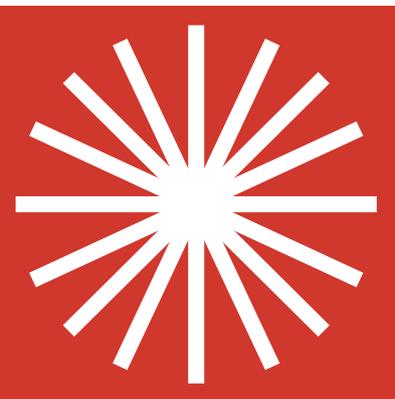


# National education and the arts statement



 MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION,  
EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

 Cultural  
Ministers  
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## Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs

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### Queensland

The Hon Rod Welford MP  
Minister for the Arts

### South Australia

The Hon Mike Rann MP  
Premier, Minister for the Arts

### Tasmania

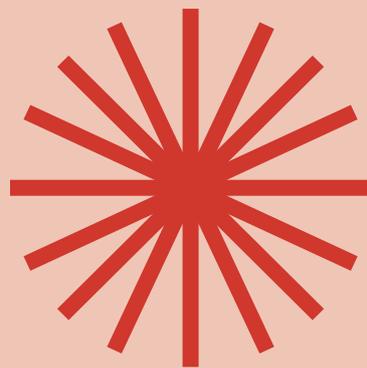
The Hon Paula Wriedt MHA  
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The Hon Sheila McHale MLA  
Minister for Culture and the Arts



## The Ministers' Message

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century provides a framework for national collaboration to meet the educational challenges of our times. This new National Education and the Arts Statement aims to build on that framework to foster a culture of creativity and innovation in Australia's school systems in partnership with creative individuals and organisations. The statement has been developed following extensive consultation with representatives within the arts and education sectors—both government and independent.

Schools that value creativity lead the way in cultivating the well-informed and active citizens our future demands: where individuals are able to generate fresh ideas, communicate effectively, take calculated risks and imaginative leaps, adapt easily to change and work cooperatively.

There is potential for creative achievement in many fields of human activity including science, mathematics, technology and the arts.

An education rich in creative arts maximises opportunities for learners to engage with innovative thinkers and leaders and to experience the arts both as audience members and as artists. Such an education is vital to students' success as individuals and as members of society, emphasising not only creativity and innovation, but also the values of broad cultural understanding and social harmony that the arts can engender.

As Ministers charged with education and nurturing the cultural life of the nation, we are committed to working together to support young Australians to realise their full creative potential. This statement sets out our agreed principles and priorities for working in partnership to realise this shared vision.



## Preamble

The arts are integral to our sense of identity—as individuals, as communities and as a nation. Through the arts and creative cultural expression we learn about ourselves: who we are, where we have come from and what we feel, value and believe.

The arts foster imagination, risk-taking and curiosity—important aspects of creativity. Governments, businesses and communities now widely regard creativity and innovation as fundamental to social, economic, cultural and technological growth. Arts-based enterprises are vitally important to economic success.

Education is the most important means for developing knowledge and wisdom in an active, productive society. Creativity in education is a necessity, nurturing imagination and curiosity – two vital elements that can drive learning for us all.

*The creative imagination knows no divide between science and art. It seeks the unknown and it invents the future. This imagination is a human resource whose creative potential has yet to be fully tapped and transformed into economic and social value for Australia.<sup>1</sup>*

We now need to mobilise our arts and education systems to reap the full benefits of creativity in our lives as individuals and communities, making us a creative and innovative nation.

Individuals' creative skills and capacities are nurtured through a balanced and dynamic education rich in arts and cultural experiences. Every child deserves such an education, with carefully planned opportunities to learn in and through the arts. Education systems that value and develop individuals' creative capacities help to position Australia as a vibrant nation in the global context.

A growing body of international and Australian research demonstrates the multiple benefits of an arts-rich education from an early age. Over and above the obvious development of individual creativity and self-expression, school-based arts participation can increase learners' confidence and motivation, thereby improving school attendance rates, academic outcomes and the wellbeing and life skills of children and young people.

