



National Cultural Policy Submission



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First Nations: recognising and respecting the crucial place of these stories at the centre of our arts and culture.

Cultural Institutions have a central role to play in recognising and respecting the crucial place of First Nations people in the past, present and ongoing culture of the Nation. MoAD is committed to truth telling and acknowledging the complex history of Australia's democracy and its impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Further, through our programs and exhibitions MoAD celebrates the contributions of First Nations peoples in shaping Australia's democratic history.

MoAD recognises that, as Australia's Commonwealth Parliament House for 61 years, Old Parliament House carries negative as well as positive associations for many people within contemporary Australian communities. We strive to acknowledge this in our onsite and digital activities including exhibitions, tours and other engagement and public programs. For example, the recent redevelopment of the Prime Ministers gallery resulted in the inclusion of 22 First Nations individuals as part of the timeline contextualising the significant people and events that have shaped Australia's democracy from 1901 to the present day. Further, MoAD established a dedicated First Nation's gallery to present work focused on the contributions and engagement of First Nations people in Australia's democracy.

As trusted sources of knowledge, Cultural Institutions are a critical avenue for truth telling under the Government's commitment to implement the Uluru Statement from the Heart. To support this, cultural institutions should embed First Nation's perspectives across their operations, including through the creation of First Nations' identified leadership roles, program teams, traineeships, and internships. A National Cultural Policy could provide the leadership and funding required to deliver on targets for First Nations' representation (and succession planning) in leadership, programming, education and curatorial teams in order to ensure the communication of First Nations histories and culture is led by First Nations peoples.

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Government's commitment to implementing the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the proposed referendum to amend the constitution to include a First Nation's voice in the Federal Parliament, if successful, will create a fundamental change in Australia's democratic process. MoAD is ideally placed to be an unbiased and trusted site (both onsite and online) to present, document and collect the context, history, and contemporary responses to this important event. Through our existing, and with additional funding, we can focus our resources on:

- Collecting contemporary items relating to the referendum and the debate, to add to our collection
- Creating school and education resources relating to the referendum, the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and the overall process of constitution development to educate and empower students to understand the system and their role in it
- Development of a temporary exhibition on the referendum, the relationship to the constitution, First Nations engagement in democratic processes
- Alignment of public programs with the referendum development and vote
- Participating as an official AEC polling place for the referendum vote

As the first national referendum since 1999, for many young voters and new Australians this will be their first time participating in a referendum. Through our learning and public programs, the museum is well-placed to engage all Australians in the debate and help them to understand the referendum process.



Jack Green stands in front of his painting, *Ngirridji Gunindjba—the Devil that Fiddles and Digs in Our Country*, 2020, in the exhibition space at MoAD.

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The centrality of the artist: supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture.

Behind the Lines is an annual exhibition at MoAD and travelling to remote and regional communities around the country celebrating the art of political cartooning. The exhibition helps our visitors understand the year in politics through the work of some of Australia's leading political cartoonists.

The art of political cartooning is central to the health of vibrant, flourishing democracies. It is the cornerstone of Australia's tradition of free speech and holding truth to power. MoAD honours and upholds Australia's unique tradition of political cartooning through our work with hundreds of artists working in this field. One of the great challenges facing all liberal democracies like ours are the attacks on the freedom of the press. Never has a free, accurate and robust media seemed more important in the face of the challenges to traditional media platforms that have traditionally been the livelihoods of political cartoonists. Each year in our work with political cartoonists, the pool of artists grows smaller as the traditional relationships with news media shrinks. The impact is felt most heavily on female cartoonists leaving the industry and First Nations and other diverse artists struggling to find footholds.

MoAD has taken a new approach over the last two years to foster and advocate for the practice of political cartooning to reinvigorate this important field. We are focused on introducing audiences to more diverse voices in the field by exhibiting the work of new and emerging political cartoonists working outside the traditional print and digital mediums to self-publish. This approach has revitalised the exhibition for our visitors and given encouragement and support to new artists working in the field.

A National Cultural Policy could work with MoAD to tackle this challenge facing so many established and emerging artists working in the industry. Programs like artists-in-residences for creatives such as political cartoonists in cultural institutions that provide financial support and rich creative opportunities is a way to protect our democracy from the existential attacks on free speech and liberalism felt throughout the world.

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A place for every story: reflecting the diversity of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture.

