



A Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultations Office of the Arts - August 2022

Prepared by Feral Arts - Sarah Moynihan, Norm Horton, Anne Dunn and Elliott Bledsoe
ferals@feralarts.com.au | contact@artsfront.com

The opportunity to develop a new national cultural policy has landed at the perfect time. This is a watershed moment for Australia. After a 'decade of drift,' the country is waking up. The government's quick action on international relations, climate change, minimum wages, immigration and First Nations is inspiring. This is the moment to bring arts and culture back to the centre of a shared vision for Australia in 2030.

The analysis and ideas presented in this submission are distilled from contributions to the [Arts Front 2030](#) project between 2016 and 2021. The Arts Front work is of direct relevance to the national cultural policy consultations. The project was developed as a whole-of-sector response to the absence of a national cultural policy **to develop a shared, artist-led vision for the future of arts and culture in Australia**. The work was supported by the Australia Council for the Arts and by Arts Queensland through the funding of project lead [Feral Arts](#).

The [Arts Front 2030](#) project worked with artists across the country and internationally:

- in-person sector gatherings at national, state and local levels
- hundreds of face-to-face meetings and phone consultations
- [5,000+ artists profiles](#)
- [100+ online events](#)
- 200+ hours of live streamed sector discussions
- 2 terabytes of digital content created

This submission draws on input and ideas from independent artists, small companies, advocates and thinkers from all artforms and from right across Australia. It also highlights issues and ideas specific to the community arts, and cultural development (CACD) sector. The 'big picture' and 'whole-of-sector' focus is designed to complement submissions from artform-specific companies and national peak bodies.

The submission also draws from a number of other national arts sector projects and initiatives undertaken by Feral Arts and our partners over the last decade and a half that have connected with and fed into the national policy development processes.

This submission follows the recommended format, responding to the five Policy Pillars from Creative Australia. We have added an introductory '**Pillar 0 - Framing the Cultural Policy**' to frame our response and put the case for a bigger and more ambitious national cultural policy consultation and development process. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Pillar 0 - Framing the Cultural Policy - *discussion*

“A cultural policy normally takes about four years (to develop). That’s time we don’t have. A rushed process is an imperfect process, but we can’t afford to wait”.

Arts Minister Tony Burke - Brisbane Townhall Meeting - July 2022

A new national cultural policy is a big undertaking, and after a decade of neglect compounded by the pandemic, the arts sector is in urgent need of repair. But what opportunities will we be missing if we rush this process? Are we being ambitious enough? Are we taking the time to connect and coordinate with the other big national reforms and social, cultural and economic changes? Where are we heading as a country and where does arts, and culture fit?

In 2008, The Rudd Government’s [Australia 2020 Summit](#) brought 1000 leading thinkers together to develop a shared vision for the future of Australia in 2020. This work underpinned the development of the [2013 Creative Australia policy](#). The arts sector was centre stage at the Summit, and arts and culture were embedded across all ten focus areas. All the ingredients to develop a whole-of-government cultural policy were in place. Fast forward to 2022, and there are a host of big social, cultural and economic reforms getting underway across the country, like the upcoming [Jobs and Skills Summit](#) for example. This is fertile ground to develop an ambitious, progressive and socially engaged whole-of-government cultural policy with a central role for the arts. But will the arts sector have a seat at the table and what is the shared vision that connects these fora? In the absence of something equivalent to the Australia 2020 Summit, should the work of developing a shared vision for Australia in 2030 be delivered as part of the national cultural policy? Which government agency is best placed to lead an expanded process?

A staged approach

We think it is possible to act quickly on the urgent priorities in the arts and entertainment sectors without foregoing the opportunities and rewards that will come from investing in a bigger *national visioning and cultural policy development process*. We don’t need to change course, we will need to work in stages and expand the scope of the work. The current consultation process being led by the [Office of the Arts](#) is perfectly geared to generating a new *national arts policy*. This can also be the first stage in developing a new *national cultural policy*. The arts policy can be completed and launched this year as planned, and urgent repairs can get underway.

The [Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPC\)](#) is best placed to join with the Office of the Arts in jointly leading a multi-stage, non-partisan, whole-of-government national visioning *cultural policy development process*, as detailed in the recommendations following.

New factors for a national cultural policy to consideration

A lot has happened in the decade since the launch of Creative Australia. In addition to the impact of the pandemic, there are a host of new social, cultural, economic and environmental considerations, including:

- the [Uluru Statement](#) and momentum for treaty and First Nations cultural authorities
- decolonisation and growing challenges to eurocentric definitions of arts and culture
- the accelerating impacts of climate change and (hopefully) [an end to the climate wars](#)
- shifts in international relations including the [growing focus on the Pacific region](#)
- advances in international human rights frameworks and the [sustainable development goals](#)
- the further deterioration of support for independent artists and small arts companies

- attacks on arts and humanities education and training, including exorbitant course fees
- the botching of the NBN roll-out and the [slide in fixed broadband speed rankings](#)
- the [corrupting of government grants programs](#) and the silencing of dissenting voices
- the undermining of cultural institutions and principles of independence and transparency
- demographic changes including the growth in cultural diversity and migration to the regions
- the trillion dollars of national debt, new economic systems - living wage options
- inequities for low-income earners, the gig economy and employment security
- advances in technology, the influence of big platforms - Facebook, Google, Netflix, etc

The new cultural policy will need to ensure it is 'connected in' to the government's responses in each of these areas, and more. It will require a well-resourced whole-of-government implementation plan.

