

## **Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Western Australia**

### **National Cultural Policy Submission**

**August 2022**

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC), Western Australia (WA), welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Australian Government's development of a National Cultural Policy. A National Cultural Policy that celebrates diverse cultures, people and places; applies the principles of access and inclusion for all, including children and young people and people in outer metropolitan and regional locations; demonstrates an understanding of the essential role of arts and culture in everyday life and Australia's social and economic success; and supports the development of current and future creatives and the sustainability of the sector aligns well with DLGSC's vision of a vibrant, inclusive and connected WA community.

### **1. First Nations**

*Recognising and respecting the crucial place of these stories at the centre of our arts and culture*

The voices of First Nations people are foundational to Australian cultural discourse, and Aboriginal self-determination and creative control are critical to cultural policy success. WA's commitment to these principles will be articulated in a forthcoming Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy, WA Creative Industries Strategy and a WA Arts and Culture Policy Vision for Western Australia. The potential for policies following these principles to facilitate a broader government agenda of truth telling, social and economic outcomes and reconciliation in addition to creative and cultural outcomes should be noted. The DLGSC acknowledges the depth, diversity and value of Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> art and cultures, and encourages the expression and preservation of traditional and contemporary regional Western Australian Aboriginal cultures, communities, and identities through the arts. WA's priorities regarding Aboriginal cultures, language, creativity and reconciliation are currently demonstrated via:

- Regional Art and Culture Investment Program's *Aboriginal Business Development and Capacity Building Program* and the *Aboriginal Arts Commissioning Fund*;
- *Revealed: Emerging WA Aboriginal Art Market, exhibition, and annual conference*;
- *Selling WA to the World*, which will facilitate the delivery of online portal(s) for Aboriginal art sales internationally;
- *Jina: Western Australian Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2021-2025*, which supports, promotes and leverages tourism through WA's authentic and diverse Aboriginal arts and culture sector;
- *Perth Aboriginal Cultural Centre Project*, along with other concurrent major First Nations cultural infrastructure projects planned or underway in multiple jurisdictions, will require national collaboration and coordination to ensure the greatest local, national and international impact of these investments;
- Leadership on the *Closing the Gap Outcome 16* – (that) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing. The *Juluru Project* supports the research, documentation, revitalisation and resurgence of Juluru, a song and dance cycle connecting more than 10 language groups across the Kimberley and Pilbara; and
- *Connecting to Country* and *Partnership Acceptance Learning Sharing (PALS)* programs link to the *Closing the Gap Jurisdictional Implementation Plan (WA)* as a WA-Specific Priority Reform - 'Supporting and Promoting Culture' - and align with the *WA Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy*.

### **2. A Place for Every Story**

*Reflecting the diversity of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture*

The DLGSC agrees that government support should reflect the diversity of Australians and that everyone has access to engage with, express and shape culture. Jurisdiction-specific data and evidence on [access to, participation in, and perceptions of the value of arts and culture](#) needs to

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<sup>1</sup> The term Aboriginal people is used in preference to 'Indigenous' or 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' people, in recognition that Aboriginal peoples are the original inhabitants of Western Australia. As outlined in the WA State Government's [Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021-2029](#).

inform funding priorities; and ensure that funding programs are relevant, inclusive, accessible and equitable.

Aimed at increasing arts access and participation, WA's [Creative Communities COVID-19 Recovery Program](#) funded artist-in-residence projects delivered in partnership with artists and a local government authority, school, or community group, to engage children, young people and families in communities; increase access and participation; increase employment opportunities for WA creatives; and activate community cultural facilities. The program's outcomes demonstrate the power of place-based, community-led interventions to achieve social and cultural outcomes, particularly in outer-metropolitan, regional and remote communities with high levels of geographical, social, health and/or economic obstacles to access and participation.

*Creative Australia* recognised the individual and broader economic and social benefits of children and young people's access to and participation in arts and culture. Early and consistent engagement of children and young people in arts and culture stimulates and supports lifelong engagement, developing future audiences, and contributing to the attraction, development, training and aspirations of the creatives of the future. Achieving these outcomes requires significant and consistent investment and a commitment to collaboration in evidence-based programs.

The WA *Creative Learning Program*, a commitment of \$2 million per year from 2021 to 2024, will provide meaningful creative learning experiences to improve student engagement and achievement, and build the capacity of educators and creatives.

The DLGSC research conducted for the [WA Cultural Infrastructure Framework 2030+](#) revealed significant unmet demand for community-level cultural infrastructure in WA, and opportunities to connect Western Australians with arts and culture where they live; for areas of high population growth and high socio-economic need; and for the integration of community cultural facilities within public transport precincts. Effective cooperation and substantial financial support from all levels of government are required to make this a reality.

It is widely acknowledged that creative engagement makes a positive contribution to mental health and wellbeing, and social engagement and cohesion. Partnership-based arts interventions will be particularly relevant and beneficial as we navigate the enduring pandemic.

