

ABN 94 156 582 599 44 Crozier Cct
P 0410 038 226 Kambah, ACT 2902
E tim@tracker.net.au tracker.net.au



Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

To whom it may concern,

Submission: Inquiry into Australia's response to the priorities of Pacific Island countries and the Pacific region

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Australia's response to the priorities of Pacific Island countries and the Pacific region. In particular, we want to respond to specific areas within the terms of reference:

- ▶ Explore opportunities to enhance people-to-people links, cultural exchanges, and educational partnerships between Australia and the Pacific to maximise local and community development outcomes.
- ▶ Consider ways in which the Australian community can be more engaged with and have a better understanding of Australia's international relations and in particular the official aid and development program in the region.

We make our submission as a small team of people with decades of work in the cultural industries in Australia and in the Pacific. In particular this work has been with First Nations people. Through this work, we have seen the rich potential for the creative and cultural sector to generate tangible and intangible benefits for people and communities - both within and across cultures.

We have recently completed a Situational Analysis of the Pacific's Cultural and Creative Industries for the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. Our comments and recommendations are informed by this extensive, Pacific-wide research.

We urge the Committee to recommend capacity building initiatives that support the creative and cultural sector in the Pacific. Useful contributions to responding meaningfully to the priorities of Pacific Island countries and territories includes:

- ▶ Partnering with and investing in the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's (SPC) Human Rights and Social Development Division, and in particular, the expanding work of the Culture for Development section. They are in the early stages of implementing the 10-year Pacific Regional Cultural Strategy (2022 > 2032), which has the potential to transform the Pacific's creative and cultural sector. However, there are significant capacity limitations, both within SPC and with member countries.

Sustained and focussed investment through the SPC is a highly effective way of generating benefits locally, regionally and internationally. As noted earlier, our recently completed project, the Situational Analysis of the Pacific's Creative and Cultural Industries (available here: [State of Pacific Culture and Creative Industries Report 2024](https://spccfpstore1.blob.core.windows.net/spccfpstore1.blob.core.windows.net)) details the scope and scale of the additional roles that SPC could deliver. The architecture for supporting in-depth, effective and sustained work in the cultural development and creative capacity of multiple countries is broadly in place - the overwhelming limitation and challenge is access to resources and expertise. We urge the committee to read the findings and recommendations section at the start of the report for a detailed view of the needs of, and solutions for the Pacific's creative and cultural sector.

Attached to this submission is some material from the Situational Analysis report; these extracts are focussed on areas where we believe Australia can contribute expertise and resources. In comparison to the scale of many development projects, investments into cultural projects is often minor, despite the longevity of the outcomes.

- ▶ Through our work, it is clear that one of the significant barriers to a more robust and economically rewarding cultural sector in the Pacific is market development and market access. Borrowing ideas that have worked for First Nations artists in Australia and other similar locations, and working with key contacts in the Pacific, a program of developing skills, marketing collateral and facilitators would generate sales, administrative know how and generate significant goodwill. We have significant case studies on how this approach encourages and supports the professional development of creators, artists and artisans from the Pacific region.
- ▶ Through the new cultural policy in Australia, there is a significant focus on 'First Nations first'. This can be extended to be internationally focussed, by

facilitating 'First Nations to First Nations' dialogue, exchange and programming - undoing the artificial barriers between First Nations people in Australia and those across the Pacific, particularly in Melanesia. For example, a greater presence by Australia and the quadrennial Melanesian Festival of Art and Cultural, including a hosting role, or direct face-to-face exchanges with PNG or other Melanesian practitioners and cultural leaders. The reverse is also true - greater opportunities to feature Pacific-based artists, makers and performers in key cultural and creative events and festivals in Australia.

- ▶ Intellectual property in all its forms is a significant issue across the Pacific. While Australia has a very poor record of acknowledging and enabling initiatives such as ICIP, TK and TEK (that have long been prioritised as something to be actioned by First Nations people), there is knowledge and capacity here (and lately, some new initiatives) that could be of benefit to creatives in the Pacific. If done sensitively, there is an opportunity to build vital capacity - as well as long term goodwill - by being a generous advocate for such legal protections, and the processes that enable them.
- ▶ The creative and cultural sector is not always included in development work due to oversight or lack of awareness within the region, or as part of a more general mindset that 'culture' is a 'nice to have', not intrinsic to peoples' wellbeing and at the core of resilience. We believe Australia could be a strong advocate for the inclusion of 'culture' in a wider range of development projects and that through this increased visibility more meaningful outcomes are created.

We value the opportunity to provide our observations and suggestions to the Committee, based on the detailed work we have undertaken in this sector. We would be pleased to discuss anything we have raised here, should it be of interest.

