



**NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION  
FOR THE  
VISUAL ARTS**

## NAVA Submission

# The Parliamentary Inquiry into Arts and Cultural Philanthropy

National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA)

2 March 2026

### Acknowledgement

The National Association for Visual Arts (NAVA) Board, staff and community is based across hundreds of sovereign nations and unceded lands throughout the continent that have become colonially known as Australia. NAVA acknowledges the Gadigal, Wangal, Dharug, Dharawal, Dja Dja Wurrung and Gimuy Walubara Yidinji peoples as the Traditional Owners, Custodians, and knowledge-holders of the lands which staff currently work on and extends our deepest respects to all First Nations communities' ancestors and Elders.

Sovereignty was never ceded.  
Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry into arts and cultural philanthropy.

NAVA is Australia's peak body for the visual arts, craft, and design sector. We are a membership organisation that brings together the many voices of the contemporary arts sector to improve the fundamental conditions of work and practice. We advocate for the rights of artists and arts workers and champion the essential role that the visual arts play in shaping an innovative and inclusive society. We do this through advocacy, education, and the Code of Practice for Visual Arts Craft and Design.

Australia's visual arts sector is largely composed of sole traders, micro-enterprises, artist-run initiatives, small-to-medium organisations (S2Ms), and First Nations art centres, alongside major public institutions. While philanthropy plays an important complementary role, structural settings currently advantage larger metropolitan institutions over the distributed ecology that sustains working artists.

This submission addresses the key issues identified in the Terms of Reference.

## Current levels of philanthropic and private support to the cultural sector

Available evidence indicates that private support is unevenly distributed across the cultural sector. The Australia Business Arts Foundation (ABAF) Survey of Private Sector Support (2009/10), reproduced in subsequent sector analysis, provides an indicative "share of giving by art form" across categories including art galleries, museums/heritage, festivals, music, theatre and visual arts, craft and design.<sup>1</sup> Evidence summarised by Infrastructure NSW suggests that 2009-10, art galleries received the largest share of private sector support (reported 23% / \$51 million), highlighting the tendency for philanthropy to concentrate in collecting institutions and major-visible platforms.<sup>2</sup>

More recent national totals cited by Creative Partnerships Australia indicate substantial overall giving.<sup>3</sup> However, contemporary reporting does not consistently provide breakdowns by artform, organisation-size, geography or First Nations-led status. This limits policy design and risks reforms disproportionately benefiting already well-resourced institutions.

It is also essential to recognise that artists themselves are among the greatest contributors to the arts and cultural sector, providing significant in-kind support through unpaid labour, volunteer governance roles, self-funded production costs and the donations of artworks to

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<sup>1</sup> [Arts Philanthropy: Towards a Better Practice Model](#), 2013, Asia Pacific Social Impact Leadership Centre, Melbourne Business School, The University of Melbourne.

<sup>2</sup> [Infrastructure NSW Australian Arts Sector Funding Review](#), 2012.

<sup>3</sup> [Creative Partnerships Australia National Cultural Policy Submission](#), 2022.

fundraising initiatives. Reported average earnings for visual artists is around \$23,000 per year<sup>4</sup> and they routinely subsidise organisational activity, exhibitions and fundraisers through unpaid hours and donated artwork. This hidden form of contribution is not captured in conventional measures of private support but is critical to sustaining much of the sector's activity.

Growth in structured major giving programs has largely benefited institutions with development staff, boards connected to wealth networks, and established donor networks. Sector analysis, including Noble Ambition's Big Picture Giving report, indicates that increases in Australian arts philanthropy have largely occurred through institutional campaigns and structured major donor strategies. Smaller organisations and independent practitioners often lack the infrastructure required to participate on equivalent terms.

## Recommendations

1. Develop a nationally consistent data and reporting framework for private support to the arts sector, including annual publication of giving by artform, organisation size, geography and First Nations-led status.
2. Recognise and measure in-kind contributions including donated artworks and volunteer labour within national reporting frameworks.
3. Consider policy settings that reduce structural reliance on unpaid labour, including strengthened requirements for payment of artist fees where public funding is provided.

## New and Emerging Funding Mechanisms

Digital fundraising is increasingly relevant within the visual arts sector. Access to and benefit from digital fundraising mechanisms, however, varies significantly.

The Australian Cultural Fund (ACF) has expanded opportunities for organisations to offer tax-deductible donations through a centralised platform. At the same time, peer-to-peer crowdfunding and DIY platforms are used by artists and independent projects.

However, most individual artists and small independent projects do not hold Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status and cannot offer tax-deductible receipts directly. This limits their ability to participate in giving structures that rely on tax incentives. While auspicing arrangements or the ACF can assist, they do not fully resolve inequity in access.

Digital platforms have created new fundraising tools, but research shows that technology amplifies existing capacity rather than compensating for its absence. Where development teams and systems exist, digital tools extend reach. Those without infrastructure face continued barriers.

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<sup>4</sup> [Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia](#), 2024, David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya, Creative Australia.

