

A New Approach (ANA)

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Rebuilding social cohesion through culture and creativity

Australia's social cohesion is being tested by domestic and global challenges. New analysis of Australian and international policy has revealed how cultural and creative engagement can help.

[Belong, Trust, Connect: Policy opportunities for social cohesion through arts and culture](#) is the new Analysis Paper from Australia's national arts and culture think tank, A New Approach (ANA).

Kate Fielding, CEO of ANA, said evidence from across the nation and the world demonstrates that cultural and creative engagement builds belonging, trust and connection, helping people to live better, together.

"This evidence is supported by our study with everyday Australians who say that arts and culture helps them feel part of the community, enhances empathy and inclusion, and combats loneliness and isolation," said Ms Fielding.

Ms Fielding said despite this, not all governments in Australia explicitly pursue social cohesion through cultural policy, and most policy focused on social cohesion does not integrate cultural and creative engagement.

"While it is not the sole purpose of cultural and creative engagement to rebuild social cohesion, we can't ignore that it has a critical role to play and is in fact already doing so in cities, suburbs and towns," said Ms Fielding.

"A recent Australian survey found that attending 'events that bring people together such as fetes, shows, festivals or other community events' is the highest contributor to community participation, other than spending time with family and friends, and the strongest contributor to civic engagement.

"Another Australian survey found that 80% of Australians trust libraries. International surveys confirm that cultural institutions are the most trusted institutions, above government, scientific, media and political institutions, including by young people who often report lower feelings of belonging and trust."

Ms Fielding said there is untapped potential in cultural and creative engagement to reconnect communities and rebuild belonging and trust, including within the cultural and creative sector itself.

"Our analysis of Australian and international policy demonstrates there are opportunities to leverage existing investments and partnerships in culture and creativity across all levels of government and portfolios to respond to this challenge," said Ms Fielding.

"A Ministerial Council of Cultural Ministers reporting to National Cabinet could guide this work now and into the future."

To find out more about A New Approach (ANA) [visit the website](#).

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