community Building and Creative Learning. For the past 20 years FORM has collaborated with multiple partners to deliver transformative cultural experiences that change lives in communities across the State through encouraging creativity in all areas of learning, living, and livelihoods.

In this submission, we not only respond to the five pillars, but also highlight two key strategic priorities that, while articulated in the 2013 *Creative Australia* policy under *Pathways for Action*, are not overtly expressed by these five pillars. These priorities should be central to the new policy, building on those in the 2013 document, as they are critical to the future success of the Australian creative and cultural sector. We also contend that a cultural policy should recognise the value of culture is not only about its quantifiable benefits, social outcomes, or its monetary value; it is also about the quality of human experience in producing it and engaging with it.

Strategic Priority 1: Creative and Cultural Economy

FORM's core purpose is to develop a vibrant creative economy for the benefit and wellbeing of all Western Australian communities. For example, our work over the past 15 years in supporting the development of the Pilbara Aboriginal arts economy, culminating in the largest ever exhibition of Pilbara Aboriginal artists at the Art Gallery of WA, *Tracks We Share*.

Creative Australia (2013) states that the cultural sector is not only central to Australia's social life, but also its economy. Recognising the key interdependence between a strong creative economy and community wellbeing [*Australia's Cultural and Creative Economy: A 21st Century Guide; Transformative: Impacts of Culture & Creativity*] **FORM calls on the Australian Government to build on the 2013 policy's original premise and ensure development of a vibrant creative and cultural economy is a strategic priority.** Key moves to support this priority include:

- Continued and **ongoing measurement of creative industry economic output**, building upon the work conducted by the ABS and Meeting of Cultural Ministers Statistics Working Group in improving data capture. It should be high-level enough to enable comparison with other industry research and fine-grained enough to provide an understanding of the diversity within the sector, to ensure data-driven decision-making based on accurate quantification of the economic and social value of the sector.
- Implement **industry-specific methods of capturing and expressing the economic, social and cultural value of the sector**. For example, qualifying and quantifying wellbeing outcomes or mapping the supply chain linking core creatives through the cultural and creative industries.
- **A disaster recovery plan for the sector** and policy settings that support organisations and artists to save money and mitigate the risk and impact of health and/or environmental crises.
- **Leverage and value-add key industry relationships** in Asia, Europe and North America, through shaping arts and cultural exchange around trade delegations and negotiations.
- Foster better **collaboration between arts and tourism**, building capacity and quality of commercial arts & cultural tourism products and services.

Strategic Priority 2: Creative Learning and Education

FORM has emerged as a leader in creative learning with our ground-breaking Creative Schools program, delivered in partnership with the Western Australian Department of Education, and working with school leaders to establish creativity as a pedagogy that embeds creative thinking across the curriculum.

Acknowledging creativity and cultural expression as critical in the future of work [*Creating Creators: How can we enhance creativity in education systems; Creativity at Work: Interdisciplinary learning in industry and community settings*] Australia needs to create, support and invest in viable career pathways within the sector, while ensuring that creative learning and cultural expression are embedded into education and school systems as a fundamental learning approach from kindergarten through tertiary education. Building on the actions articulated under "Creative Expression and the Role of the Artist" in *Creative Australia*, **FORM calls on the Australian government to move beyond in-school arts programs to embed creative learning across all aspects of the curriculum and support professional and accredited creative career pathways.** Key moves to support this priority include:

- **Implement models of creative learning in primary and secondary schools**, such as *Creativity Culture & Education*, upon which FORM's Creative Schools program is based, to transform the learning experience of children to prepare them for the opportunities and careers of the twenty-first century.
- Ensure **arts and culture degrees are viable and future-ready** in the tertiary sector (see further notes below from *Creativity in Crisis*).
- Improve **pathways from tertiary education into the creative sector**, such as, the introduction of entrepreneurship and business foundation courses and community arts and cultural development within vocational training organisations.
- Funding to provide business development services and training tailored to the creative sector, to provide **affordable access to specialist knowledge that would assist cultural and creative industries to achieve greater sustainability**.

