

A New Approach (ANA)

The arts, culture and creativity system in Australia: How it ticks

November 2025



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About 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.

ANA acknowledges the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia and their continuing cultural and creative practices in this land.

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About this Insight Report

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This report was produced by ANA. The overall direction was provided by CEO Kate Fielding, with the authorship by Director of Research and Analysis Dr Angie Vivian.

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Any errors, however, are our own. If you notice any errors, please get in contact using the details provided below.

The opinions in this Insight Report do not necessarily represent the views of ANA's funding partners, the individual members involved in governance or advisory groups, or others who have provided input.

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The Insight series

This report is the 16th in ANA's Insight series. Our Insight Reports provide a deep dive into research and analysis of a particular arts and cultural policy topic or other areas of interest.

Explore our previous work at www.newapproach.org.au.

Contact us about this work via hello@newapproach.org.au.



Executive Summary

This report explains the system that delivers arts and cultural experiences in Australia.

From kids' dance classes to immersive games, films and design; from local festivals to global fashion shows and literature prizes; from architecture to archaeological displays and hands-on making of new creations – these experiences are woven into day-to-day life in modern Australia.

The arts, culture and creativity system is fast evolving. It generates value and is **embedded** in Australia's social fabric, laws and economic environment. People often think of arts, culture and creativity as ad hoc, spontaneous and lacking formal oversight, but this research reveals a system that is **more** organised and interconnected than we think.

The primary purpose of this Insight Report is to provide an overview of the arts, culture and creativity system. Importantly, this research identifies **leverage points** in this system. Making the right change at these points can lead to high-reward, lasting differences for people, communities, creators and audiences.

Having an arts and culture system that delivers for all Australians matters because cultural engagement and creative expression are proven ways to keep our communities connected, foster creative thinking and adaptability, strengthen our economies and help us lead healthy, safe and sustainable lives.

This overview is designed to:

- **support the work of system stewards** – the creative and cultural business and organisation leaders, elected officials, policymakers, philanthropists and sponsors, researchers, educators and skills providers (hereafter known as 'stewards')
- **equip these stewards with information and evidence** to step back, see the whole, join up their thinking and seek better outcomes for creative and cultural sectors and in the population, including prosperity, cohesion, health, security and sustainability
- **help different parts of the cultural and creative industries** understand how they are part of a whole.

System stewards don't always have access to a shared understanding of the overall arts and culture system. This can lead to siloed actions and policy thinking that is less strategic. At worst, this can lead to unanticipated or adverse outcomes.

This report, therefore, aims to provide access for system stewards and stakeholders to a better shared starting point to help them identify strategic opportunities for change.

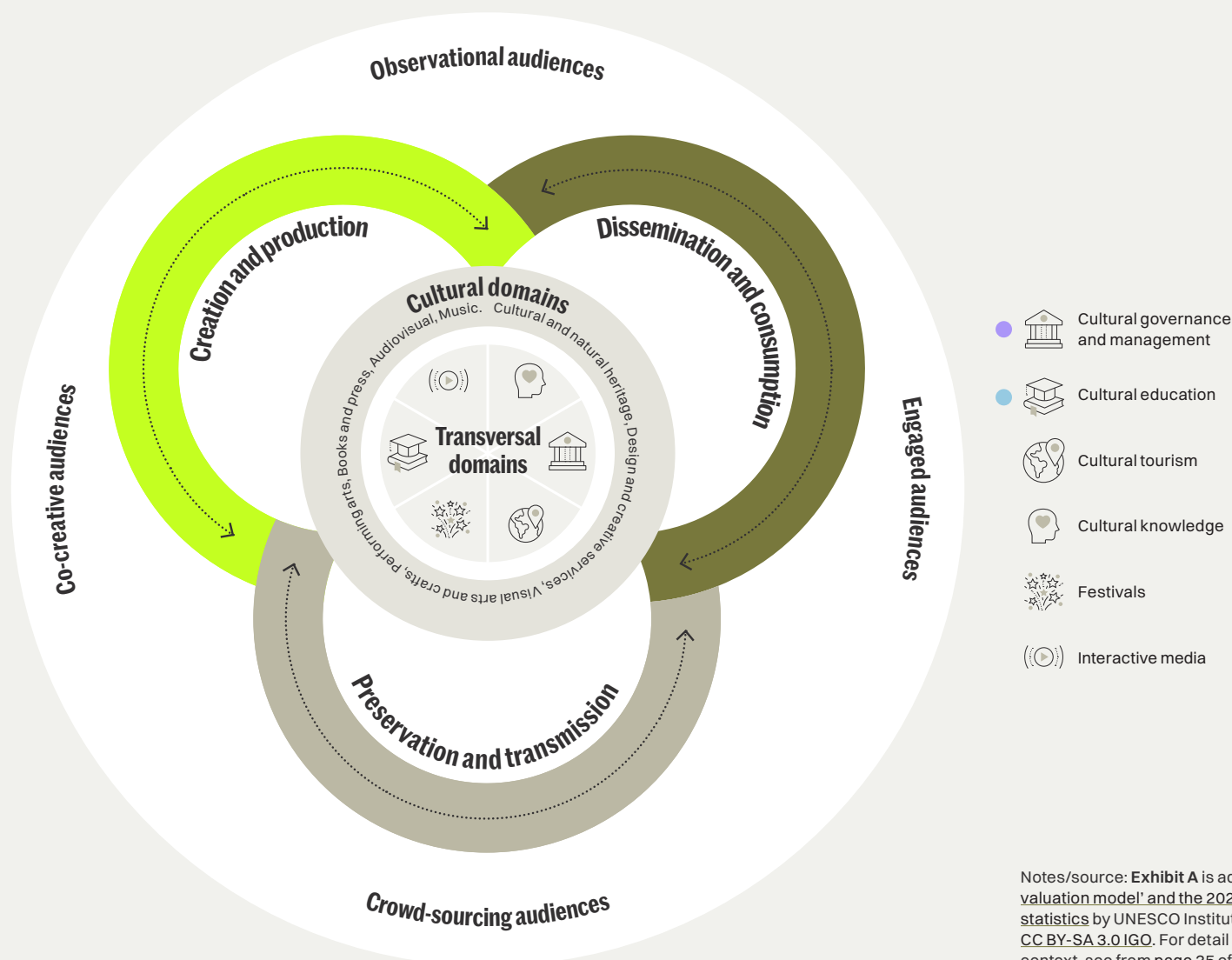
So, what is the arts, culture and creativity system of Australia? What does it include and how is it organised?

The 'arts, culture and creativity system' refers to the processes, structures, connections and distinct leverage points that help guarantee that a wide range of cultural and creative practices, experiences and products are available to people in Australia and overseas.

This system includes the end users of cultural and creative goods and services; the diverse industries, sectors, organisations and people that create, produce, disseminate and preserve these goods and services; and the financiers, regulators and governments.

Building on new UNESCO modelling, this Insight Report highlights three main structures: 'creation and production', 'dissemination and consumption' and 'preservation and transmission' – connected by the industries, audiences and 'transversal domains'¹ (see [Exhibit A](#)). We describe these structures using the evidence of cultural and creative activity in urban, suburban, regional and remote contexts in Australia.

Exhibit A: New UNESCO modelling provides a valid basis for deciphering the arts, culture and creativity system in Australia, its interdependencies and how audiences engage across these structures.²



The report offers two further models for understanding the arts and culture system, including:

- the broad structures or 'governance' in which activities are taking place (**Exhibit B**)
- the skill development pathways through formal and informal settings (**Exhibit C**).

Notes/source: **Exhibit A** is adapted from 'Figure 3 - Cultural valuation model' and the 2025 UNESCO Framework for cultural statistics by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), used under CC BY-SA 3.0 IGO. For detail on the model in an Australian context, see from page 35 of this report onwards.

Exhibit B: Modelling the governance of the arts and culture system can help people and entities see themselves as part of a whole.

Key



Government

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS Examples: UNESCO, UNCTAD, WIPO	
NON-AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL MINISTRIES Examples: Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (UK); Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (Vietnam)	OTHER NON-AUSTRALIAN MINISTRIES AND AUTHORITIES Examples: Infocomm Media Development Authority (Singapore), New Zealand Film Commission, Armed Forces Ministry (France)
EXECUTIVE GOVERNMENT (COMMONWEALTH, STATES AND TERRITORY) Examples: parliaments, cabinets, other ministers	
COMMONWEALTH MINISTERS FOR THE ARTS AND COMMUNICATIONS	
COMMONWEALTH DEPARTMENT COVERING ARTS AND COMMUNICATIONS	COMMONWEALTH DEPARTMENTS COVERING OTHER PORTFOLIOS Examples: education, environment, veterans affairs, foreign affairs and trade
ARTS AND COMMUNICATIONS PORTFOLIO STRUCTURES (COMMONWEALTH) Examples: National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, ABC, SBS, Bundanon Trust, National Portrait Gallery of Australia Foundation, Museum of Australian Democracy, National Archives Australia, Creative Australia, Screen Australia	OTHER COMMONWEALTH PORTFOLIO STRUCTURES WITH AN ARTS AND CULTURE PURPOSE Examples: Digital Platform Regulators Forum, The Sydney Harbour Conservancy, Creative Industries Youth Advisory Group, Classification Board, Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation, Australian War Memorial
STATE AND TERRITORY CULTURAL MINISTERS	
STATE AND TERRITORY DEPARTMENTS/OFFICES FOR THE ARTS/EQUIVALENT Example: Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport (NSW)	STATUTORY BODIES/TRUSTS Examples: Queensland Theatre Company, Carrick Hill Trust, Cultural Facilities Corporation, Tourism and Events Queensland, Country Arts SA
STATE AND TERRITORY ARTS AND CULTURE PORTFOLIO AGENCIES Examples: Adelaide Festival, State Library of Victoria	STATE AND TERRITORY AGENCIES WITH AN ARTS AND CULTURE PURPOSE Examples: Screen Victoria, Screen Tasmania
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTED OFFICERS Example: mayor, president, councillor	
AUSTRALIAN & STATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATIONS Examples: Western Australian Local Government Association, The Victorian Local Government Association	LOCAL GOVERNMENT-OWNED AND -OPERATED CULTURAL FACILITIES Examples: Geelong Gallery, libraries

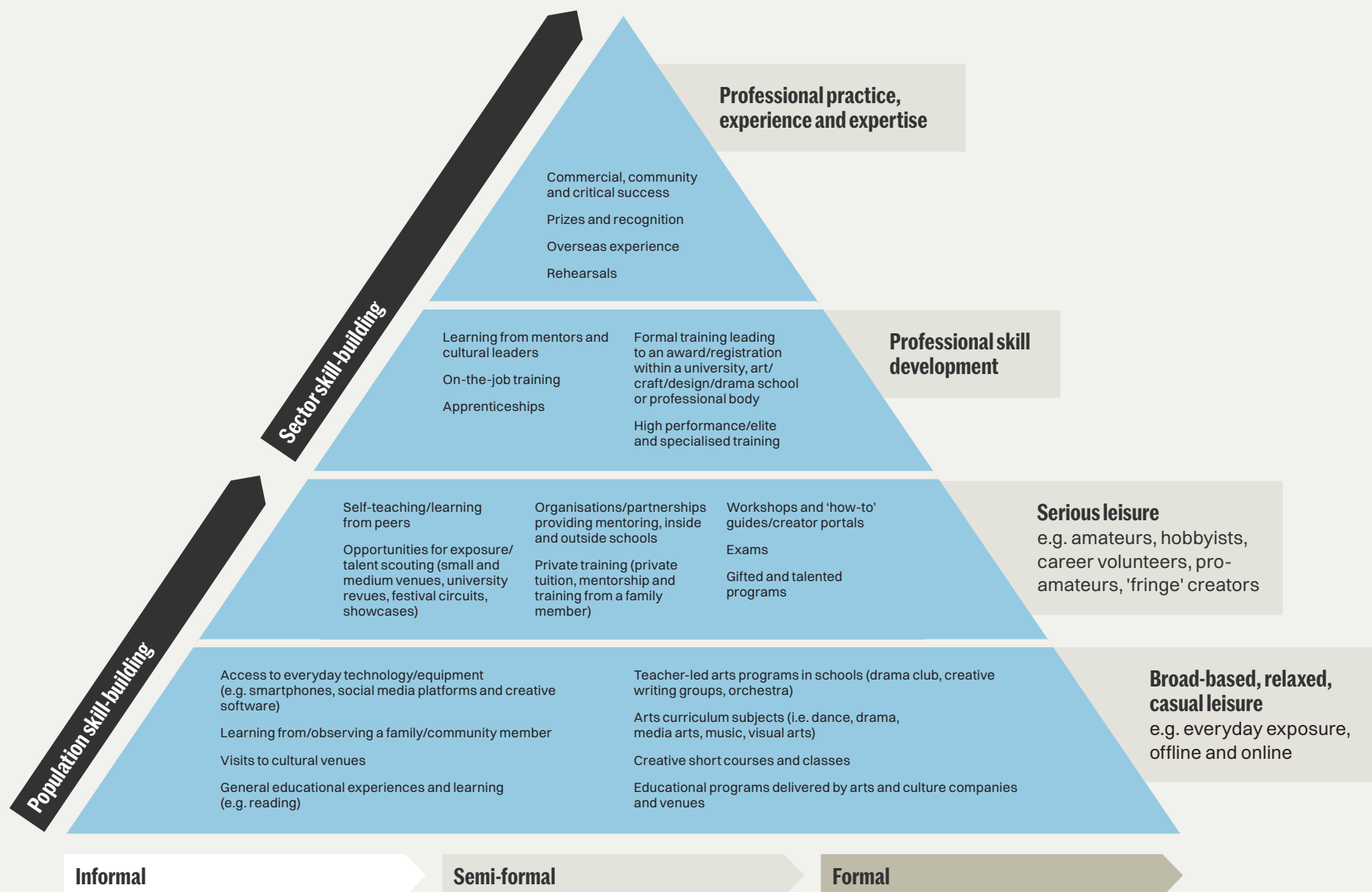
Industry and non-government entities

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS Examples: International Council of Museums, International Society for the Performing Arts, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, the European and International Booksellers Federation, Meta Oversight Board, International Organization for Standardization	
AUSTRALIAN AND NON-AUSTRALIAN SUPPLIERS OF CULTURAL AND CREATIVE GOODS AND SERVICES Examples: Video game developers, theatre companies, commercial broadcasters, remote arts centres, community heritage organisations May be categorised by: - employment size (e.g. large-, medium-, small-sized businesses, micro businesses, non-employing business) - annual turnover size (e.g. less than \$2 million, less than \$50,000) - business model (e.g. charity, partnership, cooperative, registered First Nations business, subsidised/ unsubsidised, commercial/for-profit, non-profit) - sub-sector, industry grouping or other theory-based classification (e.g. 'Concentric Circles Model', 'Trident model', 'digital service platforms') - status for tax and deductible gift recipient purposes - location (e.g. Australian, foreign and multi-territory services)	
NATIONAL PEAK ADVOCACY BODIES AND INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS Examples: Australian Museums and Galleries Association, National Association for the Visual Arts, Theatre Network Australia, Interactive Games and Entertainment Association, Diversity Arts, First Nations Media Australia, Australian Society for Authors, Australian Young Adult Literature Alliance, Federation of Australian Historical Societies, Australian Institute of Architects, 'arts sector service organisations', Ausfilm, Australian Children's Television Foundation, Cultural Development Network	
STATE AND TERRITORY PEAK BODIES FOR ARTS AND CULTURE Examples: Arts Access Victoria, Museums and Galleries QLD, AusDance QLD, MusicNSW, Regional Arts WA, MusicACT, 'arts sector service organisations'	
ARTS AND CULTURAL TRAINING INSTITUTES, SCHOOLS AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS Examples: Australian Ballet School, Flying Fruit Fly Circus, WAAPA, local dance schools, Australian Music Examinations Board	OTHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS Examples: primary schools, high schools, tertiary institutions, TAFE
COLLECTING SOCIETIES Examples: Australasian Performing Rights Association, Viscopy	
UNIONS Examples: Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, Musicians Union of Australia, Games Workers Australia	
SOURCES OF FINANCE Examples: financial institutions, private and philanthropic investment entities, social enterprises, venture capitalist entities	

Civil society

People in AUSTRALIA/ABROAD engaged in cultural and creative activities in their FREE TIME Also referred to as: content creators, writers, singers, dancers, amateurs, hobbyists, audiences, 'producers', consumers, copyright rights-holders, electors, ratepayers and residents, festival-goers, movie-goers, readers, gamers
People in AUSTRALIA/ABROAD engaged in Australia's cultural and creative activities IN THEIR CONTRACTED AND/OR COMMITTED TIME Also referred to as: creators, volunteers and board members, parents/caregivers, 'producers', 'pro-ams', 'cultural and social professionals', creative workers, copyright rights-holders, students, peer assessors
COMMUNITIES AND CLUBS Examples: offline and online communities of fans, creative and cultural groups, collectives and cultural movements Also referred to as: book clubs, film groups, writers circles, flashmobs, 'informal, self-organising groups', historical societies, conservation societies, home museums, home galleries, open homes, open gardens, culture jamming, counter-culture, raves, doofs, unlicensed hawkers/buskers
INDIVIDUAL DONORS Examples: Individuals making a donation, using a crowdfunding platform or making voluntary donation to attend an event

Exhibit C: Cultural literacy and creative skill-building occur through education, training and hands-on practice, serving both sector and population outcomes.



What should we do with this information?

This Insight Report recommends ways that stewards can help arts, culture and creativity continue to connect and inspire the nation.

In the short term, this report recommends that Australia prioritise national actions, including:

- setting a whole system goal for the decade ahead
- learning from other approaches to leverage, such as the approach of Australia's sport system
- interrogating and advancing changes using the levers explained in this Insight Report.

In the longer term, policymakers and elected officials can use this explainer to link their thinking about structures that support cultural and creative activities.

