

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to the development of the National Cultural Policy. This is a much-needed policy for the long-term development and sustainability of arts and culture in Australia. APAM strongly supports the development of and investment in a National Cultural Policy.

The **Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM)** works year-round, and across Australia, to connect contemporary Australian theatre, dance, emerging and experimental art with international and national opportunities. APAM is a strategic initiative of the Australia Council for the Arts. APAM deepens relationships and creates new markets and pathways across the globe for contemporary performance.

Based in Victoria through the support of the Victorian Government, APAM works nationally with independent artists and organisations that have strategic market development plans and engage professional artists. With a remit similar to that of Austrade and Sounds Australia, APAM services Australian contemporary dance, theatre, emerging and experimental arts nationally and connects and brokers relationships with international presenters, venues, and cultural organisations. APAM promotes and facilitates the export and touring of Australian performing arts and provides an ongoing program that encourages collaboration, exchange, and capacity building across the global marketplace. APAM operates at a national level as well as an international one, giving program participants a variety of opportunities to build their market development capacity and develop interstate and international relationships and networks.

The principles guiding all APAM's work are:

- First Nations as central
- Reciprocity
- Artist-centric
- Sustainable and equitable
- Experimental
- Asia-focused

APAM's model comprises three components:

A. An APAM Office, open year-round to facilitate connection with Australian artists and their work. Based in Melbourne with a national remit, a small, dedicated staff of advocates welcomes, hosts, and connects international artists, presenters, and partners with contemporary Australian performance.

B. Hosting 1–2 annual APAM Gatherings at established festivals around Australia that bring the attention of international presenters and influences to Australian contemporary performance.

C. Market intelligence for contemporary Australian performance. APAM serves as a hub of market intelligence that benefits contemporary Australian performance and its advocates internationally.

APAM offers the following submission, including a range of identified opportunities against the five pillars:

## **First Nations – embedding reciprocity**

First Nations artists and their work are central to all APAM activities. Our partnership with ILBIJERRI Theatre Company reflects APAM’s First Nations focus. As the First Nations Lead for APAM and part of the NPAP, ILBIJERRI brings extensive expertise and leadership as a successful and internationally engaged First Nations-led organisation.

Self-determined international engagement opportunities are key to the viability of First Nations artists. Policy developed in consultation with First Nations artists and organisations must support the development of what is truly unique about Australia’s cultural identity – the oldest continuing culture on the planet. There exists an important opportunity within the NCP to recognise the role of artists and culture to promote people-to-people connections through First Nations to First Nations networks in a similar way to DFAT’s Indigenous Diplomacy Agenda and its alignment with the Indigenous Peoples Economic and Trade Cooperation Arrangement. Global First Nations exchange is built on reciprocity and respect for protocols. Embedding reciprocity into policy development and investment strategy is vital to ensuring strong First Nations to First Nations self-determined networks can deliver on opportunities for cultural exchange and artists viability into the future. This may include global First Nations work touring to First Nations communities, residences on country and presentation within self-determined festivals and contexts.

## **The centrality of the artist – ensuring the viability of contemporary performing artists**

International mobility plays a crucial role in the economic and cultural viability of contemporary performing artists. Many of Australia’s contemporary small to medium performing arts organisations and independent artists have well-cultivated, global partnerships and networks built over many years of exchange, touring and collaboration. Organisations such as Circa, Slingsby, Back to Back Theatre, Chunky Move, Terrapin Puppet Theatre, Marrugeku, Windmill Theatre Co and ILBIJERRI Theatre Company (to name a few) enjoy strong demand for their work in major international markets and a significant part of their annual activity consists of presentation outside of Australia. Many of these companies perform to larger audiences annually overseas than they do in Australia as the combination of prohibitive touring costs in our vast continent and the size of population often do not provide the economy of scale of international touring.

For artists and organisations for whom international mobility is critical to their artistic practice, livelihoods and viability, the pandemic has adversely affected the sustainability of their work, potentially for years to come. The operating environment has fundamentally changed. Australia Council for the Arts Resilience Fund data shows that 41% of applicants reported their work impacted by international travel restrictions. Independent artists and performing arts companies have worn the loss of a vital revenue stream, that cannot simply be replaced by pivoting to digital distribution or performing to more domestic audiences. These artists and companies represent our most well-known and brightest performing arts exports. It is they, and not our larger cultural institutions with minimal access to international support, that uphold Australia’s international reputation as an innovative, bold, and creative country. To increase the likelihood of works of scale having an international life greater access to international support for cultural institutions could be considered.

International careers and reputations are not built overnight. Long-term and sustainable international networks are built slowly, over time and with consistent investment. Policy and investment that values and recognises international mobility is essential to 'even the playing field' for Australian artists to compete within the international market.

There's a three-way connection between economic viability, the development of contemporary practice and audience engagement. In the same way as a global audience for a contemporary musician creates the potential for exponential growth it does likewise for contemporary performing artists.

Policy that values a relationship centric approach to international engagement will enhance opportunities across the full spectrum of international engagement – residencies, exchanges, co-production and collaboration and touring – to create outcomes for new artistic practice, works of scale, increasing international investment in Australian artists and their work. Global cultural partnerships, created through new models of reciprocity and engagement, will build the skills of Australia's cultural workforce, and provide income opportunities for artists and organisations.

### **A place for every story – promoting Australia's diversity and maturity**

International performing arts engagement and exchange bring significant cultural and reputational benefits to Australia. In addition to the cultural export and trade opportunities, the cross-border relationships of performing arts networks, often long-standing and person-to-person, strengthen Australia's influence and promote shared understanding with our international partners and networks that extends beyond the performing arts.

