

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

Putting culture at the heart of the state

NSW Arts, Culture and
Creative Industries Policy
2024-2033



From the Minister

When we look back through history at a society, I believe we can judge it by two simple measures. Firstly, how it treats its disadvantaged and powerless and secondly, the value of its ideas - its arts and culture.

We are lucky to live in NSW, a state rich in creativity.

The NSW Government believes creativity is one of the key things to celebrate about our state. That is why we are sharing our 10-year policy framework. This is where we're starting, and where we're heading. This is certainly not the end point. We want to unleash creativity across the state.

Creative Communities is a 10-year vision, the state's first creative industries policy, supporting the traditional arts sector and cultural institutions, but encompassing industries such as music, screen, literature, fashion, design, architecture, as well as food, the digital games, and tech sectors.

The state's first arts, culture and creative industries policy commits the NSW Government to advocating for the value of culture, to enabling and investing in culture with the whole of government.

Creative Communities sets the goal of sustainably growing the creative industries in NSW. These creative sectors already represent 10% of the state's economy. They are growing rapidly. Research reveals that the creative industries are growing at nearly twice the rate of the general economy in Australia.

Growing the creative industries in NSW will be enabled by a government that advocates and invests in them, by an organised creative sector, and by a state tourism body that invites people to visit NSW to experience our culture. It will be driven by a shared vision from the sector, and from state and federal governments.

The launch of *Creative Communities* comes 11 months after the launch of the national cultural policy, *Revive*. It endorses and complements that policy.

Creative Communities supports our cultural ecosystem. We found remarkable creative communities during our consultation as far afield as Lismore, Bega and Broken Hill. We heard directly from the members of individual creative disciplines, each forming their own cultural community. This policy is designed to enable those communities, to provide the support they need and to assist them to find a home in NSW.

This policy is launched at an important time. Our nation has one of the highest creative trade deficits per capita in the world. We consume stories from other countries far more often than we tell our own stories to the world. *Creative Communities* aims to change that.

Closing the creative trade deficit needs creative people in this state to tell their stories.

It will start with First Nations stories, given the gift of that culture is often generously shared with us. It also means telling the diverse stories of our state from our outback towns to our multicultural cities.

Above all, it requires us having the confidence to celebrate our own ideas, our arts and culture.

On behalf of the NSW Government, to those many creative souls in our state, thank you for what you do.

John Graham MLC

NSW Minister for the Arts

NSW Minister for Music and the Night-Time Economy

NSW Minister for Jobs and Tourism



Sydney, December 2023

Executive Summary

Creative Communities is an expansive policy that recognises the unique place of the arts, culture and the creative industries in New South Wales, the state with the largest cultural and creative workforce, the oldest and most distinctive cultural institutions, and the most diverse population.

It is an inclusive ten-year policy that supports artists, creatives and cultural organisations and importantly, expands to include, for the first time, the rapidly growing creative industries.

It considers culture a public good and the right to participate in arts, cultural and creative activities a fundamental human right. It complements *Revive*, the national cultural policy, and shares its commitment to prioritise First Nations' culture and take our multi-faceted stories and creativity to the world.

It supports sustainably growing the creative industries and accepts the responsibility to advocate for the value of culture to build capacity, creativity, and community cohesion.

These principles and the key objectives of *Creative Communities* are detailed in Appendix 1, and their application is described in the following pages.

Creative Communities reaches across government and promises over time to touch as many lives as possible and embrace the full diversity of NSW including underrepresented culturally and linguistically diverse people and those with disability.

It commits to a whole-of-government approach to advocate for, invest in and enable the creative and cultural ecosystem across the state to realise its potential.

The policy recognises that the work produced by artists and creatives, in community and professional settings, is essential to the wellbeing of all, and that they deserve respect and support. It also recognises that cultural solutions are cost-effective and have the power to improve people's lives. Achieving the policy's ambitions requires close working relationships between NSW Government departments and agencies including those involved in education, health, transport, tourism and justice.

Creative Communities is designed to transform the creative and cultural ecosystem over the next decade. It includes an initial series of detailed commitments, developed in response to a six-month consultation process. Meetings were held in twelve centres across the state, attended by more than a thousand people, and a further seven hundred and seventy-five lodged written submissions.

The commitments grew from the deep listening of the consultation process, extensive discussions with industry leaders and across government. This process is described in Appendix 3.

A high-level position will be designated to oversee this whole-of-government approach and the implementation of the commitments to revitalise the ecosystem.

The commitments include regulatory and investment reforms, reviews of the screen and contemporary music sectors, and cultural spaces that could be made available. Reviews of the needs of Western Sydney and regional NSW are also a priority.

The NSW Government commits to delivering a parliamentary statement on the status and health of the arts, culture, and creative industries every three years, to working with industry, and fostering the next generation of artists, creative practitioners, and leaders.

The commitments are detailed in Appendix 2 and described throughout the document.

With this policy, NSW reclaims its position as the national leader in cultural policy innovation. Previous NSW governments have made decisions that have had lasting benefits—building the Sydney Opera House, establishing the first ministry of cultural affairs, providing the first prizes for authors, supporting the oldest film festival and biennale and the first museum of applied arts and sciences.

By making culture a whole-of-government responsibility and including the creative industries, *Creative Communities* provides a pathway to more fully recognising culture as a public good that enriches our democracy, economy, communities, and personal lives.

Creative Communities takes this important next step to ensure that over the next decade, the ecosystem of the arts, culture and creative industries continues to flourish and enhance the lives of NSW citizens, and shares this with the nation and the world.

We acknowledge

The NSW Government acknowledges NSW's First Nations peoples as the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout NSW and recognises and respects their continuing connections to lands, waters and communities.

The NSW Government pays respect to Elders past and present, and to all First Nations peoples, and recognises the continuation of diverse cultural, spiritual and educational practices.



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“The Arts say what we
cannot put into words.”

SUSIE SMITH, UMBELA BRASIL

A creative culturally-rich future

Creative Communities is a policy that puts arts, culture and the creative industries at the heart of New South Wales.

It embraces the special role of government in the twenty-first century as the cultural and creative ecosystem's key advocate, enabler and investor.

It reimagines cultural policy as a whole-of-government activity.

Creative Communities emerged from extensive consultation in 2023 and is now being released as a whole-of-government policy. It will enable transformative growth of the cultural and creative sectors for a generation and result in memorable art works and experiences, interesting jobs, successful businesses, improved wellbeing, and stronger community cohesion.

For millennia, culture has been central to this place. For Australia's First Peoples, culture is the inseparable expression of ancient law and a guide to contemporary life.

Over the past two centuries, public investment has added strong institutional foundations to diversify and nurture cultural and creative life in the state, and more recently to recognise the unique importance of the ancient culture that has always been here.

Creative Communities is designed to complement *Revive*, the national cultural policy, and builds on the long tradition of NSW as a national leader in cultural policy innovation.

It took extraordinary vision to commission and build the Sydney Opera House, now considered a modern wonder of the world. NSW was the first state to create a culture ministry. It was the first to offer substantial prizes to authors, and it was the first to invest in the screen industry. It is home to the century-old, nation-defining Archibald portrait prize and Australia's oldest cultural institutions, the Australian Museum, Art Gallery of NSW, State Library and NSW State Archives.

Citizens, artists, and visitors to the state enjoy the enduring benefits of these far-sighted initiatives.

Creative Communities builds on this and takes the transformative next step. It makes cultural policy a whole-of-government activity and provides a framework for the creative industries to grow.

It puts culture at the heart of government.

State government activities touch everyone: health, education, housing, transport, planning, welfare, policing, justice, environment, tourism and local government. Departments and agencies across government will contribute to building cultural activities, capacity, and opportunities in NSW. Tourism will focus more on cultural experiences. By reaching beyond departmental silos, this will unlock new opportunities to connect cultural activities with and through other government services.

This follows extensive consultation across the state that highlighted the need for better coordination, cohesion and coherence across the NSW Government. This shortcoming is having a real impact on arts organisations and creatives. An interdepartmental committee has identified opportunities for new cultural initiatives. A senior role will be designated to lead and oversee the cultural transformation envisaged by Creative Communities guided by a ministerial advisory committee, senior public servants, and industry advisors.

This will produce imaginative and rigorous policymaking that values creative and critical thinking. It will ensure that everyone in the state, wherever they live and whatever their heritage, has access and can participate as creators, students, workers and consumers. It has the potential to help transform the lives of the most disadvantaged.

Creative Communities regards the work produced by artists and the 380,000 people employed in this sector in NSW as essential to the wellbeing of the community and the economy. Some artists create new work, some teach and work in communities, institutions and businesses, others develop commercial and not-for-profit enterprises. There is also a vast network of people who work in a range of other occupations to support these activities, including teachers, production crew, administrators, tradespeople, booksellers, and other retailers of creative and cultural goods.

Their work brings joy and meaning and fosters belonging. It challenges and delights and helps us find ways to better understand the past and navigate the future.

Creative Communities recognises that the creative industries are an important part of the economy, accounting for a fifth of services exports and ten per cent of the state's workforce, and with potential for meaningful growth. Australia has a massive cultural trade deficit; for every dollar of cultural products exported we import eight. This policy framework will help address this imbalance, so more of our cultural and creative output reaches international audiences.

“I want to see regional artists truly championed. It's difficult to get people to live and work in regional NSW. They need to be given opportunities to work and live here by giving them resources to establish a career in regional NSW.”

DAVID FRANCIS, ASSOCIATION OF NSW REGIONAL CONSERVATORIUM, WOLLONGONG TOWN HALL

The policy is founded on the NSW Government's belief that the opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, cultural life is a fundamental human right. By integrating culture, art, and the creative industries into the activities of government at all levels across the whole state, NSW citizens will have more opportunities to exercise this right.

This applies to professional artists and those who work with them. It includes those who find joy and meaning by participating in an audience, as a community member, student, or maker.

The power of cultural engagement to enhance belonging and social cohesion is central to the *Creative Communities* framework. Cultural solutions are cost effective. They enhance the wellbeing of people throughout their lifetimes.

Creative Communities will take time to be fully realised. Its broad vision cannot be realised overnight or by government alone. Partnerships will be crucial. NSW Government will be an advocate, enabler and investor to foster vibrancy and engagement across the state. This will involve partnering with public, not-for-profit, community, and commercial enterprises, local government, and individuals.

Creative Communities embeds arts, culture and the creative industries more deeply in the lives of NSW citizens. It aims to provide opportunities for all to thrive.



A new model for challenging times

Culture is the fabric of life.

It is the way we communicate, celebrate, change, and grow. It embraces our values and our history. The art it creates helps us understand the past and challenges us to imagine the future.

It is embodied in the clothes we wear, in our homes and the way we live, in the technology we use, the games we play and the food we eat. It encapsulates the extraordinary diversity of our multicultural traditions and our suburbs, cities, towns and regions. It comes to life in art, in the music we make and listen to, the stories we tell, the books we write and read, the shows we watch, the galleries and the festivals we love.

Culture is a public good. It is essential to community wellbeing. It is also a growing industry, and the key to belonging.

