

National Cultural Policy Submission

City of Darwin

Submitted: On behalf of government or government body

Introduction

City of Darwin supports the development of a new national cultural policy and encourages bold change in the way Federal Government empowers, celebrates, supports and leads innovation in the creative and cultural industries. We ask the Federal Government to focus on self-determination for the regional creative sector and for First Nations and diverse cultural practitioners.

City of Darwin is the capital city Council for the NT. We have operated under our [Arts Plan 2015-2020](#) and will develop a new Creative Strategy in early 2023 to guide future work. The development of our new Creative Strategy will involve significant consultation across the municipality as well as aligning with the [Darwin 2030 City for People, City of Colour](#) and the [Creative Industries Strategy for the NT \(2020-2024\)](#)

Council has an established Arts and Cultural Advisory Committee which includes representation from key organisations and community members who advise Council on matters of importance. City of Darwin has a strong [public art policy](#) and a commitment to engaging Larrakia and First Nations creatives across a wide variety of opportunities.

Priorities under our existing Arts plan are:

- Public Art
- Creative Spaces
- Access and Participation
- Arts development, opportunities and connectivity

City of Darwin's investment in the creative industries over 2020/21 was over \$1M through sponsorship, grants, operating subsidies, operational and capital expenditure in public art. This investment does not include the employment of other artists, designers or graphic designers across the organisation or the significant investment in Libraries or Community Centres. Arts and Cultural Development staffing is 1xEFT (2 part time roles) supported by the Executive Manager of Community and Cultural Services. Collaboration across Council and with Stakeholders in our community is critical to achieving our goals.

Our [Access and Inclusion Plan](#), [Reconciliation Action Plan](#), [Youth Strategy](#) and [Climate Emergency Strategy](#) shape our approach across Council and will influence our new Creative Strategy.

The capital city of Darwin is the home of the Larrakia people, a welcoming saltwater people with extraordinary connection to place.

Darwin is Australia's gateway to Asia, located in the tropical north. We are the closest Australian capital city to Asia and share historic trading and contemporary relationships. People from more than 60 nationalities and 70 ethnicities call Darwin home. The diversity of our community contributes significantly to our economy, wellbeing and culture.

The impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic on the creative sector and the failure of Government to adequately support sector recovery have been well documented. Any future policy or initiatives to support recovery from pandemics must ensure access and equity for the creative sector similar to that applied to Tourism, Business or Sport.

Summary of recommendations

Australia's new Cultural Policy should:

- Prioritise self-determination for First Nations and diverse creative and cultural organisations and freelancers
- Review existing geographical privilege of federal mechanisms and infrastructure and actively prioritise self-determination for the regional and remote creative sector
- Acknowledge and address the importance of climate change in the creative industries
- Recognise and support the contribution that a diverse sector makes
- Address the economic precarity of artists and arts workers, considering the rising costs of living and pressure on housing and other markets
- Improve collection and sharing of data – review the ABS categories and align appropriately
- Ensure considered measures are in place should future pandemics, extreme weather events or other national or international crisis occur

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

First Nations

Recognise and support the contribution that a diverse sector makes

Prioritise self-determination for First Nations and diverse creative and cultural organisations and freelancers

As highlighted in the [Creative Industries Strategy for the NT \(2020-2024\)](#) First Nations Visual Arts and Crafts is the strongest economic driver in the NT's Creative industries, with over \$110Million in gross output annually, however workforce participation and enterprise development for First Nations people including appropriate training opportunities has not been delivered to the extent it could be. Broader impacts of health, education, housing and access as well as changing Government priorities have impacted. Adhering to measures to Close the Gap on First Nations disadvantage is critical.

Australia's remote arts networks and ecologies do not follow state and territory borders. This means important projects can struggle to access support required, as artists operate over SA/WA/NT There is great opportunity for investment and better coordination across Governments in this area.

Current funding models could be reviewed in order to increase access and participation by First Nations artists and creative enterprises. City of Darwin recognises Australia Council's commitment to accepting voice recordings within their applications as a positive step in the right direction.

There is an opportunity for increased recognition and expansion of investment in the First Nations fashion, textile and design sectors. First Nations art fairs are now prevalent around the country. A new policy should give consideration to the increased role First Nations art, fashion and products play within the commercial art sector; alongside the significant contribution this industry is making to the reimagining of a uniquely Australian aesthetic. This sector is punching above its weight and it is of national interest to bolster this sector — Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, House of Darwin and Babbara Women's Centre are great Territory examples. Investment in remote and regional arts businesses is required to meet the increasing demand and maintain steady supply. We recognise the Flourish First Nations Textile and Fashion Innovation Fund that the Australia Council has established and support the continuation of this. The Creative Industry Strategy for the NT also identified the need for a feasibility study into the development of a textiles manufacturing hub in the NT, this study has been undertaken by PWC with the Northern Territory Government however it has not yet been published.

