

National Cultural Policy Submission

1467788

Public

Individual

jude philp



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

For over 250 years Australians have acquired, appropriated, stolen and purchased significant cultural works from Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander communities, from peoples of the Pacific, Asia and from peoples beyond our immediate region. These collections formed how Australians saw themselves and memorialised their stories and the stories and cultures of others through exhibitions and publications.

The National Cultural Policy (NCP) must include support for historic collections, particularly in collection care through working with descendant communities to share their stories of the past continuing into the future. Initiatives that include cultural work with collections should have provision to support and pay elders and cultural workers for their work with their heritage for the benefit of educating their diaspora communities, and the wider Australian public. These collections are not ‘foreign’ to Australian culture, through their placement in state and national institutions they are vital to Australian identity and must be included in the NCP’s five pillars through:

First Nations First – supporting the centrality of language through renaming processes in museum data needs funding to pay for residencies fundamental to this work. Make collections understood through First Nations practice, ensure collection stores are culturally safe spaces, and further their stories through exhibitions of heritage.

A place for every story – museums, libraries and galleries are the nation’s story places. But these stories cannot be exclusively told by institutional experts. The work of elders and community-based experts to engage with their heritage is poorly funded, the NCP needs to be inclusive of this work on the national ‘assets’ and the articulation of stories to the nation from the work of elders and community-based experts.

Centrality of the artist – can the NCP support the work of understanding historical artists? Mutuaga, for example, was an internationally famous carver and artist of the Trobriand islands, Papua New Guinea, c.1900. Supporting work that can help find ‘the artist’ or maker-community through the NCP indicates that we treasure not only ‘the new’ but also new ideas and knowledges that spring from ‘the old’.

Strong Cultural Infrastructure – support for collections care, support to ensure culturally safe practices around other peoples’ heritage, support for Indigenous and other community members to work with conservation practitioners on care. Support for storage to ensure the nation truly continues to care for artworks, spiritually potent materials, and peoples’ material culture acquired in former times. Integrated institutions over institutions competing for funding opportunities.

Engaging the audience – our nation’s people care that museums, libraries and galleries are looking after the heritage of the nation. By supporting collection care the NCP can safeguard our populations’ trust in the GLAM sector and importantly demonstrate how Australians (whenever they migrated), First Australians and peoples across our region can connect with their heritage to tell their stories.