Successful creative industries grow out of the professional work of artists, and webs of diverse local activities and networks. For too long the success of cultural activities has been measured principally by tickets sold and tourist numbers. It is this and more.

Cultural experiences also help us learn and develop a stronger sense of identity. They help us make sense of our community and the world. They challenge, entertain and amuse.

Cultural activities touch us all. They must be available to everyone, wherever they live, wherever they come from, whatever their dreams. Regarding culture as a whole-of-government responsibility makes this possible and will drive NSW Government decisions and investment.

Creative Communities aims to ensure that over the next decade everyone in NSW from early childhood to old age has access to cultural and creative activities, services and goods. It aims, over time, to correct past inequity, inadequacy and inefficiency. Under this framework young people will have more opportunities for experiences and jobs in the cultural and creative industries.

The evidence is overwhelming: young children who participate in cultural and creative activities are much more likely to do well at school, find connections and thrive in later life. Finding ways to make participation in making music, art, dance, video, or drama part of every child's education will be an investment in their future and the future of the state.



Commitment

To support NSW children's education the NSW Government will develop a strategic partnership between the NSW Department of Education and Powerhouse Parramatta to embed NSW teachers into the Powerhouse Parramatta team to develop curriculum-based learning programs in collaboration with teachers, schools, industry and the museum.

Belonging and participating makes us happier and healthier. The social value of participation in cultural activities also has a dollar value.

Creative Communities regards artists as workers who produce important works and uniquely contribute to collective welfare.

Those who work in the sector are passionate about what they do. Their entrepreneurial spirit and urge to create means they see opportunities where others see problems.

We learnt during the pandemic that they are as important to community and personal wellbeing as other essential workers.

We also learnt during the pandemic, as thousands of musicians, artists, performers and those whose work supports them, lost their livelihoods, that governments must find new ways to treat artists and those in the creative and cultural economy with more respect. This is the first step towards enabling more sustainable careers.

As the next step towards this ambition, NSW government services supporting artists, cultural organisations and the creative industries will be made easier to use and more responsive.

Investment processes and regulations are being reformed. Create NSW's Cultural Front Door portal will give artists, cultural organisations, and the creative industries easier access to relevant NSW Government services by reducing complexity, red tape and duplication.

Over the next year detailed strategies will identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. Sector strategies for screen and contemporary music have begun.

A strategy for underutilised spaces to identify public spaces suitable for use by cultural and creative activities and artists across the state is also underway. A package of reforms has been introduced to cut the costs and red tape that limit the use of outdoor spaces for cultural activities. Unlocking and activating spaces in local places to support creative and cultural activities and communities is a priority.

Commitment

The NSW Government will activate creative spaces by a combination of continued direct public investment, seeking new sources of investment for the sector, and regulatory reform. We will prioritise unlocking spaces in local places supporting the creativity of specific sectors and communities. This includes:

- ▶ securing Callan Park for ongoing film production;
- ▶ making White Bay Power Station available for ongoing cultural use, starting with the 2024 Biennale of Sydney;
- ▶ delivering \$160 million for cultural infrastructure in Western Sydney including building a lyric theatre as part of the Riverside Theatres redevelopment in Parramatta, a 350-seat theatre in Campbelltown and a new cultural centre in Blacktown;
- ▶ delivering a final business case for the Roxy Theatre;
- ▶ opening new hubs for artists and creatives in Western Sydney and regional centres in 2024 and beyond, as suitable places become available;
- ▶ working with local councils to reduce red tape for festivals and events to access local spaces;
- ▶ ensuring that cultural infrastructure and good design are included in major public housing and transport infrastructure investments, including by expanding the Heritage Floor Space Scheme.

Cultural life in NSW is more diverse than it has ever been. More than eight million people now call the state home, and over the next decade the population will grow by another million. Most live in coastal cities and towns, but millions are spread across the regions, mountains and plains of a state that is twice the size of Germany.

Place matters. Truth-telling and sense-making grows from local people and their experiences.

The stories, heritage and culture of Broken Hill are different to those in Bega, Wagga Wagga, Penrith, Leichardt, Dubbo, Tamworth, Lismore, Wollongong, Newcastle, Campbelltown and beyond as we heard during the consultation process.

All are important and deserve support. That is why *Creative Communities* commits to supporting communities in Western Sydney and regional NSW.

Commitment

Commitments to support creative communities in Western Sydney and regional NSW include:

- ▶ investing in the Western Sydney Arts Alliance and increasing staff support to coordinate initiatives for Western Sydney artists, arts organisations and creative communities;
- ▶ Powerhouse Parramatta developing a major new, multi-year Western Sydney initiative for writers and writing with Sydney Writers Festival, Western Sydney University and City of Parramatta Council from 2026;
- ▶ delivering a regional arts, culture and creative industries strategy in late 2024;
- ▶ Supporting at least four new creative industries/artist workspaces in regional NSW in the next four years.

While English has been the official language of NSW since 1788, a quarter of the population speaks another language at home and many, including First Nations languages, are taught in schools.

Language is at the heart of culture, and this multilingualism is a gift.

By strengthening and diversifying the opportunities for participation in a wide range of cultural activities, and increasing industry support, the creative industries will become more robust and economically significant.





“We want to see cross-departmental support for arts’ role in ‘closing the gap’; I believe First Nations people need their own dedicated spaces.”

MANAGER, MOOGAHLIN PERFORMING ARTS

Culture as public good

Culture has always been important in the place we call New South Wales.

Culture held the key to the knowledge, social organisation, and survival of Australia's First People for millennia, well before the eleven ships carrying a thousand convicts, officials and others anchored in Botany Bay early in 1788.

In the first days, the newcomers and Eora people danced together on the beach. But the culture the British brought with them was very different and decades of bitter conflict, dispossession and denial followed.

We now recognise that life on this continent for 65,000 years imbued the place and people with unique ways of seeing, being, and doing. These cultures were eroded by colonisation, segregation and assimilation.

But they have survived and now hold lessons for all.

We can see records of ancient cultural communication all over NSW, in ancient rock carvings, middens, and fish traps. We hear it in the music, language and place names.

Contemporary First Nations artists are giving their cultural heritage new life with twenty first century tools – on screens and stages, in novels and poetry, paintings, dance, concerts, museums, galleries, sites of celebration and conflict, Cultural Centres and Keeping Places. In the process, they are sharing this rich culture with everyone.

Two centuries ago, the newcomers captured some of what they saw in paintings, diaries, and letters. They left an artistic record that is now available in the state's galleries, museums, and libraries.

When the penal settlement became a self-governing colony, free, compulsory, secular education was a priority, newspapers flourished, galleries and museums were built.

By 1901 when NSW became a state in a new nation, Australia was one of the most literate society on earth. The best of its civic nationalism inspired artists, performers, and writers.

From the earliest days Australian governments supported writers. This tradition has continued and expanded.

Now, thanks to the Commonwealth Government's *Revive* cultural policy, government support for writers will grow.

It was NSW Labor politician 'Doc' H.V. Evatt, who as President of the United Nations General Assembly, helped write the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Article 27 of this document declares, "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits."

This spirit infused the decision a decade later to build the Sydney Opera House as a symbol of courage and a place for creativity. In 1971, the NSW Government created Australia's first Ministry for Cultural Activities.

A few years earlier, US Presidential candidate Robert Kennedy observed that measuring success solely in economic terms—as gross national product—missed the value and beauty of poetry, the intelligence of public debate, the importance of relationships and public integrity, wit, courage and compassion. "GNP measures everything except that which makes life worthwhile," he famously declared.

This anticipated the trend of recent years to measure art and culture predominantly in economic terms.

This is important, but not sufficient. It understates the value of cultural activities, objects and the beauty and inspiration created by artists to help make meaning and aid belonging.

Culture grows from the work of individual artists and communities of creatives. It is embodied in places of celebration and remembering, and is activated by opportunities to learn, belong and heal.

Culture is also the bedrock of increasingly important creative industries selling stories, books, music, performance, fashion, objects, technology, games and immersive experiences, and the rapidly expanding array of businesses that match technology and creativity to produce new goods and services.

NSW is a production powerhouse, particularly in screen, literature and music.

About half the companies involved in the creative industries—publishers, producers, designers in many sectors—are based in NSW, and account for ten per cent of the economy.

These important industries with a creative core, are responsible for a fifth of services exports.

But Australia has a huge creative trade deficit – for every dollar we export, we import eight. We are voracious consumers of the best the world has to offer. Yet, we tell Australian stories to the world less than we should, and less than we could.

Over the next decade, growth in the cultural and creative industries will provide opportunities for education and training, leading to sustainable, meaningful careers for creatives, their professional collaborators and co-workers.

Many individual artists do not currently have secure incomes or sufficient opportunities to pursue their vocation. The biggest stars may feature on rich lists, but life for most artists is a struggle. This presents challenges and opportunities to think more expansively about the best ways to foster sustainable careers. Pathways to employment in the creative industries and in the community sector will be enhanced by this whole-of-government policy.

We have not invested enough in discovering and refining our stories, music, art, performance and objects and sharing them. We have not taken advantage of the potential of the many skilled and creative people who are fluent in languages other than English, nor have we seen and developed market opportunities in the Indo-Pacific region.

We have much to share.

There is a global desire for stories, cultural tourism and entertainment. There is huge potential for growth in our cultural landscape. NSW is rich in talent and capacity.

Commitment

Creative Communities has the goal of sustainably growing the size of the creative industries in NSW, by enabling creative communities throughout the state to reach their potential.

Enabled by recent and ongoing improvements to creative infrastructure, the NSW Government will focus on investing in a wide variety of creative people and communities across the state.

Creative Communities supports the *Revive* goal of exporting more Australian stories to the world. The NSW Government will measure and establish goals for the state's creative exports to assist and track output against the cultural trade deficit.





A gift to the world

As home to the oldest continuing civilisation on earth, the largest population of First Nations people in Australia, and the site of first European settlement, NSW has a particular responsibility.

We have a wonderful opportunity to unlock this potential and empower First Nations artists, communities and creative enterprises.

Creative Communities accepts the obligation to preserve, support and nurture First Nations culture and art. The elders and contemporary artists who keep it alive and flourishing deserve respect and active encouragement.

Investment, strategies and programs for First Nations creatives are a priority.

For Australia's First Peoples, culture is the inseparable expression of ancient law and a guide to contemporary life.

There are thirty-five Aboriginal language groups in NSW, and more than fifty First Nations—each rich with cultural knowledge and heritage. Each with a need for truth-telling.

First Nations artists and creatives in NSW create stories, designs, knowledge systems and products that are unique and deserve greater prominence in arts and culture markets in Australia and around the world.

The works that are created will be a gift for us all, as the Bangarra Dance Theatre, for instance, has demonstrated since 1989 and Blackfella Films with its international award-winning television series including *The Australian Wars*. The works that the growing number of First Nations creative enterprises produce enliven cultural tourism and aid participation and social cohesion.

Recognising and respecting First Nations stories and putting them at the centre of Australian arts and culture is the first pillar of *Revive*. It is an ambitious goal, which *Creative Communities* embraces.

