



Australian Government

**Creative  
Australia**

# First Nations First

Discussion Paper



# First Nations First is

**self-determined  
+ creative autonomy**

**self-governance  
+ community-led**

**our stories, our places, our cultures**

**capacity building  
+ sustainable careers**

**traditional knowledges + ICIP**

**meaningful reflection  
+ impact**

## Acknowledgement of Country

Creative Australia proudly acknowledges all First Nations Peoples and their rich culture of the continent we now call Australia. We pay respect to Elders past and present. We acknowledge First Nations peoples as Australia's First Peoples and as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we live.

We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of First Nations peoples and communities to Australian life and how this continuation of 75,000 years of unbroken storytelling enriches us. We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards ensuring an equal voice and the equality of outcomes in all aspects of our society.

Cover image: Performance by Katie Aspel at the Purrumpa Gala Dinner.

# Revive and Creative Australia

“For First Nations peoples, culture encompasses knowledges held, shared and continually adapted, including language, music, dance, stories, songlines and songspirals, and visual art. Culture is central to the health, wellbeing and identity of First Nations peoples. Culture is governed by sophisticated systems of knowledge.”<sup>1</sup>

*Revive* National Cultural Policy is a five-year plan to revive the arts in Australia.

*Revive* sets out goals and actions across five pillars.

*Revive* establishes Creative Australia, expanding the functions and responsibilities of the Australia Council under this new name.

*Revive* sets out actions for Creative Australia to establish a dedicated First Nations-led Board.

## Commitment to First Nations First

First Nations First is pillar one of *Revive*, recognising and respecting the crucial place of First Nations stories at the centre of Australia’s arts and culture.

Since 1973 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders have brought a guiding voice on matters relating to First Nations art and culture and the broader arts and cultural sector through the Australia Council for the Arts’ Aboriginal Arts and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board and First Nations Arts and Culture Strategy Panel.

We build upon the wonderful legacy of those who have come before us.



Borroloola Womens Cultural Song Project at Artback NT.  
Credit: Benjamin Warlungundu Bayliss C.

<sup>1</sup> Australian Government 2023, *Revive: A place for every story, a story for every place*.





# First Nations First national consultations

From 2024, *Revive* establishes a dedicated First Nations-led Board to:

- invest in, create and produce, First Nations works of scale, with priorities and funding decisions determined by First Nations leaders
- develop a First Nations Creative Workforce Development Strategy
- promote best practice cultural protocols, self-determination and cultural safety training across arts and cultural organisations.

## Purpose

The purpose of this consultation is to seek feedback on the establishment of a First Nations-led Board within Creative Australia and how it should implement, invest, and deliver on its new role and responsibilities for First Nations First.

Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Opening Ceremony Performance by Abai Sagulau Buai Dance Team from Badu Island, Torres Strait, Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, 2022.  
Credit: Dylan Buckee.

## Process

### Community consultation

Participate online and in person (see our webpage for live updates)

### Review

Feedback will be reviewed to identify themes raised through this consultation

### Report

A report publishing the findings from the review will be published, including advice for how First Nations self-determination should be established at Creative Australia

### First Nations-led Board

The federal Minister for the Arts will appoint the nominated First Nations-led Board members.

# How to have your say



## Tell us in-person

The consultation process will be held through a series of in-person community forums and online workshops across Australia. The dates and locations will be made available on our website: [creative.gov.au](https://creative.gov.au)

To register your interest in attending one of our in-person forums, please join the mailing list [creative.gov.au/firstnationsfirst](https://creative.gov.au/firstnationsfirst).

Community forums and online workshops will be documented to capture the discussion, comments and public feedback.



## Contact us

If you have any questions about the consultation process or you would like to talk with a staff member, please contact us:

- Email: [FirstNationsArts@creative.gov.au](mailto:FirstNationsArts@creative.gov.au)
  - Phone: 02 9215 9000
  - Toll-free: 1800 226 912
  - NRS: 1800 555 677
- Visit the [NRS](#)



## Write to us

Submissions are encouraged up until **29 February 2024**.

The questions in this paper are a guide for making submissions. You can respond to all or just what is relevant to you.

