



Ms Francesca Cubillo
Executive Director, First Nations Arts and Culture
via email: firstnationsarts@creative.gov.au

15 March 2024

Dear Ms Cubillo

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the *First Nations First* discussion paper.

The First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group (the Advisory Group) was established in January 2023 by the Minister for Communications, the Hon Michelle Rowland MP. The Advisory Group provides advice on ways to support progress towards Target 17 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap: equal levels of digital inclusion for First Nations Australians by 2026. This target is part of Outcome 17, which aims to ensure First Nations Australians have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives.

Since our establishment, we have undertaken considerable stakeholder engagement including meetings with First Nations groups, telecommunication providers, broadcasters and peak bodies. We have also consulted with the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. This engagement helped inform our initial report which identified three key areas of focus:

- the delivery of targeted measures to improve access to connectivity, making sure it is affordable and fit for purpose, and that First Nations people are aware of their connectivity options and have the digital skills they need to be safe online
- improving the national collection and use of data so that we can better assess the impact of measures delivered in community, as well as broader progress towards Target 17
- ensuring genuine engagement and collaboration with First Nations people and communities, as well as supporting their access to government programs and opportunities.

We see our recommendations sharing synergies with the issues raised in the *First Nations First* discussion paper. Digital inclusion provides a strong foundation for a broad range of economic, social and cultural benefits such as supporting First Nations artists to stay on country, helping the First Nations arts sector expand its reach via online platforms, and securing First Nations history and culture through digital archiving.

The success of the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair as a hybrid online and in-person event shows the positive outcomes that can be achieved when First Nations artists and organisations are able to innovate and leverage the opportunities of digital technology and connectivity.



The Advisory Group supports the proposed Terms of Reference for the *First Nations First* discussion paper, but question how Create Australia will strengthen capacity across all artforms if in the first instance only performing arts is prioritised.

We are particularly interested in the requirement to develop a First Nations Creative Workforce Development Strategy. This action reflects the critical importance of digital skills in supporting First Nations digital inclusion, including for artists and content producers. These skills will help enable First Nations Australians to access tools to enhance their creativity, support the growth of their businesses and promotion of their work. In response to the question on the approach to board appointments, we would support the inclusion of an expert in digitalisation in the creative space to the skills mix.

As part of our next phase of work, we are developing a First Nations digital inclusion roadmap which will also build on the First Nations Digital Inclusion Plan and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. This roadmap will include a focus on how connectivity and digital technology can help empower and support First Nations Australians to become informed and active participants in the economy and wider society.

We would be happy to meet with the Board once it is established to discuss intersections in our work. If you would like clarification on any of our comments raised in this submission, please contact our secretariat at firstnationsdigitalinclusion@infrastructure.gov.au.

Kind regards

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Co-chair

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