The Voice referendum in 2023 taught Australians a lot about the history, culture, and lives of the First Peoples, but a majority voted No.

The reasons varied, but many First Nations people are grieving.

Creative Communities embodies an ambition to develop better ways to support the First Nations artists, creatives and cultural leaders including by allocating more resources to Western Sydney and regional NSW. It will also draw on the whole NSW Government to provide opportunities for cultural growth and exchange.

The first NSW Aboriginal Languages Week in October 2023, pointed to how this might happen. The week included festivals in Redfern and Mogo, language and cultural activities in Fingal Head, Lambton, MacLean and La Perouse.

Revive emphasises the importance of artists in truth-telling, to share the stories of places and people, of survival, resistance and collaboration. As people seek to understand the meaning of the referendum result, artists have a unique role in this public and personal sense-making.

For this to be meaningful, a respectful and trusting relationship that honours First Nations self-determination is essential.

The First Nations people living on Gadigal land in Redfern, in Bourke on Ngemba land, near the Bogabilla fish traps on Kamilaroi country, close to the whales and abalone on the far south coast on Yuin land, in the river towns on Bundjalung land, in the suburbs of Blacktown on Dharug land, those among the scar trees that dot the plains and mountains of Wiradjuri lands and elsewhere across NSW, have truths to share.

By making the stories of these people, their heritage and country available in public places, residents and tourists can discover, learn and empathise.

Commitment

Creative Communities envisages that NSW will become home to a First Nations cultural centre and enhanced cultural tourism. It will forge strong and enduring partnerships with First Nations creative communities, to create new work, rebuild connection and promote healing.

The central lesson of First Nations knowledge systems is that everything is related to everything else: culture is the glue that binds the whole together.

Creative Communities embraces this ancient vision – its respect for country and the generosity of welcoming people to country – in a contemporary manner.

Whole-of-government: advocate, enabler, investor

Creative Communities adopts a whole-of-government approach to cultural participation and creative industries, supported by a ministerial and high-level interdepartmental committee. It puts human creative capacity, production and connection at its heart. The aim is clear: to work together with artists, cultural organisations and the creative industries, to build greater cultural vibrancy in NSW and drive NSW Government decisions and investment. This new emphasis highlights the pressing need for regulatory and investment reform.

Government has much to contribute, but its power as an enabler is even greater. By advocating the importance of cultural participation to creativity, wellbeing, quality-of-life and in emerging industries, it sends an important signal to other organisations: do not neglect culture and creativity.

Like every civilisation, the people of NSW will be best understood and remembered by what they create.

This is a ten-year policy framework designed for challenging times, in a rapidly changing world.

It recognises that art can help people imagine and adapt to the future and that over this decade technology will change the way many things are done. It recognises that culture can drive growth and social cohesion. Children who have access to creative and cultural activities do better in school and life. Prisoners who experience the power of storytelling, painting and art acquire valuable tools for rehabilitation. The recovery of patients who are exposed to music and art is enhanced. Elderly people in care can recover memories and joy through music and dance.

It encourages generational change with exciting mentorship and learning opportunities including for young multicultural artists and multidisciplinary creatives.

***Creative Communities* is expansive and inclusive. It is committed to ensuring that the full potential of creative and cultural activities are adequately supported. Strategies for contemporary music and screen are already underway and will produce implementation plans with milestones in the short, medium and long term. Strategic plans for Western Sydney and regional NSW will be developed in 2024. Other sectors will follow.**

Traditionally the arts have been narrowly defined. This policy significantly extends the parameters to include the state's unique and diverse cultural strengths. These include:

- ▶ First Nations cultures
- ▶ Galleries, libraries, archives and museums
- ▶ Performing arts including theatre, dance, circus, comedy, cabaret
- ▶ Music including classical and contemporary composition, performance and recording
- ▶ Screen and digital games
- ▶ Visual arts and crafts
- ▶ Literature, writing and publishing
- ▶ Broadcasting and digital media
- ▶ Design, architecture and fashion
- ▶ Built and physical heritage
- ▶ Creative and arts education
- ▶ Creativity in the food and beverage sector
- ▶ Creative innovation in the technology sector

Creative Communities embraces all these sectors, their many sub-branches and specialisations, the scores of people who bring them to life, and their diverse traditions, geographic spread and complex interrelations. It recognises that emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, will challenge and transform many art forms, and create interdisciplinary opportunities and new enterprises that we have barely begun to imagine.

It commits to reviewing education and training needs to ensure that the next generation of artists and creatives has the necessary skills and background.

Commitment

The NSW Government will refer arts and music education to the NSW Parliament for inquiry to assess its adequacy and ensure that opportunities are available to those who want to pursue careers in these increasingly important areas.

By reaching across government, the applied uses of arts and culture for social, educational and other purposes, will foster new activities to develop, and facilitate new forms of support.

Commitment

The NSW Government will adopt an inclusive arts, culture and creative industries policy that both supports the traditional arts sector, cultural institutions, and expands to include the broader creative industries in the state.

Creative Communities commits to a whole-of-government effort to advocate for, to enable and invest in the arts, culture and creative industries.

This will include, but not be limited to, formal partnerships between Create NSW and the NSW Department of Education, TAFE NSW, the Ministry of Health, Transport for NSW and other agencies to further develop priority streams of work.

To drive implementation of the policy across the NSW Government, a role will be designated to lead and oversee this transformation, guided by a ministerial advisory committee, senior public servants, and industry advisors.

The NSW Government will legislate the delivery of a Creative Statement to the Parliament every three years, detailing and tracking the status, health and progress of the arts, culture and creative industries in line with this policy.

This will put NSW places and people, their stories and experiences at the centre of creative communities and provide significant cultural, social, and economic benefits.





**A shift in value,
scale, focus and
settings**



Five guiding
principles



Objectives

A shift in value, scale, focus and settings

Creative Communities is an ambitious policy to address future challenges and opportunities. Over the ten-year life of this policy, there will be four profound shifts: in value, scale, focus and settings.

A shift in value

Robust ways to better measure the value of participation in cultural activities for individuals, institutions and communities, as creators and consumers, will be developed. Some of the value of this sector is captured on balance sheets and acquittal reports, but it is widely recognised that the benefits are much greater. Over time, environmental value has been recognised and the leadership of a whole-of-government approach presents an opportunity to develop better ways of defining cultural value and its impact.

This includes recognising the enduring benefit of exposure to, and participation in, cultural activities in terms of human capacity, mental health, the pride of association and belonging. For example, Emily Johnson from Australian Theatre for Young People said, “Attending musical theatre classes kept me alive. That was my lifeline. All kids should have access to that.”

Careers in the arts, cultural and creative industries are central to the value proposition.

Commitment

Creative Communities encourages the next generation of culture workers and leaders to step forward. Initiatives that the NSW Government commits to in *Creative Communities* include: :

- ▶ Making it a condition of NSW Government funding that organisations support and mentor emerging artists and practitioners.
- ▶ Establishing a Youth Creative Taskforce to ensure the next generation of cultural leaders are at the decision-making table, including advising the Minister directly.
- ▶ Establishing a Generations fellowship, \$500,000 investment over five years to support fifteen early career Western Sydney music artists to undertake professional development.
- ▶ Recognising the importance of the state’s universities, the National Art School, NIDA and the Australian Film TV and Radio School to our cultural ecosystem and strengthening partnerships with them.





“We dream of an arts and creative industries sector that is well supported, integrated, and partnering and engaged locally, nationally and internationally.”

VANESSA LLOYD, PERFORMANCE SPACE



Image: Caribe Carnival, Sydney Fringe Festival. Photo: David Li



The NSW Government's commitment to reviewing arts education aims to help ensure that young people who want to pursue these areas, have access to appropriate education, training and mentoring. At the Tamworth consultation, publican Luke Prout observed, "Tamworth is moving toward being one of the main regional centres in growth, but artists move out of the region to train and tour; some people come back, but the majority won't with all the opportunities elsewhere."

This is not just a regional issue. As the City of Sydney's submission observed: "No matter how much we invest in infrastructure or events, our cultural life and our creative industries will underperform if we cannot provide cultural workers with suitable places to live and work." The state is committed to building 180,000 public and affordable houses and apartments over the next five years. This provides an opportunity to advocate for these developments to include provision for cultural and creative activities.

The NSW Government is also committed to ensuring that creative workplaces are safe and careers sustainable. This includes regulatory changes, and requires recipients of NSW Government funding to commit to safe workplace standards.

Commitment

- ▶ The NSW Government recognises the need to improve the working conditions and the business environment for creative practitioners, to advocate for industrial relations reform, fair remuneration, gender equity and industry standards. It will also incentivise the creation of safe and inclusive workplaces.
- ▶ The NSW Government commits to safeguarding and modernising workplace conditions for artists by requiring individuals and organisations receiving NSW Government funding to commit to safe workplace standards.

A shift in scale

For the first time, the NSW Government will fully embrace the broadly defined creative industries. *Creative Communities* sees NSW Government policy recognising and shifting towards the creative industries, supporting the traditional arts sector and cultural institutions, but encompassing the creative industries.

Doing so recognises the reality that for most creatives in NSW, cultural pursuits do not fall neatly into single disciplines, like film or writing. In reality, creative workers do, and should, use their skills across multiple sectors. The same is true of how NSW residents enjoy the benefits of cultural practice in their communities, which are far richer when the broader creative industries are strong.

The expanded definition also serves a practical purpose. As the footprint of the sector increases, it is easier for government to support the sector. Additionally, it acknowledges the common supply chains of many parts of the creative industries and appropriately redraws new boundaries. The types of technology developed in gaming or screen could be used by musicians to create music videos or social media content.

The NSW Government will measure and establish goals for the state's creative exports to measure improvement against the cultural trade deficit. This is a crucial first step towards the *Revive* goal of exporting more Australian stories to the world.

The NSW Government will become a better advocate, enabler and investor.

It will encourage innovation and growth. Over the next decade, this policy will see the creative industries increase output and employment. Their success can be measured by output, profits and the jobs they create, as well as the prizes and awards they win.

The shift in scale that results from this turn to the creative industries will see the number of enterprises increase and the sector as a whole grow and provide opportunities for a new generation of leaders, artists, creatives and audiences.

As Anne Loxley, Executive Director of Arts and Culture Exchange (ACE) noted, "One of ACE's core activities is creative skills training. Based on unmet needs in our communities in Western Sydney and the sector, we 'fill in the gaps' of existing educational offerings. In the last year or so, our screen trades program has upskilled hundreds of people from diverse backgrounds in production accounting, assistant camera, resulting in much paid employment."

The other fundamental shift in scale comes from the whole-of-government approach. The interdepartmental committee identified many ways in which this could occur by tapping into the reach and resources of government. This will increase opportunities for cultural workers and enhance the quality of life of citizens.

“Engaging young people as audience members and in career development, can lead to lifelong engagement, bolstering future audience numbers and cultivating a culturally aware and appreciative society.”



A shift in focus

The focus will shift to place creative communities and the broad cultural ecosystem at the centre of the NSW Government's attention.