While we have sought to respond to practical questions, such as 'How can my kid get a job in this system?', the dominant advice of this research is for wider, perennial questions and concerns, such as 'How can we ensure that cultural opportunities are widely accessible across the population?' and 'How can we stabilise arts, culture and creativity against future shock or disruption?'

Contemporary democracies rely on think tanks like ANA to contribute and source credible evidence that supports good public policy. This Insight Report advances this purpose. It offers richly evidenced findings to assist Australia in securing its place as a cultural powerhouse.

Quick facts about the arts, culture and creativity system in Australia



A steady average of **85%** of the adult population has attended cultural venues and events each year since 1995.

In 2021–22, during the COVID pandemic, **64%** of adults attended at least one cultural venue or event, down from **82%** in 2017–18. **80%** of children attended at least one cultural venue or event in 2021–22, down from **94%** in 2017–18.



Australians spent **2 hours and 55 minutes per day** engaging with arts, culture and creativity activities in 2021–22 (including watching/streaming television and films).



The COVID pandemic disrupted high and growing demand for culture across Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Per capita spending on recreational and cultural services dropped by **30%** on average across OECD countries in 2020.



95,753 actively trading businesses were operating within the cultural and creative industries in June 2023 (Bureau of Communications Arts and Regional Research (BCARR) definition).

190,636 businesses were reported in the cultural and creative industries in June 2023 (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition).

1,805 registered charities were reported in the 'culture sub-type' in 2023.



281,986 people indicated that they worked in a cultural and creative industry in 2021.

524,117 people indicated that they worked in a cultural and creative occupation in 2021.

Sources/notes: ANA estimates based on data reported by the ABS, BCARR, OECD and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.³ The statistics here were selected based on their broad and inclusive understanding of arts, culture and creativity, as defined by ANA (see Glossary definition). However, the corresponding goods, services and occupations are not comparable across original sources.

Australia is fortunate to have many excellent, internationally revered datasets about the arts, culture and creativity system. ANA will continue to build understanding about the system through these measurements – and their limitations – in forthcoming work.

Summary of findings

Finding 1

Examining how the parts of the arts, culture and creativity system connect – rather than how the parts act separately – can enrich cultural policy and research in Australia.

A systems approach highlights the interdependencies that underlie complex policy problems in arts, culture and creativity and provides opportunities to achieve better outcomes (e.g. value capture, skills-building and governance).

Finding 2

Systems thinking offers principles to interrogate 12 leverage points – places where small changes could make a real difference to Australia securing its place as a cultural powerhouse.

Mindsets around what culture and creativity are and what they can achieve are the key leverage points for bringing about change. Other high-reward leverage points are: 1) system-level goals; 2) information flows in the operating environment; 3) buffers that stabilise this system against volatility; and 4) the self-organising parts of this system.

Finding 3

Cultural literacy and creative skill-building in the arts, culture and creativity system occurs through a range of pathways, including education, training and hands-on practice, starting with a broad base of opportunities.

Everyday settings, such as schools, the home and online, are crucial entry points for people to develop cultural and creative skills in Australia. An extended network of other formal and informal settings also helps to build and develop these skills.

Finding 4

Understanding the arts, culture and creativity system structures and processes helps us see and explain how diverse activities converge to generate goods, services and experiences, measurable socioeconomic value and other impacts.

New UNESCO modelling, together with ANA's modelling of governance for this system, provides a valid basis for a contemporary, joined-up conversation about the system. The two models can help different people and entities understand how they are part of a whole.

Summary of opportunities

Opportunity 1

Arts and culture system stewards should grasp the key levers for change that are identified in this report to tackle policy problems and to design solutions, structures and processes of the future.

Stewards within government, industry/non-government entities and civil society can all apply the 12 levers provided in this report. We recommend a strong focus on the levers of developing a unifying goal and challenging mindsets of what culture and creativity are and what they can achieve.

Opportunity 2

Stewards can trial the policy approach of prioritising cultural and creative engagement in specific settings, such as schools and the community, as seen in the leverage approach set out in the National Sport Strategy.⁴

Other practical actions to trial are: allocating funding on evidence-based grounds (as modelled in international research for sport participation)⁵ and continuing to build an 'activity-agnostic' approach to government activity vouchers (which can support children's access to recreation, regardless of whether that activity is sport or culture based).

Opportunity 3

An opportunity and challenge of future regulatory, industry and investment practices will be managing the expanding complexity and interconnections of the arts, culture and creativity system with other systems.

It will be crucial for different leaders to work closely together in community and industry settings where this system most clearly connects – for example, cultural governance and management, cultural education and cultural tourism. This will also require a focus on coordination and agreement-building with stakeholders in unexpected fields (e.g. the digital economy, transport infrastructure, education/training and the natural environment).

As a foundation for this work, Australia would benefit from all stewards using the three key models presented within this research. Additionally, a document that spells out roles and responsibilities of the different government agencies would also assist in managing complexity (as has been recommended for Australia's tourism system).⁶

Introduction

This evidence-based explainer serves as a companion for applying systems thinking to investment, policy, research and practice in arts, culture and creativity in Australia.

Business models and governance frameworks may seem like the boring details of arts and cultural experiences. Such foundational knowledge is easy to skip over in a rush to ensure the benefits of arts, culture and creativity in people's lives or because it seems too complex. Yet, in ANA's view, having access to more detail on these system characteristics can help stewards seize opportunities for change and join up their thinking for future success.

More whole understandings can advance Australia in securing its place as a cultural powerhouse.

The information collated in this research offers a multi-disciplinary knowledge base for elected officials, policymakers, regulators and industries. It can also help workers in diverse occupations and the general public see themselves as part of this whole.

While owners of cultural policies are key audiences for this new explainer, the research is also intended as a resource for a broader range of people, which it refers to as arts and culture system 'stewards' (see [Glossary](#) definition in [Appendix 1](#)). See '[How to use this report](#)' for details on how these different groups can use this explainer.

The central research questions explored in this Insight Report are:

- What is the current arts, culture and creativity system that delivers to people in Australia?
- What does it include, how is it organised and how is it governed?

Additional questions we explore are:

- What have others said about an 'arts, culture and creativity system' in Australia? What more is there to say? (see [Appendix 3](#))
- With which other systems do Australia's arts, culture and creativity system intersect?
- How does the arts, culture and creativity system in Australia compare with its sports counterpart? (see [Box 4](#))

The report is in two parts.

- The **first** part uses insights from systems thinking to interrogate 12 leverage points – that is, places where a small shift could make a large difference.
- The **second** part explains two key models in our system of interest that are translated to an Australian context.

How to use this report

We recommend using this report to cater to different informational needs of stakeholders about arts, culture and creativity in Australia. Suggested uses for the information are provided below.

For elected members and policy advisers

Use this Insight Report to understand how arts, culture and creativity operate and deliver goods, services and experiences around the nation.

This information may help you or your team apply systems thinking to address challenges in your electorate or jurisdiction and respond to common questions about these activities with evidence.

For cultural and creative organisations and individuals

Use this Insight Report to understand how you fit as part of a whole and as an overview of the structures and processes of this system.

This information may help you develop grant applications and advocacy documents and guide you in influencing outcomes across your community, workplace and audience.

For philanthropists and sponsors of arts and culture

Use this Insight Report to understand the system delivering cultural and creative goods, services and experiences around Australia and abroad.

This information may assist you in identifying leverage points and enriching decisions about donations and giving.

For researchers and educators

Use this Insight Report as a resource of up-to-date findings about a defined system of interest – the arts, culture and creativity system in Australia.

This information may provide you with references to add to reports, peer-reviewed research and presentations and assist you in identifying productive areas for further enquiry. It could also serve as a valuable and accessible introduction to this system in Australia for students studying cultural and creative industries.

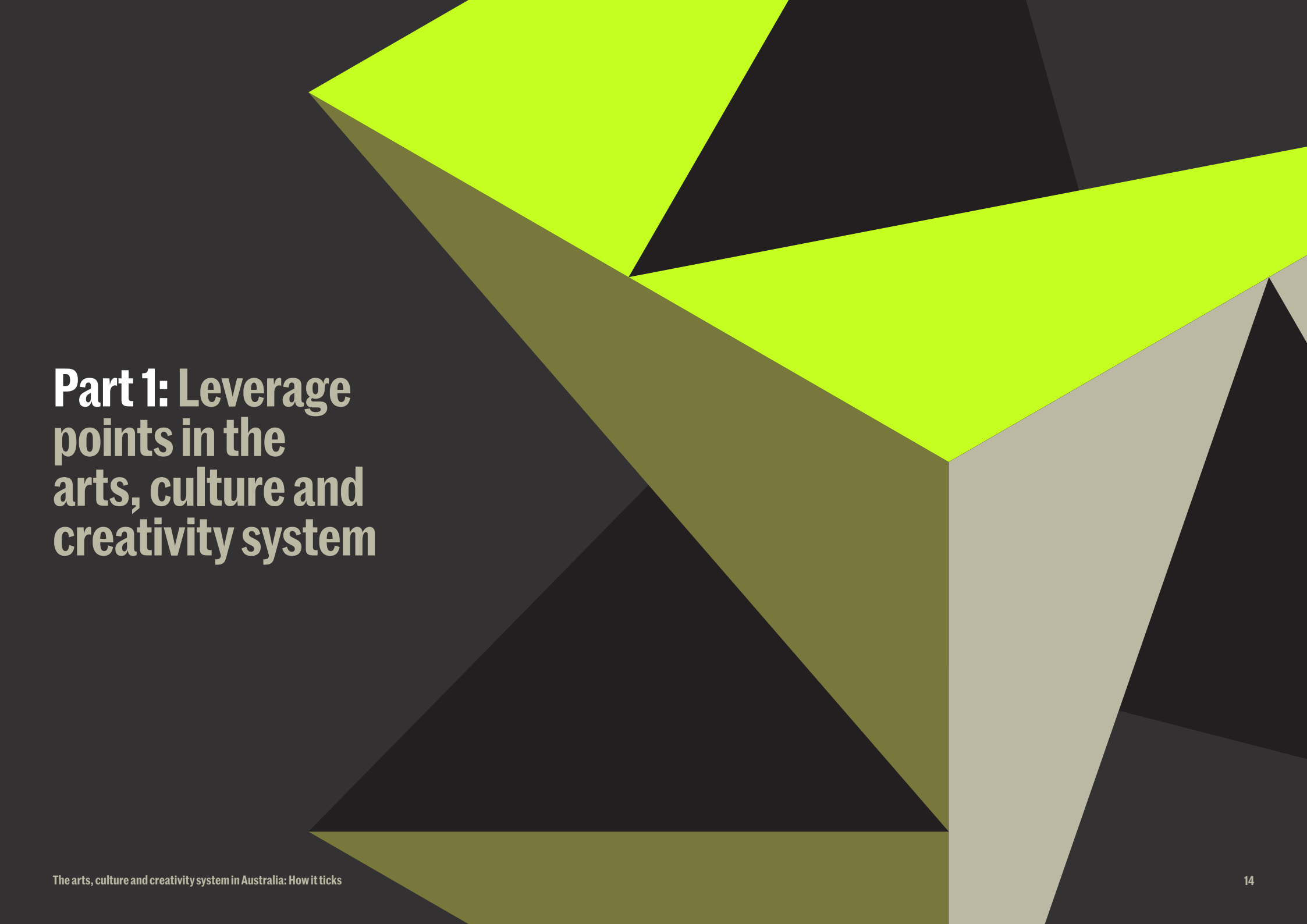
For the media, content creators and platforms for creative content

Use this report to understand the system of arts, culture and creativity in Australia. Contact ANA about media opportunities using the details on [page 2](#).

For international audiences

Use this Insight Report as a resource of up-to-date findings about the arts, culture and creativity system in Australia.

This information may help you make international comparisons, particularly in the context of the release of the 2025 UNESCO Cultural Value-Generation Model.



Part 1: Leverage points in the arts, culture and creativity system

Systems thinking views behaviour as a product of how parts connect, not how parts act separately. This can enrich cultural policymaking and research.

In this section, we use systems thinking to present ‘leverage points’ of the arts, culture and creativity system.

Leverage points – ‘places in a system where the least effort yields the biggest impact’¹⁷ – mark the transition from systems thinking to real-world change. In any system of interest, understanding leverage can help confront a problem; advance an objective; or answer the question, ‘Am I using my resources for their greatest, most influential effect?’

As *all* systems include leverage points, **Table 1** lists 12 of those most influential from a popular typology. To apply these insights to the arts, culture and creativity system in Australia, **Table 1** outlines corresponding ‘levers’ or the measures stewards can apply to influence a given leverage point.

Three further basic principles about leverage are necessary to understand this area of systems thinking:

- The search for system leverage is **interdisciplinary**,⁸ influencing many different fields,⁹ including regulatory governance.¹⁰
- Stewards can interrogate the leverage points for their relative depth and utility – they have a **predetermined order of effectiveness**.¹¹
- Examining leverage illuminates a **wider set of actions** than those that stewards commonly consider in public policy development and diverse system-change projects.

Table 1: Summary of Part 1 discussion of leverage (in order of decreasing effectiveness)

	Places to intervene in a system	Distinctive levers within the arts, culture and creativity system	Examples illustrating this lever in action
1	'The power to transcend paradigms'	Challenging mindsets of what culture and creativity are and what they can achieve	<i>Arts-health promotion and research that focuses on learning, iteration and time and recognises the non-linearity of interactions and interconnections</i>
2	'The mindset or paradigm out of which the system – its goals, structure, rules, delays, parameters – arises'	Deepening knowledge of the arts and culture system as a whole	<i>Using the UNESCO and governance modelling of this research (see these models in Part 2)</i>
3	'The goals of the system'	Setting a unifying arts and culture system goal	<i>A National Arts and Culture Strategy, as recommended by ANA</i>
4	'The power to add, change, evolve or self-organise system structure'	Giving space to self-organisation, learning and innovation while protecting culture	<i>'Activity-agnostic' publicly-funded voucher schemes for children</i>
5	'The rules of the system (such as incentives, punishments, constraints)'	Evolving the rules for arts and culture system structures	<i>Changing social media age restrictions</i>
6	'The structure of information flows (who does and does not have access to information)'	Addressing gaps and deficits in information	<i>The use and sharing of audience-segmentation information across entities and individuals</i>
7	'The gain around driving positive feedback loops'	Making the most of what's working	<i>Awards program supported and promoted by governments and industry</i>
8	'The strength of negative feedback loops, relative to the impacts they are trying to correct against'	Intervening in operations within the arts and culture system where needed without overcorrecting	<i>Inquiries, research and monitoring of the socio-technical and legal factors of content moderation</i>
9	'The lengths of delays, relative to the rate of system change'	Streamlining processes where possible	<i>Industry adoption of digital technologies that increase access to diverse content</i>
10	'The structure of material stocks and flows (such as transport networks, population age structures)'	Scaling up benefits via existing institutional structures, settings and pathways	<i>The sports strategy approach of leveraging schools and communities to enhance physical activity benefits and high-performance skills</i>
11	'The sizes of buffers and other stabilising stocks, relative to their flows'	Introducing supports and buffers for future disruptions	<i>Embedding reserves policies in companies, including as part of funding agreements</i>
12	'Constants, parameters, numbers (such as subsidies, taxes, standards)'	Adjusting funding to industry to cultivate an operating environment that fosters resilience and autonomy	<i>Data-driven framework for optimal funding to maximize activity and participation in sport</i>

Source/notes: In **Table 1**, the listed 'Places to intervene in any system' come from Meadows, Donella H. *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*. White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2008. The listed 'Distinctive levers within the arts, culture and creativity system' have been developed by ANA, building on published sources and previous work. Alongside these examples, **Part 1** of this Insight Report provides more detailed explanations of each lever and several other examples to consider.



Lever 1: Challenging mindsets of what culture and creativity are and can achieve

To find leverage in a system is to pinpoint where our efforts will be most effective. The most effective place for leverage in any system, according to *Thinking in Systems*, is having an ‘unattached’ and ‘flexible’ paradigm.¹²

A paradigm is ‘the mindset out of which the system – its goals, structure, rules, delays, parameters – arise’¹³ and is examined through what people and organisations are putting value on and how society is framing something.¹⁴

In ANA’s view, and across our work, challenging mindsets of what culture and creativity are and *can achieve* is the key lever for change within the arts, culture and creativity system.

Example: Health promotion

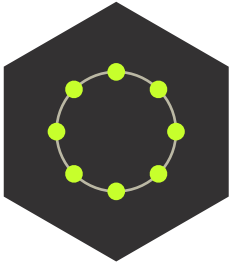
An Australian review of the evidence on the impacts of arts engagement argues that most arts-based health interventions focus on a single part of the health system (e.g. a hospital setting). They also intervene in a linear fashion and over a short time (e.g. evaluating the impacts of a six-week arts program on physical activity).¹⁵

A mindset shift in health promotion and research would involve arts-based interventions that are ‘multifaceted and enter the system at several levels; are focused on learning, iteration, time, and recognise the non-linearity of interactions and interconnections within a system’.¹⁶

Example: Australia’s national datasets

Australian datasets about national household/consumer spending currently classify spending on cultural and creative goods and services as ‘discretionary’ or ‘discretionary basics’.¹⁷ This framing can also apply to consumer spending on sport activities.

For system stewards working with the national data framed in this way, a competing perspective is that of the Australians who describe arts, culture and creativity as a transformative, essential presence in their lives.¹⁸ There is also compelling evidence of the transformative impacts of arts, culture and creativity on future ‘prosperity’, ‘cohesion’, ‘security’, ‘health’ and ‘sustainability’.¹⁹



Lever 2: Deepening knowledge of the system as a whole

Building on **Lever 1**, ‘challenging mindsets and paradigms’, *Thinking in Systems* notes that we ‘change paradigms by building a model of the system, which takes us outside [...] and forces us to see it whole’.²⁰

In this report, ANA seeks to support arts and culture system stewards in doing exactly that.