### Submissions are:

- ideally no more than 5 pages (video and audio files are welcome too)
- welcome in all languages
- can contain images, thoughts, facts, opinions and responses to the questions centred around the discussion paper.

### You can send your submission via:

- Email: [FirstNationsArts@creative.gov.au](mailto:FirstNationsArts@creative.gov.au)
- Post: % Creative Australia PO Box, Pyrmont, NSW 2009



## Protecting your data

Creative Australia recognises Indigenous Data Sovereignty and the right of First Nations people to autonomously decide what, how and why First Nations data is collected, accessed and used.

### What data will we collect?

Through the consultation sessions we will be documenting your feedback, including making notes, recordings and transcripts.

### How will we protect and use your data?

Data collected in this consultation will be respected; individual and collective interests will be protected. All data will be:

- de-identified and protected
- analysed by First Nations-led process and consultants
- contextualised and shared back in a public report
- stored and destroyed in accordance to relevant legislation.

# First Nations First is

## self-determination + creative autonomy

**Creative Australia's First Nations Protocols state that self-determination means empowering Indigenous people in decision-making processes. First Nations people have the right to self-determination in their artistic and cultural affairs, as well as in the expression of their cultural material.**

The Australian Government will increase support for First Nations arts and culture, with autonomous decision-making determined by First Nations peoples. A dedicated First Nations-led Board will be established within Creative Australia to identify and plan for strategic investments, commencing activities in 2024.

Artist Elisa Jane Carmichael at Cairns International Art Fair 2018.  
Credit: Kerry Trapnell.



“Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures.”<sup>2</sup>

- *Revive* sets out a draft terms of reference for First Nations First, to:
- give artistic and cultural voice to First Nations peoples
- ensure decisions and investments are guided by First Nations protocols and principles
- support a wide range of First Nations projects, prioritising performing arts projects in the first instance and broadening to other art forms as investment matures
- establish a First Nations Arts and Culture Framework to support the development of major new First Nations creative works of scale and ambition, created and performed by First Nations artists, performers, and companies
- leverage parallel investment in First Nations arts and culture from public, philanthropic, and commercial bodies, both in Australia and internationally
- strengthen capacity across all aspects of the First Nations arts and culture sector
- develop the First Nations Creative Workforce Development Strategy
- promote best practice cultural protocols.

### Questions

1. What are your thoughts on the draft terms of reference? What is missing or needs to change?
2. What should First Nations autonomous decision-making within Creative Australia look like?

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Article 31.





# First Nations First is

## self-governance + community-led

*Revive* sets out that the First Nations-led Board will sit within the newly established Creative Australia. It will also have a separate dedicated investment framework.

This consultation seeks guidance from First Nations communities to inform the structures, representation, governance and decision-making process for the establishment of Creative Australia's First Nations-led Board, whose members will be appointed by the federal Minister for the Arts.

“In the next 50 years, we should be able to see an embeddedness of First Nations practitioners excelling in not just art form but management, consultancy and every other affiliated industry and service that goes with the arts.”<sup>3</sup>

### Questions

1. What structures and functions are needed for the First Nations-led Board to govern well for First Nations communities? What needs to be in place for the Board to make good decisions?
2. What should the First Nations-led Board appointments be based on? (eg representative of creative practice type, location, Board skills needs?)
3. How should nominations for First Nations-led Board appointments be collected? (eg self- or community- nomination via expressions of interest)
4. How long should members serve?

<sup>3</sup> Quote from Marilyn Miller at Purrrumpa: First Nations Arts and Culture Gathering.

# First Nations First is

**our stories, our places, our culture**

Our First Nations cultures connect us to thousands of years of living cultures and knowledge and are a source of great pride reflecting cultural strength, resilience, innovation and artistic excellence. For the past 50 years Australia Council for the Arts, and now Creative Australia, has been investing in First Nations arts and cultures through the Aboriginal Arts Board and then the First Nations Strategy Panel, growing and empowering the Aboriginal and Torres Strait arts and culture sector.



KU Arts. Dunjiba Design artists L-R - Jasmine Nelson, Melissa Stewart, Audrey Stewart and Kay Finn – photo taken at the clay pans in Dunjiba. Credit: Mel Henderson.

