

**The Australian Craft and Design Centre (ACDC) Network - some further detail on our submission, and our contribution to the delivery of *Revive: A place for every story, a story for every place*.**

***Strong Institutions.***

Craft and design infrastructure in Australia is fragile and limited. While ACDC members play a key role in supporting the career development of makers, there is a lack of strategic investment in long-term market development, training and professional development and in the promotion of links with other sectors such as Tourism and Manufacturing. The withdrawal of funding from the Australian Design Centre and its imminent closure further weakens the sector with makers in NSW now without access to critical support.

Strong national infrastructure supports makers to keep making locally, and that matters economically and environmentally. A new national framework that takes a strategic whole-of-sector approach would help unlock this potential for the benefit of all Australians, not just the sector.

We propose the establishment of a new dedicated body within Creative Australia (similar to Music Australia), that in partnership with the ACDC network, can take a strategic approach to addressing those areas of the industry value chain that are not well serviced through current support mechanisms, particularly export and market development. Music Australia with its focus on industry development is a model that could be applied very effectively to the Craft and Design Sector. Currently, data on the sector cannot easily be disaggregated from the broader Visual Arts and Crafts. An initial priority could be to develop a detailed profile of the sector, including its potential to value-add to supply chains in other sectors (such as manufacturing) and an analysis of international markets.

We see this as a whole of government initiative that would necessarily involve the development of strategic alliances with the ACDC Network, Tourism and Trade agencies, the Industry and Education portfolios, and others. It would advocate for the sector and develop funding pathways backed by investment to secure the future of designers and makers, regional practice and craft and design innovation across the country.

***The Centrality of the Artist.***

The *Creative Workplace Scoping Study Report* highlighted an acute shortage of designers and craft practitioners and noted the loss of specialist higher education courses and training as impediments to addressing workforce demand and industry potential.

The makers our organisations represent are not just artists, they are primary producers of Australian-made goods. Investing in skills and training pathways for craftspeople and designers grows the community of makers whose locally produced work keeps money in Australian communities, builds the market for design-led artisan manufacture, and offers a

genuinely sustainable alternative to mass-produced, globally shipped goods. Locally made objects have shorter supply chains, lower embodied carbon, and are produced with greater attention to material provenance and longevity.

We propose the development of a 10 year workforce plan which addresses key issues including skills and training pathways for crafts people and designers. This could be delivered by the proposed new body in partnership with the ACDC network, and Creative Workplaces. It could be supported through cross government partnerships with the education and Industry portfolios, and utilise existing frameworks such as Job Skills Australia and programs such as New Enterprise Incentive Scheme.

### ***Reaching the Audience.***

When audiences engage with craft and design, in festivals, workshops, markets, and open studios, they don't just encounter beautiful handmade objects. Research consistently demonstrates that hands-on creative participation reduces stress, builds social connection, and supports mental health and wellbeing. Reaching wider audiences is therefore not just a market development opportunity, it is an investment in community health and social cohesion. The uniqueness of the sector, its roots in First Nations traditions, its multicultural influences, its connection to place and material, is equally a powerful drawcard for inbound tourism and international markets, building Australia's reputation as a creative, design-literate nation.

The uniqueness of Australian craft and design has been undervalued and there is significant unrealised potential in international markets. Australian designers and makers are increasingly being recognised internationally.

To maximise return on investment in a rapidly growing market, and to address barriers to participation by Australian makers, we are asking for a 10 year market development, cultural tourism and export strategy that gets them in front of global audiences. It should include representation at showcase events like Milan Design week and through international residencies and exchange. This could be developed in partnership with Austrade and Tourism Australia and other relevant portfolios. A focus should be on facilitating the uptake of existing programs and funding mechanisms, such as the Export Market Development Grants Scheme.

## **ACDC Case Studies - supporting the delivery of Revive.**

### **1. First Nations First**

#### ***Canberra Glassworks/Iltja Ntjarra Art Centre***

*Canberra Glassworks' partnership with Iltja Ntjarra Art Centre has delivered a nationally significant body of work connecting contemporary glass practice with the enduring legacy of Western Arrernte watercolour painting, cultural knowledge, and intergenerational artistic exchange. Developed through sustained collaboration between artists, curators and technical*

teams, the project has generated three major outcomes: presentation in the National Gallery of Australia's *After the Rain*, inclusion in *Tarnanthi*, and the Canberra Glassworks exhibition *Through the Window*. Together, these outcomes have created new artistic opportunities, expanded audiences, strengthened national recognition for Iltja Ntjarraartists, and demonstrated the potential of glass as a powerful medium for cultural storytelling. The project's major outcome was the presentation of *Arrkurla nakala kurunga lyaarta-ntama (Before and After)* in *After the Rain*, the 5th National Indigenous Art Triennial at the National Gallery of Australia and reached an audience of 128,699 visitors. The presentation significantly increased public awareness of Iltja Ntjarra's contemporary practice, and positioned the artists' watercolour tradition within a broader national conversation about Country, memory, legacy and architectural form.

