



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

National Cultural Policy

SUBMISSION TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

3 October 2025

Introduction

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (the department), welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Senate Environment and Communications Reference Committee.

This submission is intended to provide the Committee with an overview of achievements under the National Cultural Policy, *Revive*, to date, as relevant to the Committee's Inquiry into the National Cultural Policy.

The submission also highlights some of the current and emerging opportunities and challenges facing the cultural and creative sector since the launch of *Revive* and provides information on the government's commitment to develop a new National Cultural Policy.

Cultural and creative sector

The cultural and creative sector plays a critical role in upholding and advancing our knowledge-based economy. The sector makes a valuable contribution to our economic and social wellbeing by driving innovation, enriching our self-expression and showcasing Australia's national identity.

The cultural and creative sector is a dynamic and multifaceted landscape comprising of:

- Traditional arts activities such as film and television activities, music production and distribution, literature, creative and performing arts and visual arts.
- Cultural services, including libraries and archives, and museums and galleries.
- Media activities, such as print media and publishing, radio broadcasting, internet publishing and broadcasting.
- Professional services, such as architecture services and design and fashion design, and advertising and promotion.
- Arts education.

In 2023-24 cultural and creative activity had an estimated 2.5% share of the total economy, equating to \$67.4 billion, which is comparable to the rental, hiring and real estate services industry.¹ This is a 4.1 billion (6.6%) increase from 2022-23. The growth of cultural and creative activity has primarily been driven by 'Advertising and Promotion' and 'Print Media and Publishing'. Further support systems will be of benefit in helping the whole sector to achieve growth and maintain its position within Australia's economy.

Beyond a fiscal measure, Australians recognise the positive impacts of creative engagement on individuals, communities and the economy. In particular, there is strong recognition of the benefits of arts and creativity for our wellbeing, our ability to express ourselves, child development, cultural awareness and adaptability and resilience.² Arts and creativity connect us and also play a critical role in building inclusion. There is an emerging body of evidence of the potential of arts and creativity to build and strengthen social cohesion.³

Creative arts and music therapy have also been shown to have positive impacts on people's mental health and wellbeing. The value of culture and creativity was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many Australians used creative activities and experiences to protect and enhance their mental health and wellbeing while in lockdown.⁴ During the pandemic, 80% of Australians believed that digital games improve mental health and 74% believed games connect people.⁵

Sector context pre-*Revive*

The cultural and creative sector faced the most difficult period in generations through the COVID-19 pandemic. The sector was severely impacted from early 2020, experiencing unparalleled disruption including forced closures of live performance venues, museums and galleries for long or indefinite periods.⁶

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported in April 2020, that 94% of businesses in the arts and recreation services were affected by restrictions, compared with an average of 53% for other industries.⁷ For the two months between 1 July and 31 August 2021, through a national survey of 3,000 professionals, *I Lost My Gig*, reported that 32,737 gigs and events were cancelled equating to \$94.3 million in lost income, with 99% of those professionals having no income protection or event cancellation insurance.⁸

While the cultural and creative sector is resilient, the pandemic left a legacy of changed audience behaviour, lost businesses and organisations, and a lack of skilled sector workers.⁹

¹ Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sport and the Arts, [Cultural and Creative activity](#), Bureau of Communication, Arts and Regional Research website, accessed 25 September 2025

² Creative Australia, [Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey](#), Australian Government, 2023

³ A New Approach, [Society and Place: Transformative impacts of arts, culture and creativity](#), 2020

⁴ Creative Australia, [Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey](#), Australian Government, 2023

⁵ JE Brand and J Jervis, [Digital Australia 2022](#), Interactive Games and Entertainment Association, 2021

⁶ Creative Australia, [Impacts of COVID-19 on the Cultural and Creative Industries](#), Australian Government, 2022

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (April 2020/2020) [Business Indicators, Business Impacts of COVID-19, April 2020](#), accessed 17 September 2025

⁸ I Lost My Gig Australia, [Losses Continue](#), I Lost My Gig website, 2021, accessed 17 September 2025

⁹ Creative Australia, [Impacts of COVID-19 on the Cultural and Creative Industries](#), Australian Government, 2022

Revive

In January 2023, the Australian Government released *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*, Australia's National Cultural Policy.