Commitment

The NSW Government endorses the National Cultural Policy, *Revive. Creative Communities* will focus on implementing *Revive*. At a state level we will do this by supporting the cultural ecosystem in NSW.

By investing in creative people, institutions and enterprises, the goal is to sustainably grow the creative industries and enable creative communities to reach their potential.

This fundamental shift requires recognition of not just the diversity of cultural creation, but also the range of enterprises across the state. Often the large companies and institutions in the capital city come to mind when thinking about arts and culture. But as the consultations reinforced, this misses the much more diverse reality. The foundations include small scale activities; sole traders; community groups that emerge organically; and small and medium enterprises that provide opportunities for experimentation and development.

The creative spirit is by nature entrepreneurial. Recognising this provides new pathways to more diverse storytelling, local initiatives, tourism-focused experiences, and new audiences. The whole ecosystem will grow and be diversified as local groups across the state, as well as in Sydney, are encouraged to build sustainable activities and organisations. As an artist told the Newcastle consultation, "I shouldn't have to move away from my home and the people I love to be an artist."

There are important lessons to learn from grassroots initiatives that create moments of joy and celebration, and benefit marginalised and underrepresented communities.

The Bankstown Poetry Slam is a prime example. It has become the largest poetry festival in the southern hemisphere, connecting young and old in a performative celebration. Red Room Poetry has been at the forefront of developing innovative ways to work with philanthropists to enable disadvantaged communities to share their experiences by writing and performing poetry.

Cultural organisations in northern NSW demonstrated how to build resilience by creating and participating in new works after the 2022 floods devastated the region. Lismore-based Northern Rivers Performing Arts developed a new stage show, *Flow*, to tell an ancient story about water, and the first native title claim over water by the Yaegl people of the Clarence River. It was presented as a free public event in MacLean and Lismore. Likewise, musician and choirmaster Janet Swain worked with primary school children, who had been impacted by the floods, to explore their experiences in a project called *After Disaster*. Together they wrote songs, practised and performed them at a concert in Mullumbimby.



Creative Communities recognises that the cultural and artistic experiences of children can have lifelong benefits. The cultural and linguistic diversity of the state is an asset to be nurtured and the contribution of First Nations cultural expression is a unique treasure. Experience matters, whether by participating in a local festival, the annual Schools Spectacular concert or attending an exhibition at the Australian Museum, or the beloved Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo.

A shift in settings

A key insight from the consultation process was the urgent need for investment and regulatory reform. This shift in settings is within the reach of government and is now central to the commitments the NSW Government has made.

Commitment

Enabled by recent and ongoing improvements to creative infrastructure, the NSW Government will focus on investing in a wide variety of creative people and communities across the state.

Cultural and artistic experiences can happen almost anywhere, recognition that informs the strategies for Western Sydney and regional NSW.

The NSW Government has committed to regulatory changes to remove many of the barriers that have inhibited cultural activities across the state. The changed environment provides incentives for new partnerships with local government, regional businesses and the education system. Red tape, duplication and complexity in application processes is being reduced.

Vibrancy legislation passed in 2023 marked the end of a decade of overregulation that shuttered many live music venues. The new regulations include a simplified approach to noise complaints; trading incentives for live music; streamlined liquor licence processes; permanent light touch outdoor dining rules; and helping local communities activate streets for festivals and community activities. The new law, and others to be introduced in 2024 and beyond, will foster safe, lively precincts in cities across the state, streamlining application and approval processes, and reducing costs.

Multicultural Lakemba is an exciting example of how this can evolve. It was recognised in 2023 as a Purple Flag safe nightlife zone for its Ramadan Night Markets and bustling culinary and retail diversity, joining a global network of 90 accredited destinations, including London, Dublin, Stockholm, Parramatta CBD, and Sydney's York, Clarence, Kent ("YCK") Laneways.



The scope of this policy represents a profound shift that will enrich the life of everyone in the state. It put artists, creatives, and the cultural work and experiences they produce within reach.

“By cultivating a holistic creative ecosystem that prioritizes inclusivity, education, training, and industry engagement, the NSW Government can pave the way for a robust, sustainable, and vibrant arts, culture, and creative industries sector in NSW.”

ANIMAL LOGIC CEO





A shift in value, scale, focus and settings



Five guiding principles



Objectives

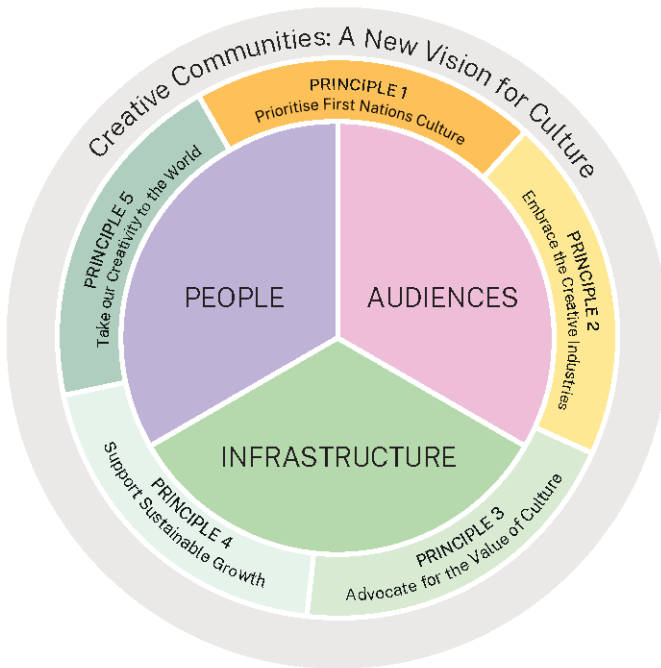
Five guiding principles

The vision of the *Creative Communities* framework is that everyone in NSW will benefit from participation in arts, culture and creative industries in local activities, at major institutions, in person and online.

This is underpinned by five guiding principles. *Creative Communities* will be measured on how well it delivers on these principles as its operational plans evolve over the next decade.

Principle one: The first principle recognises the unique gift and responsibility of being home to the world’s longest continuous civilisation.

The protocols, practices, and cultural knowledge of First Nations artists and communities is key. Just as the NSW Government recognises the human right to cultural participation, it recognises the right to self-determination in the UN Declaration of Indigenous Peoples. Australia signed this declaration in 2009.





Principle two: The second principle embraces the broad definition of cultural and creative industries. For creative communities to thrive, more resources and opportunities are needed. Growth will be enabled by reaching across all NSW Government activities, working with Commonwealth and local government, and in partnership with commercial and not-for-profit businesses.

Making this real means reorganising NSW Government services so they are more accessible and equitable; reforming investment support, services and programs; removing unnecessary red tape; and instilling the agility to respond quickly to changing opportunities and circumstances.

Principle three: The third principle accepts that government and sector leaders have a responsibility to advocate for the benefits of cultural participation, the arts, and creative industries.

This includes grassroots and community activities and high-profile professional events. Not only is cultural engagement a recognised human right, but it is also something that people cherish, as participants and audiences. Those who work in these domains are encouraged to be advocates and innovators, so the NSW Government can work with and enable sector leaders.

Principle four: Sustainable growth is the fourth guiding principle.

It requires that people engaged in these sectors are appropriately supported and businesses equipped for growth. Sustainable work also demands gender equality, safe working environments, adequate remuneration, and opportunities for education and training.

“Public spaces and public art are essential to making cities meaningful and memorable, and there is still more we can do to strengthen the cultural substance of our public places.”

CITY OF SYDNEY

Image: *Progress Shark*, NSW artist George Buchanan's Sydney Word Pride transformation for Australian Museum's *Sharks!* Blockbuster exhibition. Photo: Megan Lawrence



Commitment

Creative Communities has the goal of sustainably growing the depth and breadth of creative industries throughout NSW over the next decade, enabling creative individuals, organisations and communities throughout the state to reach their potential.

The planet and human culture are linked. The climate crisis, and the NSW Government commitment to net-zero emissions by 2050 will change the way we live, and the ways arts and cultural enterprises operate.

Principle five: The fifth principle is to take NSW creativity to the world and bring the world to our stories. This demands a reorganisation of investment priorities and infrastructure provision. NSW will build the capacity to track, measure and support creative industries, so that it becomes a significant participant in this global market, not just a consumer.

Global demand for cultural goods and services is growing at a remarkable pace; it is currently worth \$2.5 trillion. If Australia, as the twelfth largest economy in the world, is to earn its share of this growing market, it will need both federal export support and strengthened connections across the cultural and creative ecosystem, from outstanding education and grassroots activities to professional excellence.

This will take concerted effort by governments and partners to invest in human capacity, education, and innovation to build self-confidence, resilience and provide access to capital.



Delivering for people, institutions, audiences

A change of the scale envisaged in *Creative Communities* will take time and resources to be fully realised.

There are some things, however, that can be done relatively quickly.

Commitments

Early in 2024 the NSW Government will reform the Arts and Cultural Funding Program grant application and acquittal processes by Create NSW to ensure a fairer and more equitable process, reducing paperwork for applicants and simplifying the acquittal process.

The Cultural Front Door service that supports artists, creative workers, cultural organisations and creative businesses all over the state to navigate NSW Government services will become operational in 2024.

By providing senior leadership for policy implementation across the NSW Government, we will ensure robust and diligent oversight to help ensure growth.

Animal Logic is a star in the firmament of NSW creative enterprises. It was founded in Sydney in 1991 and has become one of the world's leading digital studios, producing animations and Visual Effects (VFX) for some of the most popular animated films, including *Babe*, *Peter Rabbit* and *Marvel* films. It is determined to increase opportunities for the next generation of creatives. As its submission noted: "Engagement at all levels of education will be essential in shaping the future of the creative workforce and creating a strong foundation for a pipeline of industry talent. Focus on arts, culture, and creative industries in high school curricula can spark interest, inform students and parents about potential career pathways, and inspire them to explore the sector. Initiatives like workshops, seminars, and interactive events can ignite excitement and broaden perspectives, enabling students to envision themselves as active participants in the creative economy."



Legislation to remove regulations that inhibit the night-time economy has already been passed and will begin to take effect in 2024 with an immediate impact on: supporting music venues with noise complaints; licence application processes; outdoor dining; and helping local communities activate their streets for festivals and community activities.

Commitment

The NSW Government commits to a second tranche of Vibrancy Reforms in 2024, designed to continue to improve planning, liquor, outdoor and sound and noise regulations to encourage cultural activity across NSW.

Adjusting NSW planning rules to ensure that cultural infrastructure and good design are required will also proceed and, in time, shape major investments in public housing and transport infrastructure.

The full extent of NSW creative industry exports of goods and services will also be measured for the first time. NSW will implement long-term tracking of creative industries data, including trade data, to provide a clear understanding of the size, complexity and health of the sector.

The consultation process revealed a great deal, but it also highlighted knowledge and information gaps.

Commitment

The NSW Government commits to address these gaps with policy implementation audits and ensure accountability by legislating the delivery of a Creative Statement to Parliament every three years.

