

National Cultural Policy Submission

Submitted on behalf of the Australian Dance Council – Ausdance Inc. (otherwise known as Ausdance National) which is an arts peak body and a not-for-profit arts organisation.

Challenges and Opportunities:

In current times, there are both a great deal of opportunities and challenges that exist for everyone, Australia wide, to be able to contribute to, participate in, and experience artistic, creative, and cultural activities that support identity formation, belonging, health, productivity, comfort, and overall wellbeing.

The new National Cultural Policy presents exciting new means and possibilities to harness these opportunities and address the challenges. In the Government’s quest to support the cultural pluralism necessary to afford quality living for everyone, everywhere in Australia, Ausdance National stresses the importance of recognising, valuing, respecting, and aiding diverse dance, dance practices, and the people that practice them. Our bodies hold our experience, and so dance, being a language of the body, belongs to us all. It’s important that everyone can dance so that their unique signature dialect can be communicated throughout the world.

In considering dance and more broadly, culture, Ausdance National recognises and respects that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their Cultures are an integral element of our shared, dynamic, living culture and ever evolving national identity. Their cultures have been ways of being, knowing, and learning for people living in Australia for over 100,000 years. All dance in Australia sits within the context of this cultural continuum. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their Cultures have, and continue to shape, our existence. This country’s lands, waters, and skies belong to them, they were never ceded. First Nations Cultures are part of the past, the present, and the future. They always were, and always will be. It’s, therefore, not only important, but necessary for First Nations to come first in Cultural Policy.

The Government's ongoing relationship with First Nations custodians of dance will be fundamental to ensuring that the Cultures of First Nations Dance are embedded within Cultural Policy and actioned appropriately throughout the dance sector.

When looking at Cultural Policy, it's also important that Dance in Australia is acknowledged for the great value it brings to people's lives for many different reasons. It develops artistry, creativity, and culture. It's an engaging and very effective means of: keeping fit; working memory; connecting with others; learning about oneself; learning about others; learning about different cultures; improving communication; caring for one's health; assisting the health of others; sharing experiences; building belonging; forming individual and collective identities; caring for one's mental health; expressing oneself; developing spatial and physical understanding; and experiencing the world with heightened sensory comprehension to read body language, and respond to the unsaid communications that occur on a daily basis in ways that words cannot.

Cultural Policy will need to identify and support the diverse dance sector: its practices, functions, and all dance professionals (including cultural and community leaders) whose work brings people to know and understand the benefits above as part of their daily living. Policy will also need to identify and support these professionals in providing safe, accessible, and effective means for everyone to participate in and engage with dance as part of their daily lives. In this context, we also strongly recommend that education in, through, and for artistic, creative, and cultural learning, discovery, and development be embedded within each of the five pillars. Artistic, creative, and cultural 'education' should be defined in its broadest sense: training; research and development; best practice mobilisation and implementation; and awareness and understanding. This will require coordinated and cohesive policy that demonstrates understanding of the roles and functions that different parts of the artistic, creative, and cultural ecology serve. It will also require recognition that: artistic, creative, and cultural work happens in and across other sectors and industries; that artistic, creative, and cultural development doesn't occur in isolation, but as we interact with the world; and, that the work involved requires more than just artistic, creative, and cultural knowledge, skills, and capacity. Education to serve all these purposes, therefore, needs to be accounted for. This steps beyond training artists and creatives simply for careers in performance and in creating art, creative and/or cultural products. It requires education that supports artistic, creative, and cultural engagement for better quality living at all ages of life - building artistic and creative skills, capacity, and capabilities, and developing and sharing culture to support people (as well as businesses and industries) to manage their health and wellness, their relationships, their productivity, their accessibility, their adaptability, their engagement, and so much more. Successful policy implementation will require comprehension that artists are not just workers who make and create art, but workers who facilitate artistic, creative, and cultural education for all. That they are, therefore, also integral to the development, progression, and success

of other industries. Policy will require that the artistic, creative, and cultural sector be provided with at least the same amount of business support and capacity building infrastructure that other industries are already provided with.