With over \$286 million in initial funding, and a further \$755.5 million subsequently committed, *Revive* is the primary policy through which the government is delivering the many commitments made to the cultural and creative sector.

The government's total investment through the Arts portfolio for the arts and cultural sector in 2025-26 is \$1.1 billion with a further investment over the forward estimates 2026-27 to 2028-29 of \$3.4 billion as at the 2025-26 Budget.

Revive is delivering new momentum so that Australia's creative workers, organisations and audiences can continue to thrive and grow, and positioning our arts, culture and heritage as central to Australia's future. Further information on the development of *Revive* is at **Attachment A**.

Progress under the National Cultural Policy, *Revive*

Significant progress has been made under *Revive*. As at 25 September 2025, 72 of the 85 actions have been delivered. The department regularly publishes updates on delivered *Revive* actions on its website.¹⁰

The success of *Revive* is a whole-of government endeavour. A National Cultural Policy Steering Committee, comprising of representatives from across government, oversees the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of progress under *Revive*. We continue to work closely with stakeholders to deliver outcomes that align with the 5 pillars and the guiding priorities of *Revive*.

Establishment of Creative Australia and four new bodies

The centrepiece of *Revive* is the establishment of Creative Australia, to restore and modernise the Australia Council for the Arts. With an additional \$199 million in funding over 4 years from 2023–24, Creative Australia is the government's principal arts investment and advisory body.

Within Creative Australia, a dedicated First Nations-led body has been formed. This is critical to self-determination, supporting the telling of First Nations histories and stories, and strengthening the capacity of First Nations creative workers.

Recognising creative workers as vital contributors to our national culture and economy, *Revive* established Creative Workplaces within Creative Australia to provide advice on issues of pay, safety, codes of conduct and welfare across the sector.

Creative Australia has also established Music Australia, to support the Australian music industry to grow, including through strategic initiatives and industry partnerships, research, skills development and export promotion.

Writing Australia has been established within Creative Australia, to provide direct support to the literature sector, including for writers and publishers, to grow local and international audiences for Australian books and establish a National Poet Laureate for Australia.

¹⁰ Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sport and the Arts, [Progress under Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place](#), Office for the Arts website, accessed 25 September, 2025

Support for live music through *Revive Live*

The *Revive Live* program was first announced as part of the *Critical Support for the Live Music and Festivals* measure in the 2024–25 Budget. *Revive Live* was created to support established live music venues and music festivals showcasing Australian bands and artists. *Revive Live* ensures the long-term sustainability of the live music sector.

The government continues to provide critical support to live music venues and festivals that showcase Australian artists by expanding and extending the *Revive Live* program with an additional investment of \$25 million over two years from 2025–26.

Under the first round, *Revive Live* provided \$7.8 million in funding to support 63 music festival-based activities and 49 live music venues.

This funding is assisting live music businesses to continue to perform in the current operating climate, limiting venue closures and event cancellations, and stimulating long-term sustainability. It also includes a focus on activities that improve accessibility and provide participation opportunities for audiences, and career pathways for musicians and music workers with disability.

Continued access to local content on streaming services

Through *Revive*, the government committed to introducing Australian screen content requirements on streaming platforms to ensure continued access to local stories and content. The government recommitted to this policy during the 2025 election campaign.

Streaming services are one of the most popular ways Australians consume screen content. However, unlike free-to-air commercial television and subscription television broadcasting services, these streaming services are not subject to Australian content requirements.

Whilst consultation is taking longer than we'd like, it remains government policy to introduce Australian screen content requirements on streaming platforms.

Investment in local cultural infrastructure

Under *Revive*, the government is investing in local arts and cultural infrastructure across Australia.

This includes committing a further \$13 million for the Burnie Cultural Precinct in Tasmania. The project involves upgrading the Burnie Arts and Function Centre and integrating it with the Museum and Art Gallery and civic plaza to create an inclusive environment with public spaces for co-creation and local events. The project is a joint initiative between the Australian Government and Burnie City Council.

Stage 1 of the redevelopment of the Burnie Cultural Precinct was officially opened by the Hon. Catherine King MP in October 2024. Construction on the project is currently underway and once complete, the precinct is expected to attract 100,000 visitors per year, boosting tourism and the local economy.

