
A NEW APPROACH

Insight research series
Report Four

BEHIND THE SCENES: DRIVERS OF ARTS AND CULTURAL POLICY SETTINGS IN AUSTRALIA AND BEYOND

Acknowledgements

This report has been prepared by A New Approach [ANA].

Expert analysis and input was provided by ANA's Research Working Group, chaired by Professor Malcolm Gillies AM FAHA, with Distinguished Professor Ien Ang FAHA, Professor Tony Bennett AcSS FAHA, Distinguished Professor Stuart Cunningham AM FAcSS FAHA and Professor Jennifer Milam FAHA.

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Previous reports in the Insight Research Series:

1. *The big picture: Public expenditure on artistic, cultural and creative activity in Australia*
2. *Transformative: Impacts of culture and creativity*
3. *'A view from middle Australia: Perceptions of arts, culture and creativity'* [May 2020]

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About A New Approach

A New Approach [ANA] is an independent think tank championing effective investment and return in Australian arts and culture. We aim to foster a more robust discussion about cultural policies, underpinned by good data, informed by shared understandings, and through a non-partisan and independent approach. ANA was established in 2018 with a \$1.65 million commitment by The Myer Foundation, the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation and the Keir Foundation. The Australian Academy of the Humanities is the lead delivery partner for this initiative.

For further information visit
www.humanities.org.au/new-approach
or contact us via
newapproach@humanities.org.au

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Professor Malcolm Gillies AM FAHA (Chair), Distinguished Professor Ien Ang FAHA, Professor Tony Bennett AcSS FAHA, Distinguished Professor Stuart Cunningham AM FAcSS FAHA, Professor Jennifer Milam FAHA.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

There has never been a more critical time to examine Australia's cultural policy settings.

As a nation we are facing unprecedented challenges, as we wrestle with the consequences of back-to-back bushfire and pandemic crises as well as Australia's first recession in 29 years. Arts and culture have a significant role to play in helping Australia address these challenges, including setting the tone for how we view ourselves as a nation now and into the future.

There are some important opportunities and decisions ahead of us. That is why understanding the drivers that inform public policies and policy settings is critical for the future of Australian culture.

The purpose of this report is to bring these policy drivers centre stage; to make them clearer and more accessible so that a wider range of people can take part in informed discussion about Australia's cultural policy settings. If we want our public and private investments in arts and culture to be effective and relevant, then the motivations we have for that investment matter.

In this report, we unpack four policy drivers that we have found to be the most significant influences on arts, cultural and creative policies, globally, for the last 70 years. They are:

Four cultural policy drivers

Collective identity

The purpose of arts and culture is to help groups of otherwise disparate individuals to unite around a collective identity that builds on the things they have (or can be argued to have) in common.

Social improvement

The purpose of arts and culture is to provide spillover benefits in areas of societal concern (like education, health and disaster recovery) to the widest range of people possible.

Reputation-building

The purpose of arts and culture is to help build the reputation of a country, region, organisation or individual, often by associating these entities or individuals with standards of excellence as defined by relevant stakeholders.

Economic contribution

The purpose of arts and culture is to contribute to the nation's economic prosperity, either directly through income and/or employment generation, or indirectly by influencing innovation.

Figure 1: The four most prominent cultural policy drivers found in the international literature between 1950 and 2020.

In exploring Australia's existing cultural policy settings, we found that these four very different, sometimes conflicting policy drivers have accumulated in both positive and negative ways. This has resulted in arts and culture in Australia being expected to deliver everything from aesthetic excellence to social cohesion, better health, education and international diplomacy and economic growth—all policy areas that attract debate and dissent on their own terms. This makes arts and culture a highly complex policy space.

It also makes it a policy space with great opportunity for development.

Behind the scenes: drivers of arts and cultural policy in Australia and beyond is part of the work by A New Approach to champion effective investment and return in arts and culture by governments, individuals, philanthropists and businesses. It is part of a series of reports focused on:

- * investment
- * Impacts and benefits
- * attitudes and perceptions
- * policy settings
- * the creative economy

This is ANA's fourth Insight report and it is structured as follows:

Part 1 unpacks and explores the four most prominent policy drivers evident in the international literature on cultural policy from the last 70 years to understand where each has come from, how policy makers have used them, and some of the outcomes that commonly occur when they are applied.