Ways for stewards to deepen this knowledge include:

- using the 2025 UNESCO Cultural Value-Generation Model in their work (see [Part 2](#))
- using ANA's governance model in their work and to see themselves as part of this whole (see [Part 2](#))
- considering interdependencies demonstrated in the existing Australian knowledge base (see below).

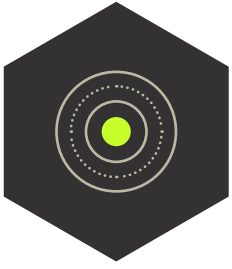
Examples: Knowledge about interdependencies

A 2018 research report for the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council emphasised connections of cultural occupations and sectors **with broader economic sectors in retail, manufacture, hospitality, leisure, education and tourism**. Accordingly, it states that the industries and occupations ‘cannot be understood outside the wider service sector of which it forms part, and the social, cultural and day-to-day economic values that animate this’.²¹

Rich empirical knowledge of the whole exists for certain regions of Australia:

- Research shows that the **NSW Hunter region creative system** involves personnel in mining, health, agriculture, education, retail and manufacturing, ‘pro-ams, amateurs, volunteers and audiences’.²²
- Research in **the very remote Barkly region of Australia** underscores a hybrid ecology contributing to social and economic development, spanning arts and non-arts sectors, First Nations and multicultural perspectives, various organisational types and individuals.²³

Other interdependencies of arts, culture and creativity across diverse sectors and services in Australia are evident in public information about **policing**²⁴ and the **army**.²⁵



Lever 3: Setting a unifying goal for the arts and culture system

Systems thinking encourages us to look for 'less obvious higher-leverage goals' ('those of the entire system'). Goals are seen as 'superior to the self-organising ability of a system [...] everything further down the list, physical stocks and flows, feedback loops, information flows, even self-organising behaviour will be twisted to conform to that goal'.²⁶

A National Arts and Culture Strategy is ANA's recommended lever for Australia to find higher-leverage goals for the future of this system.

A National Arts and Culture Strategy would establish an agreed framework and set of principles for long-term strategic collaboration to complement (not replace) policies at national, state, territory and local government levels.

According to a system-change practitioner perspective, this is also where agreement-building and coalitions become central to systems change. Leaders can join forces to pursue shared, system-wide goals.²⁷ Therefore, to support the development of such a National Arts and Culture Strategy, and as actions towards a system that delivers for all Australians, ANA has recommended greater coordination between the levels of governments.²⁸

Other examples: Goals and goal-setting

- UNESCO has outlined a goal of 'value generation' animating all processes, artists, performers, communities and audiences in 2025. It recommends nations align their methods of measurement, concepts, definitions and classifications of cultural statistics around this common goal.²⁹
- Recent Australian research emphasises the ongoing negotiation of both economic and non-economic goals among those working within music, streetwear, comedy, screen and digital games.³⁰
- The Australian Sport Commission has sought to unify national sporting organisations around a set of governance benchmarks and principles. It conducts regular monitoring of these organisations' performance.³¹



Lever 4: Giving space to self-organisation and innovation while protecting culture

Self-organisation refers to how systems organise, change and/or innovate³² through a selection mechanism of 'whatever the market will reward or whatever governments and foundations will fund or whatever meets human needs'.³³

Arts and culture system stewards can use systems thinking principles to encourage self-organisation.

Giving space to self-organisation involves policies and investments that encourage variability, experimentation and diversity³⁴ and protect against 'system crime' (i.e. the loss of culture).³⁵

The strongest signs of self-organisation in the arts, culture and creativity system include:

- ever-evolving cultural and creative engagements, both digital and physical (e.g. media consumption that transcends cultural and national borders,³⁶ 'omnichannel experiences'³⁷)
- industry collaborations such as book-to-film and TV adaptations³⁸ and the hardware and software in entertainment games adapted/licensed to 'serious games' (e.g. in the medical curriculum as rehabilitation for stroke patients and in critical response training)³⁹
- longstanding philanthropic relationships with non-profit organisations, including galleries and museums, which date back many decades or over family generations⁴⁰
- the continual growth of business models built around new data infrastructure/ algorithms, new user groups and revenue sources such as in literature and publishing,⁴¹ online gaming and streaming.⁴²

Example: Government vouchers to support self-organisation and children's access

In 2025, most state and territory governments have made state-funded voucher schemes for children 'activity-agnostic' so that they can be used for physical activities, regardless of whether they are sports-based or arts- and culture-based. This means that more children and young people across the country can now choose to participate in the health-promoting activities that best suit their needs and interests.⁴³

Examples: Actions and decisions of entities and people to protect cultural knowledge

Governments and civil society are taking protective actions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages through education and partnerships⁴⁴ and for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property through new laws.⁴⁵

Internationally, UNESCO monitors member states in this area through several relevant international conventions.⁴⁶



Lever 5: Evolving the rules for arts and culture system structures

Incentives, punishments and constraints – known as ‘system rules’ – determine the system’s ‘scope, its boundaries, its degrees of freedom.’⁴⁷ In this way, amending rules can help systems to change or support the momentum of a desired change to continue.⁴⁸

A high-return lever is making changes to the regulatory frameworks of arts and culture system structures – that is, ‘creation and production’, ‘dissemination and consumption’ and ‘preservation and transmission’.

Legislation, statutes or acts of parliament and published case law provide the legal context for all activities in Australia, including within arts, culture and creativity.⁴⁹ This rules-based order accompanies the arts and culture system’s emergent order or self-organisation (see [Lever 4](#)).

Even cultural and creative activities deemed ‘informal’ or outside government oversight can be affected by rules. For example, the tax system applies rules to hobbyists, from trained singers performing at weddings to individuals creating one-of-a-kind art from upcycled furniture and materials.⁵⁰

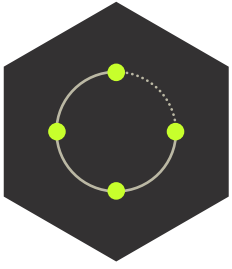
Example: Dissemination and consumption structure rules

In 2024, Australia made the decision to ban access to social media for children under 16 years of age. Part 4A of the *Online Safety Act 2021* introduces an obligation on age-restricted social media platforms to prevent children under 16 from having accounts on their services.⁵¹

Example: Cultural governance and management rules

In Australia’s arts and culture system, the arm’s length principle is viewed as an important rule underpinning many relationships between government, non-government/industry entities and civil society.

The arm’s length principle refers to the idea that governments should not act as the sole ‘arbiter of taste’ in society and that arts and culture should remain uncaptured by political interference. For example, the rules about peer panels or entities such as statutory authorities help Australian governments draw on independent expertise in making decisions and administering government funding of arts and culture.⁵²



Lever 6: Addressing gaps and deficits in information between arts and cultural sectors

A crucial leverage point in any system is its information flows, that is, 'the kinds of information generated and how [it] is passed and disseminated through these networks, and by whom'.⁵³

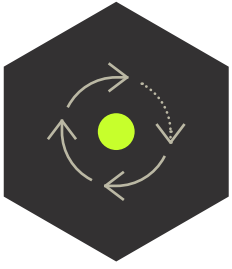
Improving or re-establishing information flows across the arts and culture system would assist people and entities to act on this information and join up its operations.

Information flows are known levers for advancing broader system-level goals of transparency, responsiveness and accountability. Therefore, research has already identified several ways to address or restore the missing or broken information flows of arts, culture and creativity (see examples).

Examples: Adding or restoring missing and broken information flows

Proposed improvements to current information flows within arts, culture and creativity relate to:

- audience and market segmentation information, including independently produced metrics about consumption, particularly in the streaming era⁵⁴
- labelling cultural and creative products to inform consumers' choices at the point of sale⁵⁵
- public information about financial inflows through philanthropic sources via the ACNC, the ABS and the Australian Tax Office⁵⁶
- innovation diffusion through clusters and collaboration⁵⁷ and 'boundary spanners'⁵⁸ such as industry associations, consultants and experts (including academics)⁵⁹
- application, recognition and control of metadata for tracking of online copyrighted content⁶⁰
- agreed communication protocols between government agencies and a 'no-wrong-door' approach to sector support⁶¹
- discoverability and local content prominence requirements for streaming services and the broadcasting landscape.⁶²



Lever 7: Making the most of what's working

System thinkers '[look] for leverage points known as reinforcing feedback loops [such as] birth rates, interest rates, erosion rates, "success to the successful" loops – essentially any place where the more you have of something, the more you have the possibility of having more.'⁶³

In ANA's view, there are four specific strengths within the arts and culture system that system stewards can consider to accelerate positive outcomes.

These are:

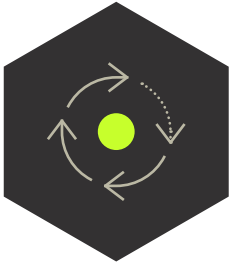
1. creativity, openness and learning in the general population
2. recognition of people and sectors through international and national prizes
3. demanding and engaged consumers engaging with arts and cultural sectors
4. market organisers in local places.

Supporting material: Creativity, openness and learning

Cultural literacy and creative skills 'slosh'⁶⁴ around cultural and creative sectors and support the economy. These skills can enrich the people who acquire them throughout their lives and careers and advance cohesion, prosperity and other outcomes for populations in different places (i.e. place-making).

Creative thinking skills are a proven competitive strength for Australia. Specifically, Australian teenagers ranked fourth out of 64 countries and economies for their creative thinking. By contrast, in maths, reading and science, Australian students scored significantly lower than Singapore, the top-performing country.⁶⁵

Capitalising on and maintaining these skills requires effort across formal and informal learning settings (see [Figure 1](#) presented under [Lever 10](#) for ANA's overview of the settings).



Supporting material: International and national prizes

Australian local and national arts and cultural productions have won and are regularly nominated for international awards and prizes.⁶⁶ Creative businesses also win awards for broader community and social contributions.⁶⁷ These prizes can expand markets and audiences.

More specifically, similar to their benefits in the sport system (and in science), prizes can:

- 'encourage an artistic-commercial marriage'
- '[promote] past successes and anticipate new stars'
- bring together – even bind – creatives, brokers, agents, media, collectors and fans
- 'balance competition with cooperation'
- involve outsiders (who 'share their views with insiders by establishing fan groups, blogs and influencer vlogs and postings').⁶⁸

Governments and industry can both continue to capitalise on this strength by promoting their diverse award programs.⁶⁹

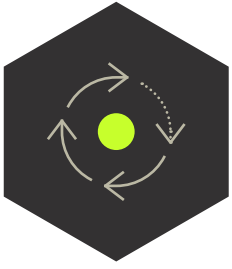
Supporting material: Demanding and engaged consumers

Demanding and engaged consumers can make creative industries more 'geographically sticky' than other industries,⁷⁰ particularly when viewed through tourism:

- International arts tourists tend to stay longer and spend more in total while in Australia than the average tourist.⁷¹
- First Nations lands, cultures and traditions in Australia are described as 'One of Australia's defining tourism offerings'.⁷²
- In creative hotspots around the country, local governments use their galleries and theatres as 'tourism drawcards'.⁷³

Digital service platforms are an identified way of lowering barriers to participation for creators and audiences alike. Examples include film-makers' use of TikTok features for interactive storytelling⁷⁴ and museums and galleries allowing selfies in these sites for Instagram and other social media platforms.⁷⁵

Co-creational audience engagement exists in Australian public broadcasting initiatives (e.g. Argonauts, Beatbox, Race around the World and Triple J's Unearthed)⁷⁶ and user-generated local history projects leveraging community knowledge (e.g. 'Streets of Freo').⁷⁷



Supporting material: Market organisers

Australia's public cultural infrastructures commonly operate as 'market organisers':

They are dedicated [...] to local procurement, cooperatively working with each other and engaging local and tourist volunteers, providing central coordination points that channel tourism income back to the local community.⁷⁸

The infrastructure fosters activity of small-to-medium enterprises in places around Australia and support commercial and non-commercial supply chains and regional sustainability. Examples from the evidence include local government operated cultural and creative institutions⁷⁹ as well as commissioning broadcasters.⁸⁰

Earlier research on this topic of market organisers and creative clusters highlights the need for better intersectoral standards,⁸¹ while newer Australian studies and commentary point to addressing related challenges in transport, visas and infrastructure, such as short-term accommodation and internet connections.⁸²



Lever 8: Intervening where needed, without overcorrecting

One of the more complicated leverage points to interrogate in a system is its ‘balancing feedback loops’ – essentially, how the people, businesses and activities within it adapt and self-correct and the mechanisms for monitoring this.⁸³

When the effects go in unfavourable directions, such as by producing harms or risks of harm – or reducing the public good – then system thinkers may call this a ‘negative’ feedback loop.

This leverage point foregrounds a shared responsibility for system stewards: to avoid wrong turns by understanding a multidisciplinary knowledge base, monitoring this and acting where necessary.

Thinking in Systems refers to this practice as getting the beat of the system: ‘before you disturb the system in any way, watch how it behaves [...]. If it’s a social system, watch it work’.⁸⁴

The expanding role of digital service platforms in Australian media, music, film and online games highlights the need to monitor the knowledge bases of law, market economics, culture, society and technology.

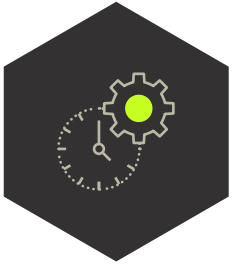
Example: ‘Many-sided’ (or two-sided/ multi-sided) markets

Harms of an expanding digital environment have been discussed in Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) inquiries since 2019. These inquiries describe the new landscape of media’s ‘multi-sided markets’, the harms for business and public interest journalism⁸⁵ and emerging legal concerns for consumers of digital and online gaming, music and video streaming.⁸⁶

Example: Socio-technical and legal factors of content moderation

According to emerging knowledge about socio-technical systems and online content moderation, some people and certain online communities are intervening themselves to reduce problematic content.⁸⁷ Nations are experimenting with user-driven classification for content,⁸⁸ and digital service platforms are directly handling rule violations.⁸⁹

Against growing calls for changing the online content moderation rules, a United States study has recommended a more comprehensive assessment of the different socio-legal considerations to inform decisions and remedies in specific cases.⁹⁰



Lever 9: Streamlining processes where possible

Thinking in Systems also prompts stewards to interrogate how quickly a system is able to react by addressing, improving and changing any ‘delays’.⁹¹

‘Things take as long as they take. [...] But if there is a delay in your system that can be changed, changing it can have big effects.’⁹²

Streamlining the delivery of cultural and creative experiences – for instance, digital or physical access and financing – is a key arts and culture system lever at local, national and global scales.

Understandings of this lever intersect with national productivity knowledge, which ANA examined in a 2023 Insight Report.⁹³ Australia’s Productivity Commission also provides two specific examples. As with the presentation of **Lever 8**, this leverage point comes with a responsibility to consider the direct and indirect effects of making changes.

Example 1: How digital technology has streamlined the delivery of goods and services

In Australia, the Productivity Commission recognised the audio-visual sector’s pivot to digital technologies as enabling a better product for consumers (defined by variety, access from anywhere and anytime and with no late fees or waiting) and larger distribution with fewer inputs (more viewing of video content, requiring fewer employees in video rental stores).⁹⁴

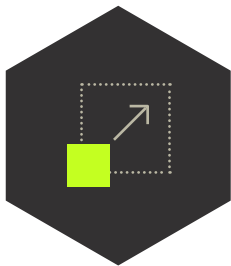
Streaming and film exhibition services in Australia, such as MUBI and SBS on Demand, are described as helping students have a far greater ‘sensitivity’ to French film culture, in the widest sense, including work from ‘Africa, Quebec and the Far East’.⁹⁵ Smartphone filmmaking has been described as removing time delays that burden bigger productions.⁹⁶

Example 2: How the process of making donations *could* be streamlined

The financing of cultural and creative activity includes philanthropy – where donors do not expect to receive a financial or other direct benefit in return for their gift (e.g. giving vehicles, such as ancillary funds; workplace giving programs; or direct giving to not-for-profits).

The Productivity Commission identified two key delays in Australia’s philanthropy, which are:

- the delays in the implementation of nationally consistent fundraising registration, reporting and conduct requirements by state and territory governments
- the accumulation of assets by ancillary funds delaying the benefits reaching end recipients.⁹⁷



Lever 10: Scaling up benefits via existing institutional structures and pathways

Systems thinking draws attention to a system's 'stock-and-flow structures'.

The '**flows**' can include information (see Lever 6); resources (e.g. money and knowledge); and/or benefits (e.g. prosperity, cohesion, health, security and sustainability).

Typically, within the arts and culture system, '**stocks**' are referred to as assets, such as an art collection, historic building, gallery, museum or other venue. But they can also include: libraries and cinemas inside shopping precincts or co-located with government services and tourist facilities; and charities registered in Australia that report serving *multiple* functions and offering arts and culture programs.⁹⁸

Crucially, stock-and-flow structures of the arts and culture system extend to include diverse 'settings', or 'a place or social context in which people engage in their everyday lives' (e.g. home, physical stores and markets, community centres, recreation centres, parks, schools, universities, workplaces, places of worship, aged care, hospitals, prisons and online platforms).⁹⁹

The two prominent levers of these arts and culture system stocks and flows are:

1. **strengthening partnerships between cultural and non-cultural sectors**
2. **supporting formal and informal skill development pathways.**

Supporting material: Partnership approaches

ANA's prior research has summarised diverse partnership approaches and tools,¹⁰⁰ as well as identified existing informational resources to bridge cultural and creative sectors with the sectors of criminal justice, health and education. We spotlighted Australian co-investments in arts engagement for health promotion across settings and cultural infrastructure in the planning approaches for the nation's built environment.¹⁰¹

Supporting material: Skill development pathways in diverse settings

Finding leverage in a system's stock-and-flow structures is exemplified in Australia's National Sport Strategy, which states:

Given the health and wellbeing benefits of an active lifestyle and emerging pathways into sport, the Strategy also seeks to leverage opportunities created through active recreation and physical activity in schools and the community.¹⁰²

Box 2 summarises what we know about these pathways in Australia's arts, culture and creativity system.

