Cultural Futures Framework (CFF) Proposal

"Empowering creators, building careers, realising cultural value."

Executive Summary

Australia's creative industries generate billions in economic value, yet the artists, musicians, writers, and cultural practitioners who drive this success remain underpaid, under-supported, and unable to fully participate in the economy they sustain.

The **Cultural Futures Framework (CFF)** is a legislative and policy proposal designed to correct this imbalance by establishing:

- Sustainable career pathways through structured job creation, apprenticeships, and workforce benefits.
- Fair pay and expanded rights, including Performance Rights, Exhibition Royalties, and Digital & AI Contributions.
- A national investment and funding institution, the **Cultural and Economic Development and Research Fund (CEDRF),** to ensure cultural practitioners receive direct economic returns from the value they create.

For too long, cultural labour has been treated as an optional extra, despite being an economic cornerstone. The creative workforce fuels multiple industries—media, entertainment, technology, tourism, and education—but the financial flow is largely one-way: value is extracted from cultural practitioners and their communities, yet they lack structured economic pathways to sustain their work.

The CFF integrates cultural labour into the economy as a structured sector, ensuring that it remains viable, sustainable, and accessible to all contributors.

At the heart of the Cultural Futures Framework (CFF) are the artists, creative workers, and communities that sustain Australia's cultural and economic vitality. The **Cultural and Economic Development and Research Fund (CEDRF)** serves as a strategic investment institution, ensuring that the creative sector is not only supported but structurally reintegrated into financial sustainability.

Key Objectives

1. Recognising cultural labour as essential – Ensure cultural practitioners are structurally included in economic policy, rather than left to operate on the fringes.
2. Job creation – Establish a structured, sustainable job network that treats creative workers as integral contributors to the economy.
3. Fair remuneration – Expand copyright systems to include Performance Rights, ensuring fair compensation for all contributors.
4. Economic integration – Redirect financial flows so that those who profit from creative content contribute directly to its sustainability.
5. Equity and inclusion – Provide pathways for Indigenous, regional, and underrepresented communities, ensuring broad participation in the cultural economy.
6. Sustainable growth through the CEDRF – Implement an investment model that

turns cultural labour into a financially sustainable sector rather than an underfunded industry.

7. Workforce benefits – Ensure that cultural workers have access to superannuation, insurance, taxation incentives, and other workforce-aligned benefits to promote long-term financial security.
8. Cultural Royalties & Digital Equity – Recognise the contributions of individuals and communities to digital platforms as a form of cultural labour. Major tech and social media companies should contribute royalties or reinvestment into the creative sector, ensuring that those who generate the content that drives engagement and profit share in its financial returns.

Core Components

1. The Three Pillars of Rights

- **Copyright** – Protects the intellectual property of creators, enabling control and monetisation of original works.
- **Performing Rights** – Ensures creators receive compensation when their works are publicly performed or broadcast.
- **Performance Rights** – Establishes an entirely new right compensating performers for live or recorded contributions, regardless of copyright ownership.

2. Flexible Apprenticeship and Job Pathways

- **Paid apprenticeships** – Emerging creatives are paired with established professionals, with wages funded through royalties, corporate contributions, and venue gig payments.
- **Job pathways** – Establishing clear, structured career routes for artists, performers, and creative professionals, supporting both formal education and independent entry.
- **Public sector employment** – Encouraging government-funded artist-in-residence programs, school arts programs, and cultural initiatives to provide stable employment opportunities.
- **Workforce protections** – Expanding access to superannuation, paid leave, and insurance to create a safety net for creative professionals.

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3. Cultural and Economic Development and Research Fund (CEDRF)

The CEDRF must be established as an **independent investment and funding institution,** modelled on structures such as the **Future Fund** and the **Renewables Investment Bank**. Rather than functioning as a traditional grants body, the CEDRF will serve as a **long-term financial engine** to support sustainable careers in the creative sector.

A Financially Sustainable Model

For centuries, economic value was backed by gold—a tangible asset. Today, economies are driven by intellectual, technological, and cultural capital, yet those working in creative fields remain financially disadvantaged compared to other industries that rely on their contributions.

The CEDRF ensures that creative professionals have access to stable incomes, career pathways, and the ability to participate fully in the economy, including home ownership, superannuation, and long-term financial security.

Funding Streams

- **Royalties and levies** – Large corporations (e.g., streaming platforms, social media companies, and digital content providers) that generate revenue from creative content should contribute a percentage of earnings to ensure cultural professionals are compensated fairly.
- **Venue and exhibition fees** – Public and private venues that rely on creative work will be encouraged to contribute directly to artists' wages, ensuring fair remuneration for cultural labour.
- **Public grants and government support** – Existing arts funding should be restructured to support long-term career pathways rather than short-term, project-based support.
- **Digital and AI contributions** – Platforms that profit from creative content, including AI-generated works based on human artistry, should contribute to the CEDRF to maintain a sustainable cultural workforce.

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4. A Framework That Works for Remote and Regional Australia

Many creative professionals live and work outside major urban centres. The CEDRF must be adaptable—ensuring that cultural practitioners in rural, remote, and First Nations communities can access wages, apprenticeships, and funding models that align with local economies and artistic traditions.

A strong, independent cultural sector not only enriches society but contributes to employment, regional development, and national identity. The CEDRF will provide the economic structure needed to sustain this vital work into the future.

How the CFF Can Apply to Other Artistic Practices

- **Musicians and performers** – Expanding existing frameworks to include performance rights for all contributors.
- **Visual artists** – Strengthening copyright protections, resale royalties, and exhibition levies.
- **Writers and other creators** – Ensuring fair remuneration for publishing, broadcasting, and digital distribution.

Conclusion

The Cultural Futures Framework (CFF) is a policy-ready solution that addresses a fundamental gap in economic justice for cultural practitioners.

By establishing Performance Rights, Exhibition Royalties, Digital Levies, and the CEDRF, the CFF ensures that creative workers receive the recognition and financial security they deserve.

Cultural practitioners have laboured without structured economic recognition, despite fueling some of the world's most powerful industries. The CFF is not about creating dependency—it is about rebalancing the flow of value so that creative labour is no longer a one-way transaction.

We invite policymakers, industry leaders, and cultural practitioners to recognize this structural imbalance and take meaningful steps toward correcting it.

Culture, Work, and Recompense

The modern economy thrives on knowledge, intellectual property, and cultural capital, yet cultural practitioners remain financially excluded from the systems they sustain.

This is not simply an artistic concern—it is a fundamental economic reality that must be addressed.

The challenge ahead is not just recognising cultural value, but realising it—ensuring that cultural practitioners can participate fully in the economy they sustain.

Contact Information

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