

Urban Design Forum Australia

Public Submission



A New National Cultural Policy

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



Siteworks, Brunswick

Access to space for living, production, rehearsal and performance is critical to our creative and cultural sectors. The affordability of this space is central to ensuring a healthy and diverse arts ecology that supports creative practitioners across their careers.

We live, work and play on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging and extend this respect to all Indigenous Australians.



Attn:
Office for the Arts
Australian Government
Department of
Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional
Development,
Communications and the
Arts

Re:
A New National Cultural
Policy

Dated:
August 22, 2022

Pages:
6

From:
Urban Design Forum
Australia
Suite 1.2/2
Collins St.
Melbourne VIC 3000

Who are we?

Urban Design Forum Australia (UDFA) is an independent non-profit industry organisation that supports public interest outcomes in cities. We were founded in 1986 and have recently undergone significant renewal and expansion under the directorship of our new leadership committee. We believe that well-designed and effectively governed cities are essential to solving the major challenges of our time.

Since relaunching in late 2021 we have a rapidly growing membership with 219 members as of August 2022, and 17 Partner organisations across universities, private consultancies, non profits and local government. While Victorian-based, we have members in New South Wales, Tasmania and Queensland. As an industry organisation we draw upon our members immense individual and collective experience in the built environment.

Our members come from private consultancy, state and local government, the development industry and academia and have a broad range of experience in the planning, financing, development and operation of spaces for the creative and cultural sector.

It is our view that a healthy creative and cultural sector is pivotal to the attractiveness, livability and public life of good cities.

Summary of submission

The planning of our cities plays a significant role in providing space for creative production and presentation. Urban Design Forum Australia (UDFA) greatly welcomes the Australian Government's development of a new national cultural policy. As a non-profit organisation that supports public interest outcomes in our cities, UDFA urges the Australian Government to ensure that our new national cultural policy leads to outcomes that:

- Contribute to the increased delivery of spaces for creative production and presentation that are affordable, secure and fit-for-purpose.
- Contribute to an increased supply of affordable housing for creative practitioners.
- Protect existing creative space, particularly in locations where there is an existing creative community and ecosystem.

Over a number of years, arts practitioners and organisations have been calling for a national policy. The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) have clearly articulated the need for a national policy:

“Australia has been without a formally defined arts and cultural policy or plan at the federal level since the launch of the ‘National Cultural Policy – Creative Australia’ in 2013, which was abandoned that same year following a change of government. For the past twenty years governments have been managing arts and culture primarily through ad hoc and reactive budgetary decisions, relying on existing infrastructure to funnel funding and support. A National Cultural Plan would provide a practical mechanism for the federal government to coordinate more consistent and effective investment in arts and culture, drawing organisations, communities and sectors together under a framework for change.”

The lack of a national policy is significantly out of step with the enormous value and benefit the arts provide to Australian society:

- The creative arts [DM1] make a major contribution to the Australian economy, employing 194,000 Australians and directly contributing \$14.7 billion to Gross Domestic Product (GDP)[1]
- Growing numbers of Australians agree arts and creativity build social cohesion and support health, education and the future economy – critical areas as our nation recovers from the impact of COVID-19. Nearly every Australian – 98% of us – engage with arts and culture. An increasing majority of Australians acknowledge the positive impacts of arts and creativity on our lives and our communities.[2]

Despite these benefits, the arts continue to face significant challenges. Within the context of planning for our cities and regions, two key challenges for the arts are gentrification and affordability.

The impact of gentrification on the creative sector is a growing and highly disruptive national trend for arts organisations. As Alexie Glass-Kantor, Chair of Contemporary Arts Organisations Australia (CAOA) and former Gertrude Contemporary Director, has noted, “In 2006, when I became Director of Gertrude, of the 14 organisations in CAOA only three had long term housing problems. (Today) 12 of 15 (CAOA organisations) have problems in terms of long-term housing or sustainable infrastructure”.

Addressing affordability is critical to ensuring a healthy and diverse arts ecology that supports creative practitioners across their career. It is worth noting that the previous 2013 national policy refers to ‘affordable creative space’ just twice with no mention of affordable housing. We strongly recommend that affordability of physical space for cultural production is a key focus area of the new national policy to support the artist-as-worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture.

