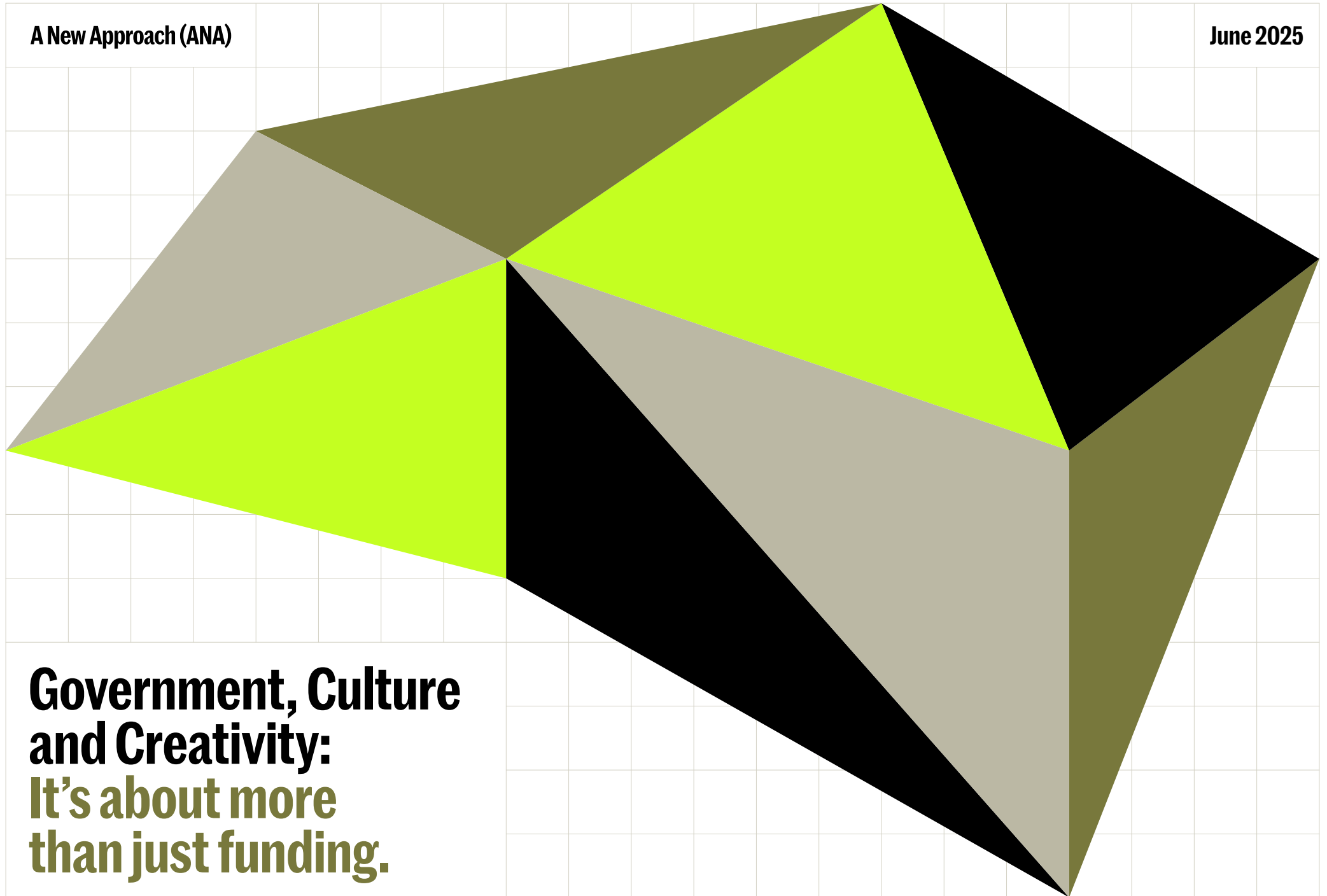


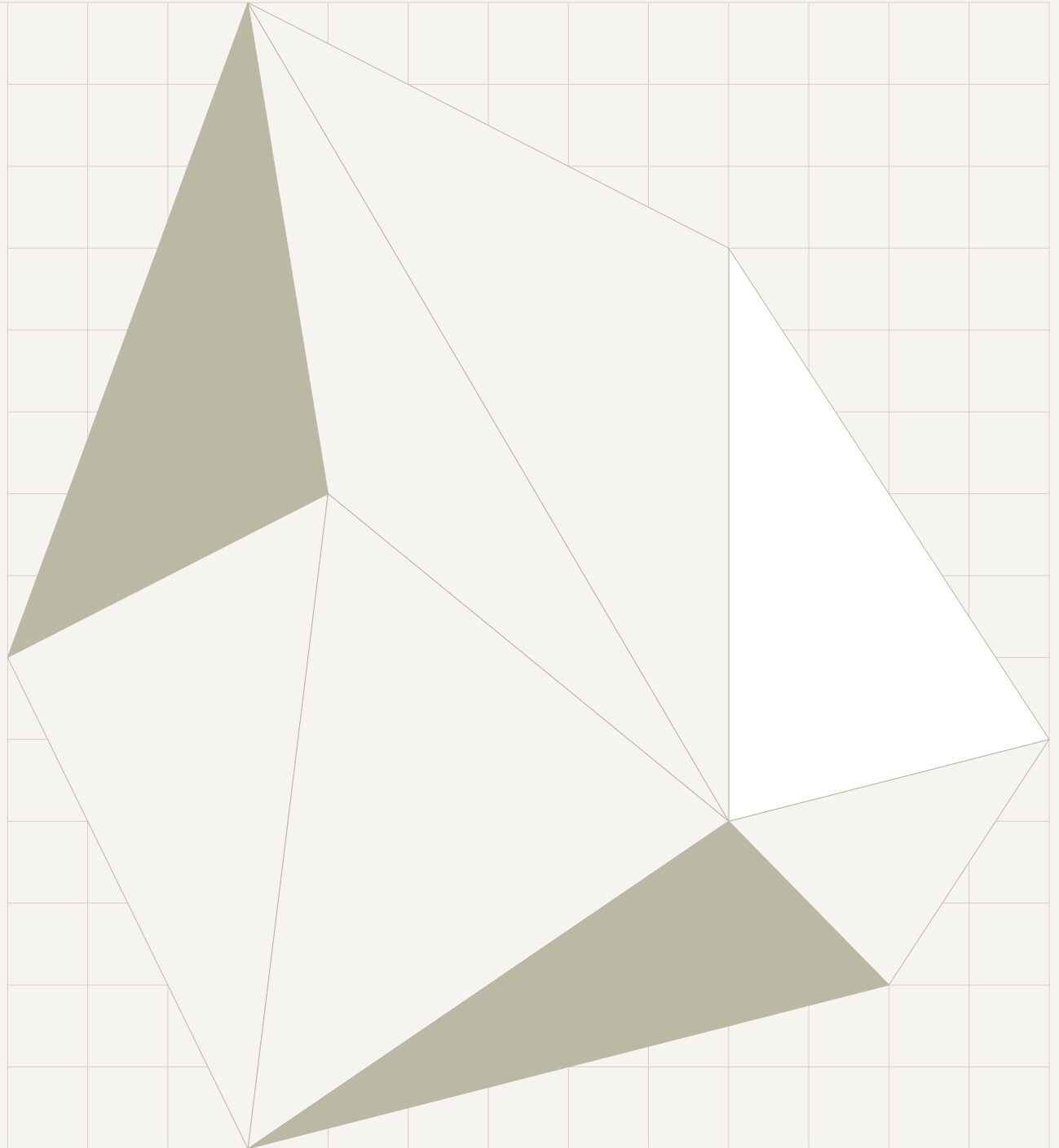
**A New Approach (ANA)**

**June 2025**



**Government, Culture  
and Creativity:  
It's about more  
than just funding.**

# Executive Summary



It's a challenging economic environment, with high cost of living and international uncertainty all putting pressure on budgets, including government budgets.

But even when times are tough, people in Australia still want to enjoy creative and cultural experiences,<sup>1</sup> including Australian-made content – and they expect all three levels of government to help make that possible.<sup>2</sup>

Across Australia, cultural ministers and policymakers are asking, 'What are the no and low-cost ways we can stimulate cultural and creative activity to complement and enhance the direct investments that governments already make?'

The **primary purpose** of this Insight Report is to showcase the broad range of actions governments can take to strengthen cultural access and foster robust cultural industries *in addition* to direct funding.

This report describes the 'pro-culture' enablers that are available to governments, including options that may prove themselves to be cheaper, easier and more effective than direct funding. It provides examples from different parts of Australia that could be adopted more broadly, as well as ideas from overseas that Australian governments could try. Often, these enablers are *uniquely* available to governments.

This Insight Report is geared towards informing decisions about how governments get full value from their direct funding dollars already invested in arts, culture and creativity. It focuses on actions that governments can take to complement (not replace) these direct investments so that people in Australia can continue to access, enjoy, create and benefit from cultural opportunities.

Governments are generally interested in fostering creative and cultural engagement because they want people to have a sense of belonging and connection, for local industry to thrive, and for Australian stories to be told on the world stage.