Key to effective implementation of a National Cultural Policy will be the support and leadership of fully functioning specialist service organisations as they will provide necessary mechanisms for mobilising policy. Effective, proven, service organisations such as Ausdance, ensure that functions such as those articulated later in this submission are fulfilled. These are necessary to ensure that policy implementation is effective as they enable appropriate and relevant guidance through form, practice, area, and/or profession specific leadership. They connect policy to people and places, transform policy into action, and build capacity for the artistic, creative, and cultural sector. This benefits the Government, the sector, and society through improved quality of living, in turn, increasing the value of artistry, creativity and culture in people's lives so that artistic, creative, and cultural activities can have continuing impact. In this regard, BlakDance and Ausdance will be key mechanisms for mobilising policy in the dance sector.

Federal funding for service organisations must be restored to ensure service organisations have sufficient capacity to carry out this important work. This funding would be best administered by the Department for the Arts rather than the Australia Council to prevent any perceptions of conflict of interest and to allow the service organisations to work in collaboration with the Australia Council for the Arts more productively.

The context of our recommendations:

This submission comes from Ausdance National which is a leading national peak advocacy and industry body for the dance sector with a globally respected, 45-year legacy of building dance sector capacity. Under the trademark 'Ausdance', Ausdance National collaborates with a network of other independently governed state and territory peak dance advocacy bodies to achieve aligned vision and integrated partnerships. Primarily, Ausdance National focuses on matters of national scope and federal level government significance, whilst the state and territory Ausdance organisations in the network focus on matters relevant to their local state or territory dance sectors.

Through a range of projects, resources, platforms, partnerships, and relationships that Ausdance National, together with the broader Ausdance network of organisations across Australia, initiate, develop and sustain, Ausdance National provides nationally relevant services and advocacy for the national network of members. Also connecting the dots between Federal Government, federal and national agencies, the broader community, and the dance sector to enable mutually beneficial

relations, programs, services, and outcomes to be realised. Driving a vision for dance to be a valued part of the lives of all Australians, Ausdance National builds the capacity of the dance sector, and makes known the benefits that diverse dance and dance practice have on the quality of life through widespread, safe, and inclusive participation and engagement.

With sufficient funding, Ausdance National, will carry out the below activities and fulfil the following functions which are vital to effective National Cultural Policy development and its implementation:

- Engage in advocacy to improve knowledge of, access to, inclusion in, and outcomes for dance. Promoting and enabling the diverse dance and dance practices of its extensive membership, also, making dance more widely recognised and valued for the benefits it provides to Australian society.
- Provide its diverse and extensive network of Ausdance Members with access to information, resources, platforms, and networks to mobilise, grow, develop, and sustain safe, effective, and efficient dance operations and activities that positively impact quality of life for people living in Australia.
- Ensure that a strong, informed, and cohesive voice is heard by the Federal Government and key decision makers to continue guiding policy and infrastructure at the national level which is relevant and appropriate to supporting the effective and efficient functioning of dance operations and activities. Also helping to facilitate better quality living for people in Australia.
- Develop and manage national alliances and partnerships to help sustain vital infrastructure and initiate and grow resources and opportunities to benefit professionals working in and beyond the dance sector, that will extend onwards through their artistic, creative, and cultural products and services to the public. As well as to develop and manage alliances and partnerships in the Asia-Pacific through Ausdance's position as the Australian Chapter of the World Dance Alliance Asia Pacific, and internationally through its many international networks with other peak bodies for dance across the world.

Ausdance National provides recommendations for National Cultural Policy from the perspective of the national peak advocacy body for dance, this incorporates recommendations from the Ausdance network organisations in SA, WA, QLD, NSW, VIC and ACT which consulted with their local members and stakeholders to bring these state and territory perspectives into focus. Ausdance QLD and Ausdance ACT, have also made submissions to the National Cultural Policy consultation to bring forth more nuanced and comprehensive state and territory level perspectives.