While planning policy for the built environment is primarily addressed by state and local government, affordability is an issue for all three tiers of government. By signaling the critical importance of access to affordable housing and creative space at the national level, individuals and organisations are able to leverage national policy to support their advocacy when engaging with planning matters at a state and local level. There is also a range of non-planning mechanisms that can contribute to increasing access to affordable space for creative practitioners. UDFA have provided planning and urban governance case studies below which provide pathways to achieve increased access to affordable space.

Affordable housing

[Affordable housing strategies and policy recognise artists as a cohort in need of access to affordable housing.](#)

For example, the City of Melbourne's Affordable Housing Strategy 2030 identified a wide range of people who may need affordable housing during their life, including artists. The strategy also identified the important role of affordable housing in supporting an inclusive and diverse city:

A broad spectrum of professionals, students, artists, service and hospitality industry professionals make a significant contribution to our city. They are critical to Melbourne's liveability and economic prosperity.

There is also an opportunity to more clearly define 'key workers' or 'creative and cultural contributors' within affordable housing policy. This has already occurred in a number of jurisdictions in the Netherlands and has been implemented locally by a number of innovative private developers such as Nightingale and Assemble in the allocation of priority housing.

Inclusionary and value capture mechanisms

[Expand the use of inclusionary and value capture mechanisms to support the delivery of affordable creative workspaces.](#)

The report Supporting Enterprise and Creative Industries investigates opportunities to support commercial enterprises and creative industries in the Inner Metropolitan Region of Melbourne. It includes an analysis of how inclusionary and value capture mechanisms in planning regulations can support the provision of affordable workspaces. The report suggests the following general principles to guide when these mechanisms should be considered:

Inclusionary affordable workspace policies should be considered in areas where access to affordable workspace is a pressing issue for start-ups and creative industries...[and where future planning controls are] expected to deliver an uplift in development rights from the present-day situation.

Affordable workspace value capture provisions could be introduced (via floor area uplift or other mechanisms) across a wider range of situations where there is scope for consideration of density and built form above what the current planning controls allow for.

Community and Creative Land Trusts

[Changes to law would enable the potential of community and creative land trusts to be realised in Australia.](#)

The benefits of land trusts have been identified in research by Dr Louise Crabtree and the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. The City of Sydney is exploring the introduction of creative land trusts to help cultural industries access the property market for affordable, long-term use. As not-for-profit landholders, they can acquire, create and secure property for creative and cultural purposes. Other market-rate commercial or accommodation spaces on the property can subsidise the cultural infrastructure.

The model has already been successful in the UK. The London Creative Land Trust now owns 3 properties with an ambitious target of creating 1,000 new artists studio spaces within the next 5 years.

Tax and investment incentives

Changes to tax systems have the potential to provide alternate methods for securing resources.

As the City of Sydney has noted in their strategy Making Space for Culture in Sydney, in the UK it is possible for cultural and creative enterprises to leverage investment through the national government's Enterprise Investment Scheme and the Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme. These two initiatives offer tax rebates to those investing in cultural ventures, including emerging and start-up enterprises. This is comparable to the existing tax concessions in Australia associated with 'Deductible Gift Recipient' status, but not limited to non-profit and 'charitable' ends.

SPACE, a social enterprise and registered charity, runs 20 affordable arts studio buildings across seven London boroughs, consisting of 22,500 square meters of creative workspace hosting 800 artists and creative micro-businesses. As a social enterprise and charity, income earned through sub-letting space can be supplemented by philanthropic investment.

Improve data collection

Develop consistent, robust and longitudinal data to inform future decision making.

As the City of Sydney has noted:

There is ample room to improve the connection between cultural policy and land use planning. However, to do so, we will need to improve the quality and reliability of data associated with cultural wellbeing, the community need for cultural infrastructure and the broader economic requirements of the creative industries.

Next steps

Urban Design Forum Australia would welcome any further opportunity to engage further with the Office for the Arts in the development of this once in a generation national policy. As built environment practitioners we can contribute practical solutions which assist in supporting the health and vibrancy of our creative and cultural sector so that it remains a viable career pathway for future generations.

Should you have any queries regarding the information contained within this letter, please don't hesitate to contact David Morison on 0422 202 891 or via hello@udf.org.au.

Kind regards,

Leanne Hodyl
President, Urban Design Forum

David Morison
Leadership Committee, Urban Design Forum

References

1. <https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/polling-gov-support-for-arts-industry-popular-and-necessary>
2. <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/news/media-releases/creating-our-future-arts-and-creativity-increasingly-important-to-all-australians/>