



GLAM · PEAK

Submission: Towards a New National Cultural Policy

GLAM Peak

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1. Executive summary:

GLAM Peak is Australia's national alliance for the galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAM) sector in Australia. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of a new National Cultural Policy (NCP).

GLAM custodianship is essential national infrastructure that preserves, activates, and connects Australia's cultural memory across every region.

The sector's impact is broad, and it already delivers on the five pillars of *Revive* (First Nations, A Place for Every Story, Centrality of the Artist, Strong Cultural Infrastructure, Engaging the Audience) through collections, physical and digital access, and knowledge transfer.

Recognising the GLAM sector across all five pillars of the new NCP is our core recommendation. Integrating GLAM into the new policy will ensure it truly represents the Australian cultural sector and acknowledges the full impact of arts and culture on Australian life.

This submission outlines the GLAM sector's direct contribution to delivery of *Revive* and the opportunity for recognition in the new NCP.

GLAM Peak acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters, cultures and communities. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and to all First Nations peoples.

2. GLAM Peak: a unified voice for collections

GLAM Peak is the representative body for Australia's GLAM sector, encompassing galleries, libraries, archives and museums alongside premier humanities research institutions, historical societies, and digital knowledge networks. Comprising 21 core member organisations, GLAM Peak speaks for a unified ecosystem that bridges the full scope of the sector, from grassroots community organisations to major institutions.

GLAM Peak encompasses the following organisations:

- Atlas of Living Australia
- Australian Academy of the Humanities (AAH)
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)
- Australian Libraries and Archives Copyright Coalition (ALACC)
- Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)
- Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMAGA)
- Australian National Maritime Museum (ANMM)
- Australian Society of Archivists (ASA)
- Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities (CAARA)
- Council of Australian Museum Directors (CAMD)
- Council of Australasian University Librarians (CAUL)
- CSIRO National Research Collections Australia
- Federation of Australian Historical Societies (FAHS)
- Indigenous Archives Collective (IAC)
- International Council of Museums Australia (ICOM)
- National Archives of Australia (NAA)
- National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA)
- National Library of Australia (NLA)
- National Museum of Australia (NMA)
- University Art Museums Australia (UAMA)
- Wikimedia.

Since GLAM Peak was established in 2015, our collaboration has supported national digital collections initiatives, cross-sector disaster preparedness, and policy work that advances access, equity, and sustainability across collections and communities.

3. The Australian GLAM sector is critical national infrastructure

The Australian GLAM sector preserves and activates Australia’s memory, enables truth-telling and cultural exchange, drives education and research, strengthens social cohesion, and contributes materially to the economy and tourism. The collective footprint of GLAM Peak’s membership constitutes one of Australia’s most vital economic, educational, and cultural assets:

- **First Nations culture:** GLAM institutions partner with First Nations communities to steward cultural materials, support language and knowledge renewal, and progress repatriation. Indigenous Data Sovereignty and culturally appropriate access protocols are increasingly embedded in practice.
- **Infrastructure & Workforce:** The Australian GLAM sector represents an expansive infrastructure of almost 2,000 public and academic libraries, 2,500 museums and galleries, and a national network of regional historical societies. This vast network includes thousands of paid professionals, and more than 50,000 dedicated volunteers, anchoring cultural tourism and community identity across regional, rural, and remote Australia.
- **Collections & Value:** GLAM institutions hold custodial responsibility for millions of individual items—spanning government files, irreplaceable manuscripts, audiovisual records, artworks and biological specimens. The movable cultural heritage held by the major national institutions alone is valued at nearly \$11 billion.
- **Public Engagement:** The GLAM sector drives exceptional civic connection. Annually, physical venues attract tens of millions of visits, while pioneering digital access platforms—such as the National Library’s Trove, the Atlas of Living Australia, and Wikimedia Australia—generate hundreds of millions of global digital engagements.
- **Economic and Tourism Contribution:** Cultural and creative activity delivers \$63.7 billion directly to national GDP while driving critical flow-on value to tourism, regional education, and workforce innovation. Galleries, libraries, archives, and museums make a significant and active contribution, as foundational cultural infrastructure and a core part of Australia’s domestic and international visitor economies.
- **Social cohesion and wellbeing:** Participation in libraries, museums, and galleries correlates with higher civic trust, inclusion, and wellbeing. GLAM venues provide inclusive public space, mitigate digital exclusion, and support settlement and community connection.

- **International engagement:** Touring exhibitions, collection loans, and skills exchanges contribute to Australia’s cultural diplomacy and soft power.
- **Education and research:** Collections underpin curriculum-aligned learning, lifelong literacy, and major research infrastructures for the humanities and social sciences, while historical and longitudinal datasets support STEM fields (e.g., climate, biodiversity, epidemiology).
- Both the current **National Research Infrastructure (NRI) Roadmap**, released in 2021, and government’s work so far in development of the 2026 Roadmap clearly acknowledge that outcomes from humanities research are critical for economic, social and environmental benefits and highlight the centrality of collections to Australia’s research infrastructure.

These connections clearly illustrate the role of the Australian GLAM sector in ensuring the health, wealth and wellbeing of the nation.

4. Representation of GLAM in the new National Cultural Policy

Revive provided a landmark reset for Australian cultural policy, centring First Nations at the forefront of cultural priorities and reaffirming the importance of Australia’s artistic and cultural life. GLAM Peak welcomed the clarity that *Revive* delivered for the arts sector through the five pillars and the additional funding it delivered to address legacy issues.