**Australian Tapestry Workshop - New tapestry designed by Maree Clarke (Yorta Yorta, Wamba Wamba, Mutti Mutti,Boonwurrung) and Mitch Mahoney (Boonwurrung/Barkindji)**  
In 2024, ATW worked with a consortium of partners to commission a monumental artwork from Clarke and Mahoney for the new Footscray Hospital. Together with ATW's master weavers, dye specialists and support staff, Clarke and Mahoney developed *Welcome to Country — Now You See Me: Seeing the Invisible — Australia's largest 3D tapestry*.

The 10m wide, 4.2m high work required more than 10,000 hours of labour and 270 kilometres of yarn. The design drew inspiration from traditional river reed necklaces, once bestowed upon travelers as symbols of hospitality and friendship. The project produced a landmark cultural work that honours the past while speaking to the present. It highlights the endurance of First Peoples cultural practices.

The collaboration also strengthened intergenerational cultural transmission, with Mahoney stepping into a leadership role alongside his mentor, Clarke. This project exemplifies how investment in cultural infrastructure generates profound community impact.

## **2. A Place for Every Story**

### **Australian Design Centre (ADC) - Galerie Handerk Munich**

In 2024, ADC's Lisa Cahill and international artist Helen Britton were invited by the Director of Galerie Handwerk in Munich to curate work by Australian artists for an exhibition to be held during Munich Jewellery Week 2025. This opportunity to exhibit Australian artists in Munich, has enabled ADC to focus on what makes Australian work foreign yet familiar in this international context. Artists were selected for this exhibition from the East and West of Australia. Many of the artists are Indigenous Australians - others have followed a European model of contemporary studio practice with a focus on place and materiality that makes their work unique. ADC has a long history of exhibiting contemporary jewellery and through these exhibitions has charted the development of a particularly Australian aesthetic. Showing the exceptional craft practice, innovative use of materials, sense of place and sources of inspiration for Australian artists.

## **Craft + Design Canberra Festival**

*The biennial Craft + Design Canberra Festival celebrates Canberra as a creative capital and global city of design, connecting the community with places, makers, designers and innovators through exhibitions, talks, symposiums, workshops, open studios, design markets and public art across the city. The 2024 Festival was the largest in the Festival's ten year history. It engaged 141,772 people, with 96,772 direct attendees at programs and galleries and 45,000 plus engaging with public art and exhibitions in public spaces. The Festival delivered 110 plus programs and events with more than 500 artists, craftspeople and designers involved across jewellery, woodwork, textiles, glass, ceramics and more, generating \$15.9 million in economic impact for Canberra and returning \$744,914 in direct income to artists*

## **3. The Centrality of the Artist**

### ***Design Tasmania - Tasmania Makes 2025***

*Tasmania Makes 25 was the second edition of Design Tasmania's signature designer development program, with 15 designers and makers producing 61 new works. Cross-industry partnerships defined the program: Hydrowood, Australia's only underwater timber recovery operation; Timber World Tasmania; and Waverley Mills, Australia's last fully vertical woollen mill. Mentorship was provided by senior Tasmanian furniture designer Simon Ancher; an important learning environment amidst the context of dramatic cuts to craft and design tuition.*

*The exhibitions drew 11,778 visitors to experience contemporary Tasmanian design practice from every Australian state and territory. Three participants had works acquired into the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery's State Collection, a rigorous and selective process. Isaac Williams was selected for the Rigg Design Prize at NGV and two designers secured new project funding as a direct downstream outcome of their participation, representing the value and concentration of career-building outcomes from the Tasmania Makes program.*

### ***Guildhouse – The Guildhouse Fellowship***

*The Guildhouse Fellowship is a nationally significant, 18-month opportunity for makers and designers, setting them up for long-term success right when they need it most - at the mid-point of their careers. The Fellowship combines major financial and institutional support to give makers and designers the financial freedom to experiment and develop their practice without the need to generate external income. The Fellowship includes a \$50,000 artist fee plus superannuation (paid as fortnightly income), legacy collateral and an exhibition sharing the outcomes of their exploration with audiences at the Art Gallery of South Australia. All six recipients to date have continued to expand their careers nationally and internationally through*

*increased profile, major acquisitions, solo exhibitions, residencies and awards. The program is delivered by Guildhouse in partnership with the Art Gallery of South Australia and funded by the James and Diana Ramsay Foundation.*

#### **4. Strong Institutions**

##### ***Australian Tapestry Workshop – Production Support for Public Art***

*Melbourne-based Korean/Japanese artist Ema Shin first connected with ATW as an artist in residence in 2017. While she continued to exhibit, teach and engage with ATW programs, she faced limitations in scaling her sculptural textile works. In 2024, she approached ATW seeking access to specialised equipment and expertise including large floor looms and advanced dye facilities.*