Part 2 provides a selective timeline of Australian cultural policy history, in order to illustrate where and how the policy drivers have accumulated within Australia's cultural policy settings between 1950 and 2010, and with what consequences.

Part 3 explores the current state of cultural policy settings in Australia and asks: are our existing settings match-fit for the emerging, often unprecedented challenges of 21st century Australia?

Part 4 demonstrates the implications of Australia's cultural policy settings, and shows how strategic deployment of the policy drivers can create significant opportunities to benefit the nation.

We hope this helps create a framework for more productive discussions about policy and investment between all levels of government, businesses, individual creators, philanthropists and in the media.

Our cultural future depends on it.

Summary of findings

Finding 1	Four key policy drivers underpin recent cultural policy around the world. These are collective identity, reputation-building, social improvement and economic contribution.	Finding 4	Considering the drivers that underpin cultural policy can be useful in planning the implementation of policy. Otherwise, there is a risk that the policy intentions may not match the reality.
Finding 2	The four policy drivers can be deliberately combined in cultural policies to catalyse a range of specific effects emerging out of arts and cultural activities.	Finding 5	Neither of the two major Australian political parties has significantly prioritised public expenditure on arts and culture more than the other. However, different governments have been influenced more by some drivers than others. At times, this has led some stakeholders to feel that arts and culture are being prioritised or deprioritised, depending on whether those stakeholders value the same cultural policy drivers as the government of the day.
Finding 3	When policy makers are not aware of the drivers they are using to create cultural policy, and inadvertently use various drivers in combination, they risk these drivers having contradictory goals. This makes it difficult or impossible for the policy to be successfully implemented.	Finding 6	The most effective cultural policies underpinned by economic contribution drivers take a creative industries approach and demonstrate how arts, culture and creative activities interact with each other to increase creativity and innovation across the economy.

Finding 7	The last decade has seen a greater concentration of different policy drivers in a range of policy settings across all three levels of government, and this has made arts and culture an increasingly complex area of public policy.
Finding 8	COVID-19 has accelerated innovation in the production, distribution and consumption of arts and culture via digital means. These trends need to be specifically addressed when updating our cultural policy settings for the 21st century.

Summary of opportunities

Opportunity 1 Determine the appropriate combination of drivers to underpin cultural policy settings for any given jurisdiction, and ensure that investment is effective and relevant in achieving that jurisdiction's priorities.

Opportunity 2 Establish an inquiry investigating whether cultural policy settings and associated investments are effective and relevant for 21st century Australia. This should include a strategy and mechanism for better coordination between the three levels of government, and identify the policy areas that would create value through strategic investment.

Opportunity 3 Review pathways and mechanisms that connect and embed arts and cultural activities in education, mental health and social inclusion strategies, including those related to recovery from natural disasters and significant social and economic disruptions.

Opportunity 4 Create a National Arts and Culture Plan, in the same vein as the existing 'Sport 2030' National Sport Plan, that identifies the enduring and non-partisan principles and responsibilities that could inform more coherent arts and cultural policy settings and investment at all three levels of government.

Opportunity 5 Increase the positive attitudes of internal stakeholders by demonstrating both the access to arts and culture provided by cultural policy and policy actions, and the value these actions have or will have to those stakeholders and their communities.

Opportunity 6 Continually review investment in, and diversity of, arts and cultural activities to increase opportunities that will bring individuals together and build community. For example, festivals, community arts and cultural development initiatives, and local and regional events and experiences.

Opportunity 7 Prioritise incentives, requirements and schemes that support collective identity-building through the production and distribution of diverse Australian content that will help to build a unified national identity and represent Australia to the world.

Opportunity 8 Consider the value of a whole-of-government creative industries approach to cultural policy that will strategically connect arts and culture to innovation outcomes in the broader creative economy.