Bundanon, a recognised National Collecting Institution in regional Australia, received \$2.4 million in 2022–23 to support its expanded operations in the Shoalhaven region. In addition, Bundanon received an ongoing and indexed funding uplift from approximately \$1.7 million per annum to around \$10 million per annum through the 2023–24 Budget. The funding has supported Bundanon's positioning as a regional arts and cultural centre of excellence facilitating local, regional and national connections through audience and community engagement. Supported by government investment, Bundanon has reported record visitor numbers and delivered new and engaging public programs and events.

NAISDA Dance College has received \$5 million to improve and expand its Kariong campus. This investment ensures the campus is fit for purpose and will enable the college to continue delivering vital vocational training in cultural and contemporary First Nations dance to talented young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Access to arts education

A guiding principle of *Revive* is that every student should have the opportunity to receive an education that includes culture, creativity, humanities and the arts. The government continues to support creative practice in the classroom through the delivery of five arts subjects (dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts) under the Australian Curriculum.

Under *Revive*, the government committed to support specialist in-school arts education programs that directly draw from cultural and creative sector expertise. The programs – for primary and high school students at participating schools –, focus on areas of identified disadvantage and to support creative practice in the classroom through the delivery of the five arts subjects under the Australian Curriculum.

The government has also supported four specialist arts education organisations: Bell Shakespeare, Australian Youth Orchestra, The Song Room and Poetry in Action. These programs provide an opportunity for students to receive an education that includes culture, creativity, humanities and the arts, as well as improve grades in English, maths, science and technology. These types of programs are also shown to reduce depression, improve social and emotional wellbeing, and resilience in children from disadvantaged communities. These programs can also lead to increased student engagement and attendance.

Progress on First Nations priorities

Government investment is enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to conserve, revitalise and express their cultures, including \$36.8 million in 2024-25 through the Indigenous Languages and Arts program in the delivery of 122 community-based First Nations languages and arts activities. While \$3.8 million is helping to preserve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural content held on vulnerable magnetic tape media. An additional \$8.7 million over three years has been committed through the 2025-26 Budget for the continuation of the Languages Policy Partnership from 2025-26 to 2027-28.

The government released its response to the Productivity Commission's study report into the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual arts and crafts market. The study examined the value, nature and structure of markets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual arts and craft, and provided 26 findings and 10 recommendations to government. It will strengthen the protections through new legislation and policies as well as bolstering the Indigenous Art Code, improving funding arrangements, and increasing professional support and development opportunities for First Nations artists and communities.

Increased access for audiences and sector professionals

Revive is increasing access for more Australians to experience art where they live. The \$11.8 million investment to the National Gallery of Australia to establish *Sharing the National Collection* Initiative has supported the long-term loan of works to regional and suburban cultural institutions across Australia. The *Sharing the National Collection* program has extended its reach across Australia. As at 25 September 2025, the Minister and the National Gallery of Australia have announced that 282 works of art will be on loan across 27 institutions around Australia.

Revive is also increasing access for audiences and sector professionals of all abilities. The government released *Equity: The Arts and Disability Associated Plan* on 14 November 2024. This plan is a four-year roadmap of activities to build the foundations for equity for artists, arts workers and audiences with disability, with an \$8.1 million investment in actions to drive sustainable and meaningful change over time.

Early outcomes of *Revive*

The department's analysis of project monitoring updates and reports has identified the following early outcomes:

- the whole-of-government approach to the policy has connected diverse stakeholders, portfolios and communities in the delivery of *Revive*.
- the actions within *Revive* assisted in reinforcing:
 - respect for First Nations cultural experience and expression, by supporting First Nations-led implementation
 - trust in institutions by stabilising and expanding funding and regulatory settings
 - innovative and new approaches to addressing gaps in cultural experience, access and participation
 - equity as a critical dimension of cultural access and participation by expanding strategies and opportunities for inclusion.¹¹

Development of a new National Cultural Policy

Revive, is due to end in late 2027. The Minister for Arts has stated the government will commence consulting with the sector to help inform the next National Cultural Policy in 2026. A new National Cultural Policy will provide the opportunity to build on the outcomes delivered through *Revive*. The consultation will provide the industry with further opportunity to raise current and emerging challenges facing the sector including those detailed below.

