

Building an arts and culture system that delivers for all Australians

2026–27 Pre-Budget Submission

About A New Approach (ANA)

A New Approach (ANA) is Australia's national arts and culture think tank. We believe Australia can become a cultural powerhouse whose creativity is locally loved, nationally valued and globally influential.

Through credible and independent public leadership, ANA helps build an ambitious and innovative policy and investment environment for arts, culture and creativity. We work to ensure Australia can be a great place for creators and audiences, whoever they are and wherever they live.

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A New Approach (ANA)

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Pre-Budget Submissions
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Building an arts and culture system that delivers for all Australians

A New Approach (ANA) welcomes this opportunity to make a Pre-Budget Submission for the Australian Government 2026-27 Budget. Our recommendations focus on **practical actions to build an arts and culture system that delivers for all Australians**:

1. A National Arts and Culture Strategy
2. A secretariat to support Cultural Ministers to meet regularly
3. A strategic approach to international cultural relations.

These actions establish enduring governance infrastructure for a long-term, multi-government and multi-partisan approach that defines shared objectives and delivers results.

Now is the time to pursue these opportunities, thanks to:

- **The Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.** This is the cultural and sporting event of a generation. The Australian Government should act now to achieve lasting arts and culture impacts by collaborating with Australia's states and territories and building momentum internationally.
- **A national focus on cultural policy, and culture and creativity's role in driving Australia's economic and social wellbeing.** The Australian Government should capitalise on current momentum for action. For example, the upcoming national cultural policy consultation is already fostering collaboration, including intergovernmental work on tax reform to better support Australian audiences and the cultural and creative industries.

Arts and culture can provide the Australian Government with a transformative edge to tackle Australia's deepest challenges. These include the current cost-of-living crisis, decline in social cohesion, stagnation of productivity and the need to engage with the emerging and often unpredictable risks created by geopolitical instability and new technologies, including generative artificial intelligence (AI). **The Australian Government can invest now in the national governance infrastructure needed to unlock the benefits of arts and culture for all Australians.**

In our role as a philanthropically funded, independent think tank, ANA is ready to provide further information about the response in this submission and would welcome the opportunity to discuss.

We confirm that this submission can be made public.

Warm regards,



Kate Fielding, CEO, A New Approach (ANA)

Contact

Find

Summary of recommendations

Outline of recommendations

There are three recommendations in this submission:

1. Allocate \$0.9 million over one year to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA) for [a National Arts and Culture Strategy, modelled on the National Sport Strategy](#).
2. Allocate existing DITRDCA resources (\$0.6 million and one ASL over four years) for [a dedicated secretariat for the Cultural Ministers to meet regularly](#).
3. Allocate \$1.0 million over two years to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to explore [a strategic approach to international cultural relations](#).

See detailed recommendations in the following sections (linked above) to assist with any policy briefing and policy proposals.¹

Rec.	Portfolio, Entity, Outcome	Budget 2026-27	Forward Estimates			All years
			2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	
1	Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, DITRDCA, Outcome 6	-\$0.9m				-\$0.9m
2	Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, DITRDCA, Outcome 6	Allocation of existing DITRDCA resources				
		-\$0.15m and 1 ASL	-\$0.15m and 1 ASL	-\$0.15m and 1 ASL	-\$0.15m and 1 ASL	-\$0.6m and 1 ASL
3	Foreign Affairs and Trade, DFAT, Outcome 1	-\$0.5m	-\$0.5m	-	-	-\$1.0m

ANA understands the Cultural Policy Strategy and Program Support Branch in DITRDCA would be responsible for recommendations 1 and 2.

The Public Diplomacy and Influence Branch in DFAT would be responsible for recommendation 3, but the Cultural Policy Strategy and Program Support Branch in DITRDCA would also have a strong interest.

Recommendation 1: A National Arts and Culture Strategy

What is the status quo?

Australia's federal, state, territory and local governments invest \$8.6 billion annually in arts and culture.²

Currently, each level of government has its own cultural policy outlining its approach and priorities for arts, culture and creativity for its jurisdiction. However, **Australia does not have a National Arts and Culture Strategy to drive long-term strategic collaboration between governments.** This means that there is no formal mechanism for all levels of government to share a vision and agree on shared outcomes and measurements for cultural access and the creative industries.

