

# Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Creative Arts (DDCA)

## DDCA Strategic Plan 2023-2027

### Strategic Context

The DDCA is a leading national peak body representing the creative arts in higher education. Our discipline base includes visual arts, design, theatre, dance, music, screen production, digital arts and writing.

Building on ten years of advocacy and leadership the DDCA Strategic Plan 2023-2027 confirms our commitment to current and emerging leaders of the creative arts in higher education.

Australian higher education providers are increasingly seeking new strategies to deliver effective, connected responses to global challenges and opportunities – from internationalisation and environmental sustainability to artificial intelligence and social justice. In many cases, this has seen the creation of large, interdisciplinary Faculties and Schools, seeking to drive collaboration and dissolve traditional boundaries between disciplines, sectors and functions.

Across the disciplines, recent innovations in teaching and research evoke the collaborative, partnered approaches which have long characterised the creative arts. Our teaching and research methods are steeped in the values and practices needed to bridge the gap between knowledge creation and creative problem solving. Our disciplinary and interdisciplinary research is entwined with practice, and work integrated learning has always been at the core of our programs. The conjunction of arts and health in recent years offers a working blueprint for interdisciplinary innovation that is creative, disruptive and rooted in practice.

The completion of the DDCA's Strategic Plan coincides with the long awaited release of Australia's new National Cultural Policy, *Revive: A Place For Every Story, A Story For Every Place*. The Policy builds on the traditions of generations of First Nations artists, acknowledging the essential connection between stories and wellbeing for all people and communities. The anticipated inclusion of Culture in the United Nations' future sustainable development goals further reinforces the enduring centrality of the creative arts to the human story.

Working with partners and on behalf of our diverse stakeholders in higher education, we are committed to supporting the creative arts to shape the future of our sector and of our nation.

### Purpose

The DDCA exists to inform, connect and amplify the voices of people and organisations responsible for scholarly and research leadership of the creative arts in higher education.

Our role is to champion the effective leadership of teaching and research in our disciplines, enhancing understanding, promoting diversity, inclusion, excellence, collegiality and sustainability, and contributing to the challenges of our age.

### Goals for 2023-2027

Our goals are to:

1. Strengthen creative arts leadership in Australian higher education
2. Raise the profile and impact of the creative arts in Australian higher education, to sustain the creative sector, enrich cultural policy, and inform public discourse
3. Enhance understanding and recognition of creative practice research
4. Increase the scale and reach of our advocacy and support for creative practice teaching, research and leadership.

<p><b>Goal 1</b></p>	<p><b>Strengthen creative arts leadership in Australian higher education</b></p>
<p><b>Rationale</b></p>	<p>In recent years creative arts leadership in higher education has been reshaped by departmental mergers, and the consolidation of creative practice teaching and research within broader disciplinary groupings - often led by academics from outside the creative arts. This has had the double effect of distancing some significant aspects of decision making from the creative arts disciplines and, as experienced staff retire from creative arts management positions, the introduction of a more junior cadre of creative arts leadership operating at discipline level, rather than as (for example) the Head of a Faculty or School.</p> <p>It is not the DDCA's role to train the next generation of creative arts leadership in higher education. However, we can play a valuable role in signposting relevant leadership training opportunities, and creating the conditions for effective mentorship and collaboration. This will help to ensure that creative arts leaders are supported to develop the leadership skills and networks essential to be the stewards of their disciplines and, subsequently, to access senior leadership positions.</p> <p>The DDCA also has a role to play in ensuring that decision makers at Faculty and School level are appropriately briefed on the value and impact of the creative disciplines, and on the needs of their diverse stakeholders in higher education and the wider creative workforce.</p>
<p><b>Strategies</b></p>	<p>1.1. Provide leadership development opportunities for creative practice academics at every career stage. This includes signposting access to mentoring, information and resources, and leadership development workshops delivered in conjunction with the DDCA conference</p> <p>1.2. Working with partners, support the development of a national mechanism to promote equality and diversity in the leadership of creative practice in higher education, drawing on models and evaluation tools such as the UK's Athena Swan program</p>
<p><b>Milestones and measures of success</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear signposting of creative arts leadership opportunities, information and resources through the DDCA website and NiTRO</li> <li>• Engagement by DDCA members and stakeholders in leadership development and mentoring led by the DDCA</li> <li>• National mechanism in place to support equality and diversity in creative practice in higher education.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Goal 2</b></p>	<p><b>Raise the profile and impact of the creative arts in Australian higher education, to sustain the creative sector, enrich cultural policy, and inform public discourse</b></p>
<p><b>Rationale</b></p>	<p>The DDCA is committed to advocating effectively for creative practice in higher education nationally and internationally. This includes building connections between diverse groups of stakeholders, enabling discussion and debate to inform policy and decision making, and promoting awareness of the value of our disciplines within our broader communities.</p> <p>Effective advocacy requires connections to be made between leaders and decision makers whose work directly or indirectly affects the creative arts. With creative arts in higher education increasingly located in larger administrative groupings, this requires an approach to advocacy which ensures that Faculty and School leaders are effectively briefed on issues affecting the creative arts, and that they are empowered to represent the creative arts equally with other components of their brief. Strong connections and open dialogue are needed between discipline and Faculty leadership, in order for policy engagement to be informed and effective.</p> <p>In 2023-2027 our advocacy will emphasise the public value of the arts and culture, including through engagement with the new National Cultural Policy. We will promote the health of our disciplines and excellence in research. We will encourage information sharing and a collaborative approach to supporting the creative arts in higher education.</p>
<p><b>Strategies</b></p>	<p>2.1 Foster links with University senior leadership (Executive Dean, DVC-R, DVC-A, Vice Chancellor) to strengthen the discourse between discipline leadership and national higher education and policy leadership.</p> <p>2.2 Build links with ARC, Australia Council, State and Federal Government and relevant national and international agencies and engage responsively with policy in development</p>
<p><b>Milestones and measures of success</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased engagement of University senior leadership in DDCA meetings and activities</li> <li>• Meetings between DDCA Executive members and key policy stakeholders to take place annually</li> <li>• DDCA is approached directly by key policy stakeholders for advice on arts and culture policy development and implementation</li> </ul>