Implementation reports will reveal the gaps in infrastructure, resources, hubs for artists and creatives, investment, training, and education, and existing and potential links across the NSW Government. They will address the public good of each sector, commercial opportunities, and the potential for deeper community engagement to foster resilience and belonging.

Cost effective solutions, and adaptation of outstanding models of community cultural activities from across NSW, elsewhere in Australia and around the world, will also be assessed.



Commitment

An audit of underutilised spaces owned by state, local government, and other landlords that could be made available for artists and cultural activities will also be undertaken 2024.

The aim is to adapt and change regulations where necessary to make these spaces available as soon as possible.

The screen industry is important in NSW, generating billions of dollars every year and employing tens of thousands. It has documented the infrastructure needed to service existing requirements and grow. Industry leaders report an urgent need for additional studio and sound stages. The NSW Government recognises the importance of identifying ways to facilitate investment to increase and diversify screen output and enable the games industry to grow.

Commitment

The NSW Government will:

- ▶ make Screen NSW more independent and strengthen its capacity to serve the industry by shortening investment approval timeframes, contracting and payment terms, and expanding the role of the board.
- ▶ develop a business case for a second major film studio in Sydney to ensure Sydney remains the leading location for Australian and international productions.
- ▶ introduce a new digital games seed development fund and market travel program to expand our support for sector to grow digital games industry.
- ▶ provide long-term funding certainty for screen investment programs.
- ▶ make Callan Park available for filming on an ongoing basis.



Image: Real-Sonic Light Bubble, Real Light Festival, Penrith City Council. Photo: Penrith City Council.





Likewise, those involved in the contemporary live music scene have documented the negative impact on the sector over the past decade, as many venues closed and the opportunities to develop talent and audiences shrunk. The initial steps are underway to revive live music as a form of entertainment, and ensure it is again a commercially viable sector. The first step has been implemented to adjust licensing and noise regulations to create a more music friendly environment, appoint members to the board of Sound NSW, and survey the needs and experiences of musicians and others working in this sector.

Commitment

The reshaping of the music sector will be driven by Sound NSW with leadership from its newly-appointed advisory board and in collaboration with Music Australia, Creative Australia's new contemporary music office. The review of contemporary music has begun and a ten-year music strategy and the three-year implementation plan will be released in 2024. Additionally, the NSW Government will:

- ▶ legislate a board for the NSW Government contemporary music agency, Sound NSW, in 2024.
- ▶ develop a business case for a home for music in NSW, providing affordable spaces for music organisations, businesses, community radio, networking, rehearsal and events.
- ▶ Review the *Entertainment Act* to identify ways to strengthen support for festivals, venues, artists, managers and music workers.
- ▶ Additionally, when the Powerhouse Parramatta opens in 2025 it will include the Western Sydney Hip-Hop Archive, a collaboration with 4ESydney and Blacktown Arts.

The medium-term challenge is to find ways of providing more opportunities for young people to become proficient performers and informed audiences. This will be addressed by the education review, to increase opportunities for music education in schools and expand creative industry courses offered by TAFE.



Culturally-rich and vibrant communities are what keeps people in NSW. They're also what bring people here and should be a greater part of our state's tourism strategy. Culture is at the heart of the full value NSW has to offer visitors. It shapes how they imagine us, what they want to see, and where they spend their money.

The tourism story NSW tells the world needs to evolve beyond the Sydney Harbour Bridge. It needs to better promote the living, breathing patchwork of neighbourhoods, towns, and cities, each with their own stories, creative activity, and personalities. This will include showcasing First Nations cultural heritage and experiences, the rich calendar of festivals, our world-class cultural institutions, beautiful places and unique natural wonders.

This is experience tourism – a focus not just on bringing people here, but thinking about what they do when they arrive and encouraging them to come back over and over again.

Achieving this requires greater investment in a broader range of experiences to bring international and other visitors to the state. It means changing the way tourism investment is measured to include what people do when they're here and the quality of their experiences.

Commitment

To support this shift, the Minister for Jobs and Tourism will issue a formal direction to the NSW Government tourism body, Destination NSW, to formalise the state's experience tourism policy focus. Such a direction will explicitly commit support for the arts, culture and creative experiences across NSW.

The NSW Government will also promote NSW arts and cultural venues and activities, including local festivals and events, alongside major international and national experiences. Destination NSW marketing funding will be refocused and state-wide calendars optimised to show local events and programs.



Festivals and venues across the state provide the spaces and stages for thousands of events each year, enhancing the vibrancy and quality of life in the state.

Music, visual arts, performance, writers, and ideas festivals, bring artists and audiences together for intensive, immersive experiences. Festivals have become ever more diverse and encompassing. There is now a state-wide roster of hundreds of food, wine, and craft beer festivals, often accompanied by music, performance, and visual arts. These celebrations are rooted in the cultural life of the places that host them.

Festivals are important ways of celebrating and having fun, sharing a generosity of spirit. They are already an important part of the calendar of events in many places. Lunar New Year, Diwali, Eid, Greek and Hanukkah festivals provide opportunities for communities to gather and share their traditions with others. NSW Government departments and agencies support many of these festivals, which play an important part in fostering social cohesion, tourism, and local innovation.

Festivals are also an important feature in several artforms—particularly music, literature and film. They showcase the best on offer, recognise emerging talent, and reach new audiences. More can and will be done to broaden the range of festivals and creative hospitality on the state's calendar to engage local audiences and attract visitors, which play an important part in fostering social cohesion, tourism, and local innovation and celebration.

Over the past decade many live music venues in NSW have closed. This was an unintended consequence of regulations governing noise and opening hours that have now been addressed. The impact of this on many small businesses has been severe. It has deprived a generation of musicians of opportunities to perfect their craft and a generation of audiences of experiencing the performance of music that speaks to them.

The NSW Government's Vibrancy Reforms have removed red tape to bring live music to local entertainment zones. The NSW Government is also undertaking a deep dive into the needs and opportunities of the sector to shape future strategic direction.

The limited number of commercial venues limits the number of performance possibilities. The review of this sector will determine the support that is needed to ensure that it grows and thrives.

The spaces audit will highlight ways to ensure easier, more affordable access to NSW Government owned facilities. This is anticipated to directly benefit festivals. A priority will be investment in outdoor festival infrastructure to build a network of community sites that provide greater access to live performances and programs. Permanent soundshells and festival stages will reduce noise, set up costs and increase opportunities for touring.

The environment and built heritage of NSW is an important cultural resource that needs to continue to be accessible and grow. More First Nations sites of cultural heritage will be added to the NSW Government inventory and provided with appropriate support.

Commitments

The NSW Government will strengthen the co-ordination of festival support in NSW to properly position and grow the festivals sector, leveraging the wide range of industries involved, including improving staging for festivals and concerts following the development of a business case for outdoor cultural infrastructure across central Sydney, Parramatta, Western Sydney, and regional NSW.

Working with local councils to reduce red tape for festivals and events to access local spaces.

Reviewing the *Entertainment Act* to identify ways to strengthen support for festivals, venues, artists, managers and music workers.

Promote NSW arts and culture venues and activities, including local festivals and events, alongside major international/national entertainment (through refocussed Destination NSW marketing funding and state-wide calendar optimised to show local events and programs).





The *Creative Communities* framework is designed to broaden the base, increase opportunities for participation and build sustainable and resilient sectors.

This is not a zero-sum game. Development in the creative industries means a more skilled workforce and more mature supply chain, both of which can be leveraged by other adjacent industries. Existing organisations and institutions need to continue to be valued and supported – the major galleries, libraries, archives, and museums are a crucial part of the state’s cultural infrastructure and sites of excellence. Regional galleries and museums need to be supported, and the importance of local libraries as community hubs and centres for writers will be supported by strengthening the state’s many local libraries.

As the State Librarian, Dr Caroline Butler-Bowden observed, “Libraries, like parks, are at the very bedrock of the best democracies, global cities and states... One of the keys to success will be balancing the focus on the physical library with the opportunities to work in Western Sydney, and regionally through the public libraries network. Together we will ensure that every citizen has access to this great library and its public network across NSW, as places of experience, learning, research, connection and community.”

Commitment

The NSW Government supports maintaining free public access to NSW State Cultural Institutions and collections. They have been built with public money over many decades and are the property and birthright of all NSW citizens.

The NSW Government will work with regional communities, councils, creative organisations and venues to support a connected network of regional touring. This will involve working with local councils to connect and activate the network of regional halls and spaces to support local touring across music, performance and visual art / exhibitions.

Creative Communities supports the *Revive* goal of exporting more Australian stories to the world. The NSW Government will measure and establish goals for the state’s creative exports to assist and track output against the cultural trade deficit.





Finding a place in the cultural ecosystem

Thinking about arts, cultural and creative enterprises and activities as alive and bristling with interdependent connections is a helpful way of understanding their diversity, resilience, and vulnerability.

This is part of the reason that a term drawn from ecology – ecosystem – is frequently used as a one-word description. An ecosystem is made up of all the living organisms in an area, interacting with all the non-living organisms.

In the creative and cultural ecosystem this means human beings, interacting with the tangible and intangible infrastructure of language, traditions, education, heritage, facilities, environment, community, technology, and resources. It includes what were once called the core arts and the creative industries that have grown from this interaction.

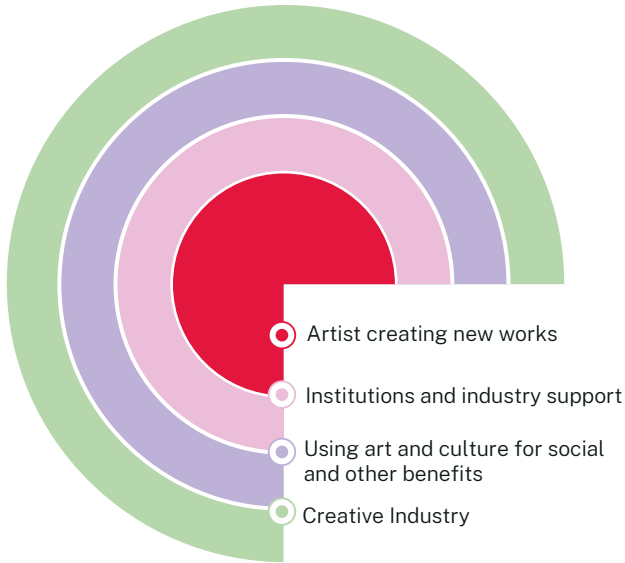
The cultural and creative ecosystem is utterly dependent on human capacity.

Creativity is at its core.

Some creative industries look like other areas of the contemporary economy. The best-selling books, high-rating shows, most popular music, prints, clothing design and beautiful objects can be almost endlessly reproduced and sold. Digital technology, artificial intelligence and software are transforming these businesses and creating new ones. It is within the experience of government to draw on the lessons of trade support, investment, partnerships, and facilitation in other industries and apply them to the creative industries.

But much of the output of artists, makers and creatives is original and bespoke, even if some eventually reaches mass audiences. It starts as the work of individuals and small groups. The role of government is to help enable them to pursue their visions. This may involve direct funding, but it may also involve indirect support, collaborations, and partnerships with philanthropists, commercial and not-for-profit enterprises and more mundane things like assisting with finding spaces and providing application forms that are easy to complete.

