

Submission to the  
Federal Senate Environment and  
Communications Reference  
Committee Inquiry into the  
National Cultural Policy

October 2025

## **About WALGA**

The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) is an independent, member-based, not for profit organisation representing and supporting the WA Local Government sector.

Our membership includes all 139 Local Governments in the State. WALGA uses its influence, support and expertise to deliver better outcomes for Western Australian (WA) Local Governments and their communities.

We advocate to all levels of Government on behalf of our Members, and provide expert advice, services and support to Local Governments. WALGA's vision is for agile and inclusive Local Governments enhancing community wellbeing and enabling economic prosperity.

## **Acknowledgement of Country**

WALGA acknowledges the continuing connection of Aboriginal people to Country, culture and community. We embrace the vast Aboriginal cultural diversity throughout Western Australia, including Boorloo (Perth), on the land of the Whadjuk Nyoongar People, where WALGA is located and we acknowledge and pay respect to Elders past and present.

## **Introduction**

The Australian Government's 2023 [National Cultural Policy](#) (Revive) provides a five-year plan to revive the arts in Australia, including the establishment of Creative Australia as the Government's principal arts investment and advisory body. In July 2025, the Senate agreed that the Inquiry into the National Cultural Policy be re-adopted in the 48th Parliament for inquiry and report.

WALGA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback to the Inquiry on behalf of the Western Australian Local Government sector and the extension granted to provide its submission.

WALGA notes the broad nature of the Inquiry terms of reference – to 'inquire and report on the National Cultural Policy released on 30 January 2023; and any other related matters.' There have been significant changes in the policy landscape since Revive was released that impact some of the content and actions.

WALGA's submission highlights the important role that the Western Australian (WA) Local Government sector provides in making arts and culture accessible to all Western Australians and therefore contributes to the successful implementation of Revive. The submission focuses on sustaining revitalisation in the arts through greater investment in local level infrastructure.

This Submission should be considered in conjunction with feedback provided directly by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and other state and territory Local Government Associations.



This Submission aligns to the following WALGA advocacy position [3.7 Community Infrastructure](#):

*Local Governments own, lease, and maintain vital community infrastructure across Western Australia that delivers essential benefits to local communities. Local Governments face significant funding pressures to ensure this infrastructure is effectively planned, developed, maintained, and enhanced to meet evolving community needs and population growth.*

1. *WALGA calls on the Australian Government to provide \$500 million per annum for community infrastructure through a national formula based, targeted Local Government funding program.*
2. *WALGA calls on the State Government to:*
  - a. *Provide \$60 million per annum for the Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund, separate to the PlayOn WA 2030 Funding commitments.*
  - b. *Provide \$60 million per annum for community arts and cultural infrastructure,*
  - c. *Provide funding for retrofitting accessible design features to community infrastructure,*
  - d. *Align all community infrastructure funding with existing State co-contribution of at least two-thirds.*

September 2025

## Context

*Revive: National Cultural Policy*

Within its five-year lifespan, Revive sets out the Australian Government's ambition to "change the trajectory of the creative sector, to deliver new momentum, so that Australia's artists and arts workers, organisations and audiences thrive and grow, and our arts, culture and heritage are re-positioned as central to Australia's future".

Revive is structured around five interconnected pillars:

1. First Nations first
2. A place for every story
3. Centrality of the artist
4. Strong cultural infrastructure, and
5. Engaging the audience

Revive seeks to build on existing Australian Government investment in the arts, links existing programs with new funded initiatives and provide a pathway for arts and culture to contribute to whole-of-government outcomes.

*The role of the Local Government sector in supporting arts and culture*

WA Local Governments are providers and operators of a variety of cultural facilities, including almost all of WA's Regional Arts and Entertainment Centres and 233 public libraries.

Local Governments run or support arts and culture programs, services and centres, make communities vibrant places to live and offer a range of benefits that contribute to overall wellbeing. It has been well researched that access to arts and culture fosters social cohesion, mental wellbeing, and education whilst also driving economic outcomes through tourism.

Local Governments also play a key role in supporting place-based arts and cultural practices due to their proximity to local communities, including a significant level of financial investment. [The Cultural and Creative Statistics Working Group](#) at the Australian Office for the Arts estimates expenditure of \$2,157.8 million by Local Government in 2023–24 for cultural activities. This represented 25% of the total government funded expenditure on cultural activities, and a Local Government sector expenditure increase of 18% (or \$331.1 million) between 2021–22 and 2023–24. Furthermore, Western Australia has the third highest estimate of total Local Government per person cultural expenditure at \$81.10.

WA Local Governments utilise their local community knowledge and connections to invest in arts and cultural facilities and services that create thriving communities and drive sustainable tourism and regional prosperity. The diverse range of Local Government arts and culture initiatives also provide welcoming and inclusive communities for all community members and visitors including Aboriginal, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, young people, seniors and people with disabilities opportunities for participation, self-representation, and economic engagement.

### **Pillar Two: A place for every story**

WALGA supports the intent of Revive’s Pillar Two actions, which include:

- Increase support for regional arts and culture through an increase to the Regional Arts Fund
- Link with the future National Urban Policy Framework to find opportunities to leverage arts and culture to enhance community liveability and stimulate economic activity and tourism in central business districts and urban centres
- Invest in local arts and cultural infrastructure across Australia
- Develop an Arts and Disability Associated Plan to enable people with disability to access and participate fully in the cultural and creative life of Australia.