Arts and culture can enrich our lives by building mutual respect and understanding. Australia's identity is enriched by our two unique Indigenous

<sup>1</sup> Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council, 'Imagine Australia – report on the inquiry into the role of creativity in an innovation economy', 2005



cultures – Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, by the wealth of cultural diversity brought to Australia through migration and by our distinct place in the Asia-Pacific region. An arts-rich education can help young people make sense of the world and enhance their awareness of diverse cultures and traditions and the wider global context in which they live.

This national statement aims to drive change. It lays the foundation for stronger coordination of government policy, programs and services in education and the arts for children and young people across Australia. It aims to build on the principles of both the Adelaide Declaration and the Stepping Forward declaration on improving pathways for all young people .

The statement is underpinned by three key principles:

1. All children and young people should have a high quality arts education in every phase of learning.
2. Creating partnerships strengthens community identity and local cultures.
3. Connecting schools with the arts and cultural sector enriches learning outcomes.

Arising from these principles are four key areas for collaborative action that were identified through the consultation process:

- professional development
- curriculum, policy and learning resources
- research and communication
- partnerships

The statement is for all educators who want students and schools to achieve and succeed through developing their capacity to discover, imagine and create. It is also for parents who understand the need for challenging and creative learning experiences for their children, for artists and organisations seeking stronger engagement with young people and schools, and for business leaders who recognise the need for new knowledge, skills and capacity for innovation that will lead Australia's growth into the 21st century.

The national statement is intended to guide arts and education leaders to ensure our education systems help children and young people to imagine, to dream and to achieve their very best.



# 1 All children and young people should have a high quality arts education in every phase of learning

Arts experiences enhance all phases of learning.

During early childhood the experimental, interactive and social nature of creative play is fundamental to human development.

The middle years see young people searching for identity and seeking to learn in unique and enlightening ways. The arts can help during this time by enhancing self-esteem and providing unique access to young people's experiences and perceptions of contemporary cultures.

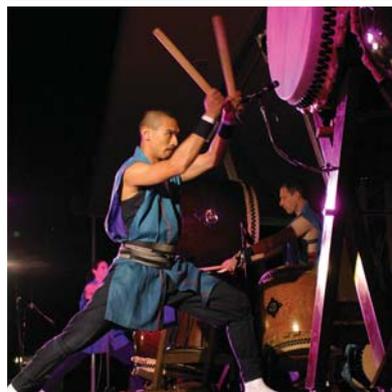
Rigorous academic arts subjects and experiences in the senior years act as pathways to the ever-expanding range of career opportunities in the creative industries—advertising, architecture, art, craft and design, fashion, film, music, new media, photography, software development, theatre, television and radio, writing and publishing. They also contribute to the cultural enrichment of local and global communities.

An arts experience can be the first meaningful point of engagement in the education system for many children and young people. All students, irrespective of their location, socio-economic status or ability should have equal opportunities to access and participate in an arts-rich schooling system that identifies and extends their natural talents.

The arts give all young people opportunities to experience, express, interpret and critique the cultural, geographic, political and social landscapes of our society. Recent research confirms that children and young people find participation in the arts stimulating and they want more creative opportunities in and out of school.

As well as connecting students to their culture, the arts are a valuable instructional method and medium that can support all key learning areas. The creative process can be aesthetic and sensory, cognitive, physical and social. It can occur in the classroom and in online and other learning environments. The principles of creativity—exploration, experimentation, perseverance, striving for excellence—are the same as those that guide and shape high standards in contemporary education.

School-based arts experiences should be diverse, based on models of effective practice, and embedded from the early years through to graduation in order to unlock the creative potential of our children and young people.



## 2 Creating partnerships strengthens community identity and local cultures

Community-based arts and education partnerships build social cohesion, respect, community spirit and active local citizenship. In an era of globalisation, partnerships between schools, artists, cultural institutions, communities, businesses and governments help to strengthen local identity and culture.

