

Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences

National Cultural Policy Submission

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1. Towards a National Cultural Policy

The National Cultural Policy consultation is a major opportunity to reform and renew Australia's commitment to the arts, its creative industries and the broader areas of cultural life and value in innovation and heritage and social cohesion.

The 2010 National Cultural Policy development will have a broad impact on Australia and contribute to productivity growth and social inclusion. Therefore the Prime Minister should take an active leadership role in developing and implementing the policy and ensure that all the relevant portfolios are committed to its success. The cultural policy will be integrated into programs in universities, schools, local government, new media and longstanding media and cultural institutions in both settler and indigenous communities – creating a cultural infrastructure for the Australian economy and society, and building on the core activities in the arts and creative industries.

Towards a national cultural policy offered a discussion framework as a foundation for understanding the nature of Australian culture and governments' role in supporting it. The Minister for the Environment, Water Heritage and the Art's framework has proved a useful base on which to test and develop ideas and suggestions. The focus on innovation and enabling new creative work is especially welcome.

Following Australia's successful investment in building its arts institutions, training and research organisations and providing opportunities for cultural engagement, the Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences sees two urgent tasks for the Australian Government so that we make a creative imaginative Australia for the 21st century.

Firstly, the Government should be using its resources to **enable innovation** in the arts and rapid development of Australian artists and art makers, given the technological change and new communications networks which have created a range of new ways for Australians to participate in and contribute to the arts.

Secondly, the Government must **support and encourage connections** between the arts and broader areas of civic culture, industry and social policy. It should connect arts-based innovation and experience to audiences, investors and education institutions and through them to broader areas of community and industry.

The Australian Government is well aware of the international and Australian research which reveals the contribution of creative industries and the arts to academic achievement, creative imagination, and in creating productive networks of innovators and entrepreneurs.

More broadly Australians value highly their cultural life as both audiences and makers, as attitude and participation surveys attest. The statistics reveal our cultural life: we are book readers and music makers, performers, digital editors and film makers at every level from

cinema and concert goers, hobbyists and students, professional artists and international prize winners.

This bedrock of evidence is the base of Government policy making in supporting development of cultural activity. The next step, after establishing a strong policy framework, should be programs lead to a lively, creative and inclusive society and will also boost Australian productivity. CHASS urges the Minister for the Arts and the Prime Minister, to ensure the national cultural policy becomes part of its policies in industry, reconciliation, the digital economy, education and community services, as well as driving delivery of services in the core heritage and arts portfolio.

Such a cultural policy should include:

- Support for our schools, where the government is already committed to a national curriculum which will include exploration and learning of our culture in history, the creative arts and languages. The national curriculum process is an integral part of the National Cultural Policy;
- Integration of investment in core cultural institutions currently supported by federal, state and local governments, recognising that the national government needs to work in partnership with other levels of government who have invested in building community based art and creative industries clusters of activities and organisations;
- A focus on investment in new Australian art works particularly in cross art form and innovative work which creates and attracts new audiences;
- Funding for events and institutions which connect cultural sectors with broader industry and community activities;
- Support for knowledge transfer and exchanges between university based research and training in cultural area and relevant areas in the public, private and non-profit sectors;
- Recognition of the arts, humanities and social sciences in innovation policies through investment development of new products and services based on IP;
- Further integration of the national broadcasters as key producers and distributors of the arts and related cultural work;
- Recognition of collecting institutions as a major resource in supporting both current and heritage cultural materials while also functioning as a major resource in the Web 2.0 environment of free flowing information and knowledge creation.

Many of these areas and opportunities have been identified in earlier reviews or debates as important. With adoption of a National Cultural Policy, the government has a rare opportunity to bring them together and set some clear goals for creative innovation, increasing participation, growing the creative industries, and public awareness of the value of the creative talent and knowledge which contributes to a strong Australian culture.