Without an overarching vision or goal for our arts and culture system, and an approach to achieving it, Australians continue to miss out on opportunities to:

- bolster productivity and economic wellbeing
- leverage the economic and social impact of the creative and cultural industries
- increase cultural access and engagement
- strengthen social cohesion.

What are the objectives, why is government intervention needed and how will success be measured?

A National Arts and Culture Strategy is a mechanism to align efforts across federal, state, territory and local governments, without limiting their independence. It would be separate to and complement – not replace – existing policies. Strategies like this exist in other areas, including the National Sport Strategy.

The Australian Government, in partnership with other levels of government, should develop and implement a 10-year National Arts and Culture Strategy, modelled on the successive national sport plans and strategies which have delivered enduring policy results in Australia.

The strategy should create a:

- **shared vision, priorities and outcomes** that are formally negotiated and agreed
- **practical roadmap** for all stakeholders
- **flexible framework for coordination across governments that complements (rather than replaces) existing policies** at national, state, territory and local government levels
- **mechanism for collaboration** on investment, incentives, legislation, regulations, standards, programs and policies across levels of government
- **mechanism for cross-portfolio action** that enhances existing policies in other portfolios
- **shared reporting framework** focused on clear benefits for the public.

A National Arts and Culture Strategy would help deliver social and economic impacts across Australia by **driving long-term collaboration and bringing together fragmented investment arrangements** across federal, state, territory and local governments.





These impacts include:³

- boosting innovation
- building an adaptable workforce
- growing trade and investment
- future-proofing employment, workforces and labour supply
- providing new solutions to generational issues
- strengthening social cohesion
- increasing cultural access and engagement.

With the current momentum for creating the next national cultural policy, **this is an ideal time for the Australian Government to look at a long-term, multi-government and multi-partisan approach that defines shared objectives and delivers results for all Australians.**

A fully realised National Arts and Culture Strategy would require the federal government to take a leading role in comprehensive consultation, industry engagement and policy development. This should be done **in partnership with all other levels of government** to ensure effective implementation and coordination across jurisdictions.

ANA's Position Paper, *Imagine 2035*, provides an **indicative 'Strategy on a Page'** that could be adopted by Australian governments. It reflects common priorities and outcomes from cultural policies at federal, state, territory and local government levels. It sets out a long-term vision, principles, priorities, outcomes and measurements for Australia's arts and culture system:⁴

VISION	Creative, connected communities enriched by a robust arts and culture system that delivers for all Australians					
PRINCIPLES						
	Available & Accessible	Innovation & Preservation	Ambition & Enterprise	Integrity & Partnership		
PRIORITIES	Culturally engaged communities	Creativity, openness & learning	Training, skills, workforce & digital transformation	A high-performing, high-impact industry	Strengthening economies & places	International exchange, engagement & trade
	Improve access and reduce barriers to participation in cultural and creative expression and experiences.	Invest in early years and school-aged education and community activities to grow cultural literacy, creative thinking, adaptability and lifelong creative engagement.	Refine specialist education and training opportunities to grow digital capacity (including AI), meet future skills demand and build more sustainable careers.	Accelerate high-impact and innovative organisations, institutions, projects and activities. Impact considerations = cultural, economic & social.	Co-invest in place-based approaches that create liveable communities and increased economic activity.	Secure and leverage Australia's position as an innovative, stable, multicultural liberal democracy. Priority region: Asia-Pacific.
OUTCOMES	Society-wide belonging, connection, cohesion, civic engagement & health benefits		Creative, adaptable people	Dynamic creative expression & sustainable industries, in cities, suburbs & regions	Increased economic contribution & liveable cities, suburbs & regions	Strengthened cultural relations, regional connectivity & creative trade
MEASUREMENT	Cultural venue and event attendance statistics (ABS ²⁹) Culture-related indicators in Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion ³⁰ and HILDA Survey ³¹	Creative thinking performance (OECD ³²) Cultural participation statistics (ABS ³³) Creative education access & quality - early years, primary, secondary	Training and workforce size - creative and cultural industries ³⁴ New/continuing businesses and not-for-profits by geography Success on international platforms	Percentage of total economy ³⁵ Proximity-based and digital connectivity access measures	Creative trade balance (UNCTAD ³⁶) Cultural power (Lowy Institute Asia Power Index - Cultural Influence Measurement ³⁷) International creative exchange	

ANA's research has highlighted how the alignment and coordination towards whole-system goals is a powerful way to realise system change, and has recommended a National Arts and Culture Strategy to pursue this ambition.⁵

What are the options?