### **3. The Centrality of the Artist**

#### *Supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture*

The complex and unique employment relationships that typify the creative industries, including insecure work and short-term contracts, reinforce the need for a coordinated national approach to ensure that industrial relations, tax and social security arrangements, and legislative provisions are fit-for-purpose, adequate and future-proof.

The precarity of short-term arrangements, casual and freelance employment is a defining feature for much of the sector, and particularly independent artists and SME (small and medium-sized enterprises) organisations, as highlighted in [DLGSC's research into the impact of COVID-19](#) on arts and culture practitioners. [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\) research](#) highlighted the inadequacy of current mitigations, such as JobKeeper, particularly in times of crisis: 'Employment and income support measures are not always accessible or adapted to the new and non-standard forms of employment.' This issue requires significant, urgent attention.

Investment in growing and retaining emerging talent and businesses is critical to the sustainability and future growth of the WA creative economy and ecosystem. *Creative Australia* identified valuable pathways to address the barriers for young people to further training and employment through the *Artstart* and *ArtsReady* programs. Such programs would provide much-needed funding for long-term fellowship and on-the-job training programs within arts organisations, increasing artist employment.

Sustainable spaces in which to work, exhibit and perform are also critical. *Creative Australia* set a vision of partnership, supported by leveraged funding through Commonwealth programs, for cultural infrastructure. The OECD's COVID-19 recovery research concluded that targeted cultural infrastructure investment supports sustainable growth, and the resilience of individual arts workers and SME organisations to future shocks.

#### 4. Strong Institutions

*Providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture.*

The significance of SME organisations to employment generation and the arts ecology in WA is [well demonstrated](#); however, Federal funding, delivered to WA primarily through Australia Council's National Performing Arts Partnership Framework and Four-Year Funding programs, has been constrained. The Australia Council review informing *Creative Australia* identified a significant funding gap - or 'unfunded excellence' - estimated in 2013 at \$15 million and a commitment to address it accompanied the launch of Creative Australia. In the 2021-2024 Four-Year Funding round, 23 per cent fewer organisations were funded. Theatre was most heavily affected, where 26 applications were deemed suitable with funding available for only 15 nationally. WA companies The Blue Room Theatre and Barking Gecko were among those suitable but unfunded. Without appropriate and sufficient support, the sector is in jeopardy. This impacts on the sustainability of these companies and the entire sector.

A sustained and coordinated commitment to funding for cultural infrastructure from all tiers of Government, as outlined in the national cultural accord, is central to supporting strong institutions, including those in outer metropolitan and regional locations. Support for creative and cultural institutions requires an empirical understanding of their value. *Creative Australia* noted the '...lack of sufficiently strong, comprehensive and comparable data about the sector and the economic and public value it creates'. National coordination and advocacy for data collection, through the Statistical Working Group, as part of the Meeting of Cultural Ministers structure, is fundamental to articulating this value. Demonstrating public value remains a priority for WA. Through its Public Value Measurement Framework and outcomes measurement systems, the WA Government is committed to demonstrating clear and quantifiable outcomes of its investments.

#### 5. Reaching the Audience

*Ensuring our stories reach the right people at home and abroad*

The significance of digital culture and the associated creative industries is growing rapidly. Effective Commonwealth policy and programs are vital to maximising the economic and cultural opportunities created.

The DLGSC welcomes the federal Games: Expansion Pack fund through Screen Australia and supports implementation of the Digital Games Tax Offset (DGTO) following industry consultations. WA will have the potential to build on the DGTO. The State Government's commitment to a *WA Games and Interactive Fund* and targeted industry development programs will boost game development and immersive technologies in WA, taking advantage of the global demand for skilled creative workers and providing a larger market for investors and attracting talent to WA. The Fund is predicted to result in a total economic contribution of approximately \$18 million over five years.

Screen industry peak bodies have called for a 20 per cent Australian commissioned content expenditure requirement on global technology streaming businesses, such as Netflix and Disney+, to deliver sustainable industry growth while facing increasing competition with multi-national businesses. Such a requirement would provide opportunities for investment in long-form scripted series production within WA, creating significant opportunities for on-the-job training and delivering the skills needed for the State Government's investment in the planned Perth screen production facility and the *Screen Production Attraction Fund*.

The DLGSC has partnered with the Australia Council to provide digital culture programs to WA participants as part of the Digital Culture Strategy. Additional funding would support increased sector resilience and income generation opportunities in this area.

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*Creative Australia* proposed a National Arts and Culture Accord to define the roles and funding responsibilities of the three tiers of Government in delivering arts and cultural experiences and supporting institutions. Prior to its disbanding in 2020, the Meeting of Cultural Ministers had identified many of the themes from Creative Australia as priority areas for national collaboration. Re-establishment of a national forum of Cultural Ministers is recommended to provide a mechanism to engage all levels of Government, facilitate a coordinated approach and support the success of a National Cultural Policy.