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## **National Cultural Policy Submission**

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**Submitted:** On behalf of an arts peak body

**About Festival City Adelaide:** Festival City Adelaide (trading as Festivals Adelaide) is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. Established in 2012 by the South Australian government, Adelaide City Council, and the not-for-profit festival sector, it continues to coordinate the consortium of South Australia's arts and cultural festivals. Its primary purpose is to promote and support arts and cultural festivals in Adelaide.

The guiding imperatives of the organisation include:

**Cultural** - To enhance our identity as The Festival State, with all of the richness that it brings in terms of culture, creative inspiration and collaboration, activation, State confidence and international connections.

**Innovation** - Knowing the power of festivals to mobilise, connect and encourage experimentation, we seek to foster the conditions in which Adelaide can become the world's most joined-up creative community, and the best place in which to trial new ideas.

**Economic** - To grow the visitor economy and the creative industries – and to inspire the next generation of South Australians – a festival sector as advanced and fulfilling as anywhere in the world.

**Sustainability** – Festivals are active contributors to the global goals of reducing inequality, sustainable consumption and production, quality education, sustainable cities and communities, good health and wellbeing, as well as decent work and economic growth. For this reason, we responsibly align the sector with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## ***General Feedback***

Festival City Adelaide calls for the National Cultural Policy to demonstrate a genuine whole-of government approach – with appropriate and tailored monitoring, review, and reporting practices embedded across multiple departments, their strategic plans and indicators.

The latent potential found at the intersection of arts and adjacent policy domains requires deliberate focus, attention, and cross-portfolio investment. This includes areas including but not limited to: foreign affairs, trade & tourism, employment & workplace relations, skills & training, health, education, small business, housing, infrastructure, regional development, local government, and environment. A whole of government approach would ensure cross – referencing and collaboration on key strategic actions.

In order to prevent stagnation and further deepening of siloes, the arts cannot be isolated and compartmentalised. Whether it is arts education, arts and cultural tourism, cultural diplomacy, or many of the other ways that the arts positively propel long-term and sustainable development, if we continue to perceive policy domains as fragmented islands (and resource them like we would an afterthought), progress will be dull and slow.

Collaboration and tangible action must be at the heart of a modern cultural policy. Accountability for a successful cultural policy must be shared across government.

## ***Arts and Cultural Festivals***

At their core, arts and cultural festivals, specifically not-for-profit ones, prioritise artistic, social, and/or regenerative development missions.

They create value far beyond the economic, often filling gaps left behind by cuts to education, community, health and wellbeing, or social infrastructure programs. The expectations put on festivals are serious, and they are taken seriously.

We know that at every level festivals are stretched, in resources and capacity, trying to address multiple and diverse societal challenges. From rising inequality in access to arts, dwindling arts education in public schools, and fewer commercial opportunities for creators and makers to make a living from their work year-round due to significant disruptions in the ecosystem (like the decline of independent booksellers or art galleries). To quickly ageing infrastructure that is unresponsive to the needs of our diverse society (even damaging to our climate) or population declines and quiet CBDs.

Anyone who has attended arts festivals has experienced and navigated rich and immersive programs that showcase local, national, and international artists and arts companies; offer professional development workshops for artists; promote cultural tourism; curate educational activities for children, young people, and families; galvanise export and touring opportunities; and much more.

For so many reasons, arts and cultural festivals are excellent platforms for all of these very diverse endeavours, but they do require the appropriate capacity and resourcing. Each endeavour could be the sole focus of any arts organisation on its own. But the expectations to stretch funding (both public and private) even farther have become exceedingly unrealistic and the responsibility too heavy. A sentiment shared by many arts organisations.

Arts festivals with decades of positive impacts under their belts – inspiring generation after generation of Australians to think bigger, be bolder, and act more compassionately – are experiencing funding stagnation or cuts. When ROI is only measured in terms of the dollar, our communities lose out. The standard and singular measure of a festival's success must stop being the number of bed nights and visitors they attract. This is the least interesting story we can tell, and merely one component of a much larger story that we must tell.

### **Recommendations**

Festival City Adelaide advocates for the National Cultural Policy to:

- Enable the use of festival platforms for reconciliation. Arts and cultural festivals mobilise and connect Australians in recognition of our First Nation people's commitment to and understanding of culture, language, dreaming, law, country, and the environment.
- Set up a basic universal income scheme for all artists.
- Lead on a strategic and significant increase in arts funding, so that operational, administrative, and capacity-building support – on a multi-year basis and at all levels of government – can provide arts organisations with the right foundations to pursue the myriad of impacts and outcomes they seek to generate.
- Resource a national voucher scheme, via a co-funding model with state governments, to offset costs related to arts education, training, experiences, and engagement for young people. Existing schemes, such as the [NSW Creative Kids Voucher](#) or the [SA Sports Voucher](#), albeit state-based, are excellent and successful examples that must inspire a national standard and outcome. A pilot scheme could initially target a specific age group around the country.