Option 1: Recommended (National Arts and Culture Strategy)

This option would allocate \$0.9 million to DITRDCSA in 2026-27 to coordinate preparation, and support agreement, of an intergovernmental strategy.

The Office for the Arts would develop this strategy, **working in concert with state and territory agencies with portfolio responsibility for arts and culture policy, and local government representatives**. This could be undertaken alongside Office for the Arts work in 2026 to develop the next national cultural policy, or as a separate process.

ANA's conversations with state and territory decision-makers for cultural policy confirm there is appetite to work more closely with the Commonwealth.

Rec.	Portfolio, Entity, Outcome	Budget 2026-27	Forward Estimates			All years
			2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	
1	Infrastructure, Transport, Re- gional Development, Commu- nications, Sport and the Arts, DITRDCSA, Outcome 6	-\$0.9m				-\$0.9m

Option 2: Status quo

Multibillion-dollar investments by 127 agencies over three levels of government lacks sufficient collaboration across jurisdictions and portfolios.⁶ Generally, jurisdictions would develop and pursue their own arts and culture policies and collaborate on select projects only.

Australian jurisdictions would continue to miss opportunities to maximise the return from key arts and culture investments, including the Brisbane 2032 cultural program and cultural infrastructure investments.

Fragmented government policies and funding would continue to contribute to a volatile investment environment that hampers the industry's investment in its own success. This would also unsettle other investors, including private and philanthropic sources.

Why is Option 1 the best option?

A National Arts and Culture Strategy is a cost-effective way to coordinate multibillion-dollar investments in cultural funding across portfolios and levels of government. The strategy would help unlock the full potential of culture and creativity to grow Australia's productivity, and social and economic wellbeing.

Recommendation 2: A secretariat for Cultural Ministers to meet regularly

What is the status quo?

In recent years, Cultural Ministers have not consistently met the intended twice per year.⁷ This has meant that jurisdictions have missed out on regular opportunities to collaborate on arts and culture priorities.

What are the objectives, why is government intervention needed and how will success be measured?

The existing forum for Cultural Ministers to meet is important for coordinated work, especially with combined state and territory investment now exceeding federal government funding.⁸ A **dedicated secretariat within the Office for the Arts** for regular meetings of Cultural Ministers would establish consistent support for federal, state and territory collaboration.⁹

Currently, meetings are held on an ad hoc basis and states and territories are not consistently hosting meetings. This hinders national decision-making and collaboration. The Commonwealth already hosts one meeting each year, but dedicated secretariat support is needed to ensure state and territory jurisdictions host the other meeting.

By providing consistent support for meetings through a dedicated secretariat within the Office for the Arts, governments would be in a **better position to negotiate the use of their unique powers**, beyond direct funding, to support cultural access and strengthen creative industries. This would include **exploring no- and low-cost opportunities that in some cases may be cheaper, easier and more effective than direct funding**.

What are the options?

Option 1: Recommended (support interjurisdictional collaboration by Cultural Ministers)¹⁰

Fund a Commonwealth secretariat of one ASL per year on an ongoing basis through existing DITRDCA resources. The secretariat would assist regular meetings of Cultural Ministers and progress arts and culture system priorities requiring action from all levels of government.

Rec.	Portfolio, Entity, Outcome	Budget 2026–27	Forward Estimates			All years
			2027–28	2028–29	2029–30	
2	Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, DITRDCA, Outcome 6	Allocation of existing DITRDCA resources				
		-\$0.15m and 1 ASL	-\$0.15m and 1 ASL	-\$0.15m and 1 ASL	-\$0.15m and 1 ASL	-\$0.6m and 1 ASL

Option 2: Status quo

Meetings of cultural ministers would continue to be ad hoc. Arts and culture policy-making would mainly continue to be pursued within jurisdictions, with insufficient regard for interjurisdictional opportunities and impacts.

Why is Option 1 the best option?

It is a modest investment in national governance infrastructure, drawing on existing resources, to see improved collaboration across jurisdictions to tackle arts and culture priorities.

