

1. Opening Statement

Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land – the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples – and pay respect to elders, past, present, and emerging.

On 1 July this year, with the appointment of its Council, Writing Australia was established. The Writing Australia Council has already endorsed the first suite of investments and programs to support and promote the Australian literature sector and the development of its markets and audiences. Important in itself, the establishment of Writing Australia completes Creative Australia's implementation of all major actions under our National Cultural Policy, *Revive*.

In becoming Creative Australia, we have experienced the biggest growth period in the history of the organisation. We are investing in more artists and more organisations – in more ways - to deliver more public value than ever before.

Over the financial year 2024-25 we invested a total of \$285.8 million in the sector. Creative Australia's direct investment in regional Australia increased by \$10.6 million to \$35.8 million.

Over 2025 to 2028 we will fund 169 four-year funded organisations across the country, up from 112 in the previous period, with 46 of them in the regions. Our National Performing Arts Partnership Framework now invests in 39 organisations. In total, we now fund over 200 organisations on a multi-year basis, which develops significant national cultural infrastructure across the country.

The other three entities that we have established within Creative Australia are all now well in train and delivering on their objectives.

In July 2024 First Nations Arts commenced. Following extensive consultation, First Nations Arts has put in place a new investment framework for First Nations artists, creative workers, organisations and businesses totalling \$32.1 million.

Music Australia has completed its second year of operation, investing not only in great talent but also in export markets and the broader Australian music industry that supports artists and builds careers.

For the first time, through Creative Australia's research capability, Music Australia's research has set benchmarks for the engagement, discovery and economic impact of the music industry. Music Australia exemplifies Creative Australia's transition from a grant making body to an investment and development agency.

In collaboration with state and territory jurisdictions, over the past year Creative Workplaces developed and its website that provides resources and referrals on issues of pay, working conditions, and workplace health and safety - including discrimination, bullying and harassment. The first of its kind for the creative industries.

This year, Creative Australia launched the Creative Futures Fund, investing \$7.8 million in the telling of Australian stories aimed at engaging national and international audiences at scale. The fund supports works that build partnerships through public and private co-investment.

In August 2025 we launched the inaugural Australian World Heritage Residency Program with the participation of 11 Eligible Australian World Heritage Sites, in collaboration with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and the state and territory governments where the World Heritage sites are located.

I am especially pleased to report that since the merger in July 2023 of Creative Partnerships Australia with the Australia Council, our work to stimulate philanthropic support and build sector skills has thrived. Investment in artists and creative projects through the Australian Cultural Fund, for example, has grown from \$11 million in 2023 to more than \$15 million in the past year. We have also announced the inaugural day of giving to the arts, *AusArt Day*. This is a collective call to action for artists and arts organisations to raise funds for their practice/creative ambition on one national day – Thursday 23 October 2025 – to increase the visibility of arts philanthropy and to encourage giving in support of the arts. [We hope you'll participate.]

With Creative Australia now fully established, we have much to build on, while being mindful that the sector at large still faces a number of challenges. Next year, we will publish Australia's first State of Culture Report. And we look forward to contributing to the next iteration of the National Cultural Policy.

Thank you.