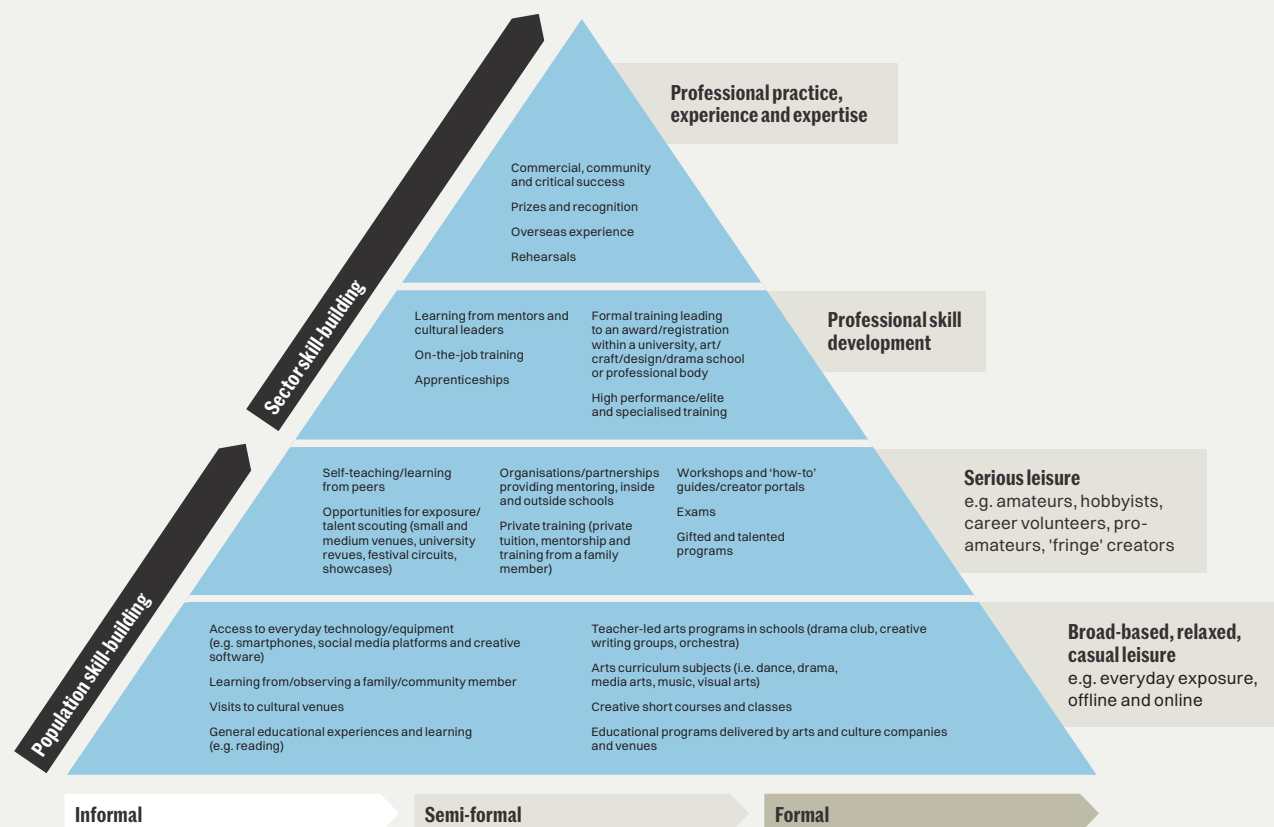
Box 2: Skill development in the arts, culture and creativity system – a theory-led, evidence-informed perspective for Australia

The arts, culture and creativity system supports diverse skills in Australia – from creative thinking and cultural and media literacies to specialist skills and expertise.

These skills are crucial to the cultural and creative productions of industries reaching audiences¹⁰³ and broader place-making.¹⁰⁴

Overall, studies on this topic suggest highly individualised, non-linear pathways in formal and informal learning settings located around the nation and online.

Figure 1: Opportunities for skill development in the arts, culture and creativity system in Australia



Notes: Sources for this framework included national studies,¹⁰⁵ examples identified within single case studies, regional evidence (see below and [Part 2](#) for Culture and Arts Education examples) and theory.¹⁰⁶

Box 2: Continued ...

Figure 1 visualises four main thematic segments driving different learning outcomes, skills and Australia's cultural life more broadly, with illustrative examples:

- **A 'base' segment of widely available activities and everyday exposure:** 'Casual leisure' captures this skill entry point of the population. Within this segment, cultural programs and the arts curriculum delivered in schools can provide a formal skills-development pathway for children,¹⁰⁷ while adults may undertake short courses or classes in their communities and workplaces on a self-directed basis.
- **A 'middle' segment of opportunities for hobbyists, volunteers, amateurs and 'fringe' creators:** Prior research has described this middle ground as both 'serious leisure pursuits'¹⁰⁸ and 'pro-am' (professional-amateur).¹⁰⁹ Here, we also locate Australian research highlighting the following informal settings and learning:

'the theatres and clubs that have provided the seedbed for much of Australian comedy, the small venues that have launched so many rock bands, media-making circles in Indigenous communities and the fringe festivals that have catalysed exchange around digital games'.¹¹⁰

- **A 'next-to-top' segment of opportunities primarily aimed at fostering professional, 'high-performance' and/or elite skills:** Here, we locate teaching and training that leads to awards and recognition in a university, CAE, Institute of Technology, Teachers' College, TAFE and art/craft/design school.¹¹¹
- **An 'apex' of professional practice, experience and expertise:** Creative and cultural workers can spend significant time honing and executing their skills through these opportunities and settings via rehearsal, professional experience overseas and in pursuit of success.

Outside theoretical contexts, a common public question about skill development is: 'How can my kid get a job in this system?' Research being undertaken by an Australian Jobs and Skills Council about progression points of arts careers may help answer this question.¹¹² Details on common pathways into jobs are also available in existing evidence about pathways of working artists;¹¹³ creative workers in architecture, design, software development and interactive content;¹¹⁴ the visual arts sector;¹¹⁵ community radio;¹¹⁶ and First Nations Artists in Remote Australia.¹¹⁷ **Figure 1** includes examples from these case studies and regional evidence.

Finally, parents, educators, skill/education providers and others can make use of point-in-time assessments of the skill gaps and shortages within the arts, culture and creativity system. At the time of writing, these sources show:

- acute shortages in production/technical roles across a wide range of creative sectors, such as production/editorial roles in writing and publishing¹¹⁸
- occupational shortages that vary by jurisdiction (e.g. shortage of librarians in Northern Territory; acute skills gaps in Aboriginal arts and cultural production, live event technical production, curatorial [visual arts and museums] and library roles in Western Australia);¹¹⁹
- skilled occupations in high demand, eligible for visa application purposes (e.g. 'Arts Administrator or Manager' and 'Community Arts Worker').¹²⁰



Lever 11: Introducing supports and buffers for future disruptions

Systems thinkers call for introducing and increasing the size of stabilising buffers in systems:

*'The stabilizing power of buffers is why you keep money in the bank rather than living from the flow of change through your pocket. [...] There's leverage, sometimes magical, in changing the size of buffers.'*¹²¹

Arts, culture and creativity in Australia go through many of the same ups and downs as other parts of society and the economy: volatile incomes and investment, changes in technology, regulation and consumer behaviour and changing employment patterns.

Devastating events, such as the Black Summer 2019–20 bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, disrupted how some creative work had been created and shared. The COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant disruption in highly globalised production networks, such as the fashion industry.¹²²

In Australia, performing arts have been called 'intrinsically risky business',¹²³ and national data on cultural and creative activity show that revenue streams for newspaper and magazine publishing have been significantly impacted by digital disruption, resulting in individual business closures.¹²⁴

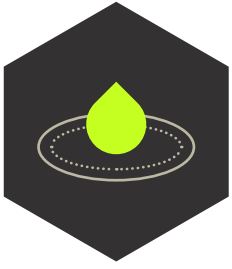
This understanding of volatility and risk stresses the need for arts and culture system stewards to grasp a recognised lever of system change: the stabilising buffer.

Existing research presents key examples of stabilising buffers for various participants and perspectives within the arts and culture system.

Examples: Stabilising buffers

Examples of stabilising buffers discussed in related research and analysis include:

- the availability of 'public and private relief schemes' for COVID-19's employment shocks and the accompanying fiscal buffers of governments¹²⁵
- the ability within industries to adapt and pivot existing business models and modes of delivery (referred to as a 'digital pivot' in Australia)¹²⁶
- the access within households to saving buffers¹²⁷
- the reserves policies of companies, including as part of funding agreements¹²⁸
- commercial/industry relationships and collaborations specifically to increase revenue (e.g. business-to-consumer initiatives and shared 'demand-side buying')¹²⁹
- the government, non-profit and private entities that function as 'buffers, mediators, representatives, supporters and lobbyists'.¹³⁰



Lever 12: Adjusting funding to cultivate an operating environment that fosters resilience and autonomy

Thinking in Systems places 'parameters' like the subsidies and taxes that governments administer as the lowest-ranking, shallowest leverage point in a system. Systems thinkers say this is because parameters rarely change a system's behaviour¹³¹ or produce desired 'transformational change' on their own.¹³²

Adjusting government spending and taxes can be an important lever for arts and culture system stewards to pull when this action is used *in conjunction with* other levers.

An increase in spending (or another parameter) may be useful at a system level to:

- buffer against future disruption to cultural and creative activities (**Lever 11**)
- give space to self-organisation and innovation (**Lever 4**)
- align with a National Arts and Culture Strategy (**Lever 3**)
- drive the performance of funding regimes or address 'bottlenecks' (see examples).

Example: Data- and performance-driven approaches to funding

In sport in Austria, researchers developed a framework to model how changes in funding can be expected to impact the number of child club members.¹³³

For public sector stewardship in Australia across sectors, systems thinking and research has recommended performance measures that reward joint solutions and inter-jurisdictional partnerships.¹³⁴

Example: Addressing bottlenecks in public support

Bottlenecks – 'the forces that sit between other phenomena and may gatekeep potential change'¹³⁵ – in creative and cultural engagement in Australia include a lack of joined-up co-investment focused on public access.¹³⁶

Research in Europe identifies a bottleneck in government funding support 'at the later stages of the [cultural and creative] value chain, especially in dissemination/exhibition'.¹³⁷ It argues that government investment in cross-sectoral collaboration would help to bring products and services to market more smoothly, complementing an existing funding focus on support for creation.



Part 2: Modelling the arts, culture and creativity system

Cultural and creative activities converge to generate goods, services and experiences and measurable socioeconomic value and impact. This process can be explained simply and/or elaborately.

This section models these processes to respond to the central questions of this research: What does the system include? How is it organised? How is it governed?

Specifically, this section outlines two models for arts and culture system stewards to apply in their work:

1. the 2025 UNESCO Cultural Value-Generation Model, applied to existing Australian evidence on cultural and creative industries and experiences
2. a governance model developed by ANA, capturing government, industry/non-government and civil society structures and processes in which cultural and creative activities are taking place.

These two models provide a valid and useful way of deciphering the arts, culture and creativity system as a *whole*.

System maps and models can assist disparate groups in getting on the same page about complex topics. The diagrams can be used to work through problems or different flashpoints together.

However, it remains important to note a key systems thinking insight that ‘[all] system diagrams are simplifications of the real world. We each choose how much complexity to look at’.¹³⁸

What does the system include?

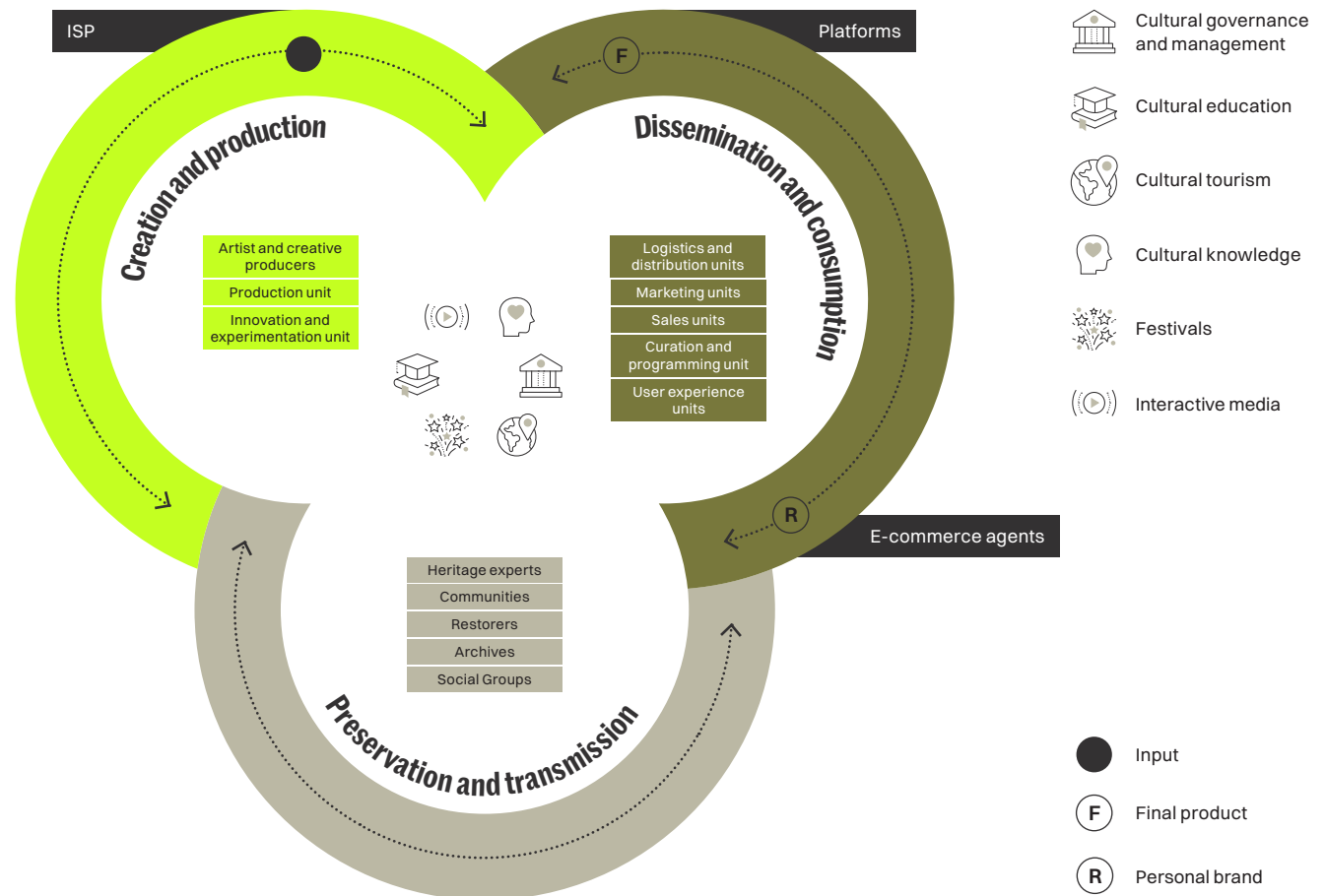
Alongside the 12 leverage points, a basic system model must elucidate three key characteristics: its 1) function/purpose; 2) interconnections; and 3) elements.¹³⁹

The 2025 UNESCO Cultural Value-Generation Model (hereafter 'the UNESCO model') – visualised in **Figure 2** – elucidates all three things.

Developed using international statistical frameworks, the UNESCO model intends to help countries harmonise cultural statistics. It updates the 2009 version of a statistical framework and builds on new research and key developments in culture and creativity around the world.

The UNESCO model therefore provides a foundation for explaining what the arts, culture and creativity system of modern Australia is and what it includes.

Figure 2: UNESCO Cultural Value-Generation Model



Source: This figure is adapted from 'Figure 3 - Cultural valuation model' by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, used under [CC BY-SA 3.0 IGO](#).

The UNESCO model centres on three key structures (which it calls ‘systems’):

1. Creation and production

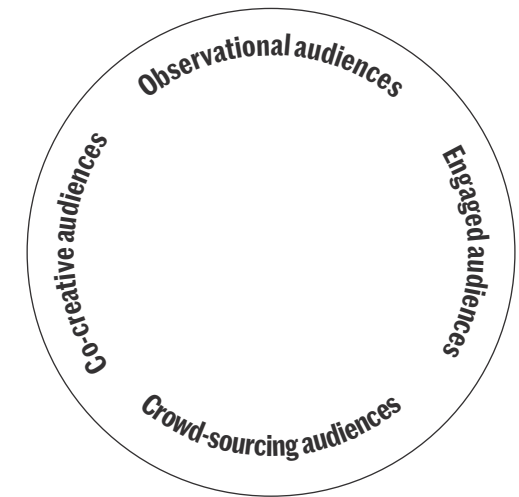
2. Dissemination and consumption

3. Preservation and transmission

Strengths of the UNESCO model are that it shows:

- a **whole-of-system function of value generation**, which encompasses flexible understandings of socioeconomic value
- the **interconnections/touchpoints/overlap of sectors, industries and agents with the structures** and through ‘transversal domains’ such as cultural governance and management, education and tourism¹⁴⁰
- the **audiences integrated in the framework** and conceptualised as:
 - ‘observational audiences’ (e.g. accessing and consuming a cultural good or service as a passive audience response, such as streaming a film)
 - ‘engaged audiences’ (e.g. participating in after-show talks or sharing impressions about a particular book, series or performance on social media)
 - ‘crowd-sourcing audiences’ (e.g. directly financing cultural and creative expressions, participating in advisory boards of festivals or a writer asking a community of fans for geographic details of a town they are writing about)
 - ‘co-creative audiences’ (e.g. communities creating/painting public art, digital choirs or a singer releasing an artificial intelligence model of their voice and inviting collaborations).¹⁴¹

Figure 3: Four key audience types of the UNESCO model

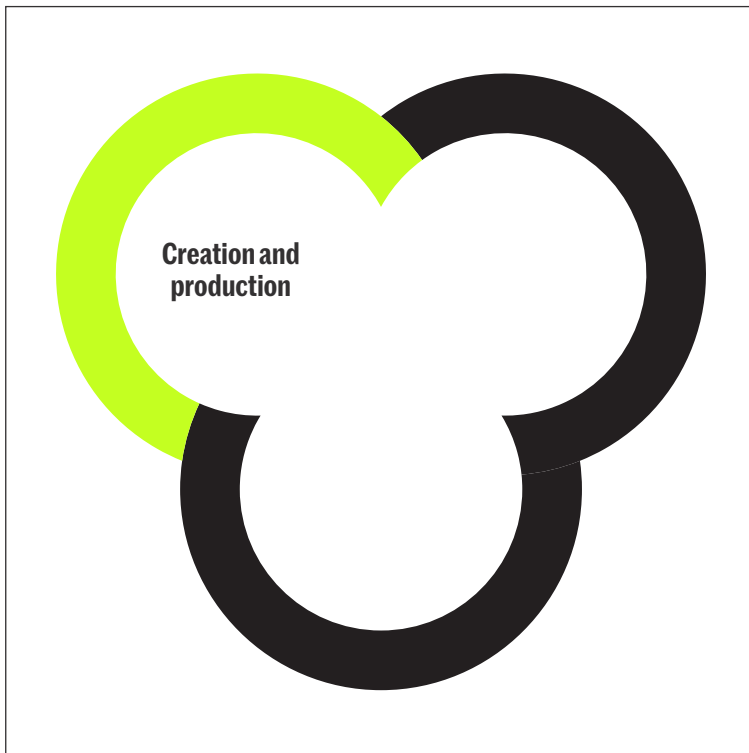


The UNESCO model and its extensive framework of concepts, definitions and statistical standards can clearly support and develop understandings of the arts, culture and creativity system. Therefore, what follows is a detailed examination of its three structures, supported by Australian case examples.