Elevating the status of the Cultural Policy and ending the Culture Wars

The status of the arts sector across government and its standing in the broader community is at a low ebb. This was evident in the low profile of the arts during the federal election campaign. The culture wars have taken a huge toll over the last decade, and history tells us that we will need to deal with this problem if the new cultural policy is to survive a future change of government.

[Anthony Albanese has spoken about](#) the need to '*rebuild our capacity to have constructive national conversations about the big issues*'.

*"The endless culture wars are undermining rational discussion. This has got to stop... this country will only advance when we engage with each other in meaningful ways"*¹.

If we are serious about improving the standing of the arts and putting an end to the culture wars, we will need to elevate the profile of the national cultural policy process. We think the new policy should be publicly promoted as a top-level priority for the government and the Prime Minister. It should be an initiative they lead, the same way Paul Keating led the development of Creative Nation, and Anthony Albanese is leading the implementation of The Uluru Statement. At the appropriate time, the Prime Minister and other cabinet members could join with the Arts Minister and Special Envoy for the Arts to elevate the profile of the new national whole-of-government cultural policy as a top-level non-partisan priority.

A Charter of Cultural Rights

"Just as citizens have political rights, economic rights, social rights and civil rights they can also be thought of as having cultural rights.

[Donald Horne Arts Funding and Public Culture² \(1988, 5\):](#)

The government should continue to work towards constitutional reforms and "*restoring a human rights-based approach to public life*" (Mark Dreyfus, Annual Castan Centre for Human Rights Law Conference: July 2022). This work can strengthen and enshrine laws and policies in key areas of government including a set of cultural rights, and elevate them above the responsibilities of partisan politics. This builds on the work of arts sector leaders including Donald Horne, and echoes 30-year-old recommendations in the [preamble to Creative Nation](#).

¹ <https://twitter.com/AlboMP/status/1203122846504873986>

² <https://artsfront.com/-n3ZZO3x>

Pillar 0. Framing the Cultural Policy - *recommendations*

Recommendation 0.1 - That the [Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPC\)](#) and the [Office of the Arts](#) jointly lead a multi-stage, non-partisan, whole-of-government national visioning and cultural policy development process that:

- is underpinned by the government's implementation of [The Uluru Statement from the Heart](#).
- develops and promotes a shared vision for Australia in 2030
- delivers on the government's core values - '*no one left behind, and no one held back*'
- articulates the central role of the arts sector within a broader cultural policy
- embeds the arts across the whole-of-government and the whole-of-community
- leverages the benefits of new technology
- prioritises action on climate change
- aligns with [international human rights frameworks](#) and the [United Nations' 2030 SDG's](#).
- resets our national identity and our standing on the global stage

Recommendation 0.2 - That as a first stage in the development of the new National Cultural Policy, the **Office of the Arts** coordinates with **DPC** to complete the current consultation process and deliver a ***national arts policy*** this year as planned, with a specific focus on actions addressing urgent ***arts sector*** priorities.

Recommendation 0.3 - That the government legislate to create a **Ministry of Culture** bringing together in one cabinet-level portfolio its key arts and cultural responsibilities, [as proposed elsewhere](#).

Recommendation 0.4 - That the government establish a national cultural policy implementation fund, coordinated by **DPC** and delivered through a new **Ministry of Culture** to deliver key priorities and actions identified in the new policy.

Recommendation 0.5 - That as part of the policy development process the **Office of the Arts** policy team develop and adopt consistent language and agreed definitions to enhance the consistency of public messaging and better connect sector advocacy.

Recommendation 0.6 - That the Prime Minister and cabinet members join with the Arts Minister and Special Envoy for the Arts to elevate the public profile of the new cultural policy and its status as top-level whole-of-government, non-partisan priority.

Recommendation 0.7 - That the new cultural policy strengthens its alignment with relevant international human rights agreements and UN 2030 sustainable development goals to help elevate the standing of the policy and enhance its non-partisan positioning and status.

Recommendation 0.8 - That the Prime Minister, the Arts Minister and the Attorney General work towards the provision of stronger protections and security for the arts sector through the pursuit of constitutional reforms and a Cultural Bill of Rights to enshrine core values, including the centrality of the arts in Australian culture and the independence of key cultural institutions.

Pillar 1. First Nations - *discussion*

*“In Australia, cultural policy surely has to start with the fact that we have the oldest continuing culture on earth. So (policy) Pillar number one is **First Nations First** - that’s where we start”.*

Tony Burke - Brisbane Townhall Meeting - July 2022.

Beyond the symbolism, which is itself significant, what will *First Nations First* mean in practical terms for the new policy? Is Australia ready to adopt First Nations definitions and framing of arts and culture? What would that look like? How can it be expressed in the language of the policy, and the actions it triggers?

Within the Arts Front 2030 Project, *First Nations First* has been a call to action for the arts sector and the broader community. De-colonisation, self-determination and cultural authority emerged as the highest priorities, and these principles are at the core of Arts Front’s shared vision for the arts and Australia in 2030. In the absence of a cultural policy, many in the arts sector have been getting on with embedding these core principles in their lives and work. We support the recommendation that de-colonisation, self-determination and cultural authority are also embedded as core principles and priorities for the new national cultural policy.