Current and emerging challenges in the sector

While *Revive* has delivered significant benefits to the sector, since its release, the sector continues to face challenges.

A key concern among stakeholders is that growth of the cultural and creative sector is at risk due to pressures such as the rise of artificial intelligence (AI).

This is further compounded by cost of living pressures impacting discretionary spending of households.

The sector, like many others, is increasingly affected by changed production and consumption patterns, and rapid technology advances. While demand for original and local content is strong, the rise of streaming services and digital platforms means that Australian arts and cultural outputs face increasing competition and risk being lost amongst the mass availability of content.

Opportunities, risks and challenges of AI on the cultural and creative sectors

Some artists and creators are early adopters of AI and use it by choice in practice. However unregulated AI is having detrimental impacts, particularly in terms of the economic viability of Australia's creative economy, the misuse of intellectual property (for example musicians, First Nations People and their art, and authors) and the impacts on job security (e.g. voice over actors and musicians).

Portfolio responsibility for technology policy sits with the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, while the Attorney-General's Department is responsible for copyright law. The department is working closely

¹¹ Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sport and the Arts, [Annual Reports | Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts](#), Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sport and the Arts website, to be published in late 2025.

with these and other government agencies, including Creative Australia, to ensure the needs and concerns of the cultural and creative sector are adequately represented in Australia's response.

Copyright

Copyright is a fundamental source of income that sustains artists and creative industries more generally. A large number of representatives of Australia's creative industries, copyright holders, content licensing bodies and media organisations have expressed concern about the tech sector and the Productivity Commission calling for Australia's copyright law to be amended to include a fair use and data mining exception.

Revive commits to maintaining a strong copyright framework, ensuring the reasonable and equitable use of copyright material, and to support artists as both workers and creators.

Transparency and labelling

Culture and creative stakeholders maintain that transparency of AI outputs is critical to safeguarding Australia's cultural and creative sector. Technologies such as watermarking and labelling can help create transparency by making AI-generated content clearly identifiable, thereby assisting stakeholders to understand when AI systems that could impact them are in use.

A key challenge for the sector is the misuse of AI resulting in the creation of deep fakes, appearance and mimicking voice which are not subject to copyright provisions. Industry representatives have called for regulatory change to introduce mandatory labelling and watermarking of AI-generated audio, visual and written content.

Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property

There is an increased risk of harm by AI on Australia's First Nations artists and cultural practitioners. There are also concerns about the production and perpetuation of inauthentic and fake First Nations art, design, stories and culture.

Addressing the use of AI-generated images of First Nations people and artworks

AI-generated 'stock images' that claim to depict First Nations people and artworks are concerning. Such use of AI poses negative cultural and economic threats to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creators, knowledge holders, and communities.

The department is working closely with a number of other government agencies to determine the best way forward to address these concerns.

Taxation and benefits to the cultural and creative sector

Cost of living pressures and audience purchase behaviours have shifted substantially in recent years. The sector has raised potential tax reform ideas including through the recently held New South Wales government Art of Tax Reform Summit. Reform ideas raised at the summit include theatre and live performance tax offsets, simplifying claiming expenses, strengthening incentives and systems for donating to the arts, property tax benefits for creative spaces and reforming income tax for some artists, including on prize money.

The government currently provides a number of benefits through the tax system including offsets for film, television and games, known as the Australian Screen Production and Digital Games Incentive. These benefits provide continuity and certainty for industry, and underpin ongoing investment in our local screen stories and businesses. The 2024-25 financial year was a record year for support provided under the Digital Games Incentive. Rebates valuing almost \$1.1 billion were provided to Australian production and digital games companies which had spent more than \$3.7 billion in creating film, television and digital games content. This included over \$760 million to support local Australian productions.

The government also offers taxation incentives through the Cultural Gifts Program to encourage people to donate cultural items to public institutions with Deductible Gift Recipient status. The Cultural Gifts Program receives around 550 applications with a total value of approximately \$86 million per financial year. Artists and

creators make 38% of donations, and 22% of which are made to institutions located in regional and remote Australia.

In addition, the government also facilitates and incentivises giving through Creative Australia's dollar-for-dollar matched funding programs Plus1, MATCH Lab and ACF Boost.