The output of artists doesn't rank on a classic productivity scale, but that doesn't diminish its value.



A composer may take a year to create a symphony; novelists and poets can labour over a book for years; dancers, performers and musicians must practice their skill every day; visual artists create their work with painstaking care; bringing the original work of playwrights and screenwriters to stage and screen can take a very long time.

These may be works of great beauty and importance that endure, or they may be a step towards the next creation.

The institutions that support this creative activity are crucial. They may be places, like galleries, libraries, archives, and museums; or organisations, like industry or advocacy groups; or resources, like prizes and awards; or spaces, like theatres, hubs and community centres. Government has a responsibility for this spine of institutional support, in conjunction with local government, philanthropists, industry groups and other enterprises, to enable the cultural life of the state to flourish.

The use and adaptation of cultural and creative output to enhance the quality-of-life, enjoyment and social cohesion of citizens is part of what makes us human and is recognised as an area of growing importance. The evidence is clear, embedding creative and cultural activities and opportunities across all the areas of government responsibility is a way of enriching the lives of citizens.



Investing in the creative industries is a way to pull these threads together and help viable businesses flourish.

Festivals enable the work of the individual artist, musician, or writer to find a larger targeted audience. To make the tales of places accessible so that tourists have a richer experience. To share the stories, design, fashion, and food that are uniquely of this place with others at home and abroad. To innovate and use emerging technologies synthesized with culture and creativity to imagine and create new goods and services and find new audiences.

There are many ways of trying to make sense of the diversity and complexity of this system. It is more like a matrix than a linear assembly line. Hence the ecosystem. It can produce immediate results or take years to materialise.

Providing opportunities to children in remote NSW to learn how to make videos, record songs and paint, may in a decade see them thriving in a global creative community. Or it may help them find meaning and belonging at home.

There are things that government can enable by working across departments and in partnership with philanthropists, commercial and not-for-profit enterprises and local organisations.

At a time when social cohesion is fragile and costs are rising, *Creative Communities* accepts an obligation to find new sources of funding over time. This will not happen overnight. Over the next decade, its ambition will be to see small and medium enterprises grow, and the existing cornerstones of cultural excellence strengthened.

Cultural solutions are cost effective and cannot be measured only on a balance sheet.

Creative Communities embraces the whole cultural and creative ecosystem. There are many more parts than can be described here. Some grow from ancient traditions; others are still emerging. In an ecosystem they both stand alone and interact with each other. In each domain there are opportunities and needs. At a fundamental level this means supporting individual artists, creatives and institutions, and encouraging opportunities in applied settings and commerce.

State government interacts with this complex ecosystem in many ways. It is responsible for education, health, housing, community safety, law, tourism, and environment. It works with the Commonwealth Government to provide infrastructure, build social cohesion and encourage trade, and to implement the vision of the national cultural policy.

The NSW Government recognises the potential across the ecosystem, and as the *Creative Communities* commitments promise, will be a strong advocate, enabler and investor.





What the future holds

Creative Communities will put art, culture and the creative industries at the heart of life in New South Wales.

It builds on ancient traditions and investment over the past two centuries. It aims to transform engagement and provide new opportunities for artists, creatives, and citizens.

Over the next decade culture will feature across all the areas of NSW Government activity in the state and the creative industries will grow as new partnerships are forged and opportunities for new generations materialise.

The NSW Government will become a strong advocate for the cultural and creative sectors, supporting the advocacy and leadership of industry leaders. It recognises that exercising the right to cultural participation and creation is a pathway to stronger social cohesion and greater understanding, new commercial opportunities and a way of respecting the unique contribution artists and other creative practitioners can make to help us make sense of challenging times.

The legacy will be that in years to come, the creative output of the people of New South Wales will bring pleasure, meaning and opportunity to artists, creatives and citizens and be an enduring gift to the world.

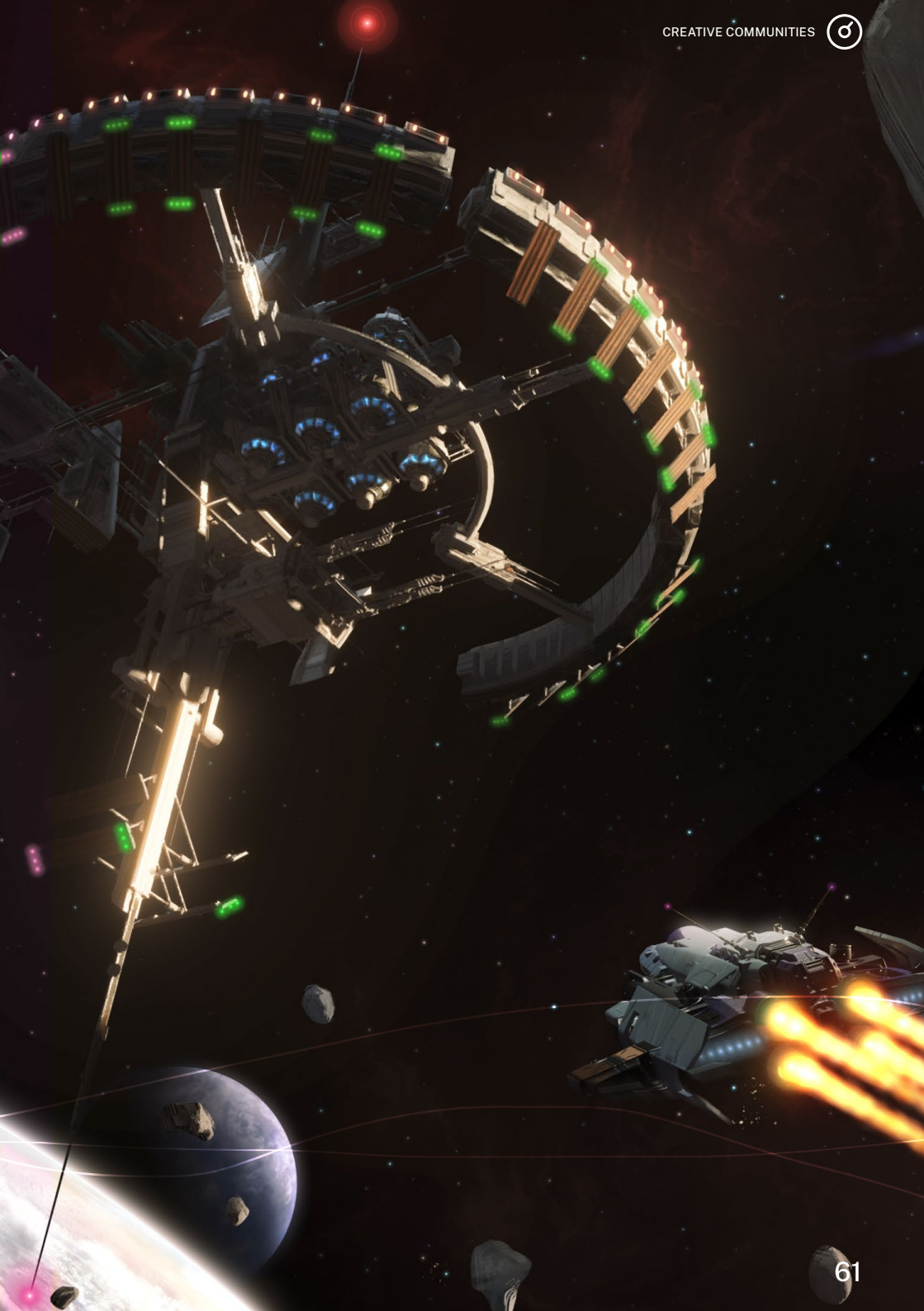






Image: Sydney Writers' Festival, Carriageworks. Photo: Jacquie Manning

Appendix 1: *Creative Communities* Framework

Putting Culture at the Heart of NSW

Creative Communities puts arts, culture and the creative industries at the heart of government. For the first time, arts, culture, and the creative industries become a priority across all of NSW Government departments and agencies.

Creative Communities recognises the creative industries as an important contributor to the economy, and culture as essential to wellbeing. This framework shifts thinking to a multi-departmental and multidisciplinary approach.

Creative Communities expands ways of thinking about artistic and creative endeavour. The NSW Government will advocate, enable, and invest to create a vibrant, inclusive, and growing cultural and creative ecosystem. NSW will be a place where the artistic, social, and economic benefits are celebrated, artists are respected, the creative industries grow, and everyone has opportunities to participate.

State government touches everyone through many spheres: health, education, housing, transport, planning, welfare, policing, justice, environment, tourism, and local government. Over the next decade, artistic endeavours and cultural services will become an important activity for many agencies.

Creative Communities is grounded in five guiding principles.

Five Core Principles

1. Prioritise First Nations culture

Creative Communities recognises and respects the place of First Nations stories at the centre of NSW's arts and culture. The NSW Government will prioritise First Nations investment, programs, and strategies to support First Nations creative industries growth. We will support self-determined and autonomous organisations, services and spaces for NSW's First Nations creative, cultural and language practitioners, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, businesses and communities.

2. Embrace the arts, culture, and creative industries

The NSW Government acknowledges the value of NSW arts, culture, and creative industries, including the talented, innovative artists and other creative practitioners at its centre. We will establish a whole-of-government approach to creative industries investment, services, and program provision. We will reform the various forms of creative industries investment, programs and initiatives provided across NSW Government into a coordinated and cohesive network. We will review the arts and cultural sectors to assess needs and build effective partnerships across agencies and with philanthropists, commercial and not-for-profit enterprises. We will strengthen industry pathways and training for the next generations of artists, cultural and creative workers.

3. Advocate for the value of culture

As the *Creative Communities* document emphasises, NSW Government will champion participation in community cultural life with the people of NSW, wherever they live and whatever their traditions. Providing equitable access is central. The government recognises culture as a public good and acknowledges the role it plays in personal and community wellbeing and economic development. NSW Government will ensure that cultural access and opportunities for the next generation are enabled and celebrated.