RESPONSE TO THE FIVE PILLARS

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

FORM's work aims to support Aboriginal people to lead, vision, plan and realise cultural and artistic outcomes that are appropriate and meaningful to them, and which can then be shared with multiple audiences, subject to approval by those Aboriginal people. Our Aboriginal Partnership strategy informs all present and future programming, and has been shaped by more than fifteen years of continued consultation, collaboration, programming, delivery and operations with Aboriginal artists and communities across the Pilbara. Challenges and opportunities at a national level include:

- Embedding **principles of self-determination and diversity of expression**. Rather than making assumptions about what's important, we need to learn how to listen to and be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with regard to how they wish these stories to be shared, recognised, and positioned at the centre of Australian arts and culture, acknowledging that cultural practice comes from many diverse groups and takes many forms; for example, traditional conservation practices and the work of rangers.
- Recognising and **respecting the crucial place of First Nations stories is not confined to the cultural sector**, but is something that all of us, as Australians, genuinely need to feel and honour. These stories should be embedded in our national consciousness and expressed in all aspects of society
- More **Indigenous people in positions of cultural management and leadership**, while acknowledging that 'leadership' can take many different forms according to context and preference, including arts and cultural projects and collaborations which invoke the spirit of the Indigenous Voice to Parliament.
- Consider **legislation and other mechanisms to enforce ICIP protocols**, so that ICIP protocols are automatically observed by non-Indigenous organisations.
- Expand the opportunities for **authentic cultural products to be made and marketed**; sustaining and strengthening the Indigenous Art Code.

FORM.

building a state of creativity

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

Everyone has a story to share, and there are as many ways sharing them. FORM's Cultural Programming strategy connects communities across Western Australia with cultural and artistic collaborations and experiences that offer depth and complexity as well as access and quality. It's also important that stories are shared and passed down through generations, and also that young people are empowered to share their own stories. It's not just about the Australia of now, but also of the future. Thinking, learning and acting with creativity and imagination can help individuals, organisations and society collaborate to achieve meaningful potential. Challenges and opportunities at a national level include:

- Managing the **complexities associated with what 'culture' means to multicultural Australia**, and how we ascribe value to it. A westernised view often holds that culture is informed by aesthetics (high arts, hierarchical), or conversely, culture is informed by sociology and social theory (culture is ordinary) [*What Matters: Talking Value in Australian Culture*, 9-10]. In fairness, we must **empower other perspectives and interpretations of cultural values**.
- If there is a place for every story, then how does every story retain its significance or distinctiveness? **What constitutes cultural success in this area?** Is a high number of stories more important than the quality of experience or the depth of human response?

The centrality of the artist: supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture.

FORM's work focusses on generating more opportunity and profile for Western Australian creative practitioners, and ensuring there is investment in and support for the creatives of the future. At the core of FORM's programming is a process of co-creation, whereby we facilitate relationships between children, youth, artists, communities and stakeholders to enable outcomes that are mutually relevant, authentic, enduring and reinforcing the centrality of arts and culture in everyday life.

It is important for emerging generations to appreciate to see potential role models pursuing practices and professions that are not only artistically fulfilling, but also financially viable. For example, FORM's Young Adult Curators are empowered to work with staff and creative practitioners to develop part of FORM's annual *Scribblers Festival* of arts and literature for young people; programming for young people, by young people, inspired by accomplished senior creatives. Challenges and opportunities at a national level include:

- The **importance of the arts worker** also needs to be acknowledged as the people who facilitate art as opposed to produce it. E.g. curators, editors, gallerists, art centre managers.
- *Creativity in Crisis* (40) notes: 'Doubling study costs to acquire professional cultural sector skills will impose the greatest disincentive to study for...students.' The government needs to address **the expense of studying humanities and arts relative to other subjects at tertiary level**.
- **Navigating insecure employment trends:** casualization, the instability of the gig economy and the fact that artists and arts workers are likely to take on multiple jobs outside the sector to boost income. Their talent and expertise should not come on the cheap.