We look forward to reading the Committee's final report and to seeing change take place.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Choulai / Dr Susan Congreve / Tim Acker

25 June 2024

**Tracker Development
Canberra**

Supply chain support



Figure 1: the creative and cultural sector supply chain and the four zones in which direct investment, intervention and brokering appropriate expertise can make a significant difference - even with relatively minor levels of support. These are the areas we have encouraged SPC to support.

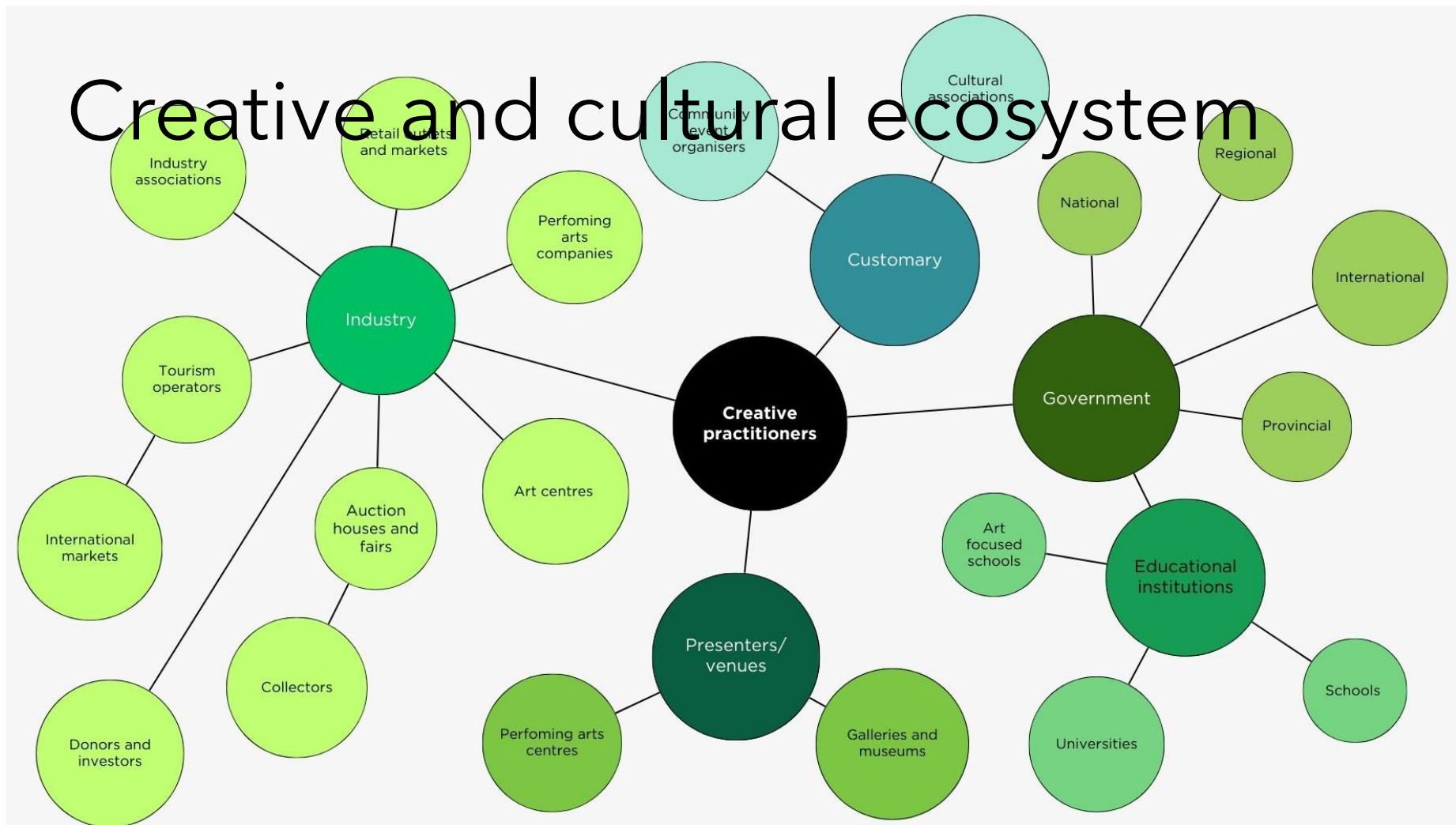


Figure 2: summarising the complexity and interconnectedness of the creative and cultural sector. Few places in the Pacific have this ecosystem in place, an opportunity for Australia - through targeted and sustained investment - to support significant capacity building.