Want to zero in on an individual Cultural domain (e.g. Books and press, Music, Performing arts) or a Transversal domain? Detailed domain models are provided in UNESCO's classification guide.¹⁴²

UNESCO's three key structures with examples from the Australian arts and culture system

Creation and production



The first circuit of the UNESCO model, **creation and production**, refers to the 'processes through which artists and performers develop creative ideas by using audiovisual, musical, literary or visual language to transform those abstract concepts into copyrighted products'.¹⁴³

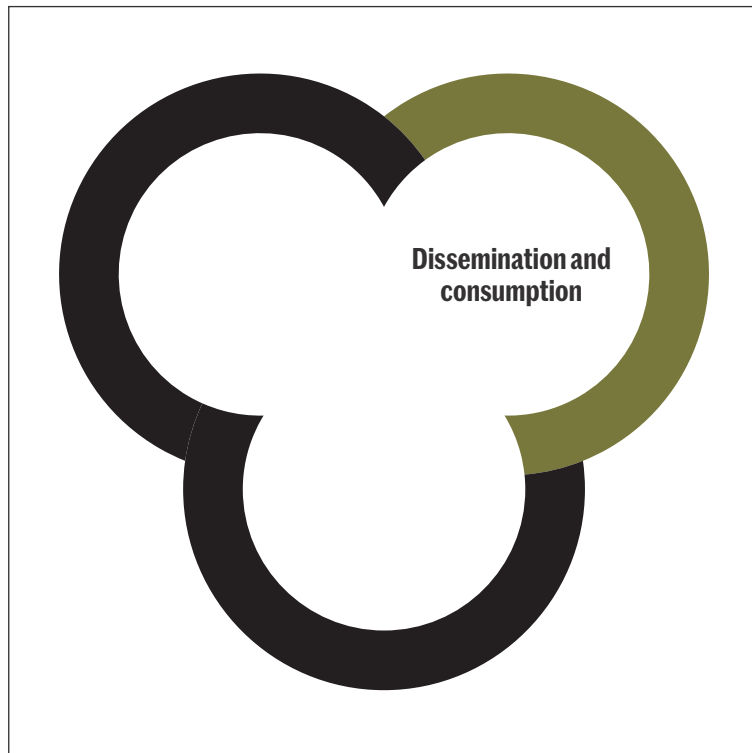
The activities in this structure are content creation, production, innovation and experimentation.

The structure in action

Examples of these activities occurring in Australia at different scales include:

- musicians and theatre professionals – from writers and performers to designers and directors – developing and producing works to be staged live and/or digitally¹⁴⁴
- creative artistic activities and practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in remote arts centres, family and community settings (i.e. visual arts, performing arts, composing or choreographing, writing or storytelling, making a film, TV or radio program or multimedia work)¹⁴⁵
- fashion brands combining local production with international factories to offset limited domestic capabilities¹⁴⁶
- large-scale international film and television productions, along with corporate and commercial videography in regional places¹⁴⁷
- firms providing specialised and local architectural services (e.g. masterplans, signage) and collaborating with contractors, engineers, lawyers, tradespeople and others to complete building projects¹⁴⁸
- professionals and amateur-professionals in photography and commercial photographic services, weddings and portraiture.¹⁴⁹

Dissemination and consumption



The second circuit refers to **dissemination and/or consumption**: ‘the interactions between artists, the complex network of public and private agents and audiences during the processes of diffusion, distribution, access and consumption of cultural products. It also encompasses the dissemination of cultural offerings related to heritage expressions and their enjoyment’.¹⁵⁰

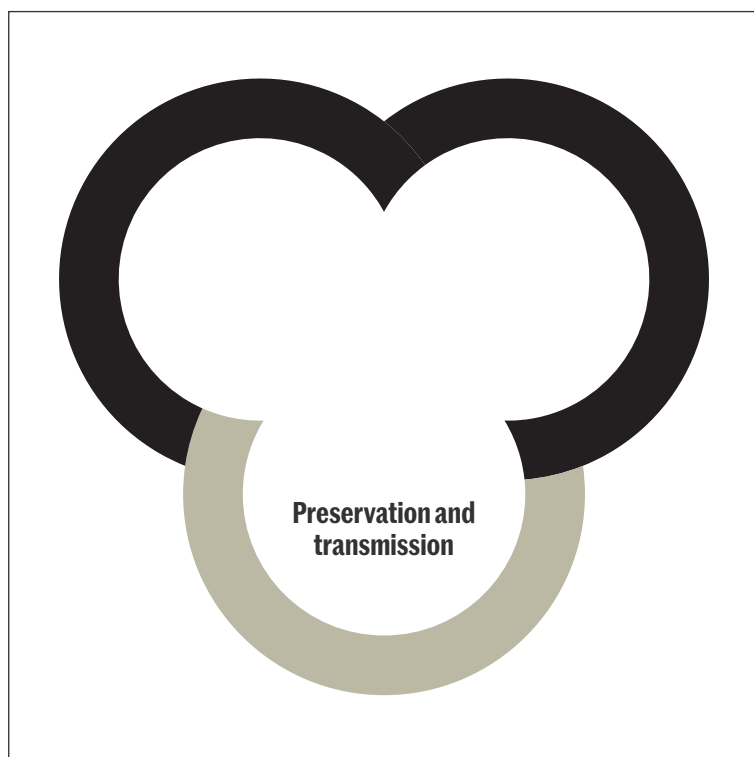
The activities in this structure include rights management, marketing and promotion, sales, logistics and distribution, curation and programming, user experience and points of sale.

The structure in action

Examples of these activities occurring in Australia at different scales include:

- entertainment centres and other venues hosting live performances, including touring acts, major bands and events such as comedy festivals¹⁵¹
- book publishing houses and intermediation by publicists alongside marketers, booksellers, influencers and authors themselves¹⁵²
- art markets, museums, galleries and Aboriginal art centres across Australia showcasing and marketing visual arts¹⁵³
- hubs, workspaces and centres providing recording studios, green screens and meeting rooms for hire to create works¹⁵⁴
- bricks-and-mortar and online stores selling books, musical instruments, amps and PA systems¹⁵⁵
- companies arranging online ticket sales for performances, events and festivals across the country, as well as self-ticketing and subscriptions by venues and companies themselves.¹⁵⁶

Preservation and transmission



The third circuit refers to **preservation and transmission**: 'the socioeconomic contributions made by central, intermediary and supported agents who play a vital role in the identification, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission and revitalization of cultural and natural heritage intricately tied to each cultural domain'.¹⁵⁷

The activities in this structure are documentation, preservation and transmission.

The structure in action

Examples of these activities occurring in Australia at different scales include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists taking part in ceremonies, interpreting and cross-cultural consulting, serving on cultural boards or councils and engaging with the history of place¹⁵⁸
- libraries and librarians maintaining collections of documents as well as facilitating the use of such documents (issuing library cards, offering diverse programs and outreach)¹⁵⁹
- communities documenting/storing photographs, videos and other material in 'archival clusters' across premises, including in churches, private residences, aged care residences and universities in suburbs and regional cities¹⁶⁰
- national archives digitising and restoring film and sound works, returning them to their original form, rendering true copies, repairing machines required to play them back and sharing these on websites and social media.¹⁶¹

Is that all? What else does the system include?

As noted previously, a strength of the UNESCO model is that it highlights interdependent domains – which it calls ‘transversal’ – that overlap with and are central to the three key structures.

These domains are:

- cultural governance and management
- cultural education
- cultural tourism
- cultural knowledge
- festivals
- interactive media.

What follows is a description of these domains’ cross-cutting activities and several examples in action from Australia.



Cultural governance and management

UNESCO defines the cultural governance and management domain as ‘an extensive network of public and private individuals and organisations (both formal and informal)’. It explains that these intermediaries are fostering creation and production, dissemination and consumption, and preservation and transmission.¹⁶²

The varied services of the individuals and organisations of this domain include research and development, grant-making, financial investment services, funds, other financial vehicles and rights management. Other activities characterising this domain include regulation and promoting/lobbying.

The domain in action

In Australia, cultural governance and management includes government entities such as Creative Australia and Screen Victoria as well as non-government entities like the European and International Booksellers Federation, collective management societies and unions, including the most recent establishment of Games Workers Australia.

Figure 4, the ‘Governance of Australia’s arts, culture and creativity system’, provides extensive examples of this domain in action.



Cultural education

A further transversal domain of the UNESCO model is cultural education, which is defined as encompassing:

'educational activities for all people; delivered in all contexts, formal, non-formal and informal; using different pedagogies (especially those that embrace diverse cultural perspectives, activities, practices, expressions, materials and objects) and modalities (such as offline, online, distance and blended) and provided at all levels'.¹⁶³

The domain in action

Examples in the arts and culture system of Australia at different scales also include:

- regional conservatoriums and universities offering individual and group lessons to enrolled students, music programs for schools and professional development for teachers¹⁶⁴

- teacher-led arts programs in schools, including drama club, creative writing groups, orchestras¹⁶⁵
- elite performing arts training through the Australian Arts8 organisations¹⁶⁶
- philanthropic and volunteer organisations, community partnerships and mentoring involved in the music education of school children, inside and outside schools¹⁶⁷
- virtual workshops about film and television with students and teachers that explore special visual effects, storyboards, storytelling techniques and the ethics of AI use.¹⁶⁸

Box 2, Part 1 of this Insight Report outlined how arts, culture and creativity in informal and formal learning settings are driving skills of various kinds (creative thinking, cultural literacy and specialist skills). **Figure 4** provides more examples of entities in this domain, from examination providers to local dance schools.



Cultural tourism

A further transversal domain at the centre of the UNESCO model is cultural tourism, which 'contributes to the systems of creation, production, dissemination and consumption of cultural and creative products'.

This domain is also defined by those 'economic activities where a visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination' and as a form of cultural participation'.¹⁶⁹

The domain includes heritage tourism, arts and creative tourism, culinary heritage tourism and ethnic tourism.

UNESCO's model presents most transversal domains as positive. However, it notes that cultural tourism can harm local cultural heritage and should therefore be carefully 'identified, dimensioned and analysed'.¹⁷⁰

Australian sources identifying and analysing cultural tourism include the reports and data produced by Tourism Research Australia,¹⁷¹ a parliamentary inquiry,¹⁷² and a national survey of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.¹⁷³

The domain in action

Examples in the arts and culture system of Australia at different scales also include:

- First Nations businesses operating art galleries and offering nature-based arts and culture experiences to tourists¹⁷⁴
- privately owned museums attracting tourists, residents and investors and incorporating products and brands¹⁷⁵
- hundreds of thousands of people visiting the rock art and archaeological sites in national parks.¹⁷⁶



Cultural knowledge

The UNESCO model characterises the transversal domain of cultural knowledge by the 'living heritage practices related to preserving oral traditions and expressions including languages, culinary arts, biocultural practices, vernacular[/traditional] architecture and traditional sports and games'.¹⁷⁷

It links this domain to traditional knowledge and intangible cultural heritage, as defined within international law, emerging intellectual property discussions, UNESCO conventions and the work of other international organisations such as the World Intellectual Property Organization.

The domain in action

Examples in the arts and culture system of Australia at different scales include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages spoken in Australia, and participation in centre-based Indigenous language teaching and learning programs¹⁷⁸
- artists involved in cultural practices, such as fishing, hunting and gathering bush food, as well as in caring for country and teaching arts and culture¹⁷⁹
- research-based guidance and educational resources about traditional games.¹⁸⁰



Festivals

The UNESCO model shows festivals as a transversal domain. It applies an existing definition of festivals as 'themed, public celebrations' and lists the activities as feasts, fairs, festivals and traditional markets.

The domain in action

Examples in the arts and culture system of Australia at different scales include:

- businesses and venues hosting film festivals on a temporary or permanent basis¹⁸¹
- city-based fringe festivals, regional music festivals, as well as multi-day gatherings featuring competitions, celebrations of place and camping¹⁸²
- multi-arts festivals that involve visitors and community members in music, dance, art, film, food, theatre, workshops, adventure tours, camping, sports and cultural activities¹⁸³
- music festivals, with attendees ranging from a few hundred to tens of thousands, organised and supported by specialist contractors, local councils, police/security and others.¹⁸⁴



Interactive media

The UNESCO model highlights the transversal domain of interactive media involved in the creation, production and dissemination of, as well as access to, cultural content, specifically through social networks, wikis, podcasts and videogames.

UNESCO emphasises that interactive media remains 'a novelty from the cultural statistics perspective'.¹⁸⁵

The domain in action

Examples in the arts and culture system of Australia at different scales include:

- digital platforms connecting audiences to music, dance classes, classical music, concerts, creative writing and old Australian television programs¹⁸⁶
- Australian companies creating visual effects and digital games within global projects, for platforms (e.g. consoles, PC and Mac, mobile and web platforms, virtual and augmented reality)¹⁸⁷
- radio-owned podcasts, the movement of podcasts to linear radio and the rise of history podcast listening and production.¹⁸⁸

How is the arts and culture system governed?

Delineating institutional structures of the arts, culture and creativity system can serve many practical purposes. One of these is to discuss **governance – ‘the systems by which organisations are directed, controlled and accountable’**.¹⁸⁹ Governance modelling can also help people and entities see themselves as part of a whole, which is guaranteeing cultural and creative activities in Australia.

Unlike sport in Australia, the governance structure of arts, culture and creativity remains undocumented at the national level. **Figure 4** begins to address this knowledge gap. It shows that arts, culture and creativity have three main governance structures:

- **Government:** Organisations owned or controlled by any of the three levels of government within the Australian political system, including national (which includes Commonwealth and multi-jurisdictional organisations), state and local organisations¹⁹⁰ or organisations within international political systems
- **Industry and non-government entities:** Organisations including Australian public companies and other entity types¹⁹¹ *not* owned or controlled by any of the three levels of government within the Australian political system
- **Civil society:** Individuals, groups, social movements and organisations that may view themselves or may behave as autonomous from direction, control or the accountability of government or other market pressures.

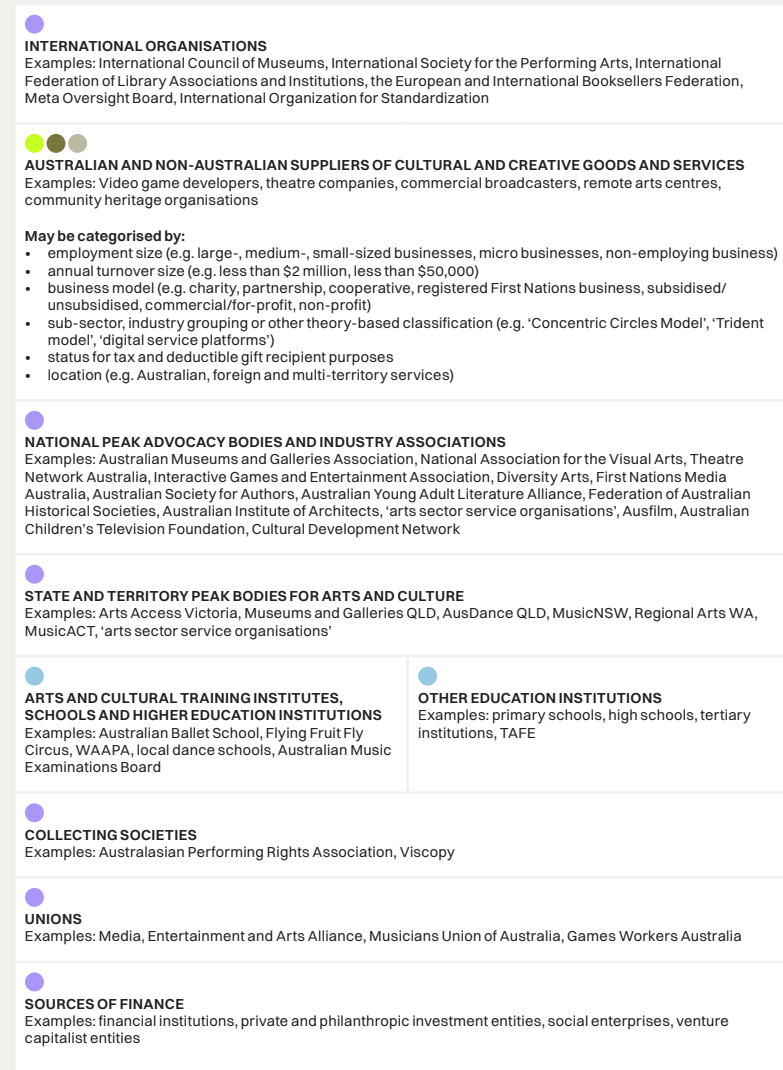
While ‘governance’ is often used to refer to the specific governance of an individual organisation (e.g. a board), here we are describing a much broader scope, namely the governance of the system in which organisations and individuals are operating and activities are taking place.