<p><b>Goal 3</b></p>	<p><b>Enhance understanding and recognition of creative practice research</b></p>
<p><b>Rationale</b></p>	<p>The dissemination of new knowledge through non-traditional research outputs (NTROs) is a distinctive characteristic of creative practice research. As the ARC continues its work to redevelop ERA it is essential that the case for creative practice research and non-traditional outputs continues to be made. The DDCA has a key role to play in the development of national approaches to managing NTROs, and in engaging creative arts leaders and practitioners in their refinement and implementation.</p> <p>NiTRO is an inclusive, accessible and focused online platform providing responsive and flexible mechanisms for engaging with policy debates and sharing opinions and ideas in creative practice teaching and research. Following the retirement of NiTRO’s founding editor, Dr Jenny Wilson, the DDCA seeks to maintain the high quality and responsiveness of the platform, to foster engagement between creative practice academics and between the academic sector and policy development processes. This strategy aims to support the creative arts sector at the same time as promoting understanding of creative practice teaching and research.</p> <p>The arts and culture are recognised as an integral element of wellbeing for First Nations people and communities and the UN has included Culture in its suite of sustainable development goals from 2030. The DDCA acknowledges the significant place of First Nations knowledges within the national creative research landscape, and to seeks to promote recognition of the link between the arts and wellbeing for everyone.</p>
<p><b>Strategies</b></p>	<p>3.1 Build on the success of NiTRO to amplify the voices of creative practice researchers</p> <p>3.2 Provide national leadership to enhance the production, management and assessment of non-traditional research outputs</p> <p>3.3 Promote First Nations research leadership in the creative disciplines including by highlighting the intersection of the arts and wellbeing and through events, publishing and bursaries</p>
<p><b>Milestones and measures of success</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three issues of NiTRO to be produced each year</li> <li>• Events and publications to progress a national approach to the management and assessment of NTROs</li> <li>• First Nations researchers featured in NiTRO and DDCA events</li> </ul>

<p><b>Goal 4</b></p>	<p><b>Increase the impact of our advocacy and support for creative practice teaching, research and leadership</b></p>
<p><b>Rationale</b></p>	<p>The DDCA celebrates ten years of operation in 2023. This coincides with a new era of Federal government and the introduction of a highly anticipated national cultural policy focussed on people and stories.</p> <p>To increase the impact of our advocacy, we will signpost good practice across the sector through our publications, events and a new series of DDCA annual awards. The DDCA annual awards will provide independent recognition of excellence in creative arts teaching, research, leadership and advocacy. The inaugural round of awards will commemorate 10 years of the DDCA.</p> <p>In 2023-2027 we will seek to extend our reach to creative arts leaders and practitioners in all parts of the Australian higher education sector. We will offer a range of events and opportunities for our stakeholders to engage with each other, triangulating the interests of creative practice academics across disciplines and career stages with policy and decision makers in higher education, the creative sector and in government.</p>
<p><b>Strategies</b></p>	<p>4.1 Develop and promote an annual program of events and publications to maximise participation and raise the visibility of DDCA among creative practice academics and leaders</p> <p>4.2 Leverage high-profile annual events to generate traction with national higher education leadership and arts and cultural policy makers</p> <p>4.3 Introduce DDCA annual awards to recognise and celebrate achievements and celebrate the spirit of creativity in higher education</p> <p>4.4 Grow and diversify membership of DDCA and participation in DDCA events and activities to include representatives from across the Australian higher education landscape</p> <p>4.5 Provide opportunities for creative arts academics at every career stage to debate and publish on aspects of teaching, research and leadership</p>
<p><b>Milestones and measures of success</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement of a diverse range of stakeholders in DDCA events</li> <li>• Interaction between creative practice academics, leaders and policy makers at DDCA events, documented and shared through NiTRO</li> <li>• Establishment of DDCA annual awards</li> </ul>