



2 September 2022

# BCCM Submission to inform the new National Cultural Policy

Via email: [culturalpolicy@arts.gov.au](mailto:culturalpolicy@arts.gov.au).

To the Hon Tony Burke MP,

The Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM) welcomes the Albanese Labor Government's commitment to return drive, direction and vision to the arts industry, and is pleased to make this contribution to an updated National Cultural Policy.

The BCCM is the national peak body for Australian co-operatives and mutuals. The BCCM represents a diverse range of member-owned enterprises operating in sectors including the arts and culture, community energy, agriculture, banking, insurance, motoring, health services, aged care, disability employment, Indigenous services, housing and retail.

The BCCM recognises the significant benefits that derive from co-operative ownership and the strong opportunities co-ops present to support the five pillars (First Nations first; A place for every story; The centrality of the artist; Strong institutions; and Reaching the audience) of the new National Cultural Policy.

**The BCCM recommends that the co-operative model is included across all five pillars of the National Cultural Policy.**

### **What are co-operatives and how they can support the five pillars of the new National Cultural Policy?**

Co-operatives are member-owned enterprises that exist to meet the social, economic and cultural aspirations of their members and communities. As owners of the co-operative, it is the members that democratically govern their enterprise.

Co-operatives are guided by a set of internationally agreed principles based in self-help, solidarity and democracy. These values are stewarded by the International Co-operative Alliance and are enshrined under section 10 of the Co-operatives National Law (CNL):

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Co-operation among Co-operatives
7. Concern for Community

In Australia, there are more than 400 arts and culture co-operatives and community owned and controlled organisations, with many more in ancillary business, sharing and support services that strengthen arts and culture in Australia.

#### **Arts and culture co-operatives:**

- Can deliver improved pay and conditions for artists
- Enable creative industries workers to share resources, back-office services and infrastructure
- Provide solidarity with like-minded creatives
- Involve the community or consumers in ethical purchasing

## First Nations first: Recognising and respecting the crucial place of these stories at the centre of our arts and culture.

First Nations co-operatives provide a holistic approach to serve the needs of Indigenous communities in a manner which is culturally informed and artist governed.

Co-operative models are particularly well placed to address specific challenges that impede recognition and present positive opportunities to promote the expression and sharing of culture in an environment of collaboration and respect. They ensure equitable distribution of income derived from arts practices and a bulwark against exploitation by market intermediaries or intellectual property infringement. Co-operatives develop the skills, capabilities and governance practices of First Nations people involved in artistic practice to have autonomy and agency over their art.

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### Case study: Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative

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[Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative](#) has been an enabler for hundreds of Aboriginal Artists. The ripple effect of their art has been profound, with many past and present members having enduring and successful careers.

Boomalli's primary goal is to promote Aboriginal Artists whose language groups exist within the NSW state boundaries. The co-operative supports, promotes, educates and protects copyright for its members.

Boomalli strives to improve access for Aboriginal Artists from both regional and metropolitan NSW. Boomalli has a current membership base of 50 artists. Approximately a third are emerging artists and over half of its membership consists of regional artists.

Boomalli was selected for the Around the World film series in 2019 and featured in [a short documentary viewed here](#).

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## A place for every story: Reflecting the diversity of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture.

Inclusion is a core principle of co-operation. Co-operatives and mutuals, through their members, are closely connected to their communities and promote collaboration that reflects the diversity of the communities in which they operate.

Through co-operatives, communities of creatives can band together to access and promote diversity in arts and cultural activities and allow for the consideration of all stakeholders.

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### Case study: Flock

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[Flock](#) is a digital community artist marketplace for women and non-binary folk that allows its sellers to reach Australian audiences and returns the profit direct to the makers.

The organisation aims to create a human place to build digital literacy for feminine identifying creatives. It creates a sense of belonging and reduces isolation, and through principles of mutuality and reciprocity creates, maintains and strengthens their social connections.