Figure 4: Governance of Australia's arts, culture and creativity system

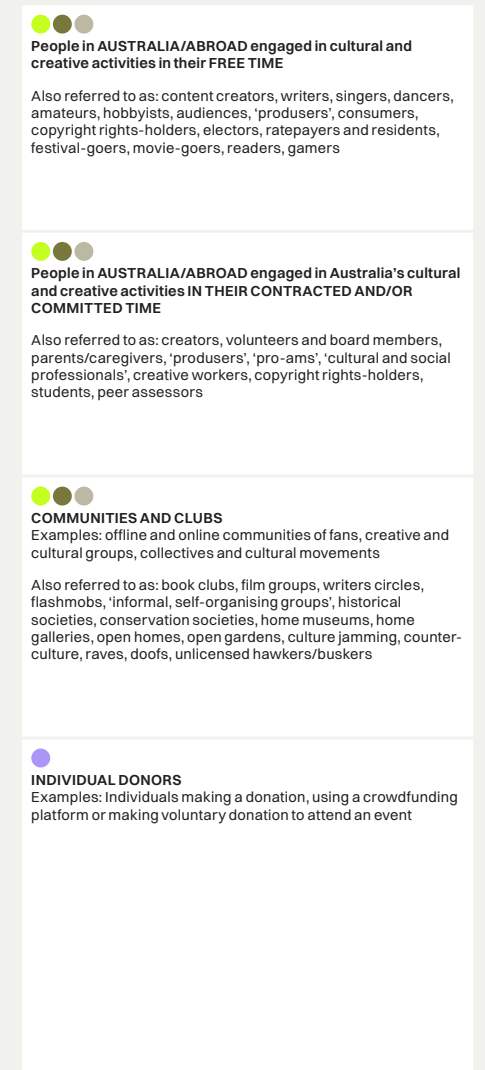
Government



Industry and non-government entities



Civil society



Notes: Government and non-government examples are subject to cessation, consolidation and name-change. For further details on methods and sources used in this model, see [Appendix 2](#). This is not to scale nor is it intended to imply hierarchy of categories. For key definitions used in [Figure 4](#), see the footnote.¹⁰² This model takes its original inspiration from the Australian Sport Commission and the Clearinghouse for Sport, 'Structure of Australian Sport', Accessed 10 September 2025, <https://www.ausport.gov.au/clearinghouse/evidence/structure-of-australian-sport>.

What this governance modelling tells us

As well as helping industries and occupations see themselves as part of a whole, the modelling in **Figure 4** can shape a more holistic conversation about governance, particularly when underscored by the following three key conclusions.

Conclusion #1

Cultural and creative activities do not have a single, centralised government regulator.

The government governance structure is 'a set of parts (e.g. people, rules, processes and resources) that interact within the boundaries of a finite area or topic [...] seeking to influence that area or topic within the limitations of politics, the economy and the judiciary'.¹⁹³

It is important to remember there can be many 'cultural management' entities and people that creative businesses interact with, rather than a single regulator or oversight body. Technology and media regulators are relevant, as are government departments across portfolios and departments in other countries that may be trading or cultural diplomacy partners with Australia.

Conclusion #2

Non-government institutions strongly influence the arts and culture system's governance, with new forms of accountability emerging.

The modelling in **Figure 4** signals the emergence of new forms of non-government accountability within an expanding digital environment (e.g. Meta's Oversight Board), alongside longer-established industry associations and organisations that endorse formal standards, specifications or recognition.¹⁹⁴

Related to this non-government governance structure, research has critiqued the lack of 'coherence' or 'systematic character' of broader internet governance¹⁹⁵ and questioned the absence of social media platforms owned by Australians or located here.¹⁹⁶

Conclusion #3

Acknowledging the civil society governance structure helps explain how cultural and creative experiences change based upon societal norms, trends and new directions of the people within it.

'Civil society' is the umbrella term ANA has used in **Figure 4** to group together the governance of activities occurring outside market pressures or the direction or control of government/industry. Here, civil society refers to individuals and communities and is not defined by a specific legal structure or operating model.¹⁹⁷

The civil society governance structure includes a wide range of activities discussed in the research that span:

- grassroots or non-institutionalised creativity¹⁹⁸
- formal and informal volunteering¹⁹⁹
- trends and cultural movements²⁰⁰
- the democratisation of culture²⁰¹
- alternative/gift economies of street libraries²⁰²
- busking²⁰³
- the illegitimate art market²⁰⁴
- graffiti.²⁰⁵

In sport-focused research, this area of individual and community activity is referred to as 'informal' sport.²⁰⁶

Box 4: How does the arts, culture and creativity system in Australia compare with its sports counterpart?

Comparing the sport system with the arts and culture system in Australia may help inform cultural policy, investment and practice. This box summarises the comparative findings based on key system principles.

For people and communities who participate in cultural activities and in sport, the two systems can be interconnected.

Sports can involve arts and culture (e.g. rhythmic gymnastics and artistic swimming); venues can double as cultural and sport venues; and parts of the workforce are shared by both arts and culture and sports systems, particularly the technical and event-focused occupations.²⁰⁷

National statistical collections connect cultural and sport activities through spending and time use data.

For instance, sport and arts and cultural activities are counted as free time activity²⁰⁸ and discretionary basic consumer spending (see discussion in **Lever 1**). Data show that people across the nation are spending money on tickets for both sport and arts events.²⁰⁹ To gain a statistical understanding of participation, people taking part in sports and cultural activities have been examined nationally through a method known as ‘market segmentation’ – essentially, how the activities are consumed by different groups.²¹⁰

The two systems share specific leverage points for advancing system change.

In particular, they both have important ‘prize cultures’ (**Lever 7**) and formal and informal stock-and-flow structures for skill development (**Lever 10**). Opportunities for change in arts and culture were famously compared with sport by an Australian academic, Bernard Smith, who stated in 1975:

‘We might gain a hint from outside art. Australia did not gain its achievements in cricket, tennis and swimming by cultivation of sporting elites. True, the best were encouraged and carefully trained. But it was the ubiquity of these sports throughout the community that has told. We began with a broad democratic base, not a few score chosen ones, chosen by wealth or by their personal friends, but culled from the populace at large. If your object is excellence, you begin with a broad base: elitism fails because it insists upon a narrow base; its apex fails to reach the limits of the possible.’²¹¹

The clearest differences between these two systems relate to governance.

Sport has a government agency – the Australian Sports Commission – with remit across national sporting organisations, including those for people with disability, which sets governance benchmarks. Whereas arts and cultural activities are taking place nationally within three broad structures – 1) government, 2) industry/ non-government and 3) civil society – the national sport system modelling suggests only two key structures (government and industry).²¹²

Conclusion

This Insight Report is a new explainer of the system delivering arts, culture and creativity in Australia. It explains how and where we might create change within this dynamic system for different goals and purposes of the population and the sectors within it.

Systems approaches have been adopted to understand other systems of interest like sport, tourism, health promotion and innovation, and we found that they can enrich policy, practice and research about arts, culture and creativity as well. They make evident the interdependent role of arts and culture in the lives of people in Australia. These approaches give stewards a fuller picture and can help them to grapple with complex problems, resource constraints and a system in constant motion.

The key insights we hope readers take away from this report are threefold, comprising:

- **the UNESCO Cultural Value-Generation Model** as a way of understanding how cultural and creative activities are being delivered in Australia
- **the arts and culture system governance modelling** as a way of situating people and entities contributing to this whole
- **the arts and culture system levers** to identify new ways to help Australia secure its place as a cultural powerhouse by 2035.

Systems thinking as a field or discipline is never straightforward. In undertaking this research, ANA confronted complex dynamics and connections with other systems of interest – in short, difficulties of boundaries. We also grappled with conflicting views in theorising about leverage and systems thinking. We remained evidence-driven in our efforts to gain insights from these fields of knowledge for future regulatory and industry practice and stewardship more broadly.

Effective stewardship of this system matters because cultural engagement and creative expression are proven ways to keep our communities connected, foster creative thinking and adaptability, strengthen our economies and help us lead healthy, safe and sustainable lives.

To conclude on the value of the approach taken in this research, and any further work that builds on it, one last insight is worth mentioning: the more we learn about the system, the more 'readied' we will be for action in research, policy and practice.²¹³



Appendices and endnotes

Appendix 1: Glossary of terms

Arts, culture and creativity

Arts, culture and creativity is the inclusive and broad umbrella term that ANA adopts in this report for a range of activities, such as: attending cultural events; visiting cultural venues; creating or performing something; and engaging with arts, culture and creative content in your home.

It is also used to refer to activities performed in industries and occupations that may be less obvious, such as advertising, design and architecture. See more details on [ANA's website](#).

Arts, culture and creativity system

The arts, culture and creativity system refers to the processes, structures, connections and distinct leverage points that guarantee a wide range of cultural and creative practices, experiences and products are available to people in Australia and overseas.

This system includes the end users of cultural and creative goods and services and the diverse industries and sectors that produce, disseminate and preserve them, along with financiers, regulators and governments.

Cultural powerhouse

The term cultural powerhouse encapsulates ANA's vision of Australia as a forerunner in how we:

- respect and cherish our unique cultural inheritance
- invest in and celebrate our creators, cultural organisations and creative industries
- enable our citizens to participate in and contribute to cultural activities
- strategically plan and nurture our creative future in a manner that befits our standing as the world's 12th-largest economy (recently updated to 13th position).²¹⁴

End users

This research's definition of the arts, culture and creativity system (above) uses the term end users to describe the entities and individuals who engage with cultural and creative goods and services. This includes audiences (as defined by UNESCO)²¹⁵ as well as the groups referred to as 'users' in the context of media and digital platforms and 'clients' for creative businesses such as architectural or design firms.

Governance

The term governance is used in many disciplines with diverse and often contradictory meanings. While governance is often used to refer to the

specific governance of an individual organisation (e.g. a board), in this report, governance refers to 'the systems by which organisations are directed, controlled and accountable' (e.g. government, non-government/industry, civil society).²¹⁶

Lever/leverage points

Leverage points are 'places in a system where the least effort yields the biggest impact'.²¹⁷

A lever is a specific measure by which influence can be applied to a given leverage point.²¹⁸ Systems thinkers sometimes use related terms, including 'intervention' and 'methods of leverage'.

Mindsets and paradigms

In systems thinking and for this research, a mindset refers to 'deep, assumed patterns of thinking that shape how we make sense of the world and what we do that can alternately normalise or problematise aspects of the existing social order'.²¹⁹

A paradigm is a mindset out of which the system arises.²²⁰

Regulator

Regulators refer to the government officials, departmental units and independent statutory authorities that are empowered by legislation to grant approvals (including

registration and licensing), monitor compliance and enforce laws.²²¹

In arts, culture and creativity, as in sport, definitions of regulators can often stretch to include financiers and support agencies.

Stewards/stewardship

In this research, arts and culture system stewards are any people and entities who want to play a role in creating the arts, culture and creativity system of the future from their different positions.

This definition is informed by an understanding of 'shared stewardship' in place-based approaches²²² and influenced by thinking on public sector stewards who 'assume responsibility for influencing actors and allocating resources so that private value can be leveraged for public good'; and/or 'ensure accountability for implementation of high-quality, user-driven service delivery models that produce outcomes for populations and individuals'.²²³

Systems thinking

'Systems thinking is a framework for seeing the interconnections in a system; a discipline for seeing and understanding the whole system; and for understanding or explaining the 'structures' that underlie complex situations. It is also a collection of tools and approaches that can help support us in thinking systemically about our work'.²²⁴

Appendix 2: Methodology and limitations

This Insight Report is the result of bringing together inputs from expert advisors and published sources, including within ANA's back catalogue of research. This appendix summarises the methods we applied in the two parts of the report.

In **Part 1**, we interrogated leverage points using *Thinking in Systems* by Donella Meadows and more recent published work about leverage in other systems of interest. The limitations of leverage theory to be aware of include the need to develop and update frameworks or typologies in addition to the original 12 described in this report.²²⁵

The skill development pyramid in **Figure 1** builds on research about formal and informal training and education in arts, culture and creativity, including key national sources on this topic.

In **Part 2**, ANA considered different models for their relative strengths in applied use, explanation and better understanding of the arts, culture and creativity system in Australia.²²⁶ That desktop review highlighted the strengths of UNESCO's Cultural Value-Generation Model, which it globally consulted upon in 2024.

To explore the model in Australia, we conducted a targeted review of published material about arts, culture and creativity in Australia using the databases of public institutions, our previous research and sources shared with us by expert advisors.²²⁷ **Part 2** provides key examples from that review.

The 2025 UNESCO Framework of Cultural Statistics, underpinning **Figures 2** and **3** was unpublished at the time of developing this Insight Report. ANA has taken care to update this Insight Report between the draft for consultation and its final published version. However, readers should refer to UNESCO's original source for the most accurate and up-to-date information on definitions, concepts and statistical classifications. It is also worth noting that ANA did not identify comparable whole-of-system modelling for sport, which has limited the comparative objective of this research.

The governance modelling in **Figure 4** draws on ANA's experience with working at the intersection of knowledge and policy and builds on governance-structure modelling of Australia's sport system.²²⁸ Key sources for the examples were budget papers at state/territory and federal government levels, scrutinised by ANA; parliamentary inquiries in Australia about arts, culture and creativity; and publicly available directories pertaining to different sectors.

Please note we selected the examples in **Figures 2** and **4** to illustrate system structures nationally, not to be exhaustive. We also applied commonly used categories and definitions in existing research, policy and practice sources.

Systems thinking can call for creating causal loop diagrams with stakeholders.²²⁹ However, time and resource constraints did not permit this step, and it is a limitation of the research. In addition, questions based on governance modelling that went beyond scope would prove to be impactful avenues for further research. These are: 'What is working well?', 'What duplication is frustrating?' and 'Where is adequate governance lacking for people and entities in the system?'

Appendix 3: What have others said about an ‘arts, culture and creativity system’ in Australia? What more is there to say?

Prominent examples of systems thinking and related terminology used in discussions of arts, culture and creativity are:

- stakeholders within arts and cultural sectors calling for systems change²³⁰
- cultural policies referring to ‘ecosystems’, both in Australia and internationally²³¹
- research about ‘cultural and creative ecosystems’ at different geographic scales in selected sub-sectors and on related topics, such as innovation²³²
- stakeholders calling for a stronger, foundational role for culture in global systems change.²³³

At least 56 research publications, dating back to 1950, have referred to cultural and creative ecosystems. In that body of research, ‘cultural and creative ecosystems’ are understood as (1) a condition of the world – an ontological reality; (2) a descriptive and analytical perspective – an epistemological framework; or (3) an approach to cultural policy, programming and practice – an organisational, managerial or strategic method.²³⁴

Against this backdrop, discussion and research about systems can quickly become confusing and focus more on theory than practice. This is because, as one research work summarised, ‘a system in one perspective is a subsystem in another’.²³⁵ The field is also plagued with related terms such as subsystem(s), ecosystem(s) and ecology/ecological approaches.

By choosing the term ‘system’ over these other options found in published sources, ANA’s research aims specifically to build knowledge and inform shared understandings about:

- a defined system of interest operating at different scales in Australia
- the leverage points that stewards can influence, including to advance ANA’s vision of Australia as a cultural powerhouse
- comparisons with other systems of interest, in particular, the sport system in Australia.