4. Support sustainable growth

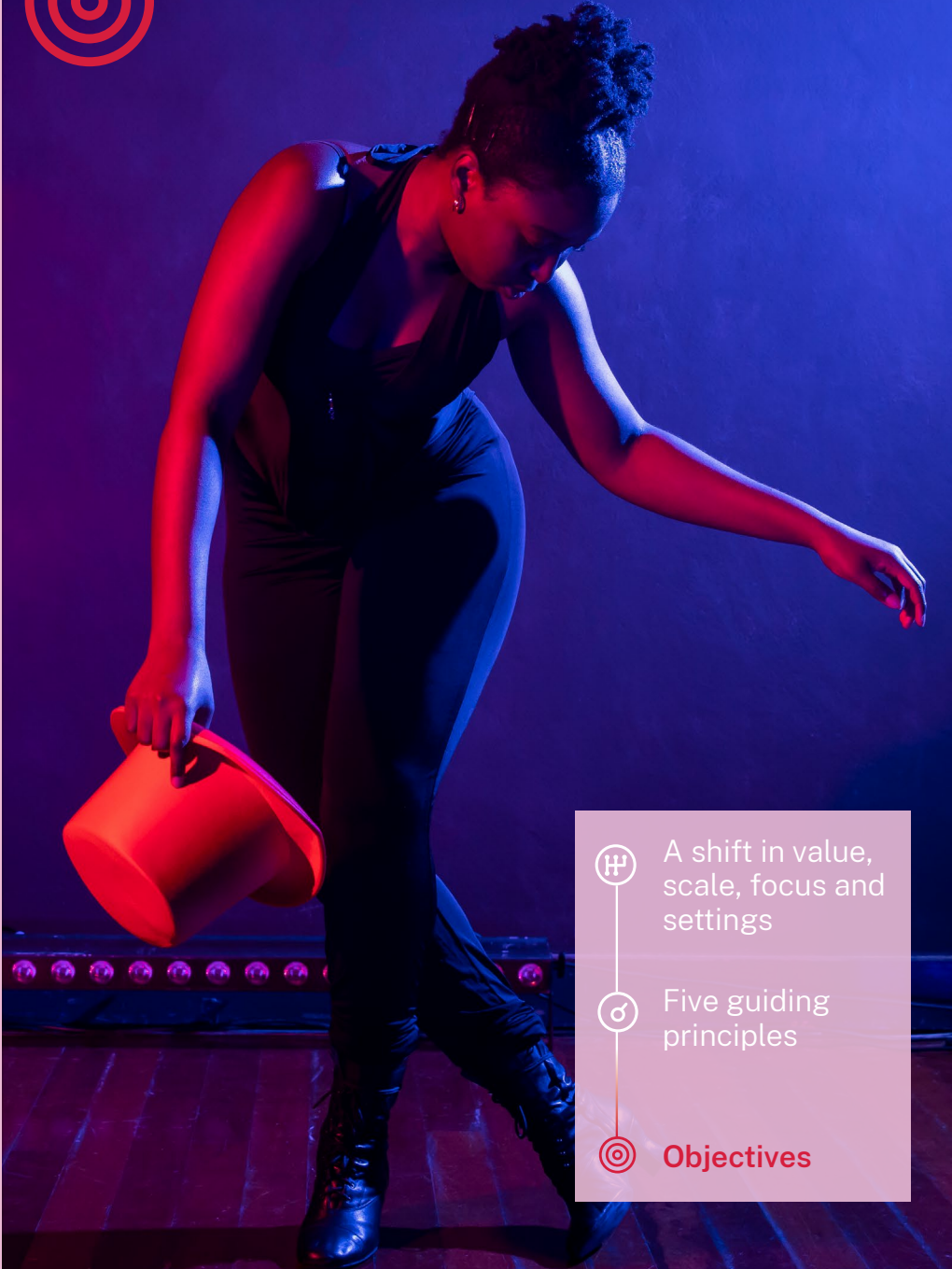
Creative Communities commits the NSW Government to fostering growth of the arts, culture and creative industries. This includes reforming cultural investment to provide more equitable distribution of funding across NSW and the financial sustainability of cultural infrastructure, protection of cultural assets and collections. Sustainability also refers to the efficient use and activation of underutilised cultural and civic assets and ensuring the sector transitions to renewables and reduces carbon emissions. Sustainable growth also requires regulatory reform to ensure viable careers and enterprises now and for future generations.

5. Take our creativity to the world and bring the world to our stories

Creative Communities aims to grow national and international audiences, drawing on the rich diversity of cultural experience, artforms and local initiatives. As a part of this ambition, NSW tourism will increase its focus on cultural experiences, including festivals and First Nations cultural tourism. Investment and regulatory support for creative industries and the development of creative content, expertise, and jobs. This will be done in partnership with the Commonwealth and other partners.



Image: Fairfield City Museum and Gallery, Here After exhibition. Photo: Kai Wasikowski



A shift in value, scale, focus and settings



Five guiding principles



Objectives



Objectives

The three core objectives of the *Creative Communities* ten-year vision relate to People, Infrastructure and Audiences.

People

The NSW Government will ensure that all NSW citizens have opportunities to contribute to and experience arts and culture.

By integrating culture, art, and the creative industries into the activities of government at all levels across the whole state, NSW citizens will have more opportunities to exercise the fundamental human right to participate in and contribute to cultural life.

The new Cultural Front Door concierge will provide a simplified way to access NSW Government services for artists, cultural organisations and the creative industries. This will make access easier, as well as reducing red-tape and duplication.

1. Broad and inclusive approach to artists and creative practitioners

- ▶ *Creative Communities* details support for local participation in cultural and creative life by aligning NSW Government investment with community needs. Some of these needs were revealed through consultations conducted in the second half of 2023. *Creative Communities* acknowledges that further deep dives into the specific needs of industry sectors are needed.
- ▶ The NSW Government will focus on supporting broad involvement to nurture new generations of multidisciplinary, multicultural, urban, rural and remote artists and creatives.

2. Sustainable careers

- ▶ *Creative Communities* recognises the need to support sustainable careers by reforming arts education and creative industries training. This will give young people, career-changers and creative workers access to the skills needed to grow creative businesses across NSW.



- ▶ The NSW Government also recognises the need to improve the working conditions and the business environment for creative practitioners, to advocate for industrial relations reform, fair remuneration, gender equity and industry standards. It will also incentivise the creation of safe and inclusive workplaces.
- ▶ Develop detailed strategic implementation plans to enable sustainability and growth. In 2024 plans for screen and contemporary music, Western Sydney and regional NSW will be developed and other reviews commenced.

3. Growing the sector

- ▶ *Creative Communities* supports the breadth of NSW's cultural and creative sector. It champions the creative industries, excellence, community cultural life and seeks to provide more equitable access.
- ▶ *Creative Communities* recognises culture as a public good and acknowledges the role culture and all the arts sectors play in personal and community wellbeing and development.
- ▶ The NSW Government will reform creative industries investment, programs and initiatives provided across all departments into a coordinated and cohesive network, properly resourcing the sector for success, with effective partnerships across agencies, with local government, commercial and not-for-profit enterprises.

Infrastructure

Creative Communities will provide a strong and effective network of equitable and sustainable services, resources and spaces for creative development, expression, practice and engagement across NSW.

1. Broad and inclusive approach to infrastructure

- ▶ Provide suitable infrastructure and commit to good design through the NSW planning system.
- ▶ Unlock underutilised spaces and make them fit-for-purpose and cost effective for creative and cultural uses.
- ▶ Increase the number and quality of accessible, appropriate and affordable spaces (for performance, development and administration) where they are needed.



- ▶ Address major cultural infrastructure gaps across sectors, with attention to the needs of small-medium scale enterprises.
- ▶ Remove legislative and regulatory barriers that prevent venues and precincts from flourishing.

2. Sustainable organisations and spaces – support resilience and sustainability

- ▶ Provide resources and training to support creative practitioners and organisations (such as strategic and business planning, financial management, fundraising and marketing).
- ▶ Provide and facilitate connections between creative industry organisations, government, industry, and other partners, drawing on international case studies.
- ▶ Protect and preserve the state’s cultural assets and collections.
- ▶ Include sector resilience to climate risks and transition to renewables.
- ▶ Incentivise the uptake of infrastructure solutions that reduce embodied carbon.

3. Deliver equitable investment and service delivery across NSW

- ▶ Establish a whole-of-government approach to creative industries investment, service and program provision.
- ▶ Reform NSW Government investment and service delivery for artists and cultural practitioners, supported equitably across NSW, with particular attention to Western Sydney and regional NSW. Initiatives in these areas are flagged in *Creative Communities*.
- ▶ Incentivise collaboration across industry, government, and the private sector, and consider broader models around innovation/research and development for sector use.

Audiences

1. Broad and inclusive approach to local and global audiences

- ▶ Partner and invest in local creative communities, local government, and trusted networks to develop local approaches to cultural development and creative industries output.
- ▶ Grow local and global audiences across all artforms and all tiers of the sector to build sustainability.
- ▶ Promote NSW arts and culture venues and activities, including local festivals and events as part of a shift to experience tourism.

2. Grow the next generation of audiences throughout NSW

- ▶ Align NSW Government investment by prioritising programs, services and advocacy that builds pathways to partnerships to enhance distribution opportunities for artists and creative practitioners online and physically.
- ▶ Grow both emerging and established creative practice across the many disciplines and specialisations within the cultural and creative industries.

3. Showcase NSW to the world

- ▶ Prioritise experience tourism.
- ▶ Undertake strategic and sector-specific national and international market development.
- ▶ Attract creative industries with investment to develop NSW creative content, experiences, and jobs.
- ▶ Support an Australian cultural community presence in, and dialogue with, the Indo-Pacific region.

“We seek to be a beacon of art and culture, reflecting and exploring our place in the world to enrich lives through meaningful encounters with art.”

ART GALLERY OF NSW



Appendix 2: *Creative Communities* Initial Commitments

Committing to arts, culture and the creative industries

- ▶ The NSW Government has adopted a whole-of-government arts, culture and creative industries policy to provide ongoing support for the state's traditional arts sector, our cultural institutions importantly expanding to include the broader creative industries.
- ▶ The breadth of the NSW Government's policy is reflected in a new, more expansive definition of arts, culture and creative industries. It includes:
 - First Nations cultures
 - Galleries, libraries, archives and museums
 - Performing arts including theatre, dance, circus, comedy, cabaret
 - Music including classical and contemporary composition, performance, and recording
 - Screen and digital games
 - Visual arts and crafts
 - Literature, writing and publishing
 - Broadcasting and digital media
 - Design, architecture and fashion
 - Built and physical heritage
 - Creative and arts education
 - Creativity in the food and beverage sector
 - Creative innovation in the technology sector
- ▶ *Creative Communities* has the goal of sustainably growing the depth and breadth of creative industries throughout NSW, and over the next decade, enabling creative individuals, organisations and communities throughout the state to reach their potential.
- ▶ The NSW Government endorses, and through *Creative Communities* will focus on implementing, *Revive*, the National Cultural Policy, by supporting the NSW cultural ecosystem.
- ▶ *Creative Communities* supports the *Revive* goal of exporting more Australian stories to the world. The NSW Government will measure and establish goals for the state's creative exports to assist and track output against the cultural trade deficit.



Whole-of-Government approach

- ▶ *Creative Communities* commits to a whole-of-government effort to advocate for, to enable and invest in the arts, culture and creative industries.
- ▶ To drive implementation of the policy across the NSW Government, a role will be designated to lead and oversee this transformation, guided by a ministerial advisory committee, senior public servants, and industry advisors.
- ▶ The NSW Government will legislate the delivery of a Creative Statement to the Parliament every three years, detailing and tracking the status, health and progress of the arts, culture and creative industries in line with this policy.
- ▶ The NSW Government will establish formal partnerships between Create NSW and the NSW Department of Education, TAFE NSW, the Ministry of Health, Transport for NSW, Placemaking NSW and other agencies to further develop priority streams of work.
- ▶ The NSW Government recognises the importance of the state's universities, the National Art School, National Institute for Dramatic Arts (NIDA) and the Australian Film TV and Radio School to our cultural ecosystem and will strengthen partnerships with them.

