

National Cultural Policy Submission

QAGOMA

Submitted: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation

On behalf of government or government body

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

First Nations

First Nations engagement is now deeply embedded in Australia's cultural landscape and is a high priority for the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA). Moreover, the visual arts are one of the most significant cultural, social and economic drivers for change for many First Nations communities. Engagement with Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Australian South Sea Islander peoples provides a significant opportunity to work together towards meaningful reconciliation at a national level. This includes through direct support for capacity building for First Nations arts, entertainment, and cultural professionals, as well as through the support that art museums provide in collecting, presenting and communicating First Nations works to the broader Australian community. This activity is one of the most vital strands in ensuring the non-First Nations community learns more about First Nations stories, perspectives and history, in turn fostering the development of greater cultural awareness, understanding and tolerance, to create a stronger foundation for the progress toward Voice, Truth and Treaty. This Gallery and the art museum sector more broadly is committed to implementation of [The Uluru Statement](#) from the Heart in full, including its obligations to Voice, Truth and Treaty. In Queensland, the recent (16 August) adoption of a formal process to [Path to Treaty](#) remains both a key opportunity and a challenge for us to ensure that all Australians are ultimately able to walk together in the spirit of truth, healing and reconciliation among our creative community and between all Australians.

A Place for Every Story

In recognising and reflecting on the diversity of Australian stories – what Noel Pearson described as our “our ancient heritage, our British inheritance, and our multicultural triumph” (2012) the arts can and do play a critical role in fostering cross-cultural inclusion and understanding. Inclusion and access remain key opportunities and challenges in connecting people with the enduring power of art, culture and creativity; and promoting the role of art as a catalyst for individual and community wellbeing.

The Centrality of the Artist

In supporting the artist's voice as central to Australia's cultural life, consideration should be given to the sustainability of artistic careers in light of the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and other potential disruptions to the continuity of artists' livelihoods. The reduction in job security during the pandemic period, and the outflow of arts workers from a number of key sectors, not least the performing arts, has contributed to industry burn-out, and Government support is not necessarily suited to address the specifics of employment in cultural economy. Consideration should be given to the wellbeing of those involved in the sector, and how the expertise of those who have left the sector to ensure their livelihoods can be positively reengaged. In supporting artists as workers and creators of culture, their

right to creatively communicate diverse views about the past, present and future should be paramount.

Strong Institutions

National Cultural Policy should recognise the potential for cultural institutions to address regional diplomatic priorities through cultural diplomacy, and provide support for institutions to leverage those opportunities.

Pandemics and extreme weather events pose ongoing risks for cultural institutions and consideration should be made towards addressing both current and potential future pandemic, climate events and natural disaster impacts at a national level.

Reaching the Audience

Ensuring engagement with and providing access to the cultural sector's transformative experiences for audiences of all ages and abilities is a challenge, but also an opportunity to enhance knowledge and wellbeing for those audiences. This includes widely accessible programs that appeal to the broadest audiences, while also identifying and fulfilling specialised interests and needs. The digital capacities of institutions to ensure their stories reach audiences at home, regionally, remotely and abroad are crucial. Here again, Australia's influence on the world can be advanced through well-targeted soft diplomacy. It is regrettable that the recent White Paper on Soft Diplomacy, which many major arts institutions made submissions to, has not been embraced, implemented and appropriately funded by DFAT. Soft diplomacy remains a lost opportunity in effectively advancing Australia's interests abroad. Arts and culture were once in the forefront of how Australia engaged in the world. Today, economic and trade, military and other strategic alliances appear to have replaced arts and culture based relationship-making as strategies for engaging with existing and prospective allies. Just as arts and culture help to shape and reflect what it is to be Australian, they can and should be engaged to play that role on a global stage.