In support of the self-determination of First Nations Peoples, please refer directly to submissions from First Nations Peoples and First Nations self-determined organisations to gain full comprehension of recommendations from the First Nations perspective. In this submission, Ausdance National highlights recommendations to support First Nations ecosystems that will aid cultural development to support quality living in Australia which have been informed by the submissions provided by BlakDance Australia, Moogahlin Performing Arts, Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company, Ilbijerri Theatre Company, Marrugeku, and NAISDA, as well as recommendations put forward through consultation with First Nations Peoples who are members and stakeholders of the Ausdance network.

Ausdance National also focuses attention to submissions from Diversity Arts Australia, Regional Arts Australia, and Arts Access Australia whose submissions provide expert perspectives to help inform just and equitable artistic, creative, and cultural practice and engagement.

We request that you give weight to individual submissions from artists and ensure that their recommendations are central in the process of consultation.

We also draw your attention to submissions from The National Advocates for Arts Education, the Ausdance National Education Subcommittee and the Tertiary Dance Council of Australia which highlight the significance of education and training in dance, for dance, and through dance from their perspectives.

Ausdance National participates in the National Dance Managers Meetings¹ and holds informal alliance with the Consortium of Peak Arts Organisations² so we would also like to draw your attention to their submissions which provide recommendations from the dance performance sector, and other peak sector and service perspectives respectively.

¹ National Dance Managers Meeting Members – BlakDance, Ausdance National, Australia Council for the Arts, Bangarra Dance Theatre, Critical Path, Force Majeure, Shaun Parker Company, Sydney Dance Company, BalletLab, Chunky Move, Dancehouse, Lucy Guerin Inc, Stephanie Lake Company, The Australian Ballet, Australian Dance Theatre, Restless Dance Theatre, Australasian Dance Collective, Dancenorth, Karul Projects, Queensland Ballet, The Farm, Tasdance, Co3, Marrugeku, Strut Dance, West Australian Ballet, Guts Dance, NT Dance Tracks Dance.

² Consortium of Peak Arts Organisations - APRA/AMCOS, Arts Access Australia, Ausdance National, Australian Museum and Galleries Association, Australian Music Centre, Australian Society of Authors, BlakDance, Diversity Arts Australia, Live Performance Australia, National Association for the Visual Arts, Performing Arts Connections Australia, Regional Arts Australia, Symphony Services Australia, Theatre Network Australia, Screen Producers Association, Australian Writer's Guild, Australian Festivals Association, Indigenous Art Code, and First Nations Media

Recommendations:

FIRST NATIONS FIRST:

Embed First Nations self-determination and develop workforce capacity

- Set example and demonstrate that the Federal, State and Local Governments recognise and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples by investing in, implementing, and sustaining their cultures to support quality living for all.
- Position self-determination as a fundamental principle in all First Nations engagement and activities and embed it into all First Nations programs and initiatives.
- Develop and secure funding for a 10+ year plan to invest in building First Nations workforce capacity and capability to enable more self-determined First Nations dance professionals and arts workers to have sustainable careers where they can freely create, develop, and deliver the highest quality of artistic, creative, and cultural leadership, products, and services.
- Truthfully acknowledge information about colonisation and its impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to ensure that everyone is aware and better able to understand the disadvantage and marginalisation that First Nations Peoples have experienced and continue to experience.
- Acknowledge and remunerate the costs incurred by First Nations Peoples in facilitating cultural processes to aid artistic, creative, and cultural activities so that they can be freely led, contributed to, participated in, experienced and practiced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
- Ensure that cultural protocols, ICIP management and community consultation are an explicit and eligible expense in grant budgets and that best practice protocols as determined by First Nations Peoples are adhered to.