2. The Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences

In preparing this submission on a National Cultural Policy, we have sought input from more than 80 member organisations including the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia (ASSA) and the Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) and other peak bodies in the creative and performing arts disciplines of Australian Universities like the National Association of Tertiary Music Schools, Museums Australia, Ausdance, Craft Australia, and the Australian Major Performing Arts Group. While this submission is a fair reflection of members' views and feedback, there will be significant diversity in detailed views given the range of the Council's membership and the depth of knowledge of specific cultural issues. This submission refers to work and recommendations of several member organisations which will be making detailed submissions. CHASS will also work to brief its network on the range of views and programs suggested during the policy consultation so they take an active part in the next stage of development.

The [Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences](#) promotes and provides advocacy for the humanities, arts and social sciences and serves as a coordinating forum for academics, students, business, practitioners and the broader community. CHASS has [82 member organisations](#) representing learned academies, university partners and faculties; national councils and major peak bodies; research centres, training and collecting institutions; practitioner and professional associations and learned societies; and creative industry groups.

CHASS and its members have taken an active role in cultural and innovation policy debates. Over the past year the Council has released [papers](#) on the role of design in innovation and an analysis of the history of innovation policy and its relationship to the creative arts. Another publication documented the ageing of the academic workforce, underlining the need for good strategy in higher education for building skills in Australia to meet the future demand for creative, knowledgeable citizens with active participation in the work force.

The Council is developing a proposal for a national forum for the humanities, arts and social sciences which will connect networks within and between individual art forms and disciplines across the sector. CHASS believes the national forum will be a major driver in implementation of a successful National Cultural Policy.

3. Discussion Framework

The discussion framework identifies the role of government as “not to directly shape culture but to enable all Australians – whatever their background, beliefs and abilities – to explore and nurture their creativity and draw in the wealth of our culture to enrich us all (Point 10).”

The Council agrees with the enabling role as the space for government action.

The key questions the Government is asking in its consultation process are:

- What do you think should be priorities for a national cultural policy?
- What positive steps would you like to see to advance Australian culture?
- What other issues do you think are important?

The submission provides a response to these questions, grouping positive steps with each of the priorities it identifies.

4. Priorities

4.1 Broadening cultural policy from its foundation in arts policy

In the history of Australia's arts funding, the word 'culture' has been essentially equated with the arts, particularly those from the non-profit sector. The Australian arts industry is a success story and shows the strength of commitment of successive Governments in investing in the arts since the 1940s. We have built solid cultural institutions, have won a collectors' cabinet full of international awards; built an expectation of world standard performance and visual arts with an engaged and growing audience; and supported literary writing and publishing.

The time has come, however, to recognise that cultural policy and arts policy are not synonymous. A wide ranging cultural policy needs to start by asking the fundamental questions about culture. It needs to set a broad range of objectives, a vision, of Australian culture – what it encompasses and the tools by which to facilitate its development.

The discussion framework begins to do this, and sets out four notions of culture – heritage, innovation, creation and expression. These concepts will help shape our understanding of cultural potential and our goals, but we also need to identify the main areas where the policy will impact.

CHASS believes Australians support a national culture which demonstrates their creativity and ability to develop talent. They also expect to have access to the best of this talent and work – whether through non-profit arts, national broadcasting, commercial retailing or government funded libraries and collections. The Council thus welcomes the broad definition of culture contained in the discussion framework, and the layers it encompasses. Including heritage alongside creativity and innovation means Australia supports not only the means of reflecting our culture, but also those additional elements that foster its preservation and regeneration.

[Professor David Throsby's](#) conception of culture as a series of concentric layers, with the creative arts at its heart, is a useful tool in thinking about how the National Cultural Policy can operate. That model looks at cultural or arts content as a proportion of the overall goods and services produced by an industry to arrive at "core", "wider" and "related" industries. It also could be used as a way of looking at the relationship between the creative arts and broader activities based on developing and exploring culture, from Australia Day concerts and citizenship affirmation ceremonies at the "related" layers of the circle, education and research in cultural studies and the humanities in "wider" cultural activities, and dedicated arts festivals at the "core".

Using this model, the Government can look to support non-commercial core activities which nourish Australian cultural experience, but which also contribute to creativity and innovation in other areas of the economy and society.