Recommendation 3: A strategic approach to international cultural relations

What is the status quo?

Australia has a significant trade deficit in creative goods.¹¹ Despite this, Australia does not have a creative and cultural export strategy. Moreover, unlike almost all other major world economies, Australia does not have an international cultural relations institution to focus its cultural relations efforts.¹²

Failure to act could see Australia lose the unique opportunity provided by Brisbane 2032 to deepen cultural ties with valued overseas partners, bolster our cultural reputation and expand creative industry exports.

What are the objectives, why is government intervention needed and how will success be measured?

ANA research has highlighted how cultural relations contribute to national peace and security alongside commercial, trade and other diplomatic and reputational objectives.¹³

For Australia to make the most of these opportunities, preliminary work is needed to understand what a strategic, Australian approach to international cultural relations could and should look like. An initial **exploratory study** would:

- Identify existing Australian cultural relations activities and objectives, which are spread over multiple government agencies, and across arts and culture organisations (including ones not funded by government).¹⁴
- Conduct case studies of select overseas cultural relations institutions and approaches to cultural diplomacy to identify organisational models, policy objectives and activities that are relevant to Australia. This is likely to involve some foreign-language research.
- Recommend options that Australia could consider and implement in time for the Brisbane 2032 Games.

The Australian Government is uniquely placed to pursue this. It has the best view of cultural relations activities it leads and supports, including those that are not public or publicised.

What are the options?

Option 1: Recommended (study to explore options)

This option involves \$1.0 million over two years for an exploratory study to understand Australia's current cultural relations activities and objectives, and how other countries organise and pursue international cultural relations work. Commissioned by DFAT, this study would consult agencies with cultural relations activities, including DFAT, DITRDCSA (including Office for the Arts), Department of Home Affairs, Department of Defence, Creative Australia, Screen Australia and Austrade, as well as state- and territory-based trade agencies.

The study would **provide insights and options** to the Australian Government to consider **how best to pursue cultural relations activities**, including whether this is best done through an international cultural relations institution. It would also identify opportunities to improve the effectiveness, and value for money, of existing cultural relations activities.

Rec.	Portfolio, Entity, Outcome	Budget 2026-27	Forward Estimates			All years
			2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	
3	Foreign Affairs and Trade, DFAT, Outcome 1	-\$0.5m	-\$0.5m	-	-	-\$1.0m

Option 2: Status quo

Australia will likely continue to miss opportunities, including Brisbane 2032, to bolster our cultural reputation, expand creative industry exports, help secure our region and deepen cultural ties with our valued overseas partners.

Why is Option 1 the best option?

Option 1 is a meaningful first step to improve the impact of Australian cultural relations activities, requiring only a modest investment. It will identify opportunities in trade, arts and culture and foreign relations, both from existing activities across the Commonwealth and from potential future activities.

Appendix

Major economies with an international cultural relations institution¹⁵

GDP rank	Economy	GDP USD	Cultural relations institution
1	United States	\$29.2 trillion	Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
2	China	\$18.7 trillion	Confucius Institute
3	Germany	\$4.7 trillion	Goethe-Institut
4	Japan	\$4.0 trillion	The Japan Foundation
5	India	\$3.9 trillion	Indian Council for Cultural Relations
6	United Kingdom	\$3.6 trillion	British Council
7	France	\$3.2 trillion	Institut Française
8	Italy	\$2.4 trillion	Istituto Italiano di Cultura
9	Canada	\$2.2 trillion	(None, but developing a cultural diplomacy strategy)¹⁶
10	Brazil	\$2.2 trillion	Instituto Guimarães Rosa
11	Russian Federation	\$2.2 trillion	Rossotrudnichestvo
12	Mexico	\$1.9 trillion	Mexican Cultural Centers
13	Australia	\$1.8 trillion	(None)
14	Spain	\$1.7 trillion	Instituto Cervantes
15	Republic of Korea	\$1.7 trillion	King Sejong Institute Korean Culture and Information Service Korean Creative Content Agency Korean Foundation for International Cultural Exchange

