

IA-CEPA Submission – Consideration for Cultural Industries and Creative Arts

Submission by: Professor Tom Murray, ARC Future Fellow, Macquarie University,
Director, Tarpaulin Productions Pty LTD
Contact: Tom.murray@mq.edu.au

I thank DFAT for the opportunity to express these personal observations and opinions in relation to the upcoming assessment period of the [Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement](#) (IA-CEPA).

I wish to draw attention to the critical function of the creative arts in extending the regional role of Australia, specifically in Indonesia. As is increasingly known, this is a unique relationship based on the earliest cross-cultural and trading relationships that relate to the Australian continent (via Makassar-Northern Australian fisheries trade 1700s onwards, see Campbell Macknight, 1976).

The broader context of this submission is that the creative arts and cross-cultural connections, via the full range of creative expression, are often neglected in a trade context that focuses on specific industrial sectors, goods, services and investment that are seen as more lucrative and strategically significant (ie. Goods, services, critical minerals, digital trade, sustainable agriculture, the green economy and transition to net zero).

While these areas are undoubtedly valuable and important drivers of economic partnership, we should not overlook the power of creatively shared narratives across the region that foster reciprocity, build skills exchange, and create connection.

As the [Revive](#) blueprint for Australia's cultural policy 2023 – 2028 makes clear, Australian creative industries are 'globally recognised', and have an important role in 'reciprocal exchange, export and cultural diplomacy' (2023: 19).

In this submission I wish to make clear that there are major advantages to the Indonesia/Australia relationship across all domains, when the creative industries are seen as an intrinsic element of the economic and diplomatic partnership. Or, as it is expressed in **Revive** - when Australia's creative industries are supported to better 'foster and enable reciprocal arrangements for cultural engagement, co-production and touring' [as a way to] '... grow access to international markets and support international cultural collaboration and exchange' (2023: 80).

This argument is fleshed out further in **Revive**: 'Cultural diplomacy can lead to increased access to international markets and growth in Australia's cultural exports, including through exhibiting, touring, participation in international fora, and cultural exchange opportunities, particularly for First Nations peoples' (2023: 91).

Hence there is an argument both to further support the creative industries as an outcome in itself, and as a significant soft-power form of cultural diplomacy that will have advantages across a range of other sectors.

For myself, as a scholar and filmmaker who has had work screened at some of the most prestigious international festivals (Sundance, IDFA Amsterdam, Chicago, Palm Springs, Jakarta etc), now engaging in a major film (funded in part by the Australian Research Council) that seeks to link the pasts and futures of Australian-Indonesian connection into a high impact work, it would be excellent to have the support of an aligned cultural infrastructure that is designed to foster co-production and cultural initiatives across the Australian-Indonesia region.

As a critical partner in the Indo-Pacific, Indonesia must be a key pillar in the 'Government's international arts and cultural engagement and cultural diplomacy priorities ... [a place where we must] Strengthen arts collaboration and exchange and cultural diplomacy by leveraging Australia's global diplomatic network in key Australian overseas posts' (2023: 93). This could be better supported and realised through a dedicated area of the Australia-Indonesia trade/culture mission.

Conclusion:

Any future [Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement](#) (IA-CEPA) must acknowledge the critical role of the creative arts and cultural exchange as part of the historic and future bilateral relationship.

Further strengthening co-production possibilities and investment in this sector will have significant value in itself – as proud nations assist each other to develop forms of cultural self-expression that strengthen, and make more cohesive and inclusive, local, regional, and global cultural identities and relationships.

Investing in cultural activities within the creative industries also offers cost effective forms of cultural diplomacy and regional connection that will have diverse advantages across a range of other trade sectors.