**Revive recognises that creative ambitions require a vibrant ecology and opportunities for development at all stages of life, across all art forms.**

The First Nations-led Board will determine First Nations arts and culture investment at Creative Australia, guided by First Nations protocols and principles. This includes direct investment as well as brokering new investment and partnerships to support creative practice and process and creative ambitions.

## Questions

1. Where are the biggest gaps and needs for investment in your part of the sector?
2. If long-term investments could be made, what would have the biggest impact? Over what timeframe?
3. What types of investment or activity is most needed in your art form, area of practice, organisation or creative business? (eg developing new partnerships, developing skills and training)





Performance by  
Katie Aspel at the  
Purrumpa Gala Dinner.

# First Nations First is

## opportunity + capacity building

*Revive* aims to build sustainable careers in the creative industries across all stages of working life through vocational training, mentorships, fellowships, internships, grants and other opportunities in Australia and overseas.

The First Nations-led Board will determine First Nations arts and culture investment at Creative Australia, guided by First Nations protocols and principles. This includes direct investment as well as brokering new investment and partnerships in leadership and sustainable career pathways.

“Arts and culture are such an integral part of who we are. I really look forward to seeing more opportunities to be created particularly for young people coming into the space in the sector to be supported and nurtured and be given the pathways that they deserve to reach whatever goals it is that they want to.”<sup>4</sup>

### Questions

1. What barriers do First Nations artists and creative workers encounter in wider non-First Nations arts organisations and creative industries?
2. What are the capacity building and opportunities needs for First Nations organisations and creative industries?
3. What changes are needed for First Nations artists and creative workers to work freely, safely and fairly within arts organisations and creative workplaces?
4. How do we ensure arts organisations and creative workplaces are fully accessible to First Nations artists and creative practitioners, including people with different access needs?

<sup>4</sup> Quote from Lilla Berry at Purrumpa: First Nations Arts and Culture Gathering.

# First Nations First is

## traditional knowledges + ICIP

Traditional cultural expressions are integral to the cultural, social and economic life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, embodying knowledge and skills, transmitting core values and beliefs and manifesting identity.

Revive is committed to promoting best practice cultural protocols, the principles of self-determination and cultural safety training, in partnership with First Nations communities and arts and cultural organisations.

The Protocols for using First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property in the Arts ('the Protocols') are guiding principles for Creative Australia. The Protocols endorse the rights of First Nations people to their cultural heritage and support First Nations creative practice. The Protocols encourage self-determination and help build a strong and diverse Indigenous arts sector.

"Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions."<sup>5</sup>

### Questions

1. Do the Protocols meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs and expectations?
2. Do the Protocols meet the broader arts and cultural sector needs and expectations?
3. How can the Protocols be more accessible for communities?

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Article 31.



Elaine Crombie, Seb Lawrie  
and Nara Wilson  
Credit: Ben Searcy



# First Nations First is

## meaningful reflection + impact

*Revive* sets out new functions and priorities and an increased emphasis on evaluation, reporting, research, evidence, and demonstrating impact and value. First Nations First will be strengthened by the development of an evaluation framework, with benchmarks and measures shaped by First Nation peoples on what matters to First Nations communities.

In setting up First Nations First we want to consider from the outset ways to track and share progress, reflect and respond to feedback, and understand success.

First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing encompasses culture, health, wellbeing and community. We want to ensure ways of measuring value are First Nations-led and focus on strengths, wellbeing and measures that are meaningful.

### Questions

1. When you tell stories about the meaning or change that comes from your art, culture or creative work, what examples do you use?
2. After five years of First Nations First, what does First Nations arts and culture look like?
3. How should First Nations First keep track of and report on investments? What measures matter to you?
4. What are your priorities and concerns for Creative Australia evaluation of First Nations creative output and impact? How do we make sure First Nations knowledge shapes what is valued?



Yolanda Finette, Holistic life coach and consultant.  
Credit: Jacinta Keefe.



# Thank you

Thank you for providing your feedback on First Nations First.

We look forward to building on our long-term commitment to First Nations self-determination, cultural authority and leadership together.



Australian Government



[creative.gov.au](https://creative.gov.au)