Connecting with Uluru and Purrumpa

One positive coming from the decade-long delay to the implementation of Creative Australia is that the new policy is now being formulated at the same time that the Australian government is implementing [The Uluru Statement from the Heart](#). Delays to the much anticipated national First Nations arts and cultural summit over recent years have also opened up the window for this October’s [Purrumpa gathering](#) to fully connect with the development process for the new cultural policy.

The cultural policy development process needs to take the time to fully connect with and be guided by the big changes underway in the First Nations space - the response to The Uluru Statement, Makarrata and the Voice to Parliament. This work is too important to rush and getting it right will dramatically enhance the value, impact and relevance of the new cultural policy.

One of the influential ideas presented to the Arts Front 2030 project through its First Nations leadership was to make use of the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People](#) (UNDRIP) as a framework when developing policies that relate to first nations people.

Towards Cultural Authorities and a National Cultural Consciousness

Throughout the Arts Front project, First Nations’ leaders advocated for self-determination and (re)establishing cultural authority in Australia. The First Nations Working Group reporting to the [2018 Arts Front Rights Symposium](#) proposed that:

*Our overarching aim is the development of a **future cultural consciousness** for Australia. That cultural consciousness comes from the country itself and is facilitated by our link as First Peoples to that country.*

In terms of practical steps to achieving a **cultural consciousness**, the group offered this advice to the broader arts sector:

- *embrace truth-telling and conciliation.*

- *actively support self-determination.*
- *actively support the development of First Nations cultural authorities that operate locally (within communities) regionally (within nations) and nationally and internationally (connecting with First Nations communities in other countries).*
- *be brave enough to cede power, listen and follow (the lead of First Nations people).*

Pillar 1. First Nations - recommendations

Recommendation 1.1 - That the government listens to and prioritises the leadership, advice and input of First Nations artists and First Nations-led companies in developing a new arts policy and a new national cultural policy, including through the [Purrumpa gathering](#).

Recommendation 1.2 - That the government ensure the processes for developing a new arts policy and a new national cultural policy coordinate and connect fully with its implementation of [The Uluru Statement from the Heart](#).

Recommendation 1.3 - That de-colonisation, self-determination and cultural authority are embedded as core principles and priorities in a new national cultural policy.

Recommendation 1.4 - That the government make use of the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People](#) (UNDRIP) as a framework when developing policies that relate to first nations people.

Recommendation 1.5 - That the cultural policy adopts a First Nations framing and definition of arts and culture.

Recommendation 1.6 - that the government develop strong connections and linkages amongst the new national cultural policy and [Closing the Gap](#) and other relevant First Nations programs and initiatives.

Pillar 2. A place for every story - discussion

Fundamental commitments to the principles of **equity, diversity and inclusion** are central tenets of the shared vision for Australia in 2030 developed through the Arts Front project. History tells us that advances in this space are always hard-earned and that they can be easily eroded. This is not about ticking boxes and we can never sit back and assume that the job is done. To deliver on principles of **equity, diversity and inclusion**, we need to work at them each and every day. They need to be fundamental to the way we do our jobs and the way we live our lives.

The Arts Front project has been witness to many stories of deep frustration from advocates and leaders of all parts of the arts sector - First Nations, young people, older people, women, rural and regional people, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people - all challenging the arts sector - and each other - to do better.

An international human rights framing for Policy Pillars

Our previous national cultural policies [Creative Australia](#) and [Creative Nation](#) both make use of key international agreements and conventions as policy framing, and we think there is value in making this more systematic, explicit and consistent throughout the new policy. This approach is in line with work being led by the Office of the Attorney General to [restore a human rights-based approach](#) to public life in Australia. The [2018 Arts Front Rights Symposium](#) brought together 40 leading advocates from diverse parts of the arts sector to work on shared values and develop a rights-based platform for whole-of-sector advocacy. [Specialist working groups](#) explored international rights-based agreements relating to a wide range of advocacy areas. The approach helped identify and distil the fundamental elements of a national cultural framework and shared vision for the future - the things that are non-negotiable. The language of this Pillar needs to be strong so that the actions flowing from it are more ambitious and braver.

Aligning with the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals

Aligning the actions the sector undertakes implementing a new national cultural policy over the next decade with the [United Nation's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) provides internationally recognised, measurable, non-partisan shared targets. This opens up the potential to aggregate and connect the work of the sector in delivering change in key priority areas set through the new national policy, and provide practical examples to inform and inspire change in the broader community. Here is an example using Creative Australia as a name for the new policy:

Creative Australia - Climate Action - a net zero arts sector by 2030 - reporting to [SDG 13](#)

A [growing number of artists and organisations](#) across Australia and internationally are taking the lead on reducing carbon emissions in the delivery of their work. The new policy could facilitate information, sharing and exchanges and encourage the adoption of positive practices that contribute to the goal of a net-zero arts sector and Australia meeting its emissions reduction targets. The industry-wide adoption could be promoted as an example in the other industries and the broader community. The online platform could generate reports to the UN and form part of Australia's response to SDG 13.