Constitutional recognition and moving on the Uluru Statement from the Heart will provide opportunities to further address disadvantage, remove barriers to participation and celebrate the strengths of First Nations arts and culture with a view to stronger self-determination.

Costs associated with delivery of projects, freight and logistics are increasing and are an additional burden to remote and regional creatives, particularly First Nations across remote parts of the NT. Support should reflect this challenge with an industry standard established as a minimum additional 20% cost on projects. This challenge, has been experienced by City of Darwin in its commitment to delivery of significant works of public art.

Investment in continued capacity building of leadership will increase the opportunities for success and strengthen self-determined outcomes for First Nations creatives.

A Place for Every Story

Review existing geographical privilege of federal mechanisms and infrastructure and actively prioritise self-determination for regional and remote creative industries

Recognise and support the contribution that a diverse sector makes

Access and representation in national funding rounds is still challenging for many parts of our community. Funding processes need to be streamlined and simplified to support submissions from diverse, CALD, regional/remote and First Nations communities who are currently underrepresented in national grant funding pools.

Greater efforts to ensure national funding panels are diverse is needed.

Existing mechanisms such as funding bodies or national and peak bodies need to review the geographic privilege of their workforce and consider genuine representation, investment and access for regional and remote Australia.

Considerable work has been delivered by Diversity Arts Australia, Arts Access and Regional Arts Australia in increasing access for Creatives and audiences in regional and remote Australia and working from perspectives often underrepresented. Continuing and building on this work is critical and greater investment in platforms, residencies and touring as well as mainstage opportunities needs to be made. Increasing the awareness that Regional and remote people are not just receivers or consumers of cultural products created in Sydney or Melbourne is vital to the National Cultural Policy.

City of Darwin's [Access and Inclusion Plan](#) and the [NT Disability Strategy and Action Plan](#) aim to address barriers to participation in social, recreation, sporting, arts, cultural events and activities by increasing access and reviewing existing infrastructure. Opportunities for partnership with local government and States and Territories should be further explored as avenues for co-investment

The Centrality of the Artist

Recognise and support the contribution that a diverse sector makes

Address the economic precarity of artists and arts workers, considering the rising costs of living and pressure on housing and other markets

Ensure considered measures are in place should future pandemics, extreme weather events or other national or international crisis occur

As outlined above recognition and support of diversity is central to a strong cultural policy.

Addressing the economic precarity of creatives in the current economic climate is critical and should be considered from early training (noting increased costs of higher education in creative industries) through to rising costs of rental properties, transportation costs associated with delivery of touring or major projects in regional locations and overall rising costs of living.

Options such as low or no interest loans, active engagement with creative industries across other Government portfolios such as business and trade development and appropriate access to and consideration within recovery funds to address the impacts of global pandemics such as Covid-19 need to be considered in future policy development.

Accessing professional development can be challenging for regional artists, there is an opportunity to embed professional development in major commercial projects with support by the sector and mentors. At City of Darwin we currently embed emerging artists within our major public art projects to support development.

City of Darwin acknowledges the Australia Council's Space to Create opportunity as a positive step in the right direction by. Providing professional development resources and encourages future opportunities for artforms outside of the music industry.

Continuing to educate non arts organisations in best practice through Arts Law is still necessary and desirable to protect artists rights, particularly in relation to copyright and contracting. It is encouraging to see the increase in non-arts organisations engaging artists such as government, construction, tourism, private business or land councils however better understanding and access to support the professional engagement of artists is required.

Access to arts training, via organisations and through Department of Education and tertiary institutions remains limited in regions and is often unaffordable at tertiary level. City of Darwin encourage Federal Government to continue to address this inequity as well as focus on the goal within the Creative Australia document regarding the Australian Curriculum to ensure that 'every child will be given access to arts education and the important role of creativity across the curriculum'.

[creative-australia-national-cultural-policy \(1\).pdf \(nt.gov.au\)](#)

Strong Institutions

Acknowledge and address the importance of climate change in the creative industries

Ensure considered measures are in place should future pandemics, extreme weather events or other national or international crisis occur

It is challenging to future-proof institutional infrastructure and allow movement to more sustainable models of sponsorship, particularly in relation to moving away from fossil fuels.