A PLACE FOR EVERY STORY:

Promote, enable, and uphold just and equitable practices and environs in supporting the creation, development, delivery, participation in, and engagement of artistic, creative, and cultural products and services for all people

- Prioritise artistic, creative, and cultural development that supports safe access and engagement for people who experience disadvantage or marginalisation.
 - Strategic, targeted investment for First Nations, CaLD and migrant, disabled and neurodiverse, regional and remote populations and especially the intersections of these.
 - Establish an independent service to develop and provide information, advice, education, training and supporting resources to the artistic, creative, and cultural sector to better understand issues of disability access and inclusion, and the actions that can be taken.
- Implement equity measures for programming, funding, and employment and provide investment in infrastructure to enable it.
 - Ensure that projects and organisations that are funded by the Government annually report on the diversity of their audiences and participants and that this is made publicly available.
 - Implement processes that measure the impact of artistic, creative, and cultural dance activities – both their processes and the outcomes produced by their processes, and across multiple timeframes (immediate, short, medium, and long term). Ensure that these measures can gather both quantitative and qualitative information which encompass the far-reaching impacts that artistic, creative, and cultural dance activities and engagement have on quality of living in everyday life. Also making sure that there is scope to account for dance activities beyond those focused on driving performance outcomes in the purpose of their design and implementation. (Large government-funded organisations such as the ABS, the Australia Council for the Arts and the Department of Communications and the Arts may be positioned to take on this work if properly resourced. The work of Dr Jackie Bailey and the BYP group is also relevant here).
- Comprehensively map the artistic, creative, and cultural sector to understand the diversity of activities and workers as well as the scope of different purposes, functions, and interdependencies of the artistic, creative, and cultural ecology. Particularly focussing on areas

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where previous mapping has been non-existent or extremely limited – e.g., activities of small to medium organisations, independent providers, and artistic, creative, and cultural workers employed in other work beyond creating and delivering performances for audiences.

- Invest in environments of all types for all people to participate in and engage with artistic, creative, and cultural professionals and their products and services.
 - Spaces that are flexible and/or that there are multiple spaces available to support a wide variety of different activities in suitable ways.
 - Built for purpose spaces for dance so that safe dance practice of all forms and for all people can be facilitated.
 - Accessible spaces for dance for those who are disabled and neurodiverse to participate freely and safely.
 - Invest in making digital platforms for dance safer spaces for both participants, viewers, facilitators, and artists.
- Invest in the means for communicating and creating for everyone to engage – Mediums of all kinds, as well as engagement and participation of all sorts at all different levels, for all abilities.
 - Invest in implementing accessibility standards both online and in-person (closed captioning, descriptive text, audio descriptions, building and venue standards, Auslan interpreters, multi-lingual translations, content disablement, separation of foreground and background content, etc.)
 - Ensure there's diversity in dance opportunities available for the public to engage by investing in making Australia's dance studio sector safer – an enormous and vital part of the dance ecology.
 - Review welfare support to ensure accessibility of benefits for students undertaking local or specialised courses, not just nationally recognised training programs.
- Clearly position cultural heritage to acknowledge and respect its place in shaping artistry, creativity and culture of the past and the role it plays in shaping the artistry, creativity, and shared cultures of today.

- Support Ausdance National and the National Library of Australia to continue its work in ensuring that dance is documented.
- Adequately support the costs of diversity capacity building and making provisions which enable diverse access in the workforce and the workplace.
 - Enable training to ensure safe dance engagement is facilitated for all abilities and mobilities.
 - Fund costs to cover access needs.
- Always promote human rights and fundamental freedoms.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE ARTIST:

Recognise, and value the real work of artists in Australian society and build sustainable artistic, creative, and cultural careers

- Recognise, promote and instil that ‘Artists’ are more than entertainers, cultural performers, and creators of artistic, creative, and cultural products. Dance professionals are also public service providers who contribute to and work in Education and Training, Health, Human Services, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Industry Innovation and Science, Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities, Environment and Energy, Research and Development, and Social Services.
- Recognise, promote, and instill that being an artist involves developing diverse skills and capabilities and that these are not all artistic or creative. (The job of being an artist requires the same work to be done that many other businesses require – marketing, promotions, and communications, project management, documentation, financial management, human resourcing, stakeholder relations, reporting, business planning, strategic planning, travel, ongoing professional development, information and technology services, grant writing, resourcing, income/revenue building, training, etc).
- Ensure that partners, funding bodies, and Government articulate the benefits they receive by supporting the work of artists to remove the stigma of ‘free handouts’.
- Build understanding that artistic, creative, and cultural activities require finely developed skills and capabilities and ensure that the contributions they make are acknowledged.