Strengthening the teaching of arts and creativity in schools and arts career pathways

Specialist arts education programs include capacity building opportunities for teachers, for example by partnering experienced music teachers with generalist teachers. In addition to mentoring opportunities to upskill teachers in delivering creative subjects, specialist programs also support generalist teachers using creative skills to teach non-creative subjects, for example using drama techniques to teach aspects of a science class.

While the current specialist arts education programs are achieving positive outcomes, stakeholders have expressed that there is an opportunity for the government and non-government school sectors to build on existing support by offering ongoing funding streams for arts education, in order to reach as many students as possible. Sector feedback has emphasised the importance of an open, competitive arts education program offering multi-year funding, to ensure the sustainability of arts education providers, and to continue to provide career pathways for arts workers. This also aligns with the recommendations of the Creative Industry Youth Advisory Group (the Youth Advisory Group) relating to providing increased access to the arts for everyone, strengthening arts and creativity in schools and supporting specialist in-school arts education programs.

Stakeholders and the Youth Advisory Group have also described a trend in creative industries courses being closed or restructured, both in universities and vocational education and training resulting in limited course options on offer for prospective students. Stakeholders have noted that this signals to the wider community, including to primary and secondary education providers, that the creative industries are of little value. Stakeholders have also noted that the decline in courses offered is coinciding with the cultural and creative sector experiencing critical workforce and skills shortages.

This trend was reflected in the Creative Workforce Scoping Study, which was jointly undertaken by Creative Australia and Services and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) as an action under *Revive*, and released in March 2025.¹² It provides a robust evidence base to support future strategic investment in creative workforce development, address skills shortages and strengthen career pathways in the arts. SaCSA is using the study findings to work with key stakeholders to develop their work program of industry-led solutions, collaborating with government, vocational education and training (VET), higher education, and creative industry employers.

The department regularly consults with key arts education stakeholder groups in considering these challenges and investigating potential opportunities for arts education funding programs.

Attachments

Attachment A: Development of *Revive*, the National Cultural Policy

¹² Creative Australia and Service and Creative Skills Australia, [Creative Workforce Scoping Study](#), Australian Government, 2025

Attachment A

Development of *Revive*, the National Cultural Policy

The starting point for developing *Revive* was *Creative Australia*, the National Cultural Policy launched by Prime Minister Julia Gillard in 2013, which celebrates Australia's strong, diverse and inclusive culture. It describes the essential role arts and culture play in the life of every Australian and how creativity is central to Australia's economic and social success: a creative nation is a productive nation.¹³ *Revive* builds on the model provided by *Creative Australia (2013)*, its 5 goals and its themes.

Consultation

Revive was shaped by the diverse voices of the Australian cultural and creative sector following an extensive national consultation process during 2022. Town Hall events were held across the country for stakeholders and community members to convey their views. Sixteen events were held in every state and territory between 6 July and 22 August 2022, with over 800 people attending.¹⁴

There was also a public submissions process which received over 1200 submissions including submissions from state and territory governments. Over 1,000 public submissions are available on the arts website and more than 200 were made privately and were not published.¹⁵

Expert Review Panels and Policy Advisory Group

Five Expert Review Panels were appointed for each policy pillar and were responsible for identifying key issues and themes raised through the consultation process, including through the review of public submissions. The Minister for the Arts appointed 5 Expert Review Panels to draw from relevant expertise and lived experience across the culture and creative sector.

The Policy Advisory Group reviewed advice from each of the 5 Expert Review Panels, and provided overarching strategic advice to inform the development of the National Cultural Policy. The Policy Advisory Group's independent advice to the Minister for the Arts (final report) was published on the department's website on 30 January 2023.¹⁶

¹³ Australian Government, [Creative Australia—National Cultural Policy \(2013\)](#), 2013, accessed 17 September 2025.

¹⁴ Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sport and the Arts, [Town Hall Events - National Cultural Policy](#), Office of the Arts website, accessed 17 September 2025

¹⁵ Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sport and the Arts, [Have your Say Revive: a place for every story a story for every place](#), Office of the Arts website, accessed 17 September 2025

¹⁶ Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sport and the Arts, [National Cultural Policy Review Panels and Advisory Group](#), Office of the Arts website, accessed 17 September 2025