- **Don't penalise people for not being STEM workers;** in fact, more people are employed in the cultural sector 'than the entire electricity, gas, water and waste industries, and other areas of the economy which receive greater policy supports such as finance, aviation, and coal mining. [*Creativity in Crisis*, 12].

Strong institutions: *providing support across the spectrum of institutions – funded, philanthropic and commercial - which sustain our arts and culture.*

We all benefit from strong cultural institutions, which range across individual artistic practice, digital ecologies, arts companies, governance and government structures and more. Since 2008, ongoing economic challenges and COVID-19 have revealed the insecurity and 'hollowing out' of cultural institutions of all kinds. Our institutions need to be robust and future-proof. In addition to our other work, FORM operates two gallery spaces and a studio, and partners with arts organisations, art centres and individual artists to present a wide range of programming through collaboration. We aim to maintain a diverse range of funding partners and income streams and indeed, the percentage of funding we receive from government is less than most of our Western Australian peers. Growing cross-sector collaboration and investment that helps to support the reinvigoration and sustainability of Australian cultural institutions is a key priority for us. Challenges and opportunities at a national level include:

- **Exploring and enacting many ways of representing and presenting culture;** not just institutional, not just building-based; particularly across other industries including tourism, innovation and technology, medical research, urban planning, land management and conservation.
- Opportunity for a whole new conversation with Indigenous cultures about the presentation and representation of their art, and to **address all institutional "gatekeeper" mentalities.**
- **Sustain and strengthen the Creative Partnerships model.** A bigger pool of matched-funding and the ability for organisations with a larger financial turnover to apply would be welcome improvements.

Reaching the audience: *ensuring our stories reach the people at home and abroad.*

While FORM's operations are concentrated in Western Australia, our programming and strategies have always aimed to achieve outcomes of national and international significance. Challenges and opportunities at a national level include:

- **How do we measure success?** Again, high numbers may signify 'success' in terms of reach, but what do they say about the actual experience?
- The variable resources/skills base of regional galleries and their capacity with touring product: need to **upskill and strengthen regional and rural capacity.**
- **Affordability and value:** a lot of arts and culture activities are beyond the reach of lower socio-economic demographics, while simultaneously, a lot of subsidised programming is provided for free, which obscures the true financial value of these experiences.
- Integrating cultural exchange and soft diplomacy into trade relationships; **reciprocal programs with overseas organisations** and practitioners.

FORM.

building a state of creativity

This submission is suitable for publication, attributed to FORM Building a State of Creativity Inc. Any specific quotations used as part of the National Cultural Policy Report may be attributed to:

Tabitha McMullan
Chief Executive Officer
FORM Building a State of Creativity Inc.



Submission Reference List

Austin C., Cornell C., Jenkins G., Pedersen C. and Sade G. 2021. *Creativity at Work: Interdisciplinary learning in industry and community settings*. Australia Council for the Arts and Queensland University of Technology.

Fielding, K., I. Glisic, and J-L. Trembath. November 2019. *Transformative: Impacts of Culture and Creativity*. A New Approach and the Australian Academy of the Humanities. Canberra.

Gawn. R. (ed). 2020. *Creating Creators: How can we enhance creativity in education systems*. The Lego Foundation. Denmark.

Meyrick, J., R. Phiddian, and T. Barnett. 2018. *What Matters: Talking Value in Australian Culture*. Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing.

Pennington, A., and B. Eltham. July 2021. *Creativity in Crisis: Rebooting Australia's Arts and Entertainment Sector After COVID*. The Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute.

Trembath, J-L., and K. Fielding. November 2020. *Australia's Cultural and Creative Economy: A 21st Century Guide*. A New Approach and the Australian Academy of the Humanities. Canberra.

Creativity Culture & Education, <creativitycultureeducation.org>, accessed 18 August 2022.