- Incentivise arts engagement and make tickets to live performances, exhibitions, and arts experiences – those presented by not-for-profit cultural organisations and festivals – tax deductible for below-median and median wage earners (up to a specified cap).
- Initiate a national program to embed artists within local government and schools, borrowing from the good practice and example of [Sporting Schools](#).
- Recognise Australian arts and cultural festivals as institutions – complex and comprehensive platforms for the presentation and development of arts, culture, and communities. Many of these festivals are national assets.
- Inject the *Festivals Australia* grant scheme with significant additional funds, expand criteria to allow for multiple projects across a program, and broaden eligibility to festivals headquartered in suburban or urban centres, yet with significant regional reach and intended collaborations.
- Consider an explicit focus within the Australia Council around research and investment in the development of not-for-profit arts and cultural festivals specifically, both existing and new.
- Position cultural diplomacy as a strategic facet of Australia’s foreign policy, backed by proportionate funding and collaboration between DFAT and arts organisations. The Festivals Edinburgh [Momentum](#) program provides an excellent case study of how to leverage festivals for international diplomacy and relationship building.
- Support and expand international export platforms for the cultural and creative industries, including the international marketplace opportunities that festivals create. Create an export strategy and explore the untapped potential of international arts festivals in this domain.
- Seek to expand federal investment in accessible infrastructure – existing and new – particularly in the regions. Arts and cultural festivals aim to ensure fair and equitable access to the arts and creative learning, eliminating disparities and barriers wherever possible. Yet, many arts venues and organisations require appropriate levels of investment to transition, build, or add accessible solutions.
- Demonstrate leading environmental responsibility by weaving in KPIs pertaining to climate action and the reduction of the arts’ ecological footprint. Our festivals, events, major organisations aim to embrace carbon emission/waste reduction as well as sustainable development standards as a competitive advantage (and just the right thing to do for our planet).
- Prioritise building/expanding dedicated youth arts institutions and youth arts projects across Australia with the remit of cultivating the makers, creators, and presenters of tomorrow.
- Examine the role of volunteers in the arts, including a review of the scale of participation, opportunities and pitfalls. Cooperate on the National Strategy for Volunteering to secure a firm focus on arts volunteering. Understand arts volunteering as a workforce issue and volunteer management as an invisible

(but highly important) profession and role, in line with the [National Strategy for Volunteering](#) Discovery Insights Report.

- Accelerate progress on a National Arts and Cultural Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, in light of the significant evidence collated by the Australia Council into [International](#) and [Domestic](#) Arts and Cultural Tourism. Work with Tourism Australia to introduce dedicated development schemes and growth incentives, as well as quotas for imagery and content pertaining to the promotion of arts and cultural tourism across campaigns at home and abroad. Embed Australia's festival sector in national marketing campaigns and international trade shows, including [Cultural Attractions of Australia](#).
- Take a big and bold step towards bringing the policy domains of arts and health together. Invest in preventative and recovery programs that utilise the arts and creativity for improvement of both physical and mental health. Supercharge the [National Arts and Health Framework](#) to become a living, breathing, and thriving piece of policy that can be leveraged by industry.
- Address the digital divide and its effects on the accessibility and affordability of arts engagement, as well as the barriers to arts work, management, and administration. Increase investment in digital adaptation, innovation, and arts and cultural IP development.
- Re-examine policy around arts education and training. Turbocharge federal programs that support skills development and education pathways, particularly for the live performance industry and all the behind-the-scenes and arts management professionals needed to address the massive skills shortage. Enable Creative Based Learning (CBL) to be employed and instated in every state and territory in Australia, and provide professional learning and training programs to support teachers in CBL implementation.
- Provide federal support to traineeship and internship programs for new entrants into the sector as well as those seeking to upskill or retrain, including a federal campaign to educate the public, parents, and young people about the many diverse, meaningful careers possible within the arts and cultural sector.
- Work with the ATO to include the technical and production staff in live performance industries in its list of 'specialty professionals' eligible for income smoothing provisions.
- Recognise that capacity to conduct research and maintain quality data sets within organisations, particularly small to mediums, is limited. Hence, it would be helpful to centralise and systematise this work via the peak bodies (investment should be explored for this purpose).
- Embolden and enable the Australia Council to remain a truly independent and robust organisation, that is expected to advocate on behalf of the national arts sector, create bridges between industry and government, and collaborate with relevant federal departments on improving outcomes for the benefit of all Australians.

## ***Final Thoughts***

Arts associations, networks, peak bodies, and service organizations play a critical role in the arts ecosystem. With a focus on advocacy, research, future-thinking, and/or sector development, these organisations tend to fall through the cracks of all funding criteria. And yet, they provide valuable services on behalf of a sector that already has a lot on its plate. Festival City Adelaide urges government to restore and resource operational as well as project funding programs accessible to peak bodies and service organisations, so that they can address local challenges, leverage economies of scale, innovate solutions, and galvanise collaboration.