“Regardless of disability, ethnicity, faith, sex, gender - regardless of all the different aspects of diversity in Australia, we want to make sure that every story is being told”

Tony Burke - Brisbane Townhall Meeting - July 2020

If we want to *make sure that every story is being told*, we need to address systemic inequities that underpin the distribution of arts funding in Australia. Nearly 70% of the Australia Council annual budget goes to its largest 38 companies through the National Performing Arts Partnership (NPAP) Framework. An ever-dwindling pool of ‘contestable’ funds is spread across the hundreds of independent artists and small to medium companies who specialise in and deliver the vast majority of work with diverse communities. In Canada, this funding ratio is inverted, with around thirty percent of investment going to their larger companies. The arts funding ecosystem in Australia is out of balance.

The government has the opportunity to address this problem, not through a reduction in the NPAP allocation but through targeted investment in the Australia Council’s discretionary funds. A new policy should be underpinned by principles of equity in funding and commit to addressing this imbalance by growing its annual investment in independent artists and small to medium companies to at least be equivalent to its investment in the NPAP Framework. These funds should also address the imbalance and inequity in rural and regional funding. Based on the [Australia Council’s most recent Annual Report](#) it would take an additional annual investment of \$64.8m to bring combined funding in Council Grants and Initiatives (\$25.5 million) and its 4-year funding (\$29.7 million) up to the level of the investment in NPAP (\$120.3 million). In practical terms, it could kick off this process and demonstrate its intent by establishing a new innovation program that was targeted to independent artists and small to medium companies from outside the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework. This growth could be staged to meet a 2030 commitment and gives the government the flexibility to also increase support to the majors as long as an equitable position is achieved by 2030.

Pillar 2. A place for every story - recommendations

Recommendation 2.1 - That the government strengthen its commitment to core principles of **equity, diversity and inclusion** through a more systematic and explicit alignment of the new arts and cultural policies with [key international rights agreements](#), in line with the government’s broader moves to [restore a human-rights based approach to public life in Australia](#).

Recommendation 2.2 - That the actions the arts sector undertakes in implementing a new national cultural policy over the next decade are aligned with the [United Nation’s 2030 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG’s\)](#) to provide internationally recognised, measurable, non-partisan targets and whole-of-sector outcomes that can be promoted as examples in the community.

Recommendation 2.3 - That the government commit to the principle of funding equity and address the current imbalance in the arts ecosystem by bringing its investment in independent artists and small arts companies into line with its investment in larger companies by 2030, through additional annual investment of \$68.4 million in the contestable funding pool of the Australia Council. These funds should also address the imbalance and inequity in rural and regional funding.

Pillar 3. The centrality of the artist - *discussion*

The centrality of the artist, or more specifically - *artist-centred and artist-led* - has been a core principle of the Arts Front 2030 work throughout the five years of the project. There is a deep and commonly held desire, regularly expressed during the Arts Front project, for artists to be recognised and valued for their work and as members of the community. This new policy is a chance to re-establish the centrality of the arts and artists in Australia.

Artists as leaders

Beyond a re-centring, the Arts Front project also identified the strong desire of artists to be recognised and respected for their roles as leaders, critical thinkers and agents of change in our communities. We think these are important aspects of the identity and positioning of the arts that the new cultural policy should consider and actively incorporate. Artists' leadership takes many forms, and it is happening all around us each and every day. It is sometimes most obvious in social and cultural change movements. It was on show in the roles that artists played in the marriage equality debate. It has been on show through the work of artists who have supported political and economic refugees. It has been on show in the ongoing fight for equality in the women's movement. It has been on show through the work of artists who have been leading climate action. It was on show when thousands of artists stood up against George Brandis to protect the independence of the Australia Council. It has been on show in the actions many in the arts community have been leading in decolonisation and enacting the principles of First Peoples First. These actions inspire and enable change. It is how we grow as a community and mature as a nation.

After a decade during which dissenting voices have been silenced on so many fronts in this country, the new policy is an opportunity to renew our commitment to the leadership of artists. It is an opportunity to invest in critical thinking and in the creation of work that challenges us and drives change. It is fundamental to the health of our democracy and our standing as a multicultural, globally engaged country.

It won't always be easy. There will be times when artists' actions are at the very cutting edge of political debate and social change. It is always easier to support and celebrate our leaders after change has happened than in the middle of a conflict. But it is at these very moments that a strong national cultural policy, underpinned by international human rights agreements and actively encouraging artists to be critical, think deeply, act with compassion and respond to injustice will make the most difference.

Developing a common language

There is no denying that artists have been marginalised over the last decade. In the absence of a national cultural policy, a number of national arts visioning and advocacy projects have been initiated, each with their own language and priorities and strategies for convincing the community about the value of the arts, and the centrality of the artist. The [Arts Front 2030](#) project is an example, along with the work of [Reset](#), [Test Pattern](#), [ANA](#), [Re-imagine](#) and others. A quick scan of the submissions reveals the variety of definitions and uses of keywords currently in play. One of the opportunities for the policy team will be distilling these offerings and formulating and adopting consistent language and definitions. This can enhance the effectiveness of public messaging around the new policy as well as strengthen connections and coordination of sector advocacy.

We will need consistent language, especially when the policy is seeking to engage and connect at a whole-of-government and whole-of-community level. Our language will need to be accessible and reflect the diversity of arts practice and the multitude of ways artists connect with and contribute to our communities and our lives.