Adaptability and sustainable resourcing solutions will be required by our institutions considering the rising cost of living across regional and remote Australia. Infrastructure investment in solar and other renewables across our institutions such as the galleries, museums and performing arts centres has begun in part but would benefit from incentive programs or partnerships, particularly where this infrastructure is co-owned.

An opportunity exists for partnerships with Libraries and Archives and other cultural institutions - offering cultural residencies or opportunities to develop, support and deliver creative outcomes more consistently.

Reaching the Audience

Improve collection and sharing of data – review the ABS categories and align appropriately

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:

First Nations

The previous policy acknowledges the unique role each state and territory plays in the formation of our national identity; however, it should be noted that the Northern Territory consistently generates First Nations art across all platforms that represents Australia on a national and world stage. First Nations art defines our arts and cultural industries, yet it is consistently under resourced in the Northern Territory.

City of Darwin have a Reconciliation Action Plan and have significantly invested in public art commissions with high levels of participation and leadership by First Nations artists and producers with Mirragma Gunungurra-wa created by Larrakia artists Roque and Trent Lee working with Garuwa Creative due to be installed later this year.

Through our sponsorship program support is provided for First Nations programming and events such as the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair.

It is important to City of Darwin to increase First Nations visibility by investing in telling Larrakia stories and histories for locals and tourists to understand and celebrate the culture of this place. City of Darwin have made a commitment to addressing inequity through our Reconciliation Action Plan.

A Place for Every Story

Culturally rich stories are found across regional and remote hubs such as Darwin, many finding their voice in one-off events like [Spun](#) and increasingly in the digital space with award winning podcasts such as [Birds Eye View](#),

Increased access to digital technology and the capacity for Northern Australia to connect with hubs across the region and into South East Asia is worthy of consideration. Equally worthy is connection within the NT in order to strengthen practice. [The Darwin Street Art Festival](#), which extended outside of Darwin to the rest of the NT is a great example of this, and greater investment is required for other forms of public art, complimented by the digital space to tell these stories. Greater collaboration across local government with cultural bodies such as First Nations organisations like Larrakia Nation allow for co investment in significant public art outcomes. Opportunities and incentives for co-investment on major public art or festivals is required.

The Centrality of the Artist

Mentorship and opportunities for collaborative projects across Territory and State borders and internationally would strengthen capacity for artists to use new technologies in their craft across all artforms.

Interest free loans such as those offered in Tasmania under the Collect Art Purchase scheme which offers 12 month interest free loans to purchase work by artists in that region are another mechanism that could increase sales for individual artists.

Rethinking funding models in order to broaden timelines and provide space for deeper work through more residency models or innovative practice.

Strong Institutions

The Northern Territory lacks a peak body to represent the Creative Industries as identified as a key recommendation in the [Creative Industries Strategy for the NT \(2020-2024\)](#). The development of this body would enable the sector to strengthen and support both existing institutions and the broader creative and cultural community.

City of Darwin invests in Creative organisations and institutions through our Sponsorship programs with organisations such as [Darwin Festival](#), [Browns Mart](#) or [Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair](#) and our Operating subsidies which include [Darwin Entertainment Centre](#) (\$680 000 annually). Aging infrastructure impacts on the effectiveness of Darwin Entertainment Centre investment. Opportunities for institutions to update aging infrastructure or develop broader programming offering to new audiences through the use of digital technology and targeted upgrades would assist. In addition, climate change impacts particularly in more remote and regional areas of Australia is a concern with some great inroads made in other locations to moving towards renewable technologies and reducing costs associated with powering facilities.

Strong institutions don't just increase tourism, they create the next generation of artists by showcasing the potential within their own communities. Institutions have an obligation to advocate on behalf of the sector and to set standards for best practice, meaningful ethical and sustainable processes and frameworks.

The institution of the Australia Council for the Arts would be strengthened by having representation across the country in its workforce, there is no longer reason as demonstrated by Covid that a workforce need to reside in one building in one location in Sydney. Representation by the regions from the regions is what our representative bodies should be striving for.

Reaching the Audience

Investment in national and international showcase opportunities and platforms at a local national and international level would result in a healthier touring ecology and economic growth for regions, it would also allow broader audience engagement for work made outside the eastern states.

Investigation into a Share the risk program as previously utilised in Victoria would assist also smaller organisations to move their work interstate or overseas.

City of Darwin encourage continuing to review the Major Performing Arts Group for equity of location and art form and to refine and update this model to suit the changed nature of audiences, expectations and reach.

Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

Stronger investment in digital access and training across the cultural and creative sector
A more cohesive approach to First Nations creative workforce development in the Northern Territory