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:

First Nations

QAGOMA's commitment to First Nations art and artists is articulated in our [Reconciliation Action Plan 2022–24](#), and further extended through our **First Peoples Strategic Principle** which sees the Gallery celebrate and respect the strength and resilience of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures and acknowledge the role of truth-telling in [Queensland's Path to Treaty](#). This also aligns with the 'Elevate First Nations Art' pillar of the Queensland Government's [Creative Together 2020–2030](#) roadmap.

A Place for Story

The Gallery champions the work of diverse Queensland, Australian and international artists and stories. Our [Vision](#) to be Australia's most inspiring and welcoming gallery, and a global leader in the contemporary art of Australia, Asia and the Pacific, sees the Gallery continue to develop and promote the [Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art](#), the Gallery's flagship exhibition series that since 1993

has focused on fostering cross-cultural inclusion and understanding through contemporary art as a form of cultural diplomacy. This aligns with the 'Share our stories and celebrate our storytellers' pillar of the Queensland Government's [Creative Together 2020–2030](#) roadmap.

The Centrality of the Artist

QAGOMA's [Purpose](#) to connect people with the enduring power of art and creativity recognises the intrinsic role of artists – that is further extended through [Strategic Principles](#) of: **Artistic expression** – respecting the right of artists to creatively communicate diverse views about the past, present and future; and **Inclusion** – valuing inclusion and access as central to how we work with audiences, artists, supporters and each other.

Strong Institutions

The Gallery is committed to addressing and mitigating strategic risks in areas such as:

Safety and security, including the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to prepare for and respond to safety and security risks, including current and potential future pandemics, extreme weather events, natural disaster, terrorism or personal attack and cyber-attack.

Finance and funding, including risk of insufficient funding. The securing of government and non-government funding, sponsorships, grants and donations is a critical priority, especially for the forward planning of blockbuster and major exhibitions.

Brand and reputation — failing to keep pace with innovation and technological change to enhance audience access and engagement and/or improve productivity. We continue to invest in our digital infrastructure and capability through our Digital Transformation Initiative focused on improving operational service delivery, workflow and efficiency

Building and asset maintenance — limited Collection and general on-site storage capacity, and ageing building infrastructure, plant and equipment. QAGOMA works closely with Arts Queensland on short- and long-term mitigation strategies for building, storage and asset maintenance.

Reaching the Audience

Reaching the audience is the core of QAGOMA's purpose, described in our Strategic Plan as connecting people with the enduring power of art and creativity. We value inclusion and access as central to how we work with audiences. Our Digital Transformation Initiative includes a fundraising campaign to bring the Gallery's Collection online in a dynamic and accessible way. We facilitate participation and learning as a means of building community cohesion and improving mental health and wellbeing. We promote year-round cultural tourism to the Gallery from interstate and international visitors, and partner with regional and remote Queensland communities through touring exhibitions and programs.

Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

The development of this National Cultural Policy should consider how other legislation interacts with the sector's specific needs and whether amendments should be sought to safeguard cultural institutions' operational requirements.

One example is the recent implementation of [Australia's Foreign Relations Act 2020, Foreign Arrangements Scheme](#), which requires states and territories and their entities (encompassing state and local government agencies and statutory bodies and Australian public universities) to undertake a lengthy approval and notification process for core and non-core foreign arrangements. This has

escalated reputational and financial risks for cultural institutions in securing key international partnerships, including through memorandums of understanding and project-based funding – due to the specific approval requirements outlined – for activities that would otherwise be deemed low risk. These risks include failure to secure partnerships that would otherwise be significant cultural outcomes for Australia due to the extended time required for this approval.

The National Cultural Policy should seek to actively support opportunities for cultural diplomacy, including outward-bound touring of artistic programs, exhibitions and works of art that communicate the strength and diversity of Australian cultural life, and bolster the great international work of the Australia Council for the Arts and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's bilateral organisations. The principles described in the 2013 Creative Australia report under 'Cultural exchange and diplomacy to drive stronger, deeper and broader international engagement' are a strong basis for this area.