A three-pronged value proposition

From time to time we all find ourselves in conversations defending the arts. Why is it important? Why should the government invest in it? What value does it bring? At the Brisbane town hall meeting, Arts Minister Tony Burke shared some of his experiences and put the case for an approach that combines the **intrinsic value** - artist as creator, and the **economic value** - artist as worker. We agree that combining these dual aspects of the value of the arts makes our case stronger. Some people have raised concerns about the term **intrinsic** seeing it as a bit exclusive and likely to put some people off. Perhaps a more accessible and common use option that still conveys a similar meaning could be **creative**?

We recommend adding a third prong to our value proposition - community value. This describes the contributions that artists make at a whole-of-government and whole-of-community level. This will be a critical element in the delivery of the new cultural policy.

- **creative value** - contributions through creating art
- **economic value** - contributions as workers and businesses
- **community value** - contributions to the community

This is not to downplay the critical importance and value of creative practice in and of itself. One of the most compelling justifications for the creative value of the arts came from Gough Whitlam:

"In any civilised community, the arts and associated amenities must occupy a central place. Their enjoyment should not be seen as something remote from everyday life. Of all the objectives of my Government, none had a higher priority than the encouragement of the arts, the preservation and enrichment of our cultural and intellectual heritage. Indeed I would argue that all the other objectives...social reform, justice and equity in the provision of welfare services and educational opportunities - have as their goal the creation of a society in which the arts and the appreciation of spiritual and intellectual values can flourish. Our other objectives are all means to an end; the enjoyment of the arts is an end in itself".

Building on the Minister's lead we think it makes sense to adopt a multi-pronged approach whenever we define the value of the arts.

Budget deficits and the critical importance of a 'whole-of-government' approach

"A cultural policy isn't a set of arts announcements. A cultural policy is when you get the whole of government to say this is where the sector matters and fits and reaches the whole of the nation".

Tony Burke - Brisbane Townhall Meeting - July 2022

With a trillion dollars of debt, one of the challenges will be finding the funds to implement a new cultural policy. It is frustrating that when money was eventually channelled into the arts and

entertainment sector last year there was no policy in place to guide the investment and maximise the long-term benefits. Budget repair will take time, and we all know how hard it is to grow government investment in the arts at the best of times, so we need to work on new approaches. What can we do to maximise the value and return on the government's investments? How can we leverage and coordinate with spending in other areas of government? Where do the arts fit?

Adopting a whole-of-government approach to developing and delivering the new policy is critically important. The underpinnings of a whole-of-government approach are in place in the previous iteration of [Creative Australia](#) from the Rudd government's 2008 [Australia 2020 Summit](#). There are a number of social, economic and cultural reforms getting underway across the country. Next month's [Jobs and Skills Summit](#) is a good example. The arts sector has important contributions to make, and we can't afford to miss the boat. But if the arts want a seat at the table, we will need to demonstrate our relevance and our value in the community. We will need to contribute to the big national agenda items like responding to The Uluru Statement, climate change, disaster recovery, health, education, international relations, equity, inclusion and justice.

Leveraging Community Arts, and Cultural Development (CACD)

These are not new ideas, and we don't need to start from scratch. There is a lot of knowledge and capacity in the sector that we can build on. The experience and expertise of working in whole-of-government frameworks with non-arts partners in the Community Arts, and Cultural Development (CACD) sector was documented through the 2011 National Cultural Policy Forum, [the joint CACD sector submission developed for the previous cultural policy consultations](#). The CACD sector has demonstrated its ability to turn a modest investment into much larger whole-of-government programs working with communities across the country. For example, in 2010 for every dollar invested in the core funding of the national network of 4-year-funded CACD companies, an additional [\\$7.50 was leveraged from other sources](#) (page 19). As money is tight, these are the kinds of multiplier strategies that will enhance the capacity of the Government, in partnership with the arts community, to implement a whole-of-government strategy. The expertise of the CACD sector should not be overlooked or wasted.

Life-long career concepts

We have been exploring some ideas that respond to the challenge of providing life-long career options for artists. As Arts Minister Tony Burke argued, it's not in the national interest for artists to be under-employed. As well as robbing the country of artists' skills and talents it devalues our status and undermines our rights as workers. We think unlocking this under-utilised potential of a national arts workforce can be a game changer for the arts in Australia and a key to successfully implementing a new Creative Australia policy at a whole-of-government and whole-of-community level.

What might an integrated suite of initiatives designed to deliver artists as workers with security, flexibility and safety in the workplace that is underpinned by proper workers' rights, pay rates and conditions look like? There are different needs at each stage of an artist's employment cycle:

- **young and emerging artists** - need flexible options that fit in with the demands of the gig economy and can coordinate with part-time study, training and travel.
- **established artists** - need safe, secure full-time options with fair remuneration and conditions that meet national standards.
- **senior artists** - need flexible options that fit with and add value to other life commitments.

Creative Australia Fund

As part of implementing the Creative Australia policy, a new centralised investment pool should be established. The **Creative Australia Fund** would provide a means for private companies, government agencies (federal, state and local) and philanthropists to partner with the government and co-invest (50/50) in delivering mutually beneficial initiatives that generate employment for artists and deliver on a shared vision for the future - **Creative Australia**. The idea is based on a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach in which artists are respected and acknowledged as workers who make valuable contributions in a wide range of sectors across the country. It will require investment at a departmental level in brokerage to build connections and bring in partners across government and the broader community.