The Museum of Australian Democracy is housed in one of Australia's most iconic buildings, Old Parliament House. It is a nationally heritage listed building that is synonymous with some of the country's most important moments including Australia's declaration of war against Japan in 1941, the tabling of the Yirrkala Bark Petitions in 1963, the constitutional change following the 1967 Referendum and the dismissal of Gough Whitlam's Labor Government in 1975. There could be no better place to tell the stories of Australia's democratic history than in the building where it happened.

MoAD takes the opportunities and responsibilities that come with place-based storytelling very seriously. Our interpretation of heritage spaces such as the Prime Minister's office and the House of Representatives and Senate chambers helps history come alive for our visitors. One of the challenges for the museum is the significant investment required to maintain the building for current and future generations to connect with this important part of their cultural heritage. A National Cultural Policy that prioritises financial investment in heritage-listed and historic homes that tell our nation's stories would connect more Australians now and in the future with their cultural heritage.

As a museum of social and political history, MoAD is in active dialogue with our visitors about contemporary conversations about democracy. Our exhibitions, events and public programs look for opportunities to connect our visitors with 'the power of their voice' in democratic decision making.



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MoAD is a leader in developing community-led and “crowd-sourced” installations that celebrate the diversity of our stories and the contributions all Australians can make as creators of culture. As part of the Enlighten Festival each year MoAD hands over King’s Hall to our visitors to co-curate an installation focused on civic-engagement and building social cohesion. This programming attracts tens of thousands of visitors to MoAD. With greater funding for these kinds of engagement-driven public programs, MoAD could amplify these experiences to the broader community through touring. Bringing these collaborative experiences to remote and regional communities would promote grassroots democratic engagement, highlight the value of democratic participation and contribute to social cohesion.



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Strong institutions: providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture.

Strong institutions have the capacity to collaborate and support each other. MoAD would support the establishment of a National Cultural Heritage body that could connect museums, galleries, historic homes and libraries across the states and create opportunities for the institutions and the visitors.

An organisational body of this nature could provide a platform for cultural institutions akin to the Australia Council's representation of the performing and creative arts which would provide ease of connection and idea-sharing especially for smaller, regional institutions, greater opportunities to connect all Australians to their own cultural heritage and help to highlight the vast cultural heritage assets of the nation held in these institutions.

MoAD has taken some cultural leadership in this space with the Australian Prime Ministers website which relaunched earlier this year. The website brings together content, collections and audience participation opportunities relating to our prime ministers from around Australia. Visitors can search seamlessly across more than 70,000 items held by 18 organisations (including the NMA, NAA and NLA). MoAD plays a key role in creating and maintaining this national digital asset, working closely with the Network of Prime Ministerial Research and Collecting Agencies and other like-minded organisations.

Another successful collaboration is the Founding Documents website hosted by MoAD and developed in collaboration with the NAA. This and the Getting it Together website tell the story of our nation, the documents that codified our system, laws and parliament, and the story of Federation. They are popular sites that would benefit from digital upgrades including high quality digitisation, design and motion graphics.

Strong institutions have strong teams. The Arts sector needs skilled staff supported by opportunities for permanent roles, appropriate training and professional development. There should be a perception that a career in the Arts is an enticing opportunity, that will be adequately remunerated and that there will be opportunities for growth, promotion and learning. Long term funding agreements and competitive salaries are crucial to attracting and retaining the skillsets required to safeguard Australia's cultural heritage.

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Reaching the audience: ensuring our stories reach the more people at home and abroad.

Efficient, accessible technology allows all Australians access to our cultural heritage. Most importantly it connects young Australians to rich, diverse cultural experiences far from their homes. MoAD promotes active citizenship via a suite of engaging audience experiences and targeted activities that support inclusion and build social cohesion. Our Museum Educators engage with almost 23,000 students a year via our digital programs. Over half of these students are from regional and remote areas of Australia. These digital programs overlay strong in-person student experiences, some 80,000 students walk the halls of the museum each year in curriculum-aligned programs that cover voice and agency, media literacy and sustainability.

Our ability to connect with these young people not only assists with their in-classroom learning, it also creates empowered students who develop a connection to museums and their cultural heritage that they carry into adulthood. The quality and capacity of these programs matter. We need to ensure that they are resourced in a way that ensures they can develop, grow and stay aligned with the needs of both the curriculum and advances in technology. A critical approach here is ensuring that the sector has the digital tools it needs to maintain strong connections between the institutions and their publics, we need investment in digital infrastructure that will allow us to stay in step with the fast-paced needs of students and visitors. Increased capacity in this space is increased capacity to keep growing our audiences.

