



ACT
Government

National Cultural Policy Submission

ACT Government

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Introduction

The ACT Government recognises and values the role that arts, culture and creativity play in improving Australians' lives and the contribution to social and economic outcomes. A renewed conversation about arts, culture and creativity in Australia and the opportunity for a national conversation is both timely and welcome. After a period of global change and uncertainty precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is the opportunity to reflect and to better align support to the national arts, culture and creative sector. Investigation of new and emergent opportunities and connections for governments and the sector to work together will better support outcomes for artists, creatives and arts workers and broader Australia.

Recently the ACT Government released [Canberra: Australia's Arts Capital - Arts, Culture and Creative Policy 2022-2026](#) (Arts, Culture and Creative Policy), a roadmap for Canberra to be recognised as Australia's Arts Capital through three strategies of Create, Develop and Promote as detailed in [Canberra: Australia's Arts Capital – a statement of ambition for the Arts 2021-26](#). The Arts, Culture and Creative Policy identifies 10 focus areas under the strategies: Elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural and artistic practices; strategic partnerships; venues and precincts; accessibility and inclusivity; arts practice; skills development; innovation and sustainability; promotion; cultural tourism; and research and data.

The Arts, Culture and Creative Policy recognises and builds on the strength and contribution of the Canberra arts, cultural and creative sector and its progressive and connected population. As a diverse and inclusive city, Canberra has much to offer both in creative output and in engaged audiences. The ACT has the highest attendance rate out of any jurisdiction in Australia, 92.5 % of Canberrans attend cultural venues and events and the highest participation rate, 45% of Canberrans participate in selected cultural activities¹.

On Ngunnawal Country, a meeting place for many nations, cultural and artistic exchange has defined this place. It has always been a place where big ideas can be explored and where arts and creativity are avenues for diverse expression. Canberra is a unique place to live, to make art and participate in cultural activities. It is also important as a focal point for national cultural institutions and renowned for its cultural tourism offerings. Canberra is a forward-thinking and inclusive society that values people and knowledge with a strong commitment to sustainability and wellbeing. These unique advantages make the ACT attractive to arts practitioners and arts workers as well as provides a rich offering for local, national, and international audiences befitting of the Nation's Capital.

¹ ABS, 2017-2018

Key priorities for the ACT in the development of a National Cultural Policy

The five goals of Creative Australia described as part of the renewed National Cultural Policy strongly aligns with the focus areas outlined in the ACT's Arts, Culture and Creative Policy. Re-establishment of the Meeting of Cultural Ministers or a similar forum would provide a mechanism for better coordination across the three tiers of government and implementing a national approach to arts, culture and creativity.

1. First Nations first:

- **Recognising and respecting the cultural contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in urban areas.**

Elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural and artistic practices is a priority for the ACT Government. Figures at the 2021 Census show that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent 2.0% of the Australian Capital Territory population, up from 1.6% in 2016. The ACT Government is focused on building stronger partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to enhance outcomes that reflect Canberra's unique culture and identity. The ACT Government considers that First Nations art plays an important role in truth telling.

Noting the unique experiences of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the Eastern Seaboard and in cities, direct support to this cohort of artists and cultural practitioners and their unique needs to share and celebrate contemporary and urban stories should be considered in any future initiatives as part of the National Cultural Policy. This may include direct funding initiatives for visual arts and language programs in the ACT, particularly in support of language groups connecting Traditional Custodians with their languages.

The ACT Government has also committed to a new visual arts precinct at the Kingston Foreshore. This precinct will be the destination for Canberra's visual arts and culture. A core principle for the precinct is to embed meaningful relationships and learnings from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As part of this work the ACT is working closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to support the development of a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Space. Seeking further support for urban centres of cultural activity, such as the one planned at the Kingston Arts Precinct, and connectivity with other funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Centres nationally will be a priority into the future.

2. A place for every story:

- **Equitable national funding**

The ACT Government would welcome more equitable distribution of Australian Government arts funding that recognises that cultural ambition and leadership does not exist solely in larger cities. In particular, funding delivered through the Australia Council for the Arts and Screen Australia should recognise the critical role that smaller jurisdictions and major regional centres play in the incubation of talent and in providing a crucible in which ideas can be tested and refined and arts careers can be honed and developed.

The ACT has a small but intensely creative population. Canberra has the largest proportion of creative and knowledge workers in Australia.² However, the challenges of a small population base and competition for a limited audience reach means that arts activity in the ACT often requires multiple sources of funding, particularly for larger ambitious scale works.

Funding ratios should be determined separate to support provided to Australian Government cultural institutions given these play an important but different role in the ACT arts ecosystem.

- **Recognising the role of small and micro-organisations in supporting diverse outcomes**

There is great value in supporting small and micro-organisations in ensuring all voices are heard. These organisations are often more accessible to emerging artists and those marginalised and can respond to niche activities and audiences. Targeted programs that specifically support and mentor small and micro-organisations would increase the diversity of artists and cultural story telling.

- **Renewing the National Arts and Disability Plan**

The ACT Government would also welcome recommencing discussions for a renewed National Arts and Disability Plan which was committed to by the former Meeting of Cultural Ministers in 2017, and again in 2018 with a commitment to align it with a National Disability Strategy.

3. The centrality of the artist:

- **Promoting the fair payment and working conditions of artists and arts workers**

The value of all arts and creative work should be recognised and remunerated fairly. The ACT Government has recently released its good practice principles for the engagement and remuneration of artists and arts workers in [Remuneration Principles and Practices for Artists and Arts Workers](#). The ACT is also progressing reforms including exploring the introduction of positive duty to our [Discrimination Act](#), which may include coverage of arts and culture sectors.

National guidelines to acknowledge that all creative work is, by default, paid work and that no artists and arts workers should be expected to work for little or no pay would be welcomed by the ACT.

