

Building South Australia's Creative Future: Architecture, Collaboration and Culture

A design-led framework for cultural growth that integrates people, place, and creative practice across the built environment.

Context and Vision

South Australia's cultural and creative industries are among the State's greatest assets, enriching communities, driving innovation, and shaping our collective identity. The *Create SA Cultural Policy and Delivery Plan 2025–2027*, supported by the *Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Bill 2025*, establish a progressive platform to strengthen creativity, participation, and inclusion across the State.

The Australian Institute of Architects (SA Chapter) supports this vision and advocates for its expansion through a design-led approach that integrates creativity and collaboration across the entire built environment — not just in cultural infrastructure, but in schools, public housing, workplaces, healthcare facilities, and regional developments.

Architecture is both a cultural and civic act. When architects collaborate with artists, designers, and makers, they create places that express our shared stories, foster inclusion, and build resilience. This principle underpins the Institute's *SA Creative Collaboration Prize*, which champions partnerships between architects and creative practitioners that deliver measurable cultural, social, and economic benefits for South Australia.

By embedding creativity and design into all aspects of public policy and procurement, South Australia can lead nationally in demonstrating how culture and collaboration enhance wellbeing, sustainability, and economic prosperity.

Why It Matters

Creative Collaboration Across All Sectors:

Creative collaboration is not limited to cultural buildings. It shapes the quality of everyday life — in schools that inspire learning, homes that nurture wellbeing, workplaces that foster innovation, and public spaces that connect communities. Encouraging collaboration between architects, artists, and makers across all sectors supports both design excellence and cultural expression.

Economic and Social Value:

The creative industries contribute more than \$1.7 billion annually to South Australia's economy and support thousands of jobs across design, construction, and fabrication. Embedding creativity in the planning and design of all built environment projects enhances local capability, supports small creative enterprises, and drives export-ready innovation.

Cultural Identity and Community Connection:

Design is a cultural practice that tells the story of who we are and where we live. Culturally informed architecture — co-designed with First Nations leadership — ensures that projects of every scale reflect Country, community, and place. This aligns with the intent of the *Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Bill 2025* and the principles of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*.

Sustainability and Climate Responsibility:

Creative practice and design innovation play a vital role in advancing South Australia’s net-zero and circular economy goals. Design-led approaches to adaptive reuse, local material supply, and carbon reduction in construction deliver measurable environmental and social returns.

Regional Equity and Access:

Regional South Australia has significant creative potential. Strategic investment in design-led projects — from heritage renewals to regional schools and civic spaces — strengthens local economies, fosters tourism, and supports equitable access to cultural participation.

Recommendations and Key Actions

To build South Australia’s creative future, government must embed creativity and design across policy, governance, and infrastructure delivery — supported by clear leadership, coordinated advocacy, and investment in the creative ecosystem.

Key strategies for success include:

- **Establish an independent Creativity Council (or Creative Economy Council)**
to advise government, provide advocacy and research outcomes from national and global sources, and to develop international relations within the Arts, Culture and Creative Industries sectors.
The Council would connect existing cultural agencies, peak bodies, universities, and industry partners to ensure cross-sector collaboration and shared vision.
- **Establish a dedicated Minister for the Arts, Culture and Creative Industries**
within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, ensuring strong alignment with the Government Architect and Office for Design and Architecture (SA) (ODASA).
This portfolio would provide high-level leadership, integrate design and creativity across policy and procurement, and ensure consistent advocacy for the sector.
- **Map the South Australian creative ecosystem**
in partnership with the sector, universities, and industry to identify interrelationships, capability gaps, and the value of the creative economy beyond commercial gain.
Mapping will make the sector more accessible, connected, and transparent — supporting collaboration between architecture, design, art, craft, performance, and digital industries.
- **Establish a long-term Creative Infrastructure Fund**
to guarantee that world-class cultural and creative infrastructure continues to be

delivered across scales — from regional creative hubs to major destinations that express our uniqueness as a State.

Investment should support adaptive reuse, sustainability, and inclusion in all new public works.

- **Integrate design and creativity across government policy and procurement**
by embedding creative collaboration principles into project briefs, evaluation frameworks, and design review processes, ensuring every project delivers cultural as well as functional value.
- **Foster education, leadership, and inclusion**
by strengthening pathways that connect creative disciplines, supporting cultural literacy, First Nations leadership, and professional development across architecture, design, and the creative industries.

The Institute's Position

The Australian Institute of Architects (SA Chapter) calls on all political parties to recognise the role of design and creative collaboration as drivers of innovation, inclusion, and sustainable growth. By embedding creativity within public policy and procurement, South Australia can achieve better design, stronger communities, and a more resilient economy.

Architecture, art, and design are interconnected disciplines that together shape South Australia's cultural and physical landscape. Policy frameworks must enable collaboration across these sectors to ensure every project — from schools to housing to major civic works — contributes to the State's creative legacy.

Conclusion

South Australia's creative future depends on the partnership between culture, design, and policy. By expanding the role of creativity across the full spectrum of the built environment, the State can foster innovation, celebrate diversity, and strengthen its identity as a place where design and culture work hand in hand to enhance the quality of life for all.

Legend of Acronyms

DPC — Department of the Premier and Cabinet

ODASA — Office for Design and Architecture South Australia

RAIA / the Institute — Royal Australian Institute of Architects / Australian Institute of Architects

SAHA — South Australian Housing Authority

SAHT — South Australian Housing Trust

Create SA — South Australia’s Cultural Policy and Delivery Plan (2025–2027)

References and Resources

1. Create SA: South Australia’s Cultural Policy (2024)

<https://create.sa.gov.au>

2. Create SA Delivery Plan 2025–2027 (Department of the Premier and Cabinet)

<https://create.sa.gov.au/delivery-plan>

3. Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Bill 2025

<https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au>

4. Australian Institute of Architects – SA Creative Collaboration Prize (2025)

<https://www.architecture.com.au/events/creative-collaboration-prize>

5. Australian Institute of Architects – National Council Paper: Creative Alliance Committee (2025)

<https://www.architecture.com.au/resources>

6. Office for Design and Architecture SA (ODASA)

<https://www.odasa.sa.gov.au>

7. JamFactory – Design and Craft in South Australia

<https://www.jamfactory.com.au>

8. Guildhouse – Supporting South Australian Artists and Makers

<https://guildhouse.org.au>

9. The Uluru Statement from the Heart

<https://ulurustatement.org/>