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index emphasises that digital inclusion is fundamental to enabling people to fully participate in economic, social and cultural life. The Index consistently demonstrates lower digital inclusion in regional and remote areas, including many First Nations communities. This digital divide directly impacts the capacity of artists and arts organisations to access and benefit from online fundraising opportunities.<sup>5</sup>

## Recommendations

4. Government-supported matched-funding programs for small-to-medium and First Nations-led organisations.
5. Expanded pathways for artists and independent projects to access DGR status or equivalent tax incentives.
6. Targeted investment in digital capability building, including infrastructure, training, and fundraising literacy across the sector, with focus on regional and First Nations arts organisations.
7. National standards for ethical digital fundraising, including protection of artists' rights and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP).

## Effectiveness of Government Policies and Programs

NAVA acknowledges the role of government in enabling philanthropic giving to the arts. The Cultural Gifts Program (CGP), which supports the donation of significant cultural property including artworks by living Australian artists, alongside tax deductibility arrangements, the Australian Cultural Fund (ACF) and the work of Creative Partnerships Australia, all provide important pathways for private support.

The CGP has been particularly significant in strengthening public collections and supporting living Australian artists through acquisition pathways. Complementary reforms to broader tax and regulatory settings would further enhance sustainability across the sector.

Small-to-medium visual arts organisations, artist-run initiatives, and independent First Nations organisations frequently face barriers in accessing philanthropic support, including limited fundraising capacity, level of administration associated with compliance, and obligations for DGR endorsement.<sup>6</sup>

Obtaining and maintaining DGR status involves governance and reporting requirements that can be disproportionate for artist-led and small-scale organisational models. Requirements such as designated “responsible persons” and ongoing compliance obligations can mean moving away from artist-led governance.

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<sup>5</sup> Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: 2025 Australian Digital Inclusion Index, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society, RMIT University, Swinburne University of Technology and Telstra, accessed February 18, 2026: [2025 Australian Digital Inclusion Index](#)

<sup>6</sup> Productivity Commission, Future Foundations for Giving, Inquiry Report, 2024 (Report no. 104), p. 6, accessed February 23, 2026: <https://assets.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/philanthropy/report/philanthropy.pdf>

Philanthropy functions most effectively when it complements stable public investment. It should not be expected to replace core public funding.

## Recommendations

8. Streamlined and expanded DGR pathways for small and First Nations-led arts organisations.
9. Administrative support grants to build fundraising and compliance capacity in the small to medium sector.
10. Safeguards to ensure philanthropy supplements rather than replaces public investment.

## Incentives and Disincentives for Philanthropic Giving and Private Support Incentives

The visual arts sector operates within tax settings not designed for irregular income patterns and micro-enterprise structures.<sup>7</sup>

DGR governance and reporting requirements can deter small organisations.<sup>8</sup> For small and artist-led organisations, “responsible person” requirements and public fund governance structures can be difficult to achieve under a Board of professional artists and arts workers whose critical expertise and input should be considered “responsible”. Streamlined and proportionate DGR pathways would significantly improve equity of access.

The CGP remains an important mechanism for strengthening public collections and encouraging philanthropic acquisition of Australian art. Strengthening CGP settings would support increased acquisition of contemporary Australian work and improve representation across gender, regional and First Nations artists.

A more coherent and proportionate regulatory framework would unlock private support in ways that align with contemporary practice, cultural diversity, and regional inclusion.

## Recommendations

11. Enhanced tax incentives for multi-year operational and unrestricted giving.
12. Targeted tax offsets or co-contribution schemes for donations directed to First Nations-led arts organisations.
13. Simplified reporting frameworks proportionate to organisational size.

## Potential Government Initiatives to Increase Philanthropic Participation

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<sup>7</sup> NAVA submission, [The Art of Tax Reform](#), NSW Govt consultation, 2025.

<sup>8</sup> Productivity Commission, Future Foundations for Giving, Inquiry Report, 2024 (Report no. 104), p. 12, accessed February 23, 2026: <https://assets.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/philanthropy/report/philanthropy.pdf>

Private giving is an important component of a sustainable arts ecosystem. Philanthropy functions most effectively when it operates in partnership with strong public investment and a confident cultural policy framework. While new and emerging fundraising mechanisms, including digital platforms, have diversified revenue streams, structural and policy barriers continue to limit participation.<sup>9</sup>

Philanthropy is most productive where trust, capability and long-term relationships are present. However, without proportionate regulatory settings and investment in organisational capacity, access to private support remains uneven. Strengthening the enabling environment for philanthropy must therefore focus not only on incentives for donors, but also on equitable participation for artists and small organisations.

## Recommendations

14. Integrate philanthropic development within national cultural policy.
15. Align philanthropic incentives with equity, regional development and First Nations self-determination objectives.
16. Recognise the arts sector as an interconnected ecosystem rather than a competitive hierarchy of institutions.

## Conclusion

Philanthropy has an important and growing role in Australia's arts ecosystem. However, without structural reform, private capital will continue to concentrate within large metropolitan institutions.

Government policy should maintain strong public investment as the foundation of cultural infrastructure, reform tax and regulatory settings to improve equitable access, and strengthen capacity across the arts ecology that sustains working artists. Philanthropic growth should be guided by principles of cultural rights, fairness, and self-determination, ensuring that private sector support reinforces the long-term sustainability of the visual arts sector.

Please contact us for any further information we can provide.

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<sup>9</sup> Adrian Collette, AM, "The Vision for Creative Australia," Philanthropy Australia, accessed February 25, 2026, <https://www.philanthropy.org.au/news-and-stories/the-vision-for-creative-australia>

## NAVA's Recommendations

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