Effective education and the arts partnerships must be collaboratively planned and delivered around a shared vision focused on improving learning outcomes for students.

Creative partnerships increase community awareness of educational issues and can help mobilise and draw on communities' local arts and cultural resources. They build community capacity and capability. They also invigorate and revitalise teachers, providing fresh perspectives on diverse learning styles and creative ways to help more students reach higher levels of achievement.

Parents and families have a major influence on children's learning and attitudes. The authentic learning opportunities available in the arts provide common points of positive interest and optimism for schools and their communities. Creative partnerships that include opportunities for students to present their work can help

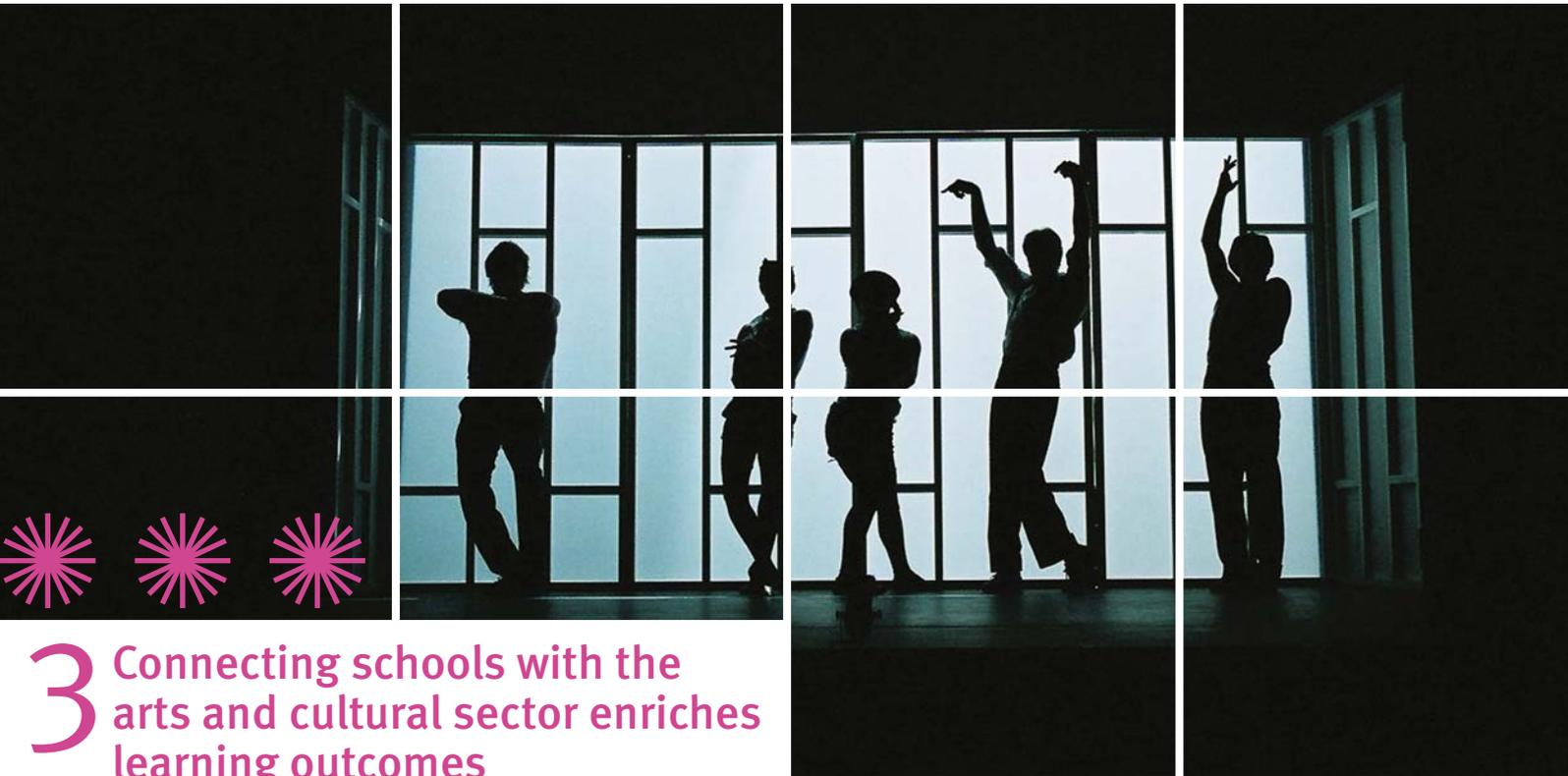
forge bonds between parents, families, schools and communities, and encourage active involvement of parents and families in their children's education.