Endnotes

- 1 According to UNESCO, the inclusion of transversal domains in its modelling and framework '[recognise] the pivotal roles played by public, non-profit and private agents in the development of cultural practices'. The transversal domains may also serve a statistical purpose for nations in avoiding double counting. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *2025 UNESCO Framework for cultural statistics, Part I. Concepts and definitions*, (Montreal, Canada: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2025), 2, 18, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000395490?posInSet=4&queryId=N-EXPLORE-f727de4d-c7a7-4d06-baae-8892375e8afe>.
- 2 Exhibit A seeks to visually represent key concepts of UNESCO's 2025 Framework for Cultural Statistics. However, ANA has adapted UNESCO's framework and modelling here, omitting significant detail on interconnecting structures and highlighting only one type of 'agent' from the original framework – audiences. For more detail on the UNESCO Cultural Value-Generation Model in an Australian context, see Part 2 of this report. For information about all domains, agents, inputs and outcomes proposed by UNESCO 'statistical universe', see UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *2025 UNESCO Framework for cultural statistics, Part I and 2025 UNESCO Framework for cultural statistics, Part II: A classification guide* (Montreal, Canada: UIS, 2025) <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000395491>.
- 3 ABS data relates to Adult Cultural Attendance, Children's Cultural Attendance, Culture Industry Counts, How Cultural Activity – Time Use Survey and Employment in Culture. This data resource was previously available from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sports and the Arts website. Cultural and Creative Statistics Working Group. 'Australia 2023.' Excel spreadsheet. 2024. Accessed 10 September 2025. <https://www.arts.gov.au/cultural-data-online/government-cultural-funding-and-participation>. Cultural attendance data for each year covers the 12 months before the interview and applies only to the survey years, which were 1995, 1999, 2002, 2005–06, 2009–10, 2013–14, 2017–18 and 2021–22. For more details see Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events, Australia', *ABS*, Accessed 10 September 2025, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/attendance-selected-cultural-venues-and-events-australia>; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Cultural and Creative Activities Methodology', *ABS*, Accessed 10 September 2025, <https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/cultural-and-creative-activities-methodology>. Other sources of data are from reports by: The OECD, *The Culture Fix: Creative People, Places and Industries*, (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2022) <https://doi.org/10.1787/991bb520-en>; The Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (BCARR), *Analysis of the Cultural and Creative Sector 2024*, (Commonwealth of Australia, 2024), <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/analysis-of-the-cultural-and-creative-sector-revive-sectoral-analysis-december2024.pdf>; The ACNC, 'Australian Charities Report 11th Edition: Charity Data Explorer', Accessed 21 October 2025, <https://www.acnc.gov.au/australian-charities-report-11th-edition-charity-data-explorer>.
- 4 Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, *Sport Horizon - National Sport Strategy 2024–2034*, (Commonwealth of Australia as represented by the Department of Health and Aged Care, 2024) <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/national-sport-strategy-2024-2034.pdf>.
- 5 Jan Hurt, et al., 'Evidence-Based Policy-Making in Sports Funding Using a Data-Driven Optimization Approach', *PLOS ONE* 19, no. 12 (31 December, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0312179>.
- 6 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, 'Are We There Yet?': From Recovery to Resilience – Opportunities and Challenges for Australia's Tourism Sector - Final Report for the Inquiry into Australia's Tourism and International Education Sectors, (Parliament of Australia, September 2024), 100, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Tourismandeducation/Final_Report
- 7 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. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-021-00956-5>.
- 8 Originating in engineering, mathematics and environmental science, the leverage points listed in **Table 1** have informed advice for broad public sector stewardship in both Australia and the UK. See Karen Gardner et al., *How Can Systems Thinking Enhance Stewardship of Public Services?* (NSW: Public Service Research Group, October 2019) https://www.unsw.edu.au/content/dam/pdfs/unsw-canberra/resources/2022-12-canberra/2023-08-PSRG%20Issues-Paper-4_20200317_0.pdf; Government of the United Kingdom, *Introduction to Systems Thinking for Civil Servants: Driving Improved Outcomes in Complex Situations*, (Government Office for Science, 2022), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/systems-thinking-for-civil-servants/introduction>. The above resource acknowledges instances where approaches other than systems thinking may be beneficial, yet encourages UK civil servants to consider using systems thinking under the following circumstances:
 - 'We are not really sure we understand the problem, let alone the solution.'
 - 'There is a significant diversity of opinion and even conflict among stakeholders and experts about what to do.'
 - 'There are many diverse and dynamic interconnections between the problem and the broader environment, which itself is unstable and dynamic (political, economic etc.).'
 - 'We are aiming to make sustained change at a broad scale.'
- 9 Knowledge and thinking about leverage has influenced fields such as fashion, health promotion and government responses to COVID-19. Alice Payne, 'Fashion Systems Thinking', in *Designing Fashion's Future: Present Practice and Tactics for Sustainable Change*, (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021), 13–39; Lori Baugh Littlejohns et al., 'The Value of a Causal Loop Diagram in Exploring the Complex Interplay of Factors That Influence Health Promotion in a Multisectoral Health System in Australia', *Health Research Policy and Systems* 16, no. 1 (December 2018): 126, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-018-0394-x>; Michelle J. Morgan, 'COVID-19: A Systems Perspective on Opportunities for Better Health Outcomes', *Geographical Research* 60, no. 4 (November 2022): 637–50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-5871.12561>.
- 10 A review of regulatory systems literature suggests three 'broad strains of systems thinking that regulators may wish to follow (or even combine) when calling for systems thinking or of regulatory governance'. They are
 - 'communicative' systems thinking to question whether the logic and language and of (government) regulation resonates with that of the actors and environment it seeks to influence
 - 'stocks and flows' systems thinking to explore the feedback loops, delays and nonlinearity that affect the regulatory problems
 - 'soft' systems thinking to question the human understanding of that very problem itself.For more information, see Jeroen van der Heijden, *Systems Thinking and Regulatory Governance: A Review of the International Academic Literature*, (APO, February 2020), <https://apo.org.au/node/303526>.
- 11 For instance, while all 12 levers may be beneficial, the measures with the highest chance of system-level impact and return are at the top of **Table 1**. As such, changing ways of thinking about culture and creativity are expected to be the most effective lever and achieve the deepest system-level change.
- 12 Donella H. Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, (White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2008), 164.
- 13 Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, 164
- 14 Birney, 'How Do We Know Where There Is Potential', 761

- 15 Christina Davies and Melanie Pescud, *The Arts and Creative Industries in Health Promotion: an Evidence Check rapid review brokered by the Sax Institute for The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation* (Ultimo, New South Wales: VicHealth, September 2020). <https://doi.org/10.37309/2020.CI877a>.
- 16 Davies and Pescud, *The Arts and Creative Industries*, 57.
- 17 That is, for the ABS, the categories of clothing and footwear, goods for recreation and culture, recreational and cultural services including audio, visual and computing equipment/services are 'discretionary goods/ services'. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Monthly Household Spending Indicator Methodology, March 2025', ABS, Accessed 6 May 2025, <https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/monthly-household-spending-indicator-methodology/mar-2025>.
For the Melbourne Institute's Household Expenditure Measure, these goods and services are described as 'discretionary basics'. For a more detailed breakdown, see the Department of Treasury summary, in Appendix C: CPI groups and components for Mandating cash acceptance Consultation paper. Based on Commonwealth of Australia, *Mandating Cash Acceptance Consultation Paper, (December 2024)*, <https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-12/c2024-604832-cp.pdf>.
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- 20 Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, 164
- 21 Justin O'Connor and Mark Gibson, *Culture, Creativity, Cultural Economy: A Review* (ACOLA, 2018), 20, <https://acola.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/06-culture-creativity-cultural-economy.pdf>.
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- 23 Sunderland, Bartleet, Woodland, O'Sullivan, Apps and Gregory, 'Exploring Arts-Health Ecologies in the Very Remote Barkly Region of Australia', *Rural and Remote Health*, 24, no. 2 (2024): 7832, <https://doi.org/10.22605/RRH7832>.
- 24 The South Australia Police band works with other areas across the agency to 'deliver police messages and build community relationships'. South Australia Police, 'Band of South Australia Police', Accessed 30 June 2025, <https://www.police.sa.gov.au/services-and-events/community-programs/band-of-sa-police>.
The NSW Police website notes that its band fulfils over 230 engagements each year. Government of New South Wales, 'About - NSW Police Band', *New South Wales Police Force*, Accessed June 30, 2025, https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/about_us/police_band/about.
- 25 The Australian Army Band consists of five full-time bands and six part-time bands, with all members being 'soldier musicians, who are required to regularly qualify in fundamental soldiering skills'. Department of Defence, 'Australian Army Band Corps', Accessed 30 June 2025, <https://www.army.gov.au/about-us/army-corps/australian-army-band-corps>.
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Meadows (p. 115) also states: 'If everyone can work harmoniously towards the same outcome (all feedback loops are serving the same goal), the results can be amazing.' 'The most familiar examples of this harmonisation of goals are [...] recovery after war or natural disaster.'
- 27 Birney, 'How Do We Know Where There Is Potential', 749-65.
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- 30 Tony Moore, Maura Edmond, Chris McAuliffe and Mark Gibson, *Fringe to Famous: Cultural Production in Australia After the Creative Industries*, (Sydney, NSW: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024).
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- 32 Baugh Littlejohns et al., 'The Value of a Causal Loop Diagram', 2.
- 33 Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, 160.
- 34 Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, 160.
- 35 *Thinking in Systems* defines a systems crime as follows: 'allowing species to go extinct is a systems crime, just as randomly eliminating all copies of particular science journals or particular kinds of scientists would be. The same could be said of human cultures, of course, which are the store of behavioural repertoires'. Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, 160.
- 36 Fran Martin et al., 'Transcultural Media Practices Fostering Cosmopolitan Ethos in a Digital Age: Engagements with East Asian Media in Australia', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 21, no. 1 (2 January 2020): 2-19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2020.1728921>.
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 - The 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage
 - The 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage
 - The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
 - The 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions
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According to further analysis of the OECD data by ACER, Singapore was the highest scoring country (or economy) in creative thinking. Korea, Canada and Australia performed at similar levels, lower than Singapore but higher than all other countries. Australia performed higher than 60 other countries, which included New Zealand, Estonia, Finland, Denmark, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong (China) and Macao (China). De Bortoli, L. and Underwood, C., *PISA 2022. Assessing Creative Thinking for a Better Future*, (Melbourne, Australia: Australian Council for Educational Research, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.37517/978-1-74286-754-0>. Also see the description by Australian Council for Educational Research – ACER, 'Australian Teenagers Top Creative Thinkers, but Confidence Varies', Accessed August 27, 2025, <https://www.acer.org/au/discover/article/australian-teenagers-top-creative-thinkers-but-confidence-varies>.
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- 81 The market organiser concept builds on an extensive study on 'Creative Industries Clusters'. This study shows the connections of public collecting institutions (e.g. galleries, libraries, archives, museums, zoos and aquaria) with other sectors and highlights the potential role of sector and intersector standards to grow these connections between people and entities. Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Creative Industries Cluster Study*, Volume II, (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2004).
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The Creative Hotspots research has also highlighted many of the broader challenges of industry growth, recommending better NBN connections in some locations, as well as other ideas such as the importance of Airbnb in enabling creative offerings such as festivals in regions. See for example Phillip McIntyre, Susan Kerrigan and Marion McCutcheon, *Australian Cultural and Creative Activity: A Population and Hotspot Analysis: Coffs Harbour*, (Queensland University of Technology, 2021), 37, <https://doi.org/10.5204/rep.eprints.208028>.
- 83 A technical definition of a feedback loop is a 'closed chain of causal connections from a stock, through a set of decisions or rules or physical laws or actions that are dependent on the level of the stock and back again through a flow to change the stock'. Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, 27.
When the concept is applied in fashion systems, feedback loops are described as 'circumstances that change, reinforce or balance the flows', with the example of a technological shift in one area of a system that creates an effect in another area of the system. Payne, 'Fashion Systems', 26.
- 84 Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, 170.
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- 87 Jessica McLean, Clare Southerton and Deborah Lupton, 'Young People and TikTok Use in Australia: Digital Geographies of Care in Popular Culture', *Social & Cultural Geography* 25, no. 5 (27 May 2024): 795–813, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2023.2230943>. Eric Goldman, 'Content Moderation Remedies', *Michigan Technology Law Review* 28, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.36645/mtlr.28.1.content>.
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- 89 American research has suggested this can include service providers reducing the visibility of content, people's access to accounts and even imposing financial consequences. See Goldman, 'Content Moderation Remedies'.
- 90 The specific factors outlined in the article include severity of the rule violation; confidence that a rule violation actually occurred; scalability and consistency; the community's ability to self-correct; how the remedies impact others; retaining user engagement while curbing violations and recidivism and parallel sanctions. For more detail, see Goldman, 'Content Moderation Remedies'.
- 91 The systems thinking concept 'delays' has also been defined as 'how quickly a system can react to a disturbance through a balancing feedback loop or how it may delay or speed up an amplifying feedback loop'. van der Heijden, 'Systems Thinking and Regulatory Governance' 20.
- 92 Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, 151.
- 93 Kate Fielding, Angela Vivian and Sari Rossi, *Accelerate: Reframing Culture's Role in Productivity, Insight Report*, (Canberra: A New Approach, 29 November 2023), <https://newapproach.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ANA-Accelerate-Productivity-Insight-Report-2023.pdf>.
- 94 See Box 2.2. Productivity Commission, *5-Year Productivity Inquiry: Advancing Prosperity*, Volume 11, (Canberra, 2023), 40 <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/productivity/report/productivity-advancing-prosperity-all-volumes.pdf>.
- 95 Ben McCann, 'Special Dossier: French Film Studies in Australia', *French Screen Studies* 23, no. 1 (2 January 2023): 46–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/26438941.2022.2160073>.
- 96 For example, Darcy Yuille's award winning *One Punch* was shot entirely on iPhone. The technology is opening new pathways for emerging filmmakers who may not have access to expensive equipment or a large crew. 'Cinematic Devices: Darcy Yuille on One Punch and Using Everyday Technology to Advantage', *Metro Magazine: Media & Education Magazine*, August 2022.
- 97 Productivity Commission *Future Foundations for Giving*, 259, 91.

- 98 Technically, in systems thinking, stocks are 'the elements of a system you can see, feel, count or measure at any given time'. Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, 17.

In the UK, the concept of stocks is used within the DCMS approach to valuing the benefits provided by culture and heritage assets. Harman Sagger, Jack Philips and Mohammed Haque, *Valuing Culture and Heritage Capital: A Framework towards Informing Decision Making*, (Department of Digital, Media and Sport, January 2021), 26, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/valuing-culture-and-heritage-capital-a-framework-towards-decision-making>;

These diverse settings are discussed in Australian research and data, for example in Matthew Bailey, 'Shopping for Entertainment: Malls and Multiplexes in Sydney, Australia', *Urban History* 42, no. 2 (May 2015): 309–29. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926814000583>; Philip Hider et al., 'Public Library Services in Rural Australia: Challenges and Prospects', *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association* 73, no. 2 (2 April 2024): 122–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24750158.2024.2315338>; and by the ACNC, 'Australian Charities Report 11th edition: Charity Data Explorer', Accessed 21 October 2025, <https://www.acnc.gov.au/australian-charities-report-11th-edition-charity-data-explorer>.

- 99 Cited in Christina R. Davies and Stephen Clift, 'Arts and Health Glossary - A Summary of Definitions for Use in Research, Policy and Practice', *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (22 July 2022): 949685. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.949685>.

- 100 Vivian, Rossi and Fielding *Thriving through Thick and Thin*.

- 101 Examples of some of these cross-sectoral partnership resources include Creative Victoria's Great Partnership Resources (Creative Victoria, 'Great Partnerships Resources', Accessed 1 May 2024, <https://creative.vic.gov.au/resources/great-partnerships/resources>) and published guidance of the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance, 'Enhancing Arts and Culture in the Criminal Justice System A Partnership Approach', *Arts in Criminal Justice*, (Clinks, 2019), <https://artsincriminaljustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Enhancing-arts-and-culture-in-the-criminal-justice-system.pdf>.

As noted, we spotlighted the award-winning example of Good Arts Good Mental Health (see also Christina Davies et al., 'A New Perspective to an Old Problem') and policy approaches and targets for facilitating access to arts and culture (see Commonwealth of Australia, *National Urban Policy* (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, 2024). <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/national-urban-policy.pdf>. and *Regional Australia Institute, Rebalance the Nation – Regionalisation Ambition 2032 A Framework to Rebalance the Nation* (Canberra: Regional Australia Institute, 2022), <https://rebalancethenation.com.au/common/Uploaded%20files/Rebalance-the-Nation/Rebalance-the-Nation-Report-2022.pdf>.)

For more discussion of these examples, see Vivian, Fielding and Rossi, *Transformative Edge* 2024.

- 102 Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, *Sport Horizon*.

- 103 For example, formal learning settings played a crucial role to The Newsreader production by the ABC. The lead performer trained at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA); its screenwriter had trained at the Australian Film and Television and Radio School (AFTRS), and the producer received mentoring and production support from the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF).

- 104 Australia is world-leading at using arts and culture to sustain urban, peri-urban, regional and rural development. For a description of the evidence on this theme, see Kate Fielding, Iva Glisic, and Jodie-Lee Trembath, *Transformative: Impacts of Culture and Creativity*, (Canberra: A New Approach and the Australian Academy of Humanities, November 2019), <https://newapproach.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2-ANAIInsightReportTwo-FullReport.pdf>.

A recent example of this place-making is described in Australian research by Elizabeth Ellison and Sasha Mackay, 'The Role of Universities in Strengthening Regional Arts Sectors: Central Queensland University and the Regional Arts Services Network', *The Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society* 53, no. 2 (2023): 136–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632921.2023.2184895>.

A review summarises the different roles that 'place-based arts' can play in advancing social equity and addressing social disadvantage. This research highlights skills and technical mastery as part of the 'personal development' outcomes of place-based arts and culture projects. Emma Heard, Brydie-Leigh Bartleet and Geoff Woolcock, 'Exploring the Role of Place-based Arts Initiatives in Addressing Social Inequity in Australia: A Systematic Review', *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 58, no. 3 (2023): 550–72. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.257>.

- 105 Key studies include those in the series by Macquarie University for Creative Australia, 'Art and Cultural Production by First Nations Artists in Remote Australia', *Creative Australia*, Accessed August 27, 2025, <https://creative.gov.au/research/art-and-cultural-production-first-nations-artists-remote-australia>; Creative Australia and Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA), *Creative Workforce Scoping Study - Full Report*, (2025), https://creative.gov.au/sites/creative-australia/files/documents/2025-05/Creative%20Workforce%20Scoping%20Study_Full%20Report.pdf; and David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya, *Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*, (Creative Australia, 2024), <https://creative.gov.au/sites/creative-australia/files/documents/2025-03/Artists-as-Workers-An-Economic-Study-of-Professional-Artists-in-Australia-2%20%281%29.pdf>.

- 106 The definitions of casual leisure and serious leisure used in ANA's framework draw from theory and academic sources. Specifically, '[Casual leisure] is immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy it.' 'Serious leisure is [...] the steady pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist or career volunteer activity that captivates its participants with its complexity and many challenges. It is profound, long-lasting and invariably based on substantial skill, knowledge or experience, if not a combination of all these three. It also requires perseverance to a greater or lesser degree.' Robert A. Stebbins. 'Serious Leisure', *Society* 23, no. 4 (2001): 335–41. The typology of leisure containing these two concepts also includes a third category that is project-based 'one-off project and occasional projects'. See Stebbins, Robert A. "Right Leisure: Serious, Casual, or Project-Based?" *NeuroRehabilitation* 23, no. 4 (2008): 335–41. <https://doi.org/10.3233/NRE-2008-23407>.