- **Creating an educational environment in which creative thinking skills are developed through engagement with arts and culture**

There is unequivocal research evidence that quality arts processes and experiences engender a distinctive and critical set of understandings and skills that all young people need to navigate twenty-first century living. Direct participation alongside exposure to diverse arts and cultural activities enhances learning outcomes and builds capacity for creative thought in young people.

A [Linked In Learning Report](#) headlined that creativity was the most in-demand soft skill for applicants in 2020. In a rapidly changing environment and times of uncertainty creativity will be important to navigating complexity across all domains into the future. The rise of artificial intelligence is likely to create demand for human skills like creativity and emotional intelligence, both of which are enhanced through early engagement with the arts. Prioritisation of the role of arts and creative thinking in the Australian Curriculum, and dedicated pathways for training for teachers in the arts including, national initiatives to

² 2016 Census.

bring specialist teachers and artists into schools, is critical to ensure that future workforces can meet changing needs.

The ACT Government notes the establishment of Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) in responding to Australia's current, emerging and future labour market and workforce skills needs including assessing the adequacy of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in delivering these skills. A new National Cultural Policy provides the opportunity to ensure that the arts, culture and creative future workforce skills are met, beginning with an arts education through the Australian Curriculum through to appropriate tertiary and vocational education and elite training; and supported by opportunities to transition from education to professional practice.

4. Strong institutions:

- **Prioritising support to national collecting and cultural organisations**

Canberra's national institutions are a major drawcard for the nation's capital, attracting local, interstate and overseas visitors. The national collecting and cultural institutions contribute significantly to the economy of the ACT and to the character of Canberra as the national capital. They provide an important source of employment for Canberrans and attract a diverse and creative workforce to the ACT from around Australia and internationally, in addition to a strong volunteer base.

The ACT Government contributes significantly financially, both directly and in partnership with the national collecting and cultural institutions through a range of programs. This includes support for:

- The attraction, staging and promotion of major exhibitions through the Major Events Fund (approximately \$8.4 million since 2011).
- Support for the 'Icons' collaboration through the Tourism Cooperative Marketing Fund (\$175,000).
- Long term partnership with the National Capital Attractions Association as the major financial partner for The National Capital Educational Tourism Project to market Canberra to interstate school groups (\$350,000 annually).
- Investment in showcasing the attractions through large scale projections in the delivery of Enlighten.
- Promotion of the attractions through annual tourism marketing campaign activity.

Continued and appropriate levels of Australian Government support for Canberra's national cultural institutions is critical to properly maintain, store, care for and promote their collections. Over the years, many of the national institutions based in Canberra have been subject to budgetary pressures including ongoing efficiency dividends that have impacted their ability to meet core responsibilities. There are also substantial fixed costs associated with maintaining collections worth billions of dollars. Continuous improvement and innovation require significant new investment. Funding to undertake high-quality outreach programming is also important in creating Australian narratives for future generations, as well as ensuring these institutions remain rich repositories of information for practice-led research. The national institutions are the custodians of the Australian story, and the collections belong to all Australians. The funding afforded to them should reflect the unique status and responsibilities they hold.

- **Recognising culture and the arts as social infrastructure**

Social infrastructure that specifically encompasses arts and culture should be reinstated into the expectations for Infrastructure Australia, noting the critical role arts and cultural facilities play in

community wellbeing and as employment generators. In addition, a consistent national framework for the planning and delivery of arts and cultural infrastructure should be developed to drive appropriate and effective investment and resourcing, including operational and programming expectations.

The ACT Government is investing in sustainable and connected arts and cultural venues and precincts for more creative participation across the ACT, adding to the vibrancy and liveability of Canberra. This includes the Kingston Arts Precinct; a revitalised cultural precinct in the city with the redevelopment of the Canberra Theatre Centre; and upgrades to heritage Gorman Arts Centre and Lanyon Homestead. This is in addition to our new Arts Investment Program Framework, which provides a stronger strategic direction and applicant schema for our ACT arts organisations, and preparing a strategic framework for future management of ACT Government arts facilities.

5. Reaching the audience:

- **Equitable access to cultural content**

The Australian Government provides significant investment to the National Performing Arts Partnership (NPAP) organisations. The ACT is the only jurisdiction which does not have an NPAP-funded organisation and we would welcome further discussions to address this in future. In addition, it is important that Canberra audiences are provided the opportunity to see the top-shelf content produced by NPAP organisations on our local stages. Significant commitment has been made by the ACT Government into the design and community consultation phase for redevelopment of the Canberra Theatre Centre, with the ambition of hosting such productions into the future. NPAP organisations should be incentivised to undertake residencies in major regional centres, such as Canberra, to develop work and create opportunities for local creatives to participate in making performance works of scale. This would allow for greater development of artists and technical staff in the ACT through exposure to excellence and allow for a greater diversity of stories to be told.

- **Collecting national cultural and creative data**

To allow for evaluation of the National Cultural Policy and to support transparency and accountability, data collection specific to the arts, culture and creative sector should be prioritised. Research and data are fundamental for evidence-based policy development, informed decision-making, effective planning, and the efficient use of resources for service delivery. Research and data are also important for advocacy reasons, in terms of promoting and understanding the value and impact of the arts. The ACT Government would welcome data and research which would take better account for the professions of those working in gig economies, and across the creative and cultural industries with recognition of paid and unpaid work.

The ACT Government supports the important work that was undertaken by the Cultural and Creative Statistics Working Group (CCSWG), formerly part of the Meeting of Cultural Ministers, and would like to see a continuation of this work.

The ACT Government recommends a consistent national definition of the cultural and creative industries, and standardisation of ANZSIC data across the country, as well as a consistent methodology in measuring their economic value.