A National Cultural Policy should also be an expression of Australia's democratic values, providing an equal opportunity for all Australians to participate in the development of Australian culture. At a crucial crossroads in understanding and incorporating the diverse nature of the Australian polity, a National Cultural Policy needs to inform and encourage the affirmation of the democratic beliefs, liberties and laws on which an enriching cultural life and a prosperous and innovative economy depend. Australia's first cultural policy, 1994's *Creative Nation* started from this fundamental democratic commitment.

Australians rely on their artists to express and explore their culture from contemporary music and major events like festivals, but this policy should recognise that the cultural policy connects also to civic values and traditions. Coordination of policies across education, arts and heritage and citizenship is necessary to achieve the potential in rich expression and exploration of Australian life and values.

There are two significant areas of Australian cultural policy relevant to the Council's membership and strategic direction – the creative industries is one, and arts policy the other. We urge that a National Cultural Policy should refrain from making a choice between the two, or prioritising one above the other. The use of the Throsby model allows development of the two areas in an interdependent way. Both are reliant on innovation to renew and regenerate.

Australia has already built significant for-profit and non-profit industries on its creative talents, in both arts and communications areas which should be encouraged to invest and innovate further while the Government can foster further research and development to create the culture of innovation envisaged in its *Powering Ideas* white paper.

Programs built on the basis of the National Cultural Policy should provide ways of building the connections between Australians, and its diversity of organisations and communities. While funding to nurture talent and new work in the creative arts will be at the heart of the policy, it should recognise the impact on the outer circles, from building good ways of accessing the arts through live performance and the broadband network, through to fostering economic growth through investment in the cultural industries.

Arts initiatives and responsibilities – Positive Steps

Arts policy will always be a significant element of a national cultural policy.

The Government has a number of continuing responsibilities in this area, including key institutions like the national galleries, museums and libraries which must be resourced to meet the growing demand for access to their collections and databases. They are also a focus for some of the new interest in cultural activity generated from the networks of interest developing on-line.

The success of Australia's investment in the arts means that we have strong institutions in state and non-profit areas making a strong contribution to our cultural life which should be supported into the future where they demonstrate strong connections to both creative producers and their audiences.

However with the emergence of new technologically based participation in the arts, and of new live performance venues and models, investment in research, design and development of these new models is a major priority in our cultural life. Artists are experimenting with the potential of the on-line audiences, and digitally based technologies for new ways of making art, and designing new services and products.

Developing the talent which will drive both community based and for-profit cultural work is a major responsibility for the Australian Government which is committed to productivity growth and an inclusive society.

Therefore the Council agrees with the Minister's suggestion that there should be a new focus on innovation and investment in individual artists and creative teams, after a major period focussed on sustainability in the major non-profit companies and public institutions. A National Cultural Policy should include programs, like ArtStart, that encourage and commission new works from emerging artists, and support art-making as a profession. But there is much more to be done.

Funds for commissioning of new experimental work and building of creative teams will be central to the success of this policy as the soft infrastructure to allow artists and creative producers to experiment and develop with the new production and distribution technologies, and to challenge Australian audiences with new art.

Council members are supportive of the continuing work to model public-private partnership in establishing investment and support funds for individual artists and new creative teams.

The National Cultural Policy should focus attention on Australian audiences, not just as consumers but as co-creators or people seeking creative fulfilment through engagement with the arts.

Australians should be proud of their participation in the arts, which an ABS tracking series shows is steadily rising, and the National Cultural Policy should state that Australians have a growing interest in creating and participating as creators, as audiences, as commercial producers using cultural skills and knowledge, and in supporting the talent of Australian artists. It should celebrate our success stories. It should encourage cultural production at a community and individual level through the targeted promotion of social networking and Web 2.0 technologies to enhance participation by Australian people.

Creative industries initiatives – Positive Steps

Arts based industries – the creative industries – continue to contribute strongly to economic growth, and provide significant employment. The Minister notes that the cultural industries contribute about \$3.5 billion to Australia’s economy, and more research is emerging to allow understanding of the impact of the networks of small businesses and service providers which cluster in Australian cities, and also the impact of Australian talent overseas through touring, engagement in international creative industries and export.