Here are a few examples of possible 50/50 co-investment initiatives with the potential to deliver outcomes for the policy and provide jobs for established artists with relevant skills and experience in non-arts sectors.

- *a private aged-care provider wants to deliver a new arts activity program in its centres employing 100 artists nationally.*
- *a state government Education department wants to deliver a new artist in schools residency program employing 150 artists across their state.*
- *a mid-sized regional council wants to employ a team of 5 artists to work on a range of local arts initiatives.*

Benefits:

- double the original fund through co-investment
- provision of centralised support and best practice employment conditions
- enables Creative Australia to respond to government priorities (eg aged care)
- integrates the arts and the work of artists in the broader community
- raise the profile of the arts sector and their contributions to the nation
- direct investment to the artist directly from the fund (like the NDIS).
- boost to employment options for independent artists.

Living Wage Initiative

The COVID pandemic amplified calls for the provision of a universal basic income (UBI) and has been a high priority for many in the Arts Front networks. The **Living Wage Initiative** is tailored to the needs of young and emerging and senior artists but could also be open to established artists. Using the [Irish basic income arts pilot scheme](#)³ as a reference point and model, it would provide an agreed number of qualified artists with a basic weekly payment in return for undertaking their creative practice and reporting on their contributions to meeting the goals of the Creative Australia policy. Using the Irish pilot as a benchmark a similar scale 3-year trial in Australia could provide ten thousand places.

Fellowships

This initiative builds on the analysis and scoping undertaken by the [Centre for Future Work](#) and detailed in its [Creativity in Crisis Report](#), 2021 p.43) that would primarily target established artists.

³<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/27aed-irelands-basic-income-for-the-arts-pilot-scheme-launched-by-government/>
Creative Australia 2.0 - A Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultations - August 2022 - Feral Arts

The model proposes a program with 300 artists funded for 3-year fellowships at a living wage with entitlements. This wage could be based on the average annual full-time wage in the arts and recreation services industries. In February 2021, this figure was \$76,128. Including 9.5% super, this equates to a total package of \$83,740 a year. In the first year of operation, this would cost around \$26 million including administration costs.

Pillar 3. The centrality of the artist - recommendations

Recommendation 3.1 - That the government adopts and promotes a three-pronged definition and description of the value of the arts in its arts and cultural policies, combining ***intrinsic value, economic value and public value.***

Recommendation 3.2 - That the government develop and implement a [coordinated suite of initiatives](#) to deliver lifelong career options for artists at all stages of their careers as part of the [Jobs and Skills Summit](#).

Recommendation 3.3 - That a new centralised investment pool - the Creative Australia Fund - is established providing a means for private companies, government agencies (federal, state and local) and philanthropists to partner with the government and co-invest (50/50) in delivering mutually beneficial initiatives that generate employment for artists and deliver on a shared vision for 2030.

Recommendation 3.4 - That the government develop and deliver a **Living Wage Initiative** based on the [Irish basic income arts pilot scheme](#)⁴ to support 10,000 young and emerging and senior artists.

Recommendation 3.5 - That the government develop and deliver a fellowships initiative of three hundred artists funded for 3-year fellowships at a living wage with entitlements building on the proposal in the [Creativity in Crisis Report](#), 2021 p.43).

Recommendation 3.6 - That the government leverage the knowledge and expertise of the Community Arts, and Cultural Development (CACD) sector in particular, and its investment in 4-year funded small to medium companies more generally to design and deliver the implementation of the new national cultural policy.

⁴<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/27aed-irelands-basic-income-for-the-arts-pilot-scheme-launched-by-government/>
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Pillar 4. Strong institutions - *discussion*

Our contribution to this Policy Pillar focuses primarily on the independence, governance and leadership of the Australia Council as a key arts sector institution for most of the people involved in the Arts Front project. Some of the analysis and ideas will also be of relevance to our cultural institutions more broadly. The growing discussion around the independence of our institutions including the ABC and SBS, Screen Australia and the Australian Research Council, and some of their experiences under the previous government over the last decade, is certainly of relevance.

We have all been witness to the undermining and devaluing of the Australia Council during the last decade. As Tony Burke put it in his presentation to last year's [RESET conference](#):

“The relentless attacks on the Australia Council by the Coalition, starting with Brandis, have left it diminished and lacking the financial firepower to properly serve the arts community”.

As important as the funding is, this is not just about financial capacity. There are important principles at play that go to the heart of Council's role as *the government's principal arts investment, development and advisory body*⁵. Minister Burke has been clear about his stance on the delivery of arts funding, and the critical importance of independent, arms-length peer assessment. Given this commitment, it is important that the new policy clearly articulates and commits to arms-length peer-assessed decision-making across all grant-making in the arts portfolio. But what would that look like in practice?

Clarifying roles and responsibilities - an independent review of grants mechanisms

The first recommendation of the [2015 Senate Inquiry report](#) called for '*greater clarity about the respective roles of the Ministry for the Arts and the Australia Council, as well as the other statutory arts bodies*'.⁶ There are growing calls to expand the Office of the Arts and establish a Ministry of Culture that brings all of the government's arts and cultural programs together in one place. What would that mean for the Australia Council? How can the new policy help to deliver grant-making that is consistent and reflects best practice standards? If there is a commitment to peer assessment some of things the policy team will need to consider include:

- the delivery of other competitive funding programs delivered by the Office of the Arts
- the practices currently operating in state and local government
- the practices currently operating in the philanthropic sector
- the practices covering government investment in commercial companies

There is an opportunity to revitalise grant assessment models across all government grant-giving mechanisms, including arts funding. The proposed national integrity commission could be empowered to independently review and report on all of the decision-making practices currently in use in the arts sector. The knowledge gained could help to clarify the relations between and responsibilities of our key cultural institutions. The work of the new commission could also help to establish best practice guidelines for future arts and cultural grants.