- Ensure that the full costs of working as an artist are remunerated.
 - Establish and implement legislation that provides a universal basic income for professional artists - reduce the reliance of professional artists on organisations. (The Australian Tax Office already defines a professional artist through the following business indicators in [TR2005/01](#)).
 - Address significant issues to do with ineffective, inefficient, and inequitable systems of funding artistic, creative, and cultural activity.
 - Reduce unnecessary administrative workloads.
 - Implement higher minimum wage standards and review legislation and industry awards to ensure that artists are paid to do all of the work involved.
 - Value artists as workers – ensure that all workers, including artists, are paid at least minimum wage and that artists are paid no less than any other workers who are being paid.
 - Fund projects. Employ artists. Ensure that funding processes for projects and organisations implement accountability in upholding employment standards.
 - Increase the possibility for artistic, creative, and cultural products and services to be paid for so that there's greater capacity to employ artists - Promote and value the full degree of skills and capabilities of artists and the scope that those skills and capabilities as well as the outcomes of artistic, creative and cultural work, present to benefit other industries and citizens outside of the sector.
- Make provisions for artistic, creative, and cultural learning to occur at all stages of life.
 - Invest in ongoing artistic, creative, and cultural education and training across all Government portfolios to support productivity and wellbeing.
 - Replicate a cross-portfolio framework in educational institutions so that artistic, creative and cultural capabilities are embedded within learning for all learning departments and further instill the value of artistic, creative, and cultural engagement in all facets of living.

- Review dance training across the primary, secondary, and tertiary education sector to ensure that it's adequately funded to support today's real world career pathways and so that it can support the learning and sharing of more diverse dance and dance practices present within Australia today.
- Re-establish programs such as [SCOPE](#) (Securing Career Opportunities and Professional Employment) previously initiated by Ausdance National with the Australian Sports Commission and later as part of a strategic initiative of the Australia Council for the Arts.

STRONG INSTITUTIONS:

Develop and maintain institutions with robust, interconnected, and valued frameworks that provide and sustain effective, efficient, high functioning, flexible, adaptable, appropriate and relevant infrastructure which increases capacity for a diverse ecology of artistic, creative, and cultural activities, professionals and society to thrive.

- Implement a bi-partisan National Cultural Policy.
- Ensure effective and efficient cooperation among all tiers of Government.
- Review Federal, State, and Local Government parameters of support for artistic, creative and cultural development and address gaps and inefficiencies.
- Recognise Ausdance National as a vital 'strong institution' and prioritise enabling its full participation in the implementation of a National Cultural Policy.
- Maintain collaboration with, and support for, diverse independent sector authorities to ensure that nonpartisan voices are involved in policy development, sector planning, advocacy and promotion for, and of, artistic, creative and cultural activities.
 - Invest in peak sector and service organisations.
 - Invest in youth focused organisations.
- Re-focus policy frameworks and investment towards public good rather than creative productivity – creative and economic prosperity will follow because of artistic, creative, and cultural investment in public good.