Endnotes

- 1 These sections cover questions 1, 2, 3 and 6 of the Australian Government Guide to Policy Impact Analysis.
- 2 The Cultural Funding by Government survey estimates that total expenditure on cultural activities funded by federal, state, territory and local governments in 2023–24 was \$8.6 billion. See: <https://www.arts.gov.au/cultural-data-online/government-cultural-funding-and-participation/cultural-funding-and-participation-national-overview>.
- 3 See further details and resources outlined in ANA's productivity factsheet, *Culture and creativity: The productivity gains hiding in plain sight* (August 2025): <https://newapproach.org.au/publication/culture-and-creativity-the-productivity-gains-hiding-in-plain-sight/>.
- 4 A New Approach (ANA). July 2025. *Imagine 2035: Towards an arts and culture system that delivers for all Australians*. Produced by A New Approach (ANA). Canberra, Australia, page 10: <https://newapproach.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/A-New-Approach-ANA-Imagine-2035-Position-Paper.pdf#page=10>.
- 5 Angela Vivian and Kate Fielding. November 2025. *The arts, culture and creativity system in Australia: How it ticks*. Insight Report no. 2025-02. Produced by A New Approach (ANA). Canberra, Australia, page 19: <https://newapproach.org.au/publication/arts-culture-creativity-system-in-australia/>. See also Anna Birney, "How Do We Know Where There Is Potential to Intervene and Leverage Impact in a Changing System? The Practitioners Perspective", *Sustainability Science* 16, no. 3 (2021): 749–65, pages 759–761. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-021-00956-5>.
- 6 The Cultural Funding by Government Survey 2023–24 included 127 departments (including selected agencies and authorities) with responsibility for funding heritage and arts activities. See <https://www.arts.gov.au/cultural-data-online/government-cultural-funding-and-participation/cultural-funding-and-participation-national-overview>.
- 7 At a meeting in October 2022, Ministers agreed to meet approximately twice a year. Cultural Ministers met twice in 2024, in March and July, and once in 2025 (June). See <https://www.arts.gov.au/what-we-do/national-cultural-policy/progress-under-revive-place-every-story-story-every-place>. ANA understands Cultural Ministers did not meet twice in 2023.
- 8 The Cultural Funding by Government Survey 2023–24 highlighted that 36.2% of arts and culture investment was by the Australian Government, with state and territory governments accounting for 38.8%. See <https://www.arts.gov.au/cultural-data-online/government-cultural-funding-and-participation/cultural-funding-and-participation-national-overview>.
- 9 This submission seeks funding for a dedicated secretariat to support the existing forum where Cultural Ministers meet. Separately to this, ANA has also called for the Cultural Ministers meeting to become a Ministerial Council reporting annually to the National Cabinet: A New Approach (ANA), 2025. *Imagine 2035: Towards an arts and culture system that delivers for all Australians*. Canberra, Australia: <https://newapproach.org.au/publication/Imagine-2035-towards-an-arts-and-culture-system-that-delivers-for-all-australians/>.
- 10 ANA estimated Average Staffing Level costs, noting the Department of Finance determines such costs for policy proposals.
- 11 The most recent trade statistics compiled by UNCTAD provide a useful update on Australia's deficit in creative goods trade. Using these, ANA estimates that for every \$1 Australia exports in creative goods, the nation imports \$9.20. See Angela Vivian, Kate Fielding, and Sari Rossi. November 2024. *Transformative Edge 2024: How arts, culture and creativity impact our prosperity, cohesion, security, health and sustainability*, Insight Report no. 2024-03. Produced by A New Approach (ANA). Canberra, Australia, page 45: <https://newapproach.org.au/publication/transformative-edge-2024-how-arts-culture-and-creativity-impact-our-prosperity-cohesion-security-health-and-sustainability/>.
- 12 Of the 15 largest world economies, Australia and Canada are the only two without an international cultural relations institution.
- 13 Angela Vivian, Kate Fielding, and Sari Rossi, *Transformative Edge 2024*, pages 44–45.
- 14 For example, Commonwealth-level international engagement in arts and culture is spread out across several agencies, including Office for the Arts, Creative Australia, Screen Australia, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Austrade.
- 15 World Bank Group, "World Bank Open Data," World Bank Open Data, 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org>.
- 16 Global Affairs Canada, "Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Appearance before the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (AEFA) on Cultural Diplomacy," Government of Canada, 24 October 2023, <https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/briefing-documents-information/parliamentary-committee-comite-parlementaire/2023-05-10-aeefa.aspx?lang=eng>.