The delivery of Revive actions is captured by the [Office for the Arts](#). While the list of action achievements is impressive and to be celebrated, elements of the intent of these actions, aligned to the Revive principles, should be central to future implementation.

For example, the \$400 million Australian Government regional Precincts and Partnerships Program (rPPP), is stated as delivering Revive priority actions. [The rPPP program has funded 36 projects to date](#), of which, just nine are located in WA, and of those, only one project description refers to arts and culture.

Revive also points to the Australian Government’s \$50 million investment in the Aboriginal Cultural Centre in Perth as delivering local arts and culture infrastructure. While WALGA commends the investment, such major infrastructure projects based in

capital cities should be complemented by appropriate investment in local or regional arts centres across jurisdictions that can have an equally profound impact for rural and remote communities and visitors.

Maximise the impact of Pillar Two actions requires a partnership approach to support the revival of arts and cultural sector across the nation, with better engagement with the Local Government sector as well state and territory Governments. As critical place-makers and enablers at the local level, Local Governments know their communities and are well placed to facilitate meaningful and sustainable development of local level arts and culture initiatives and infrastructure.

**Recommendation 1: Future Revive implementation should be developed in consultation with the Local Government sector to identify and prioritise locally based need.**

WALGA welcomes the development of [\*Equity: the arts and disability associated plan\*](#) (Associated Plan) under Revive, linked to the Pillar Two intent of promoting access, equity, participation and representation in arts and cultural activities for all Australians. WALGA notes that despite clear statements on the need to build sector capability and competence in disability access and inclusion and setting stronger accessibility expectations for organisations receiving Government funding, the \$8.1 million investment under the Associated Plan is focused on programs rather than infrastructure accessibility.

Community arts and culture infrastructure needs to ensure inclusive access. Approximately 411,500 Western Australians live with disabilities, with one in three facing challenges accessing buildings such as community art centres, libraries, museums and galleries. Arts and culture infrastructure that predates contemporary accessibility feature requirements and best practice such as ramps, brail signs and wide doorways are not meeting the needs of current communities. Local Governments that own and operate arts and cultural infrastructure want to ensure inclusivity, however retrofitting accessibility features can be cost prohibitive, especially for smaller Local Governments.

Supporting Local Governments to build, upgrade and maintain accessible arts and cultural facilities supports enhanced community wellbeing, generates economic activity and improves liveability in regional areas, for audiences and performers.

**Recommendation 2: The Australian Government provide sustainable funding streams for Local Governments to build and maintain arts and cultural infrastructure to meet community accessibility requirements.**

#### **Pillar Four: Strong Cultural Infrastructure**

Despite infrastructure being a key pillar of Revive, both the identified actions and reported progress those actions include very little investment in arts and culture infrastructure across the country outside of major, high profile projects.

Revive states that the Australian Government invests in arts and culture through a broad range of portfolios – including Infrastructure, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Indigenous Australians, and Home Affairs. While this is true, current funding is

typically focused on program rather than infrastructure investment or identified infrastructure priorities lack funding.

The [2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan](#) includes the key priority area of social infrastructure including recommendation 8.3: Support economic development by recognising the value of investment in social infrastructure. This recommendation proposes state and territory infrastructure bodies and the Australian Treasury as supporting agencies and identifies the need to better guide social infrastructure investment.

The [ALGA National State of Assets Report](#) highlights the significant need for replacement of Local Government buildings and facilities, including cultural infrastructure, due to poor condition, function, and capacity. Given the extent of Local Government ownership and management of arts and culture infrastructure across the nation, this is a significant barrier to the Revive vision of reviving the arts in Australia.

Local Governments require more support to ensure that facilities can be built and maintained to the standard the community expects and needs. There are currently no targeted funding programs to support WA Local Governments operating and maintaining community cultural and arts centres. Funding support primarily delivered through State and Australian Government grant programs are often oversubscribed and open to a broad range of infrastructure types, not specifically arts and culture.

Many WA Local Governments are having to source funding from many different areas, such as, federal, state and philanthropic, to be able to deliver development of arts and cultural facilities. Local Governments are innovatively and proactively identifying community need at a regional level to meet that community need such as the Gascoyne Regional Development's recently published draft Gascoyne Regional Arts Plan however, dedicated and ongoing funding, based on community need is required.

**Recommendation 3: That the Australian Government provide \$500 million per annum for community infrastructure through a national formula based, targeted Local Government funding program.**

## **Conclusion**

The quadruple return on investment (cultural, economic, environmental and social) in arts and cultural infrastructure is well documented and, as articulated in Revive, the foundation of thriving, inclusive and connected communities across Australia.

The key role Local Governments can provide in achieving the priorities of Revive are yet to be realised. Beyond the lifespan on Revive, Local Governments will nurture and support access to the arts for their communities through exposure to programs but more importantly, through the provision of critical arts and cultural infrastructure.

WALGA strongly encourages the Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications to consider engagement, collaboration and funding of the Local Government sector to increase the impact of Revive over its remaining years to provide multiple and long lasts positive impacts for Australians.



**WALGA**

For enquiries on this Submission please contact Hannah Godsave, Manager Community Policy, at [hgodsave@walga.asn.au](mailto:hgodsave@walga.asn.au) or (08) 9213 2074.