- Invest in research to better understand the functions of different parts of the ecology, identify gaps in productivity, efficiency, and function, and create fit for purpose infrastructure.
 - Enable direct response to the recommendations made in the Final Report from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and invest in Ausdance to continue development of accreditation and regulation systems and platforms to activate and maintain best practice in dance teaching activities to improve the safety of dance engagement for children. Refer to [The Ausdance Network Report to the National Office for Child Safety](#).
 - Invest in research funding for university dance research projects and their interdisciplinary approaches that benefit society and enable the uptake of new technology.
 - Allocate ARC grants to a broader industry cohort to redress diminishing arts research in dance and prevent ministerial interference in ARC decision making processes.
 - Reverse increased tertiary fees for study in the Creative Arts. And, see that any increased Federal Government fees for arts courses in the interim ensure that relative funding amounts are allocated to their corresponding departments that are delivering the courses.
- Recognise the different purposes, motivations, and focused priorities of different sub-sectors of the ecology and encourage and facilitate meaningful collaboration among diverse providers to exchange knowledge and develop skills and capabilities.
 - Invest in programs such as the [National Dance Forum](#) which brings together diverse providers within the dance sector for networking and exchange and identifies key opportunities for targeted sector development initiatives.
- Be conscious to ensure that diverse artistic, creative, and cultural providers are sustained, taking care to prevent artistic, creative, and cultural providers from monopolising and competing in professional engagement as well as product and service delivery.
 - Acknowledge that the dance sector works interdependently and instill that there is no hierarchy of function or expertise that applies to different subsectors of the dance industry – rather, they are all necessary in ensuring the overall healthy functioning of the dance ecology. Demonstrate that no sub-sector is the pinnacle of all knowledge and

expertise in the dance sector, nor is working in them the ultimate motivation of all dance sector professionals.

- Afford the whole dance ecology privileges of access to, consultation from, and representation by Government and the Government's independent representative agencies for the arts, creativity and culture.

REACHING THE AUDIENCE:

Mobilise Australia's artistic, creative, and cultural professionals and their products and services, to ensure that the sector is well networked, its value is known, and its impact is great at both national and global levels.

- Facilitate a balanced flow of cultural goods and services and increase the mobility of artists and cultural professionals.
- Acknowledge the importance of culture as integral to all aspects of living. Development and care for culture must be enacted in activities across all portfolios of Government.
- Establish a Live Entertainment and Events Insurance Scheme to increase industry confidence and support event reactivation.
- Ensure that there is cooperation for the delivery of policy between layers of Government – helping to reduce unnecessary jurisdiction-based regulations in the future.
- Recognise the centrality of dance education and training to the Australian dance ecology. Studio, school, and tertiary dance education sectors are integral to the success of the wider dance ecology. The skills learned through dance are transferable and sought after in many careers outside of the dance industry too.
- Enhance tax incentives to motivate private giving and investment in artworks and sector development.
- Invest in public campaigns to rebuild confidence in the artistic, creative, and cultural sector.
- Significantly increase funding for grants programs for artistic, creative and cultural activities to support the huge pool of “unfunded excellence” and offer longer term funding to more dance organisations. Multi-year funding for dance at the Federal level in Australia needs to reflect that

there's a place for disabled and neurodiverse populations to dance too, and that other forms of dance beyond Ballet and Contemporary are also valid and valued.

- Clearly delineate dance practice from other activities included under 'Fitness and Recreation' so that directions that limit some Fitness and Recreation activities aren't confused with the directions for dance in the future. (This had a significant impact on the livelihood of dance studio businesses during Covid-19 restrictions).
- Promote dance for its extensive and wide-ranging benefits that serve the community (e.g., dance as a health and wellbeing activity at all ages of life, dance as a means for developing creative and artistic skill sets and capabilities).
- Integrate incentives across government portfolios to provide more opportunities for creative and cultural partnerships that also aid government priorities.
- Work with local communities to develop fit-for-purpose venues and infrastructure.
- Provide a national, integrated and sustainable touring network. Ensuring that there is sustainable multi-year programming investment to support a greater range of diverse artists to work in venues managed by Councils and Local Government Areas.
- Invest in peak sector and service organisations and in education and to enable information, best practice, and the implementation of policy to be mobilised and actioned.

Ausdance National extends thanks to the Office for the Arts for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation for a New National Cultural Policy. May the Policy shape the foundations to develop a comprehensive 10-year National Cultural Plan which aids cooperation and collaboration across tiers of government and its portfolios. We eagerly await the outcomes of this consultation.

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