*ATW provided Shin with space, equipment, and materials, enabling her to experiment with larger-scale works. In 2025, ATW hosted the Curator and CEO of the Biennale of Sydney in a studio visit. They experienced Shin's work in progress. This led to a commission for a major sculptural installation at the Biennale of Sydney 2026; a career milestone for Shin that would not have been possible without ATW's support. The project also strengthened Shin's ability to secure additional grant funding, ensuring greater sustainability for her practice.*

*This collaboration demonstrates ATW's role as a catalyst for artist development and international recognition. Documenting the project has developed ATW's capacity for textile art production, ensuring that future artists can benefit from the same facilities and expertise.*

##### ***Artisan (QLD) - Expo 2025 Osaka***

*In 2025, Artisan with the support of Arts Queensland, Trade Investment Queensland and The Tim Fairfax Foundation, led Queensland's second curated craft and design delegation to Osaka World Expo, 40 years after the 1985 visit. Seven makers networked and presented 15 works to an international audience of 16,000-plus, exceeding the target by 60%, with 30% First Nations-led content. Five concrete international partnerships were opened. They are in preliminary stages of exchange and other developments.*

#### **5. Reaching the Audience**

##### ***Jam Factory Craft and Design Centre - Chihuly in the Botanic Gardens.***

*This highly successful exhibition by internationally recognised glass artist Dale Chihuly was presented in partnership with ACDC member, the Jam Factory Craft and Design Centre. The exhibition drew 1.4 million visitors with 27% of those being from interstate and 9% from overseas. It generated \$55.7 million for the South Australian economy, with more than 195,000 visitor nights and the equivalent of 300 full-time jobs. Through the Jam Factory, opportunities were created for makers to develop product for the exhibition for sale through on-site retail*

outlets and the Jam Factory's own stores. These along with products developed by, and in partnership with the Chihuly studio, generated almost \$1 million in new income for makers.

### **Australian Design Centre - Sydney Craft Week**

*Sydney Craft Week Festival (SCW) is the first and only city-wide festival dedicated to presenting the latest in contemporary craft and offering experiences for the public to get involved. SCW encourages an appreciation of making by hand, and learning new practical and creative skills in different workshops and events. The 2025 program included 600+ participating artists and 57 participating groups presenting 245 events across 37 Sydney suburbs and select regional areas including the Illawarra and Central Coast. An estimated 86,345 people attended 38 exhibitions, 40 retail events including 5 markets, 113 workshops and talks and 54 live demonstrations, open studios and digital events.*

### **The Australian Craft and Design Centre (ACDC) Network.**

The Australian Craft and Design Centre Network brings together organisations across Australia dedicated to supporting professional craft and design practice. We develop designers and makers, connect them with audiences and advocate for the conditions that allow this sector to thrive. Through exhibition programs, residencies, retail, education and public engagement, ACDC members collectively reach millions of Australians each year, supporting makers at every stage of their practice.

The ACDC Network includes the following organisations:

- Artisan (QLD)
- Australian Design Centre (NSW)
- Australian Tapestry Workshop (VIC)
- Canberra Glassworks (ACT)
- Canberra Potters (ACT)
- Craft + Design Canberra (ACT)
- Craft Victoria (VIC)
- Design Tasmania (TAS)
- Guildhouse (SA)
- Jam Factory (SA)

The ACDC Network provides the only critical infrastructure in a sector characterised by individual makers and sole-traders. However, beyond our network, industry investment is limited and institutional infrastructure is fractured and fragile. In turn, this limits the capacity of the Craft and Design sector to respond to strategic and market opportunities and to address emerging challenges in a whole-of-sector way. The imminent closure of the Australian Design Centre further weakens the sector.

Despite the uniqueness of the sector. It has traditionally been treated as part of the broader Visual Arts by Governments and funding bodies. Its uniqueness, and its cross industry links

with manufacturing, retail and tourism is not reflected in funding outcomes or in the policy settings of Governments. It also means that our collective data measurement is incomplete - however what data is available clearly shows a chronic underinvestment in the sector.

From 2015 to 2025, Craft and Design received approximately \$19.1 million through Creative Australia — just 2% of total Creative Australia funding and only 0.095% of estimated Australian Government cultural expenditure over the decade. In 2025, our member organisations received \$1.6m in funding from the Australian Government (mostly through *Creative Australia*).

Despite this modest base, our impact is significant not just in terms of income to designer/makers, but also in the building of social capital through our exhibitions and outreach programs - especially for regional and First Nations makers.

In 2025, 4.1 million Australians accessed our programs and services and we provided direct support for 4,500 designers and makers. We generated \$13 million in revenue and paid designer/makers and other industry professionals \$14.3 million in income. As a group, for every \$1 of public funding invested we returned \$2 to the sector, with one of our smallest members - the Australian Tapestry Workshop returning \$6.5 for every \$1 of public funding it receives.