⁵ <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/about-us/>

⁶ https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Arts_Funding/Report
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Strengthening Independence

One of the frustrations regularly voiced through the Arts Front project has been in response to the difficulties faced by the Australia Council Board in publicly standing up for itself and the arts community in 2014 when former Arts Minister George Brandis took \$104 million of Council's budget. Many of the artists involved in the Arts Front project stood up to defend the Australia Council and the core principles of independence and arm's length, peer-assessed decision-making during the [2015 Senate Inquiry](#). An unprecedented [2718 submissions](#) called for the dismantling of Catalyst and the return of the funds to the Australia Council. As a competitive fund under the direct control of the Arts Minister, the [RISE](#) fund, like Catalyst before it, flies in the face of the principles on which the Australia Council was established, and its whole reason for existing as an independent, arms-length advisory and funding body. We see [examples of the leadership](#) defending core principles from other similarly constituted bodies such as the ABC. For Council to fulfil its role as a leading advisory body it needs the capacity to publicly challenge decisions like this.

Board culture and the representation of artists - Sector Advisory Panels

One of the themes coming through the Arts Front project has been a desire for artists to play more prominent roles in governance and decision-making in institutions across the sector. This links on Arts Front's input to policy Pillar 3 and the centrality of the artist. A number of people raised concerns through various Arts Front fora about the impact of prioritising business culture on the boards of arts companies across the sector and a reduction in the power and status of artists.

The [review and restructure of the Australia Council](#), undertaken in conjunction with the 2013 release of Creative Australia, is itself an example of the shift in the culture of arts boards and governance structures. The result of the changes in terms of representation and centrality of the artist are mixed. On the positive side of the equation, the expanded pool of grant assessment peers and the greater emphasis on diversity implemented as a result of the review has significantly increased the involvement of artists in decision-making on grant applications. However, the decision to disband and replace the specialist art form boards and the main Council (which had representatives from each of the art form boards) with what was described as a '*conventional skills-based Governing Board*' has significantly reduced the involvement of arts practitioners in Council's governance. In addition, a key aspect of the new organisational governance model proposed by [Trainor and James](#) for the Australia Council, which was specifically designed to offset the loss of corporate knowledge resulting from the axing of the art form boards, has never been implemented. The proposed governance model for the Australia Council included the establishment of eight new artform-specific **Sector Advisory Panels**, which would be:

"Panels appointed by the Council's Board to provide arts sector-specific knowledge for informed and inclusive development of strategy and focus on artform excellence, vibrancy and innovation to the Council's Board and management." page 28. "Specifically, the Panels should provide sectoral expertise and advise on and inform the Strategic Priorities of the Board" page 26.

The lack of Sector Advisory Panels has left a big gap in the Australia Council's governance that needs to be addressed. Coupled with the issues relating to [political appointments to its Governing Board](#) it has weakened Council's connectedness to the arts community, leaving it vulnerable and isolated.

Independent Board appointments

Another issue affecting the [independence and effectiveness](#) of our institutions is the politicisation of board appointments. A new national integrity commission could take on responsibility for overseeing the independence and quality of board appointments across the whole-of-government, including the arts. The Minister should also consider implementing a process that mirrors the ABC Board appointments in which the Minister nominates candidates to the Governor-General for appointment to the Australia Council Board, based on a shortlist prepared by an independent nomination panel.

Pillar 4. Strong Institutions - *recommendations*

Recommendation 4.1 - That the government reaffirm its commitment to the principles of arms-length independent peer assessment in the delivery of arts funding in Australia by the [Australia Council for the Arts](#) as an underpinning of a new cultural policy.

Recommendation 4.2 - That, as a matter of priority, the government deliver urgent 'running repairs' to the **Australia Council for the Arts** to enable it to play a leading role in the recovery of the arts sector and the delivery of a new national cultural policy, including:

- increased funding for the Australia Council in line with the recommendations of [The Australia Institute report on a post-COVID reboot](#) (p.43).
- enhancements to Council's governance, leadership and independence by completing the restructure recommended in [2012 Trainor and James report](#), and in particular the implementation of Arts Advisory Panels (as a replacement for the Arts Advisory Boards).
- review the composition of the Australia Council's Governing Board to strengthen the representation of practising artists.

Recommendation 4.3 - That the government implement in full the recommendations of the [2015 Senate inquiry](#) into arts funding and that it particularly address the call to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Australia Council and the Office of the Arts.

Recommendation 4.4 - That within the scope and functions of the proposed new national integrity commission, the government include the capacity to take on responsibility for the independence of board appointments across government, including appointments to arts and cultural institutions.

Recommendation 4.5 - That within the scope and functions of the proposed new national integrity commission the government commit to an independent review of all government grant-giving programs and mechanisms, including the arts, in line with the recommendations of the [Grattan Institute's Preventing Pork-barreling Report](#).