More broadly, international and domestic evidence shows that cultural and creative engagement can assist Australia in tackling some of our biggest public policy challenges, including reconnecting our communities, strengthening our economies, building social cohesion and helping us lead healthy, safe and sustainable lives.<sup>3</sup>

## What we conclude

This research reveals there are eight types of pro-culture enablers for governments in Australia to consider (see **Exhibit 1**). These eight enabler types can serve at least three functions:

- facilitate financial inflows
- facilitate operations
- increase engagement opportunities.

We also found that, while many governments use some of these enablers, there are ample opportunities to consider additional measures, including learning from other jurisdictions. Enablers can be tailored by jurisdictions to suit their circumstances.

## What do we mean by enablers?

For the purpose of this report, enablers are distinct from direct funding. They include:

- **no or low-cost actions**, which we recognise may incur set-up, maintenance, staffing and training costs
- **revenue forgone** (e.g. resulting from tax concessions), which we recognise also has a cost

Refer to the **Glossary of Terms** for further details about the terminology used in this report.

## Why discussing pro-culture enablers is important

Direct funding by governments is a crucial part of the overall revenue for organisations in the cultural and creative industries and is relatively well documented.<sup>4</sup>

But there is less understanding of the other ways that governments enable arts, culture and creativity.

This report makes this important information visible and accessible across jurisdictions and cultural industries, all of which are navigating difficult operating conditions.

All forms of government action merit attention as we strive to secure Australia's position as a cultural powerhouse and optimise investment and activity for cultural purposes and economic and social returns (including improving productivity, health and cohesion).

Learning about the pro-culture enablers identified in this report can:

- improve access to cultural and creative experiences for people in Australia with benefits for national economies
- underline the mix of policy and regulatory measures needed in a pro-culture legislative, regulative and leadership environment
- equip people and organisations with information about national and international enablers they can harness to grow creativity.

This Insight Report provides a foundational knowledge on what governments are *already* doing and highlights what else they *could* be doing based on examples from other portfolios and overseas. While this report identifies actions and quick wins that governments can take right now, ANA will also undertake and publish further analysis and guidance for governments asking 'what *should* we be doing?'

## What ANA examined

Overall, this research examined the following questions:

1. What government enablers are currently available – outside direct funding – to grow cultural and creative engagement and strengthen cultural and creative industries?
2. What international examples of pro-culture enablers exist that are different to Australian examples?
3. What are some key benefits and drawbacks of the identified enablers?
4. What are the enabler-based opportunities that sit outside traditional domestic cultural policy?
5. What are the opportunities based on these findings?

We consulted across all levels of government and a wide range of cultural industry bodies to identify examples and better understand the national enabling environment.

## What ANA recommends

It is clear from this research that there are many no and low-cost things governments already do to stimulate cultural and creative activity, to improve cultural access and to strengthen our cultural industries. We recommend strengthening, safeguarding and expanding existing enablers across the country to support Australia in securing its place as a cultural powerhouse.

Governments face many resourcing constraints. In this context, ANA encourages governments, now and in the future, to consider how the identified pro-culture enablers and international examples can form part of their full suite of actions. This ought to include agencies working proactively together (within each tier of government, as well as across tiers of government).

This report examines the opportunities arising from the inventory of enablers in the following five focus areas: access, infrastructure, innovation, production and protection. These focus areas of governments and this Insight Report cross traditional boundaries between ministers' portfolios and the federal, state and territory, and local levels of government.

Noting this boundary-spanning, each level of government can play to their strengths and established responsibilities when designing and expanding pro-culture enablers. To coordinate this work, we recommend the establishment of a Ministerial Council reporting to the National Cabinet focused on cultural access and participation and the cultural and creative industries.

Other practical suggestions recommended in this report are:

- to engage with the recommendations about enablers described by international organisations, including the Organisation for Economic Cooperation (OECD), United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)
- to leverage Australia's existing biannual survey of cultural funding with a question about government action beyond direct funding.

**Exhibit 1: ANA reveals there are eight types of pro-culture enablers available to Australian governments distinct from direct funding, and provides examples (items in **bold** are most likely to be cheaper and easier).<sup>5</sup>**