There was, however, a crucial gap in the policy. There is now the need and the opportunity to expand policy recognition of the GLAM sector in the new NCP to reflect the full reach, diversity and impact of the sector. The GLAM sector’s distinct custodianship role—encompassing preservation, access, knowledge organisation, and trusted data—positions it to amplify the NCP’s goals across all five pillars.

GLAM Peak seeks further recognition of the GLAM sector in the new NCP through the following:

- **Balance of roles** – Alongside investment in artists and creative production, the new NCP can explicitly recognise custodianship as foundational to cultural life—ensuring the collections, skills, and systems that preserve and activate Australia’s stories are named as core policy infrastructure.
- **Cross-portfolio alignment** – GLAM infrastructure and practice deliver outcomes for education, skills, digital transformation, environment and climate resilience, regional development, social cohesion, and diplomacy. Articulating these connections in the new NCP can strengthen coordination and leverage existing programs.

- Digital and data readiness – As AI and data-driven innovation accelerate, the sector’s rights-aware metadata, preservation capability, and open, ethical discovery platforms are vital public goods that enable creative reuse, research, and innovation.

5. The GLAM sector directly contributes to each Revive pillar

Pillar 1: First Nations First

Closing the Gap: GLAM institutions actively contribute to Closing the Gap targets, by preserving and revitalising First Nations languages and knowledge embodied in cultural collections, and supporting Indigenous Data Sovereignty through implementation of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) protocols.

Truth-telling and co-curation: National and state institutions routinely co-develop exhibitions with First Nations communities designed to address complex histories and to acknowledge historical biases.

Repatriation and culturally safe care: collecting institutions engage in ongoing return of Ancestral Remains and secret/sacred objects from major institutions in partnership with First Nations communities; cultural permissions protocols embedded in access and description; on-Country consultations for storage and handling.

Language and knowledge preservation: GLAM institutions preserve and revitalise First Nations languages and knowledge by co-curating collections with Elders, digitising and repatriating community materials, supporting on-Country access and language programs, and embedding culturally governed metadata and permissions to ensure community control over use and interpretation.

First Nations leadership: Curatorial and governance roles are increasingly held by First Nations professionals across national, state and regional institutions; paid traineeships and fellowships are established pathways.

Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) protocols: GLAM institutions apply ICIP in collection policies, records, and public platforms to reflect community custodianship and signal cultural rules that copyright alone cannot cover.

Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story

Collections in GLAM institutions across Australia represent the full diversity of Australia, evidencing “untold” stories across regional, migrant, refugee, disability, LGBTQIA+, and working-class histories. Digitisation, inclusive metadata, and discoverability through

platforms like Trove broaden access nationally, while addressing digital inequity—particularly in rural and low-income communities—remains essential.

Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist

GLAM institutions are major commissioners, collaborators, and long-term stewards of creative work, employing creators across curatorial, design, writing, and digital roles and safeguarding IP and legacy for future discovery and reuse.

Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Strong infrastructure is the foundation of a robust and resilient cultural sector. For GLAM, custodianship of collections relies on organisations and institutions that have the resources, skills and capability to properly care for collections for the future. Strong infrastructure also ensures that cultural protocols are embedded and implemented across the sector.

Physical: Collection storage, environmental controls, accessibility, and climate resilience protect national assets and ensure public access across generations.

Digital: Catalogues, preservation repositories, rights and metadata systems, and national aggregators (e.g., Trove; Music Australia) underpin discovery, interoperability, and AI-readiness as shared public infrastructure.

Workforce: The sector's specialist skills—conservation, audiovisual and born-digital preservation, community curation, data/AI literacy—are essential to maintaining access and integrity.

Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience

Australia's GLAM sector is the nation's front door to culture and learning, delivering engagement in person and online. GLAM institutions are closely connected to their stakeholders and audiences and continue to adapt and evolve to meet audience needs. In particular, the sector has adapted with community expectations to deliver hybrid access as standard.

In person engagement: GLAM is the primary on-ramp to culture for millions annually through school visits, public programs, exhibitions, and library services.

Lifelong learning: is embedded across the sector. Libraries deliver early-years literacy, digital and media-literacy sessions and maker spaces; museums and galleries run curriculum-aligned school programs, teacher professional development, and hands-on workshops that connect collections to classroom outcomes.

Cultural tourism: is actively supported through established touring exhibitions, collection-loan programs, festivals and heritage trails that link national and state

institutions with regional venues, strengthening local precincts and year-round visitation.

Hybrid access is standard practice: institutions publish digitised collections, virtual exhibitions and tours, livestream talks and events, and provide on-demand learning packages, while engaging audiences in co-creation through oral-history drives and crowdsourced transcription and description initiatives.

5. Conclusion

Australia's galleries, libraries, archives, and museums are the living memory of the nation and the connective tissue of our cultural life. They enable creators and communities to find, understand, and build upon Australia's stories—on Country, online, and in every place people live and learn.

The new NCP is an opportunity to reflect the full cultural ecosystem by explicitly recognising GLAM custodianship—alongside creation—as core national cultural policy infrastructure. Such recognition would clarify the sector's contribution to First Nations self-determination and truth-telling, equitable access and participation, education and research, social cohesion and wellbeing, regional development, and international engagement. It would also signal the importance of trusted, rights-aware cultural data and preservation capabilities in a rapidly digitising world.

By articulating GLAM's role across the five pillars and the broader public purpose it serves, the new NCP can set enduring foundations for how Australia cares for, shares, and reimagines its cultural heritage—now and for generations to come.