Recommendations 4.6 - That in addition to the urgent 'running repairs' outlined above, the government commit to a full review, restructure and revitalisation of the Australia Council for the Arts that:

- addresses governance, independence and leadership issues
- clarifies and optimises roles and responsibilities relative to other key institutions
- rebuilds Council to play an appropriate role in the delivery of the new cultural policy

Pillar 5. Reaching the audience - *discussion*

A 'decade of drift', as Minister Burke describes it, has been a disaster for digital innovation, community engagement, content creation and delivery. Australian artists are ten years behind many of their international counterparts in terms of their digital skills. The situation was laid bare during 2020 and 2021 when the pandemic forced the sector to transition to online delivery. Access to Australian stories is at risk as Australian viewers continue to adopt streaming services and our [average fixed broadband speeds are in decline](#) compared with other countries.

Australian artists and arts companies have been at a comparative disadvantage to those in countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom. Between 2017 and 2021, the Canada Council invested \$88.5 million through the Canadian [Digital Strategy Fund](#) supporting groups, collectives, and organisations to hire external consultants to help with activities such as assessing digital readiness, identifying digital gaps and opportunities and creating digital strategic plans. In the UK numerous initiatives and funding opportunities have stemmed from the [Culture is Digital Policy](#). We need to act quickly to help address this lost time.

Digital experiences have changed how audiences engage with the arts. New technologies have changed audiences' behaviours and expectations, which in turn has changed the relationship they have with artists and arts experiences. Yet investment in digital skills development over the past 10 years has been piecemeal and ad hoc.⁷

Beyond technological competencies, the arts experience related skills gaps in areas such as marketing communications, particularly developing marketing strategy and data collection and analysis. Another skills gap in the arts is in relation to copyright and intellectual property (IP) rights management, particularly in relation to the creation and exploitation of those rights through digital means. More needs to be done to ensure the arts have a thorough knowledge of their rights and how to use them to benefit from digital's many affordances while being able to protect their rights online.

Further, there has been a shift by many audiences in how they access and consume content, with streaming content services quickly displacing other distribution channels such as free-to-air and subscription TV. Extending [transmission quotas for commercial television broadcasting](#) to video on demand (VOD) streaming services such as Netflix is often put forward as a response to this shift. Setting quotas may seem like a simple and obvious policy extension, however, the business models in play in the streaming content market are different from the models sitting behind commercial broadcasting services. Forcing quotas onto VOD services may have unintended consequences such as services opting to leave the Australian market rather than invest in making Australian content.

The Albanese government's commitment to 'fix the NBN' is welcome, but it is important that the arts is explicitly factored into planning for an enhanced NBN. The ability for Australian creators to

⁷ Examples of digital funding programs include [Digital Culture Strategy](#) (Australia Council for the Arts, 2021–24), APRA AMCOS [Digital Futures Initiative](#) (Australia Council for the Arts, 2022), [Let's Get Digital](#), (Museums and Galleries of NSW/Create NSW, 2021–22), [Digital Adaptation](#) (Arts Queensland, 2020), [Building Audiences Fund](#) (Creative Victoria, 2017–2020 as Innovation in Marketing Fund, since 2022 as Building Audience Fund), [reVision Tech Mentorships](#).

share their stories locally and abroad is further hampered by the botching of the NBN rollout which has seen Australia fall to 66 in the rankings for fixed broadband speed as of June 2022.⁸ A plan for 'fixing' the NBN must also consider how best to support creators and content producers to take advantage of increased broadband capacity.

With the impact and disruption of the COVID pandemic fresh in our memories and the very real possibility of new strains in the short to medium term, we need to act quickly to prepare for future disruptions and close the gap in capacity with comparable countries. Here are some income-generating mechanisms to consider:

- New investments in the NBN to include a 2% levy for capacity building and digital content creation.
- A 5% digital platforms levy as proposed in the [Creativity in Crisis Report](#). (page 47).

Pillar 5. Reaching the audience - recommendations

Recommendation 5.1 - That as part of the new national cultural policy the government invests in targeted programs increasing digital literacy, skills and access to digital advice through a program at least equivalent to and inspired by the [Canadian Digital Strategy Fund](#) and the [UK Culture is Digital Policy](#).

Recommendation 5.2 - That as part of the new cultural policy the government invests in the establishment of an arts-focused specialist digital agency equivalent to [The Space](#) in the UK to support commissioning projects, building digital skills and capacity, and helping organisations reach wider audiences using digital content, media and online platforms.

Recommendation 5.3 - That the Australia Council reinstate the Marketing Summit and introduce marketing focused funding opportunities similar to Creative Victoria's [Building Audiences Fund](#).

Recommendation 5.4 - That the Australian government deliver free copyright training to artists and arts organisations.

Recommendation 5.5 - That the government extend screen product incentive programs to establish genuine incentives for streaming platforms to invest in Australian productions.

Recommendation 5.6 - That the government impose a 2% levy on the infrastructure investment in completing the NBN roll-out to support a range of targeted content creation and digital capacity initiatives.

Recommendation 5.7 - That the government increase its investment in [ABC iview](#) to enable it to develop and deliver a national [whole-of Australia public streaming platform](#) as recommended in the Creativity in Crisis report (page 45).

⁸ <https://www.speedtest.net/global-index/australia#fixed>