Australia's artists and arts organisations have long played a significant role in supporting soft diplomacy efforts with high visibility to international audiences providing valuable opportunities to promote the Australian way of life and its characteristics of innovation, diversity, and creativity. With its proven capability and literacy internationally, the performing arts can contribute to DFAT country priorities and agendas anywhere in the world.

Cultural, trade and foreign policy and investment can together create the opportunity to foster our national interests in the region through the engagement of people-to-people links created through genuine artistic exchange and reciprocity. Strategy that profiles a contemporary Australian identity, embraces, and celebrates diversity and diverse artists must also embed reciprocity. Reciprocity is the only useful currency within the Asia Pacific region to create long-lasting and trusted people-to-people networks. Opportunities for international artists to present their work in a diversity of contexts and support for digital and hybrid collaboration are some means of creating meaningful cultural exchange. As countries adapt to the climate crisis and start to rebuild their economies and communities, global cooperation and knowledge sharing built through reciprocity will be more critical than ever before.

### **Reaching the audience – focusing on mobility**

The disruption of the pandemic has highlighted the precarity of business-as-usual models of distribution and touring. The NCP provides an opportunity to re-think these models to increase efficiency and create better outcomes for artists and

audiences. Continued support for fares and freight are essential to mobilising work nationally and internationally but the opportunity also exists to collapse the distinctions between regional, national, and international touring and focus more broadly on mobility and its role in economic viability, artistic development, and connection to audiences. This focus on mobility will allow artists increased autonomy in how and when they bring their work to audiences, regardless of where those audiences are located. A strong and broad-based spectrum of arts available across Australia relies on the viability of domestic mobility and, for many artists and organisations, this goes hand in hand with the business of international mobility. We recognise that contemporary performing artists are dependent on a patchwork of investment and opportunities to create work and build a career and that they are adept at stitching together residencies, collaborations, touring and presentation and commissioning support to realise their work. These artists would be aided by the removal of bureaucratic labels on touring, focusing instead on 'audiences' and how they can efficiently and effectively work with presenters to bring their work to the audience. With the future of mobility currently under transition from climate change and other disruption it's essential that the principle of artistic mobility is supported both in policy and long-term investment so that Australia is well placed to capitalise on the new opportunities that will emerge in a transition to climate-responsible mobility and hence contribute to collective global climate action.

### **Reaching the audience – increasing access and opportunities through digital and hybrid innovation**

APAM has responded quickly to the challenges presented by the pandemic, including developing new models of programs and services delivered partially or entirely online. Navigating the disruption has accelerated development of an APAM global business strategy that is future oriented, adaptive, and ready. Our long-term commitment to digital and hybrid models of facilitating international engagement is based on the need to navigate and prepare for ongoing disruption. Our proven ability to adapt business strategies to changing market and global conditions positions us well as a delivery platform for the future.

APAM has identified opportunities to support the digital mobility of Australia's cultural sector and build long-term sustainability through investment in digital capacity and skills building. Clear policy that prioritises innovation in digital and hybrid work, distribution coupled with new business models to sustain commitment is the starting point. Globally its clear which countries have been investing resources and strategies in digital culture over the past decade and the Australian sector is now having to quickly play catch up. Equipping cultural organisations with digital skills and literacy and supporting partnerships and collaborations with quality digital content producers is necessary, as is investment in digital infrastructure and workforce skills development to support monetising artistic content to showcasing artistic work to broad audiences. Sharing best practice, emerging technologies, and digital resources and tools with the sector to develop new forms of screen based performing arts would increase the competitiveness of the Australian sector internationally. An equal focus on artform development and mechanisms to support audience development and distribution initiatives that build economic sustainability for the arts sector will ensure that both audiences and artists are in dialogue.

## Summary of opportunities

Pillar	Key opportunity
First Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise the role of artists and culture to promote people-to-people connections through First Nations to First Nations global networks.</li> <li>Embed opportunities for reciprocity such as global First Nations work touring to First Nations communities and residences on country within policy development and investment strategy.</li> </ul>
Centrality of the artist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value and recognise that support for international mobility is essential to both increase Australian performing artists competitiveness within the international market and their long-term viability.</li> <li>Consider creating access to international support for cultural institutions to increase the likelihood of works of scale having international seasons.</li> <li>Value a relationship centric approach to international engagement to enhance opportunities across the full spectrum of international engagement to create outcomes for new artistic practice, works of scale and increased international investment.</li> <li>Foster global cultural partnerships to promote understanding, build the skills of Australia's cultural workforce, and provide income opportunities for Australia's artists and organisations.</li> </ul>
A place for every story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embed reciprocity with opportunities for international artists – particularly those from the Asia Pacific – to present their work in a diversity of contexts to creating meaningful cultural exchange while promoting Australia's diversity and maturity through people-to-people links.</li> </ul>
Reaching the audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus more broadly on mobility and its role in economic viability, artistic development, and connection to audiences.</li> <li>Support the principle of artistic mobility through policy and long-term investment so that Australia is well placed to capitalise on new opportunities in a transition to climate-responsible mobility.</li> <li>Invest in digital infrastructure and workforce skills development to support monetising artistic content to showcase artistic work to broad audiences.</li> <li>Equip cultural organisations with digital skills and support partnerships and collaborations with quality digital content producers.</li> <li>Share best practice, emerging technologies, and digital resources and tools with the sector to develop new forms of screen based performing arts.</li> <li>Support audience development and distribution initiatives that build economic sustainability for the performing arts sector.</li> </ul>

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