Flock believes that when the full talents of feminine identifying souls are celebrated, supported and utilised, society will thrive with joy and longevity.

## The centrality of the artist: supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture.

Co-operatives can deliver improved pay and conditions for artists. As workers within a precarious, gig-based sector, many creative industries professionals are sole traders who are not protected by a national award.

Arts co-operatives can help to establish viable working conditions and fair rates of pay, which will help to secure the longevity of Australia's creative workforce.

By empowering artists as workers, co-operatives also assist in the promotion of positive psychosocial wellbeing – two major problems in the Australian music industry, for example, are the alarming rates of mental ill-health and sexual harm, bullying and discrimination.

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### Case study: Stocksy United

[Stocksy United](#) is an artist-owned platform co-op that provides photos and videos to some of the world's leading agencies and brands. Based in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, it was formed in 2012 and now represents artists in 65 different countries and has over 900 voting member photographers.

As a co-operative, Stocksy empowers its artists members and ensures they receive fair pay, with 50-75 per cent of all licenses going directly to contributors.

The sense of community and ownership felt by its members drives a greater level of passion into their work, resulting in inspired imagery of the highest quality.

## Strong institutions: Providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture.

Co-operatives provide solidarity with like-minded creatives that promote strong networks across institutions which can support and sustain the development of culture and the arts.

Beyond major institutions, there is limited capacity, especially in isolated, rural or remote communities. By joining together through co-operative structure, creatives from across Australia can form the necessary networks to bridge and support existing cultural infrastructure.

Co-operatives allow artists to access a rich community of knowledge, support and camaraderie, and encourage opportunities to gain inspiration from one another.

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### Case study: PBS FM

[PBS FM](#) (Progressive Broadcasting Service), is a co-operatively owned community radio station in Melbourne, founded in 1979.

The PBS vision is to nurture, inspire and champion Melbourne's diverse music community. The co-operative aims to create space for little-heard music and underrepresented voices, and to combat the isolation of living in a sprawling city.

The station has grown to be an integral part of Melbourne's diverse music industry, championing Australian music from outside the major institutional framework.



PBS showcases the diversity of contemporary music and supports emerging local bands and musicians. Countless creatives found their beginnings at PBS, either as musicians, presenters or volunteers.

## Reaching the audience: Ensuring our stories reach the right people at home and abroad.

Co-operatives enable creative industries workers to share resources, back-office services and infrastructure, amplifying their reach and broadening their audience. Equipment, tools and administrative support as well as gallery space and performance venues are essential elements of artistic practice. However, they can be prohibitively expensive for artists to fund independently. Arts co-ops allow members to access a shared pool of resources and reduce the overheads of their individual creative practice.

### Case study: Smart Co-operative

[Smart](#) is a co-operative for freelancers, creatives and artists. Founded in Belgium in 1998, the co-op today operates in over 40 European cities and has more than 35,000 members.

The co-op allows creatives to pool entrepreneurial resources and risks to establish sustainable working conditions and access broader audiences. Smart facilitates regular employment for people struggling with complex, short-term and changing work conditions, or helps restructuring their self-employment in a sustainable manner.

All co-op members are co-owners who participate in democratic decision-making, and this collaborative engagement creates a network of communities able to share and widen the reach of creative expression.

We would be pleased to provide any further information.

## About the BCCM

The BCCM is the voice of Australia's co-operative, mutual and member owned enterprises and provides the latest research on the economic and social contribution of this sector to the Australian economy. In the [2022 National Mutual Economy Report](#) there were 1,832 active CMEs in Australia with the combined total revenue of the top 100 CMEs at \$34.4 billion (excluding superannuation funds).

### Contact:

Anthony Taylor  
Head of Corporate Affairs

Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM)

GPO Box 5166, Sydney, NSW 2000

E: [info@bccm.coop](mailto:info@bccm.coop) | P: +61 (02) 8279 6050 | [www.bccm.coop](http://www.bccm.coop)