The 'fringe' referred to in this framework also draws from case study research in Australia, and broadly refers to a different category of opportunities and businesses from the 'mainstream', and characterised by 'scale, but also of institutional forms, characteristic relationships, ideas of value, aesthetic sensibilities and political commitments'. For more details on what characterises the fringe, see Moore, Edmond, McAuliffe and Gibson, *Fringe to Famous: Cultural Production in Australia After the Creative Industries*, 214.

- 107 ACER, 'Australian Teenagers Top Creative Thinkers'.

- 108 Serious leisure was theorised by Robert Stebbins, who identified over three hundred activities, including arts and cultural activities. Robert, 'Serious Leisure', 335–41.
- Recent research uses of this term in Australia have included the following: Lawrence J. Bendle and Ian Patterson, 'Mixed Serious Leisure and Grassroots Organizational Capacity: A Study of Amateur Artist Groups in a Regional Australian City', *Leisure Sciences* 31, no. 3 (2009): 272–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400902837878>; Simon Darcy et al., 'Artistic Impact: From Casual and Serious Leisure to Professional Career Development in Disability Arts', *Leisure Sciences* 44, no. 4 (2022): 514–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2019.1613461>; Joseph, Dawn, and René Human. 'It Is More Than Just about Music': Lifelong Learning, Social Interaction and Connection', *Muziki* 17, no. 1 (2020): 72–93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18125980.2020.1855082>.
- 109 Susan Kerrigan et al., 'A Creative Ecosystem: Regional Journalism as Scalable and Integrated Practice', *Media International Australia*, 0, no. 0 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X241291314>; Charles Leadbeater and Paul Miller, *The Pro-Am Revolution: How Enthusiasts Are Changing Our Economy and Society*, (Demos, 2004).
- 110 Moore, Edmond, McAuliffe and Gibson, *Fringe to Famous: Cultural Production in Australia After the Creative Industries*, 219.
- 111 Creative Australia, *Artists as Workers: A Summary and Response by Creative Australia*, (2024), https://creative.gov.au/sites/creative-australia/files/documents/2025-03/3654_Creative-Australia_Companion-Report_V6_0.pdf.
- 112 Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA), 'Scoping Creative Futures | Career Journey Mapping', Accessed August 21, 2025. <https://sacsa.org.au/our-projects/scoping-creative-futures-career-journey-mapping/>.
- 113 David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya, *Artists as Workers*.
- 114 Sandra Haukka, 'Education-to-Work Transitions of Aspiring Creatives', *Cultural Trends* 20, no. 1 (2011): 41–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2011.540813>.
- 115 Vincent et al., 'Who Did You Meet at the Venice Biennale? Education-to-Work Transition Enhancers for Aspiring Arts Professionals in Australia', *Work, Employment and Society* 37, no. 2 (2023): 315–32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170211004239>.
- 116 Anderson et al., "'Go Join That Radio Station up There": The Role of Australian Community Radio in Journalism Education and Training', *Australian Journalism Review* 44, no. 2 (2022): 171–89, https://doi.org/10.1386/ajr_00102_1.
- 117 See descriptions of education, training and the acquisition of cultural capital in the region-specific reports by Macquarie University for Creative Australia. The reports are available at 'Art and Cultural Production by First Nations Artists in Remote Australia', *Creative Australia*, Accessed August 27, 2025, <https://creative.gov.au/research/art-and-cultural-production-first-nations-artists-remote-australia>. More broadly, these reports seek to provide a national picture of how First Nations Artists establish, maintain and develop their professional art practice.
- 118 See Table 1 of Creative Australia's scoping study, which describes shortages in different types of roles and creative sectors, including production/technical, creative, management and support roles. Creative Australia *Creative Workforce Scoping Study*, 20.
- 119 For more updated data see, Australian Government, 'Occupation Shortage List', *Jobs and Skills*, Accessed August 26, 2025, <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-shortages-analysis/occupation-shortage-list>.
- Policy documents can provide details on skill shortages. See, for example, Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, *Creative WA: A 10 Year Vision to Grow and Sustain Our Creative Ecosystem*, (2024), 41, Accessed 21 May 2025, https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/docs/default-source/culture-and-the-arts/2225-creative-wa_a-10-year-vision.pdf?sfvrsn=f781694a_18.
- 120 At the time of writing Arts Administer or Manager was listed on the Medium and Long-term Strategic Skills List and Core Skills Occupation List. The ANZSCO label of Community Arts Worker features on the Regional Occupation List. 'Immigration and Citizenship Website.' Accessed September 18, 2025, <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/working-in-australia/skill-occupation-list>.
- 121 Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, 150.
- 122 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts, *Sculpting a National Cultural Plan: Igniting a Post-COVID Economy for the Arts*, (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, October 2021), https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Communications/Arts/Report; Taylor Brydges, Lisa Heinze and Monique Retamal, 'Changing Geographies of Fashion During COVID-19: The Australian Case', *Geographical Research* 59, no. 2 (May 2021): 206–16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-5871.12460>.
- 123 The inquiry report explains that 'major companies may commit to productions years in advance of the performance appearing on stage, and during the intervening period, audience tastes might change, or the performer's reputation might diminish'. Helen Nugent, *Securing the Future: Final Report of the Major Performing Arts Inquiry 1999*, (Canberra: Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, 1999), <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/1999-06/apo-nid17634.pdf>.
- 124 BCARR, *Analysis of the Cultural and Creative Sector: Revive: Sectoral Analysis*, (Canberra, ACT: Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, 2024), <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/analysis-of-the-cultural-and-creative-sector-revive-sectoral-analysis-december2024.pdf>.
- 125 The OECD research highlighted these schemes globally while noting that they were 'not always well-suited to the specificities of the sector or to support longer-term growth and resilience'. OECD *The Culture Fix*, 17.
- ANA research has analysed the expenditure data on Australia's COVID-19 support measures of the last three years. See Angela Vivian, Alan Hui, Kate Fielding, Tim Acker and Sari Rossi, *The Big Picture 4: Expenditure on Artistic, Cultural and Creative Activity by Governments in Australia in 2007–08 to 2021–22*, (A New Approach, May 2024), https://thebigpicture.newapproach.org.au/pdf/ANA_THE_BIG_PICTURE_4_REPORT_MAY_2024.pdf; Angela Vivian, Kate Fielding and Tim Acker, *The Big Picture 3: Expenditure on Artistic, Cultural and Creative Activity by Governments in Australia in 2007–08 to 2020–21*, *Insight report no. 2023-1* (A New Approach, 2023), https://newapproach.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/A-New-Approach-ANA_Big-Picture-3_-Expenditure-on-Artistic-Cultural-and-Creative-activity-by-governments-in-Australia-in-2007%E2%80%932020%E2%80%932021.pdf.
- The most recent economic outlook and the Australian Government's 40-year budget projections highlight the importance of maintaining a fiscal buffer to manage economic downturns. See Commonwealth of Australia, *Intergenerational Report 2023 Australia's Future to 2063*, (2023), <https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/p2023-435150.pdf>.

- 126 The digital pivot of many arts and cultural organisations in Australia is described in House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts, *Sculpting a National Cultural Plan*. For an international perspective, see Olena Khlystova, Yelena Kalyuzhnova and Maksim Belitski, 'The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Creative Industries: A Literature Review and Future Research Agenda', *Journal of Business Research* 139 (1 February 2022): 1192–1210, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.09.062>. Cited in OECD *The Culture Fix*, 161–162.
- 127 EY, *The Economic Contribution of Australia's Live Entertainment Industry*, (Commissioned by the Live Entertainment Industry Forum, 2020), https://liveeventsindustryforum.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/economic_contribution_of_the_live_entertainment_industry.pdf. Roger Wilkins, Ferdi Botha, Inga Laß and Kyle Peyton, *The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 22*, (Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, 2024), https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/5229912/2024-HILDA-Statistical-Report.pdf.
- 128 Nugent, *Securing the Future: Final Report*, 34.
- 129 Examples from Australian research on fashion industries include: the shop-local campaign #wewearaustralian, organised by a group of Australian fashion designers including Bassike, Carla Zampatti, Nobody Denim, R.M. Williams and the Upside, which offered discounts on new-season merchandise; Vogue Australia's 48-hour 'Fashion Relief' campaign; the department store David Jones launched a 'Home of Australian Fashion' campaign to further support local designers; AFC created a virtual business-to-business showroom. Brydges, Heinze and Retamal, 'Changing Geographies of Fashion During COVID-19', 206–16.

In late 2019, broadcasters collaborated to create a demand-side buying platform (DSP), giving advertisers a single interface to purchase TV across all broadcasters and platforms in Australia. Deloitte Access Economics, *Everybody Gets It: The Economic and Social Benefits of Commercial Television in Australia - Free TV Australia*, (2020), 44, <https://www.freetv.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Free-TV-Industry-Report-Everybody-Gets-It-20-July-2020.pdf>.
- 130 UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), *2025 UNESCO Framework for cultural statistics, Part I*, 84.
- 131 Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, 148.
- 132 Abson et al., 'Leverage Points for Sustainability Transformation', *Ambio* 46, no. 1 (2017): 30–39, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5226895/>.
- 133 See Hurt et al., 'Evidence-Based Policy-Making'. The same research has led to an [associated interactive dashboard](#) and online game to guide policy-makers and investors.
- 134 Gardner et al. 'How Can Systems Thinking Enhance Stewardship', 4.
- 135 Ryan Murphy, 'Finding (a Theory of) Leverage for Systemic Change: A Systemic Design Research Agenda', *Contexts – The Systemic Design Journal* 1 (December 2022): 10, <https://doi.org/10.58279/v1004>.
- 136 ANA has previously referred to this blockage, alongside the national evidence indicating that the cost of tickets/entry to arts events prevents over half of Australians from attending as many events as they would like to. See Vivian, Fielding and Rossi, 'Transformative Edge 2024' and Creative Australia, 'Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey', 2023, 14, <https://creative.gov.au/advocacy-and-research/creating-value/>.
- 137 European Commission, Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture., IDEA Consult., KEA. and imec SMIT VUB, *Mapping the Creative Value Chains*, 12.
- 138 Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, 28.
- 139 Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, 12.
- 140 UNESCO characterises the roles of agents and entities in the transversal domains of its model and framework as 'continuous', 'essential' and 'pivotal'. Activities, products and occupations differ across the six transversal domains described by UNESCO, with examples such as providing economic resources, knowledge, technologies or products to central agents, and facilitating access to goods and services within each system. UNESCO also categorises the domains as 'transversal cultural domains', 'partial cultural domains' and 'supporting domains'. For more details see UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *2025 UNESCO Framework for cultural statistics, Part I*, 30, 89.

It is worth noting that UNESCO's model, reproduced in **Figure 2**, does not show the 'Equipment and multi-purpose devices' transversal domain (i.e. computers, mobile phones and tablets as tools in enabling and enhancing cultural engagement). The domain is however defined and conceptualised in other parts of the 'statistical universe' as a way of 'highlighting the contributions of specialized equipment and supporting materials exclusively used for the creation, production, and distribution of cultural products'. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *2025 UNESCO Framework for cultural statistics, Part I*, 89.
- 141 UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *2025 UNESCO Framework for cultural statistics, Part I*, 13.
- 142 The visual representations and classification for all domains are provided in UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *2025 UNESCO Framework for cultural statistics, Part II*.
- 143 UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), *2025 UNESCO Framework for cultural statistics, Part I*, 27.
- 144 Sandra Gattenhof, Donna Hancox, Helen Klæbe and Sasha Mackay, 'Creative Partnerships for Social Impact: Addressing Domestic Violence in Regional Queensland', in *The Social Impact of Creative Arts in Australian Communities*, ed. Sandra Gattenhof, Donna Hancox, Helen Klæbe and Sasha Mackay (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2021), 93–106. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-7357-3_7. Milk Crate Theatre, *2023 Annual Impact Report*, (2023), https://0fe8297e-6a24-4870-aa29-8c0b6c82d504.usrfiles.com/ugd/0fe829_9c0c625374064c4eac62e564238bc4ca.pdf; Jacqueline Burgess, Jo Loth and Saskia De Klerk, "'The Theatre Was Dark': Exploring Regional Australian Theatre's Resilient Response to COVID-19", *Regional Studies* 58, no. 6 (June 2, 2024): 1282–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2023.2234405>; Caitlin Vincent, 'The Impacts of Digital Initiatives on Musicians During COVID-19: Examining the Melbourne Digital Concert Hall', *Cultural Trends* 32, no. 3 (27 May 2023): 247–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2022.2081488>.
- 145 For more detailed information on these cultural production processes across six regions of Australia, see the series of reports by Macquarie University for Creative Australia, 'Art and Cultural Production by First Nations Artists in Remote Australia', Creative Australia, Accessed August 27, 2025, <https://creative.gov.au/research/art-and-cultural-production-first-nations-artists-remote-australia>. The website notes that a National Database of Art and Cultural Production by First Nations Artists in Remote Australia will bring together the results.
- 146 Brydges, Heinze and Retamal, 'Changing Geographies of Fashion During COVID-19', 206–16.
- 147 Kerrigan et al., 'The Creative Sustainability of Screen Business in the Australian Regions', *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 14, no. 2 (2020): 111–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17503175.2020.1811486>. Also available at <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/204440/>.
- 148 McIntyre, Kerrigan and McCutcheon, *A Population and Hotspot Analysis: Coffs Harbour*; Architects Accreditation Council of Australia, *Industry Profile: The Profession of Architecture in Australia*, (2018); McIntyre, Balnaves, Kerrigan, King and Williams, 'Creativity and Cultural Production in the Hunter', 463–70.

- 149 Mark David Ryan, Greg Hearn, Marion McCutcheon, Stuart Cunningham and Katherine Kirkwood, *Australian Cultural and Creative Activity: A Population and Hotspot Analysis: Albany and Denmark*, (Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology, September 2021), <https://doi.org/10.5204/rep.eprints.213126>; McIntyre, Kerrigan and McCutcheon, *A Population and Hotspot Analysis: Coffs Harbour*.
- 150 UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *2025 UNESCO Framework for cultural statistics, Part I*, 28.
- 151 Mark David, Hearn, McCutcheon, Cunningham and Kirkwood, *A Population and Hotspot Analysis: Albany and Denmark*; McIntyre, Kerrigan and McCutcheon, *A Population and Hotspot Analysis: Coffs Harbour*; Hearn, Ryan, McCutcheon and Cunningham, *A Population and Hotspot Analysis: Fremantle*.
For an indicative list of the entities selling tickets and subscriptions to live performances in Australia, including recital halls, entertainment centres, theatres and more, see Ernst and Young, *Live Performance Industry in Australia 2024 Live Performance Attendance and Revenue Report*, (Live Performance Australia, 2025), Appendix A, https://reports.liveperformance.com.au/ticket-survey-2024/pdf/2024/2024%20Live%20Performance%20Australia_Attendance%20and%20Revenue%20Report.pdf.
- 152 Millicent Weber, Claire Parnell and Alexandra Dane, 'Book Publicists and the Labour of Cultural Intermediation', *Continuum* 37, no. 3 (2023): 365–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2023.2237708>.
- 153 Stuart Cunningham, Marion McCutcheon, Greg Hearn, Mark David Ryan and Christy Collis, *Australian Cultural and Creative Activity: A Population and Hotspot Analysis: Cairns*, (Queensland University of Technology, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.5204/rep.eprints.136825>; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts *Sculpting a National Cultural Plan*; Skye Akbar and Anne Sharp, 'Strengths and Challenges of Aboriginal Art Centre Marketing', *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1 (2020): 66–83. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/ielapa.194304642906962>.
- 154 Cecelia Cmielewski, Phillip Mar, Ien Ang, David Rowe and Deborah Stevenson, *Creative Production Synergies in Penrith and the Blue Mountains*, (Sydney: Western Sydney University, 2020); Bartleet et al., 'Desert Harmony: Exploring the Cultural, Social and Economic Value of a Multi-Arts Festival in the Remote Barkly Region', *Musicology Australia* 42, no. 2 (2 July 2020): 196–214, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08145857.2020.1948727>.
- 155 Jen Li, 'Choosing the Right Battles: How Independent Bookshops in Sydney, Australia Compete with Chains and Online Retailers', *Australian Geographer* 41, no. 2 (June 2010): 247–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049181003742369>; McIntyre, Kerrigan and McCutcheon, *A Population and Hotspot Analysis: Coffs Harbour*.
- 156 Ticketing companies operating in Australia include Oztix, Moshtix, Ticketek, Ticketmaster and Ticketbooth / Leap Event Technology. For a full list of other ticket and subscription providers, see Ernst and Young, 'Live Performance Industry in Australia', Appendix A.
- 157 UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *2025 UNESCO Framework for cultural statistics, Part I*, 28.
- 158 The list of other activities surveyed in several remote locations of Australia also included teaching, cultural archiving and record keeping, caring for country, bush food practices such as fishing, hunting and gathering, making Indigenous medicines or providing Indigenous health services, arts management and administration and providing cultural tourism services. Based on the UNESCO definition and classification guide, we have included these activities in the transversal domain of Cultural knowledge. See the reports by Macquarie University for Creative Australia, 'Art and Cultural Production by First Nations Artists in Remote Australia', Creative Australia, Accessed August 27, 2025, <https://creative.gov.au/research/art-and-cultural-production-first-nations-artists-remote-australia>.
- 159 Galea et al., 'The Impact of Shared Book Reading on Children and Families: A Study of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Tamworth, Australia', *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 22 April 2024, 1–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2024.2322731>; Hider, 'Public Library Services in Rural Australia', 122–47.
- 160 Alessandro Achilli, Marko Pavlyshyn and Olha Shmihelska-Kozuliak, 'Ukrainian Community Archives in Victoria, Australia: A Stocktake', *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 10, no. 1 (20 March 2023): 3–38, <https://doi.org/10.21226/ewjus658>; Sarah Baker and Zelmarie Cantillon, 'Safeguarding Australia's Community Heritage Sector: A Consideration of the Institutional Wellbeing of Volunteer-Managed Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums and Historical Societies', *Australian Historical Studies* 51, no. 1 (2020): 70–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2019.1659836>.
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