A National Cultural Policy should recognise that entrepreneurial spirit of the arts exists in both the non-profit and commercial sectors and both should be included in innovation programs, including eligibility for the research and development tax credit.

The Creative Industries Innovation Centre (based at the University of Technology, Sydney) will be a significant source of evidence on how best to develop entrepreneurial businesses, but further research will be need to look at how Australia can develop businesses based on its creative talent given the problems in developing significant scale and project slates in film and other screen based cultural industries. This should result in new funding through agencies like the Australian Research Council.

Design, an ever broadening area with the ability to contribute to developing new services and products across a range of industries, needs to be specifically recognised in innovation policy. For instance, the Government could support the promotion of good design in the development of social innovation programs including service delivery and communications as well as the more obvious areas like urban development and making sustainable products attractive and easy to use. The United Kingdom and the Netherlands provide good models through such initiatives as (in the UK alone) [New Deal of the Mind](#), the National Endowment of Science Technology and the Arts or the UK Design Council.

The policy should recognise that creative thinking can extend beyond the arts into transdisciplinary approaches to meeting the challenges before Australia. The National Cultural Policy should recognise that creativity may be nurtured in arts and design areas of research and education, but should also be contributing to management, technology and hard science research.

4.2 Indigenous connections

The Council strongly supports the specific inclusion of indigenous culture in the discussion framework, as underpinning some of the most exciting and enriching development in the creative arts, and also connecting directly to understanding of our cultural and environmental heritage. Indigenous creativity is now an exciting and important driver in areas from cultural diplomacy, art collection and design through live performance, and science communications as well as providing cultural expression for indigenous communities across Australia.

This shift has major implications for the funding model structures (See other issues.)

4.3 Education and research connections

The Government has a role in facilitating the connections between the layers of culture, and between practitioners and audiences, between traditional art forms and new technologies. For this reason, the Council believes one of the main priorities of the National Cultural Policy should be education, particularly in the arts.

It is through education that the young Australians can be empowered to develop the capacities to fully engage in the new technologies that allow us all to express our creativity and be participants in cultural development.

The building of a creative polity begins with schools and the Council reiterates its introductory statement that national curriculum is at the core of cultural policy. Active support for resources to support development and implementation must be maintained. But cultural and creative education does not stop at high school graduation.

Students in human society and culture combined with students in the creative arts form a large percentage of Australia's higher education enrolments - more than a quarter of undergraduate and post graduate totals. In the Creative Arts alone, there are more than 64,000 undergraduates, around the same number as studying engineering. While not all of these creative arts students will enter a career in the arts and related industries, their capacity to contribute to Australian cultural life must be realised.

The embedding of creative arts and design into the university sector has resulted in the rapid development of the creative arts as a new research resource. The new depth of knowledge being created is giving new tools for individuals to exploit in cultural production, as well as a body of usable research to promote innovation and creativity in the non-profit and industry sectors.

Governments, universities and research funding agencies must support documentation and information gathering in this fast moving area, and further innovative research on the intrinsic benefits of the arts to audiences. An exemplary and exciting instance of such a partnership is the Arts Audience Experience Index research project. Based on the expressed needs of arts practitioners, researchers from Deakin University in partnership with government arts funding agencies are developing an index to measure the audience's qualitative experience of the arts. Rather than focusing (as previous research has) on audience satisfaction, this research will tell us why Australians seek arts experiences – information that benefits funding agencies, arts organisations, the arts sector, and the Australian community (J. Radbourne, K. Johanson, H. Glow & T. White (2009) "Audience experience: measuring quality in the performing

arts”, *International journal of arts management*, pp. 16-29, Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales, Montreal, Quebec).

Positive steps to realise the opportunities here are:

- Reconfirm commitment to the creative arts in the national curriculum, and to English and language studies which give young Australians access to cultural heritage and the tools to explore creativity in the digital economy;
- Implement recommendations in the Venturous Australia report on the National Innovation System to review funding of creative arts disciplines in Australian Universities (also raised in Recommendation 33 of the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education);
- Set a national research priority which acknowledges the importance of cultural industries in Australia to cultural and economic development;
- Support networks of researchers and teachers which link to non-profit and for profit industry, either through Academies and organisations including CHASS, or through new funding to training and research institutions to provide opportunities for collaboration.

