

Dear Minister for the Arts, Experts Panels, and Policy Advisory Group,

RE: Submission to the National Cultural Policy consultation – May 2026

I make this submission to the National Cultural Policy consultation solely in my capacity as an independent emerging visual artist based in Canberra, Australia. This submission outlines my personal insights, experiences, research and three recommendations for achieving greater meaningful recognition and impact for the arts in contemporary Australia.

The three key recommendations include:

1. Implement an Australian government funded pilot **living wage scheme for artists**, like what has been [successfully trialled and now permanently implemented in Ireland](#).
2. Expand the [Australian Cultural Fund \(ACF\)](#) scheme to achieve its full potential by removing project specific fundraising and enable artists to register to receive tax-deductible donations to sustain their ongoing professional practice.
3. Establish a new **Ministry of Culture**, reporting to the Prime Minister, which incorporates a portfolio of: government arts policy and grant funding (with nation-wide support for professional artists at all levels of their career); Indigenous arts, languages and culture; Sports; and National Cultural Institutions (including the Australian War Memorial and National Institute of Sport). This has been immensely successful for other countries, [including South Korea](#).

I entered the visual arts sector five years ago and completed a Diploma of Visual Arts part-time through evening TAFE classes. This career shift followed a 15-year corporate career with university qualifications in science, psychology, international affairs, and postgraduate law. I have also had the benefit of lived experience as a non-English speaking migrant, a gay man, and a person with disabilities. Having an unsettled upbringing with conflicting cultural expectations gave me an early appreciation for the value of diversity and the importance of inclusion.

I have held high hopes for [Revive](#) and the arts sector, however, I have experienced and witnessed firsthand the systemic and foundational issues that undermine the potential of visual arts in Australia for enhancing society cohesion and elevating cultural identity. One of my most valued philosophical ideas is: *When societies end, it is art that remains*. It is our art that will inform future generations and civilisations (and indeed future species) to understand who we were and what we aspired towards. This is also why I value [Lindy Lee's, 'Ouroboros'](#) despite [public criticisms](#) of its cost.

Unfortunately, contemporary art in Australia continues to straddle a fine line between obscurity and irrelevance, adding to its [undervalued and despised perception](#). This reflection is not based on the quality or substance of new art being created, but rather an industry that extensively values and defines artwork and artist relevance through esoterism, elitism, inequality, and cronyism.

I perceive art as an inherent and powerful means of communication that transcends human differences and time. To this end, art has a crucial role in society and to counter the escalating Trumpian politics of division and (social) media spread of misinformation. Accordingly, last year I undertook my debut solo exhibition, '[Saint Grey](#)' that travelled across Australia to engage audiences emotionally and intellectually on the theme of greyhounds as sentient beings at conflict with their commoditisation and killing by the (government subsidised) dog racing gambling industry. My exhibition was attended by hundreds of people and 70 greyhound guests of honour, and raised over \$8,200 to support greyhound charities.

The journey (and challenges) of undertaking this major solo exhibition has provided me with some valuable insights and recommendations. Firstly, I highly commend the work of the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) as a peak body for providing the visual arts sector with valuable resources, support and structure that is representative of a professional work association.¹ *Revive* was right to endorse the [NAVA Code of Practice for Visual Arts, Craft and Design](#). Unfortunately, this is where my praise of *Revive* begins and ends, which has provided scant little in substantive recognition or support for the visual arts sector (except for maintaining existing Indigenous visual arts initiatives).

Whilst undertaking my journey as a visual artist, I have encountered a prevalent culture in the arts industry that [actively pits artists against artists](#) for grants and awards that are very scarce in availability and contemptible in substance. For example, I was unsuccessful for several grants (seeking only \$4,000) to support my exhibition that was touring with significant in-kind support from national and international organisations. The feedback was generic and inconsistent. The unsuccessful grants ultimately cost me several days of work grant writing and 12-weeks delay in being able to commence my project (since we're unable to purchase any goods or services that are budgeted in the grant proposal ahead of its execution).

Due to the [recurrent income insecurity](#) as a visual artist and the need to "wear many hats" (unpaid), visual artists are severely stifled in developing their creativity, technical skills, and finding purpose and relevance in their work. This has resulted in the accurate stereotype (especially among emerging and mid-career artists) that you must be either wealthy or destitute to work in the visual arts. In addition, the career prospects for visual artists is heavily and unjustifiably slanted towards attaining formal tertiary qualifications, which creates an artificial separation and elitism. For example, whilst desperately searching last year for an art studio (which are few in availability and add further financial pressure) to work on the artworks for my major exhibition, I was told that I "...was not a real artists if [I] haven't studied at ANU Art School."

Disproportionately high funding of elitist educational institutions, galleries, and grant funding bodies only serve to reward mediocracy. A case in point is the tragic end for [Australian Design Centre](#) and the life-support status for the [Print Council of Australia](#) that recently narrowly avoided its dissolution after 30 years. The sidelining and ongoing stress faced by peak visual arts bodies such as these points to the direct failure of *Revive*, Government policy and its priorities, and indeed the ability to educate and connect Australian society to the value of contemporary art.

Finally, the relevance of art as the eleventh and last word in the mega Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sports and the **Arts** merely reiterates the afterthought given to art within the government, economy and society.

I hope you accept this submission with due consideration and advocate for visual arts to achieve the recognition and support that is desperately needed for contemporary Australia to thrive.

Yours sincerely,

Elliott Fox

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¹ Disclosure: In 2025 I received the NAVA Ignition Award for Professional Practice.