The arts are integral to sustaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, including both traditional arts practices and new forms of artistic expression among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in urban and regional areas.

As well as being home to some of the world's oldest living Indigenous cultures, the Australian community is one of the world's most diverse, enriched by citizens originating from over 200 different countries and language groups.

Through arts and education partnerships we can celebrate our wealth of cultural diversity and strengthen traditions of cultural knowledge and expression in ways relevant to the 21st century.

Communities with schools as hubs for creative engagement can achieve intergenerational understanding and belonging, enhance social cohesion, improve quality of life and promote active community engagement.



### 3 Connecting schools with the arts and cultural sector enriches learning outcomes

Improving coordination of policies, programs and services for children and young people can deliver an integrated, comprehensive and effective approach to education and the arts within and outside schools.

Australia has a wealth of infrastructure in the education, arts and cultural sectors. There is a vibrant network of schools, artists, festivals, theatres, entertainment centres, cinemas, galleries, libraries and museums around the country. There is great potential for the education, arts and cultural sectors to better work together to share the resources, expertise and knowledge held in this existing infrastructure.

High quality arts education enables students to explore leisure and career options in Australia's expanding traditional, contemporary and popular arts and creative industries.

Australian arts companies and cultural institutions provide unique opportunities for students to experience excellence in the arts, to experiment with ideas, to learn about cultural traditions and to exhibit and perform alongside respected artists and in professional environments.

Teachers are often artists too. Their personal engagement in arts and cultural practices can provide a wide range of arts and learning opportunities for their students.

There are many artists in communities already supporting the creative education of young people. Family, community members and independent arts teachers play a crucial role in the many pathways through which young people develop creative skills and learn to appreciate their own and others' cultural traditions and values.

In order to foster their crucial role in arts education, it is necessary to provide opportunities to build and sustain the skills and knowledge of both teachers and artists through pre-service teacher education and ongoing dialogue and professional development with both groups.

Working constructively with Australia's thriving arts and cultural sector helps build creative and sustainable communities. Connections and collaborations between artists, creative organisations, teachers, schools and educational institutions must be strengthened to allow all students to realise their full creative potential.



## The way forward

This National Statement on Education and the Arts describes a vision for education and the arts in Australia. Many effective programs and partnerships already exist between education and arts organisations across the country—ranging from small, localised projects to statewide programs.

Governments, educators, the arts and cultural sector, parents, local communities and businesses must continue to work together to fully realise this vision for all students.

Four keys areas for collaborative action were identified through the consultation process conducted in the development of this statement:

- professional development
- curriculum, policy and learning resources
- research and communication
- partnerships.

Through this statement, all jurisdictions agree to:

- build and sustain the skills and knowledge of teachers and artists through pre-service teacher education and opportunities for the professional development of both groups
- continue to develop and disseminate high quality policy frameworks, curriculum guidelines and learning resources which provide children and young people with relevant and engaging opportunities to participate in the arts in both educational and cultural settings
- promote a culture of creativity in childhood and of innovation in schools through fostering and showcasing effective programs based on sound research
- facilitate sustainable partnerships between the education, arts and cultural sectors to enrich learning in and through the arts.

By working together, we can ensure a rich and enlightened future for all Australians and continue to build the nation's cultural economic prosperity. The future is ours to create.