CHASS has a clear interest in developing these networks, and the establishment of a national forum for the humanities, arts and social sciences would provide a strong mechanism for doing so. The Council has based plans for the forum on a Canadian model which successfully allows research and practice disciplines to exchange knowledge, and then provides a broader program of events and discussion at a transdisciplinary level, while also fostering relationships with policy makers and industry.

4.4 Keepers and custodians of culture

A National Cultural Policy should include the preservation of those unique cultural characteristics which have shaped our national identity, as well as allowing for collection and study of new and changing characteristics to reflect Australia as it moves through the 21st century.

Australia’s heritage institutions have a strong record of promoting and supporting innovation. The development of new knowledge relies heavily upon the experiences of the past and ability to access that experience.

Therefore a National Cultural Policy should embrace Web 2.0 in the areas of heritage and collections, and should include programs for the digitisation of data and materials and access to researchers. Digitising both our past and current cultural artefacts for open access can both ensure future access and preservation of our cultural artefacts, as well as promote future cultural creation and innovation.

Strong policies for digitisation and access to major databases and collections will be crucial if the National Cultural Policy is to support innovation and creativity. Investment is urgently needed to address the issues identified at both national institutions, universities and in state and local government collections. CHASS notes that there has already been some review of this area, and recommendations for immediate action.

The National Cultural Policy should further commit to best practice in the care and interpretation of collections; and commit to supporting participation of Australians and their expertise in the international cultural heritage community.

5. Other Issues

5.1 New funding models and policy structures for innovation and talent development

The landscape within which Australian arts and cultural life have grown up since the 1960s and 1970s has undergone considerable change. We now have a significant industry stretching from the Sydney Opera House to the Desert art centres and from You Tube and MySpace to the National Film and Sound Archive.

As Australia's cultural life has extended and matured, a number of our great institutions and funding agencies have responded admirably to the opportunities and challenges these changes have posed.

To take just a few examples, the National Library has invested in digitisation at the National Library while the Cultural Ministers Council is working to ensure that state and national activities complement and strengthen each other. With the emergence of indigenous culture into mainstream arts, Australian Government have taken a series of steps to strengthen communities and develop artists' careers, while institutions like the National Gallery of Australia are working to formally recognise and connect indigenous work with broader art communities and audiences.

But Australia's structure of funding agencies, service organisations and federal and state collecting institutions continues to reflect policy priorities and administrative practices established when the creative arts were first recognised as a policy priority.

These structures need to be re-examined in light of developments since these early years, to ensure that they are delivering on the objectives of the Government's cultural policy in the most effective way. The development a National Cultural Policy provides a golden opportunity to look at where the current structure can be improved to reflect the Government's policy goals and its key focus on innovation and connection, to ensure it serves Australia well through to 2020 and beyond.

Specifically, a review of the policy advice and program delivery resources which are diffused through the cultural sector and into other portfolios is needed. Such a review should examine and identify the strengths of existing institutional machinery, as well as exploring new ways of adding to these strengths, for example in seeking better ways of mobilising individual and corporate philanthropy, and in building public-private sector partnerships to tap into wider sources of funding for arts and heritage projects.

It also implies that the Prime Minister should work alongside the Minister for Environment, Heritage, and the Arts. As this submission has demonstrated, the broad activities and impacts generated by the cultural policy and their contribution to a creative, imaginative Australia for

the 21st century are an extension of the core activities of the Arts and Heritage agencies. A National Cultural Policy to 2020 and beyond must use models for supporting artistic practice and connections which reflect current issues and the complex connections between the various levels of government, and between public, non-profit and commercial operations in the sector.

The broad sweep of this policy will require a nimble and well briefed administrative team which can work within the Arts and Heritage portfolio on some programs while building good networks and collaborative programs across other levels of government and government departments.