Creative people

- ▶ Enabled by recent and ongoing improvements to creative infrastructure, the NSW Government will focus on investing in a wide variety of creative people and communities across the state.
- ▶ The NSW Government will safeguard and modernise workplace conditions for artists, including requiring individuals and organisations receiving NSW Government funding to commit to safe workplace standards.

Next generation creatives

- ▶ *Creative Communities* encourages the next generation of culture workers and leaders to step forward. It will be a condition of NSW Government funding that organisations support and mentor emerging artists and practitioners.
- ▶ The NSW Government will establish a Youth Creative Taskforce to ensure the next generation of cultural leaders are at the decision-making table including advising the Minister directly.
- ▶ The NSW Government will establish a Generations fellowship, \$500,000 investment over five years to support 15 early career Western Sydney music artists to undertake professional development.
- ▶ The NSW Government will refer arts and music education to the NSW Parliament for inquiry.

Creative spaces

The NSW Government will activate creative spaces by a combination of continued direct public investment, seeking new sources of investment for the sector, and regulatory reform.

- ▶ *Creative Communities* envisages that NSW will become home to a First Nations cultural centre and enhanced cultural tourism. It will forge strong and enduring partnerships with First Nations creative communities, to create new work, rebuild connection and promote healing.
- ▶ The NSW Government supports maintaining free public access to NSW State Cultural Institutions and collections. They have been built with public money over many decades and are the property and birthright of all NSW citizens.
- ▶ A cultural space audit in 2024 will aim to identify underutilised assets that could be used for creative endeavours, including spaces held by NSW agencies, local councils and other landholders.
- ▶ Ensure that cultural infrastructure and good design are included in major public housing and transport infrastructure investments, including by expanding the Heritage Floor Space Scheme.
- ▶ The NSW Government will introduce further vibrancy reforms in 2024 - continuing to improve planning, liquor, outdoor, and sound and noise regulations to encourage cultural activity across NSW.
- ▶ The NSW Government will ensure the White Bay Power Station will be available for ongoing cultural use, starting with the 2024 Biennale of Sydney.

Festivals

The NSW Government will support festivals across the state by:

- ▶ Strengthening the coordination of festival support in NSW to properly position and grow the festivals sector, leveraging the wide range of industries involved. This will include improving staging for festivals and concerts following the development of a business case for outdoor cultural infrastructure across central Sydney, Parramatta, Western Sydney and regional NSW.
- ▶ Reviewing the *Entertainment Act* to identify ways to strengthen support for festivals, venues, artists, managers and music workers.

Creative reform

- ▶ The NSW Government will establish a Cultural Front Door concierge, as a simplified way for creative people to engage with the NSW Government.



- ▶ The NSW Government will reform the Arts and Cultural Funding Program (ACFP) making it a fairer and more equitable process, including reducing paperwork for applicants and simplifying the acquittal process.
- ▶ The Minister will issue a formal direction to the NSW Government's tourism body, Destination NSW, to formalise the state's experience tourism policy focus. Such a direction will explicitly commit support for the arts, culture and creative experiences across NSW.
- ▶ Promote NSW arts and cultural venues and activities, including local festivals and events, alongside major international/national entertainment (through refocussed Destination NSW marketing funding and state-wide calendar optimised to show local events and programs).

Screen

Screen NSW will be made more independent, and we will strengthen its capacity to serve the industry by shortening investment approval timeframes, contracting and payment times, and expanding the role of the board. Additional support for the sector includes:

- ▶ Developing a business case for a second major film studio in Sydney to ensure Sydney remains the leading location for Australian and international productions.
- ▶ Introducing a new digital games seed development fund and market travel program to expand our support for growth in the digital games sector.
- ▶ Providing long-term funding certainty for screen investment programs.
- ▶ Making Callan Park available for filming on an ongoing basis.

Music

The reshaping of the music sector will be driven by Sound NSW with leadership from its newly appointed advisory board and in collaboration with Music Australia, Creative Australia's new contemporary music office. The review of contemporary music has begun and a ten-year music strategy and the three-year implementation plan will be released in 2024. Additionally, the NSW Government will:

- ▶ Legislate a board for the NSW Government contemporary music agency, Sound NSW, in 2024.
- ▶ Develop a business case for a home for music in NSW, providing affordable spaces for music organisations, businesses, community radio, networking, rehearsal and events.

Western Sydney

- ▶ The NSW Government will invest in the Western Sydney Arts Alliance and increase staff support to coordinate initiatives for Western Sydney artists, arts organisations and creative communities.
- ▶ To support NSW children's education the NSW Government will develop a strategic partnership between the NSW Department of Education and Powerhouse Parramatta to embed NSW teachers into the Powerhouse Parramatta team to develop curriculum-based learning programs in collaboration with teachers, schools, industry and the museum.
- ▶ Powerhouse Parramatta will develop a major new multi-year Western Sydney initiative for writers and writing with Sydney Writers Festival, Western Sydney University and City of Parramatta Council from 2026.
- ▶ When the Powerhouse Parramatta opens in 2025 it will include the Western Sydney Hip Hop Archive a collaboration with 4ESydney and Blacktown Arts.
- ▶ The NSW Government will deliver \$160 million for cultural infrastructure in Western Sydney including building a lyric theatre as part of the Riverside Theatres redevelopment in Parramatta, a 350-seat theatre in Campbelltown and a new cultural centre in Blacktown.
- ▶ The NSW Government will deliver a final business case for the Roxy Theatre in Parramatta.

Regional NSW

The NSW Government will deliver a regional arts, culture and creative industries strategy in 2024 to grow and support sustainable participation in local activities. This includes:

- ▶ Working with local councils to reduce red tape for festivals and events to access local spaces.
- ▶ The NSW Government will work with regional communities, councils, creative organisations and venues to support a connected network of regional touring. This will involve working with local councils to connect and activate the network of regional halls and spaces to support local touring across music, performance and visual art / exhibitions.
- ▶ The NSW Government will support at least four new creative industries/artist workspace in regional NSW in the next four years.





Appendix 3: *Creative Communities* Consultation Listening and learning

Creative Communities grew out of deep listening over months of consultations.

The Minns Labor government was elected in March 2023 with a commitment to revive arts, culture and the creative industries. It promised to solve some of the well-known problems in the sector.

Over the past decade many live music venues in NSW have closed, tourism flagged. The pandemic had a serious impact. The creative industries did not feature in NSW investment priorities.

Addressing these shortcomings were important priorities, but once in office it became clear that even more needed to be done.

The Minister for the Arts, Music, Night-time Economy and Tourism, declared that culture, art and the creative industries could be more significant in the NSW economy and in the lives of citizens.

As Minister he stressed that it is the work produced by cultural and creative workers that will be remembered in future.

Those who work in the sector are passionate about what they do. Their entrepreneurial spirit and urge to create means they see opportunities where others see problems. In June 2023 the Minister decided to tap into this knowledge with one of the most extensive consultations ever undertaken in NSW, managed by Create NSW.

Policy development was led by Mark Crees and the team from Create NSW under Annette Pitman as Chief Executive and Kate Foy as Deputy Secretary Arts and Tourism, and Evan Hughes and Anna Burns from Minister Graham's office. Julianne Schultz AM assisted in writing this public document.

Guidance was provided by a five-member ministerial advisory panel (MAP) of industry leaders chaired by Opera House CEO Louise Herron; and a twelve-member artists advisory panel (AAP) chaired by poet and lawyer Sara Mansour. Members of the MAP were: Louise Herron AM, Michael Dagostino, Darren Dale, Kerri Glasscock, Ross Harley; Members of the AAP were: Sara Mansour, Jane Gleeson-White, Kylie Kwong, Kristy Lee Peters, Nakkiah Lui, Rachel Neeson, Anna Plunkett, Liane Rossler, Luke Sales, Khaled Sabsabi, Sukhdeep Singh, Jonathan Zawada.

Between July and August, Minister for the Arts and Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts Julia Finn MP hosted town hall meetings in twelve centres – Lismore, Newcastle, Sydney, Penrith, Bega, Wagga Wagga, Leichardt, Dubbo, Tamworth, Wollongong, Liverpool and Broken Hill. Another four meetings were held online.

More than a thousand people participated in these meetings and shared more than three thousand ideas and comments.

There were 133 targeted consultations with peak groups, industry partners, key institutions, local government and other states and territories. Seven hundred and seventy-five written submissions were lodged – by individuals, industry groups, local government, commercial businesses and social enterprises.

It became clear that there was a need for a more ambitious policy. The passion of the participants in the consultations was inspiring.

The consultations revealed an urgent need for government support and a comprehensive framework to a comprehensive framework to strengthen the sustainability of the whole cultural ecosystem. Investment and regulatory reform were considered urgent, as was affordable access to fit-for-purpose spaces.

Participants in the consultation wanted to see equitable distribution of resources, so that those in Western Sydney and regional areas can flourish and connect with their audiences and communities.

People across the state wanted to see that the culturally and geographically diverse communities of NSW could all find a sustainable place in the sector. In another lesson from the pandemic, they stressed that access to and participation in arts and cultural activities were essential for the mental health, wellbeing and futures of young people.

They were proud of what their communities offered, of the initiatives they had developed without assistance and wanted to share the success of these projects with visitors from elsewhere.

The consultations revealed that needs varied between artforms and across the state and that for any change to be meaningful it would need to be embraced across the whole-of-government.

In response, a decision-making committee of senior public servants from twelve NSW Government agencies was formed in August. It met every week for two months to consider how best to harness the levers of government across the whole of the NSW public sector to better engage with and support the sector.

This was complimented by over fifty direct consultations held by Create NSW with departments and agencies across the NSW public sector to identify opportunities to better collaborate and do more in the arts, culture and creative industries.

Create NSW led the interdepartmental committee to develop detailed plans for how this might be done. NSW Government is releasing this policy as a whole-of-government responsibility. This is the first step towards realising the ambition of the *Creative Communities* framework.

The public consultations stressed the democratic possibilities of cultural participation, the need to find better ways to involve local communities, connect with areas of government with responsibility for social, family and individual wellbeing and improve education and training.

Some of the contributors wanted to see more support for individuals and their projects. Some wanted to ensure that the institutional base of the available support was robust and equitable. Others were grounded in community engagement, in community engagement and festivals as well as schools and hospitals, aged care centres and prisons. Others urgently wanted regulations changed so that their businesses could thrive and pathways to investment support and infrastructure to enable growth.

Putting culture at the heart of NSW as a public good, as a whole-of-government responsibility, is a big change. It stretches beyond traditional arts policy to grow the creative industries and embraces transformative cultural solutions to transform lives. It presents an exciting opportunity for policymakers to learn from, and work with, grassroots initiatives, scaling and adapting as appropriate and to better engage with the commercial sector.

Creative Communities complements *Revive*, the national cultural policy. It is a pathway to transformation in the biggest state with the largest cultural workforce. It reaches across government and promises overtime to touch every community across NSW.

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