<b>1</b> <b>Fit-for-purpose and streamlining measures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘One-stop shops’ to improve access and reduce red tape delays</li> <li>• Preapproved plans for events</li> <li>• Procurement guidelines and principles</li> <li>• <b>Permits to access specific government sites/facilities for cultural purposes</b></li> </ul>	<b>2</b> <b>Legislation, regulations and standards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Copyright and IP legislation</b> and protections</li> <li>• <b>Tax system legislation</b></li> <li>• <b>Night-time economy legislation</b> and regulation</li> <li>• Local content quotas and rules</li> <li>• Signatory to international conventions (e.g. UNESCO)</li> <li>• <b>Industry codes of practice and standards</b></li> </ul>	<b>3</b> <b>Measures to develop skills, career pathways and knowledge sharing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and advisory services (including capability building, skills development, job pathways and networking opportunities)</li> <li>• Collecting and <b>publishing data</b> on arts, culture and creative sector outcomes and widening access to research and data infrastructure</li> <li>• Updates of training packages or fee structures that incentivise creative learning</li> <li>• <b>Inclusion of Australian texts in the curriculum</b></li> </ul>	<b>4</b> <b>Measures that facilitate co-investment and collaboration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships, intermediation and harmonisation (including intergovernmental, intragovernmental, public-to-private and cross-sector)</li> <li>• Facilitated access to finance (e.g. blended finance, such as impact investing, and access to public loans)</li> <li>• <b>Creative industries expertise to shape relevant government policies</b> (e.g. participation on advisory groups and co-design approaches)</li> </ul>
<b>5</b> <b>Non-commercial rates</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free or reduced cost to use/access infrastructure, assets or facilities (e.g. free parking, property rentals, community venue access and entry fees)</li> <li>• Access to specialist equipment</li> <li>• Co-working hubs</li> </ul>	<b>6</b> <b>Indirect industry assistance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tax concessions, including deductions, exemptions and offsets</li> <li>• Operating the authorising and administrative mechanisms for donations</li> <li>• Administering copyright and rights compensation mechanisms</li> <li>• Co-production agreements</li> </ul>	<b>7</b> <b>Information, promotion and marketing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Streamlined information about arts and culture events and activities</b></li> <li>• Localised promotion and marketing campaigns</li> <li>• National promotion initiatives (e.g. Arts Week and National Giving Day to the Arts)</li> <li>• Awards programs</li> <li>• <b>Convening, consensus-building and community engagement</b></li> </ul>	<b>8</b> <b>Special consideration for eligibility and exemptions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exemptions to efficiency dividends</li> <li>• <b>Ensuring arts and cultural activities and institutions are eligible within existing voucher/subsidy programs where appropriate</b></li> <li>• Improving digital and telecommunications connectivity as platforms for cultural participation and access</li> </ul>

## Summary of findings

## 1

Governments at all levels take actions to enable cultural and creative activities beyond direct funding mechanisms.

## 2

There are eight types of pro-culture enablers available to Australian governments beyond direct funding:

1. Fit-for-purpose and streamlined initiatives
2. Legislation, regulations and standards
3. Measures to develop skills, career pathways and knowledge sharing
4. Measures that facilitate co-investment and collaboration
5. Non-commercial rates
6. Indirect industry assistance
7. Accessible information, promotion and marketing
8. Special consideration for eligibility and exemptions.

## 3

Pro-culture enablers span at least three broad functions, which may overlap:

1. Facilitating financial inflows
2. Facilitating operations
3. Increasing engagement opportunities.

# Summary of opportunities

**1** Each level of government can play to its strengths and established responsibilities when designing and expanding pro-culture enablers.

Steps to implementation:

- Identifying new enablers based on other jurisdictions' actions and experiences.
- Reviewing the enabling environment of arts, culture and creativity beyond the traditional boundaries of 'domestic cultural policy' (i.e. drawing on other portfolio and international examples). International organisations and reports are key sources for knowledge that can inform this review.
- Embedding enablers in diverse policies and through focus areas and agendas for access, infrastructure, innovation, production and protection.

**2** The cultural and creative industries can leverage and work with governments to expand existing pro-culture enablers that strengthen access and foster robust industries.

Implementing this would involve:

- Harnessing the options from the inventory in **Part 1**, where industry organisations and people are already eligible.
- Discussing enabler options with government colleagues, including through ongoing advocacy for no and low-cost options and sharing evidence about drawbacks and benefits.

**3** To maximise opportunities to learn, co-deliver and collaborate, the National Cabinet should establish a Ministerial Council of Cultural Ministers, including a seat for a representative of Australian local governments.

This will strengthen collaboration and knowledge sharing across jurisdictions, including about the types of enablers described in this report.

**4** Government leadership can be strengthened by instating an Assistant Minister for Arts and Culture at the federal level and introducing equivalent roles for state and territory jurisdictions.

Extending this governance model, currently found in the Northern Territory and Queensland,<sup>6</sup> to other jurisdictions could assist Australia in resolving any overlapping interests between ministries at the state and territory and federal levels.

**5** Develop a consistent approach to evaluate pro-culture enablers. This would inform decision-making and action across jurisdictions by strengthening the evidence base.

Implementing this could involve choosing a selection of enablers that justify formal evaluation from across the eight broad enabler types identified by ANA.

**6** To increase awareness of enabler prevalence and options across jurisdictions, existing data collection mechanisms can be adjusted.

One practical action is to include a survey question in the ABS's next national data collection for the Cultural Funding by Government (CFG) survey asking jurisdictions about enablers beyond currently reported expenditure.