

SUBMISSION
Growing the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development,
Communications – Office for the Arts

ABOUT US

The Aboriginal Art Centre Hub Western Australia (AACHWA) is the peak body for Aboriginal art centres across Western Australia. AACHWA is the only Indigenous visual arts peak body based in Western Australia. There are currently 26 Aboriginal art centres in Western Australia representing approximately 4000 artists. We work in partnership with our art centre members to determine pathways for sustainable growth and stability. Through our work, we seek to harness this potential by building strong collaborations and leveraging opportunities to support job creation, drive social reform, and bring about significant long-term systematic change to improve the lives of Aboriginal people in regional and remote Western Australia (WA).

Vision: A voice for vibrant, culturally strong and sustainable Western Australian Art Centres

Mission: AACHWA works for and with WA Aboriginal Art Centres to celebrate the strength of our art and culture by:

- Promoting: we are a strong voice for art centres
- Empowering: we encourage best practice, facilitate targeted training opportunities and encourage leadership within younger generations
- Connecting: we build strong networks with members and partners

INTRODUCTION

In addressing the *Consultation Paper on Growing the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry* the Commonwealth government needs to recognise Indigenous demographics and requirements to assist the sector are different throughout Australia (one size does not fit all).

In Western Australia there are marked differences between the distinct regions of the Western desert, Pilbara, Kimberley, Mid-West and South West. Factors such as remoteness, English as a second language, numeracy/literacy competency, the social and cultural impacts of colonisation, welfare, decades of government and church intervention, agriculture and mining and dispossession.

AACHWA proposes initiatives delivered require to be tailored appropriately to the needs of these distinctly different regions to maximise appropriate industry support benefits and outcomes.

There are areas of potential growth that AACHWA has identified across the sector that the federal government could include in their Indigenous art and culture action plan.

For AACHWA's response to this consultation we will present responses that talk broadly to the themes outlined in the consultation paper.

THEME 1 - SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

ITEM	CONTEXT/ISSUE	ACTIONS
Human resources	<p>Art centres are successful because there has been an enduring IVAIS funding commitment to providing a wage for a professional manager to supervise overall supply chain operations supporting artists making and marketing art works.</p> <p>Many other Indigenous employment initiatives have failed because of the lack of continuity of funding for sustained industry development over a duration of time.</p>	<p>More IVAIS (operational funding) is required.</p>
Acknowledgement and Promotion	<p>The art centre movement/industry is one of the best examples of reconciliation in Australia. The art centre model is a respected career path for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.</p> <p>The Aboriginal art centre movement, artists and initiatives need to be celebrated and honoured like other major</p>	<p>Increase visibility of the Art centre Movement and achievements so the Australian community cares about it, celebrates it and honours it.</p> <p>Initiate an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Centre specific award to honour and acknowledge artists and contributors associated with the art centre movement.</p>

	<p>contributors to Australian society and culture like authors musicians, sports achievers.</p>	
<p>Infrastructure</p>	<p>Art centre operations are being impeded by lack of infrastructure including art centre buildings, staff housing (in remote locations), galleries spaces and vehicles.</p> <p>There is a disconnect between the arts and tourism. There has been a lack of significant investment in infrastructure to accommodate tourist visitation to Indigenous art centres.</p>	<p>Provide AACHWA with funding support for an infrastructure audit across WA arts centres.</p> <p>Use the resultant mapping audit to provide analysis for state government and federal government investment priorities similar to those provided by the <i>Regional Galleries Mapping and Needs Analysis</i> report conducted by Galleries West https://www.gallerieswest.org.au/research/</p> <p>Government at all levels need to ensure Indigenous art and culture are embedded in overarching strategies to ensure budgets are better aligned with priority needs.</p> <p>The WA government has now made available their cultural infrastructure toolkit. https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/culture-and-the-arts/cultural-infrastructure-toolkit</p> <p>To better equip art centres with the spaces for tourists to visit they first need to be funded for essential infrastructure.</p>
<p>IVAIS Peak Body Funding</p>	<p>AACHWA with a demonstrated growth of membership and engagement since inception receives less than a third of operational funding support from IVAIS compared with these other agencies.</p>	<p>Fund AACHWA appropriately to facilitate development and improve capacity of the WA Indigenous art industry.</p>

THEME 2 - CAPACITY BUILDING

ITEM	CONTEXT/ISSUE	ACTIONS
Creative development - scholarships and mentoring	Art centres have the capability to develop experimental new works and creating markets.	Provide scholarships to artists through art centres - allowing for development of a body of exploratory new work for exhibition - relieves stress on art centre to sell work immediately. Payments made to artists through art centre via Stipend payments.
Arts worker employment and capacity development	IVAIS arts worker employment program is extremely important. This program provides employment in regional and remote communities where there are very few job opportunities. Key issues are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More clarity around job pathways and associated training. • The role of an art centre manager is one with many challenges and that means they do not often have the time to provide an adequate level of training to arts workers 	A review of the Indigenous arts worker program should be undertaken. The IVAIS arts worker program is bolstered by additional funding from NIAA to enable better structure, professional development, formal training towards job pathways, job retention, pride and self-esteem and reduction in reliance on CDP. Consider models for employment and training such as the Indigenous ranger program that provide employment and supported training within community.
HR support for art centres	Recruitment remains a significant time burden on resources for peak bodies and art centres with the revolving door of advertising jobs and costs of recruitment to art centres.	Peak bodies such as AACHWA require appropriate funding to adequately meet the needs of art centres in HR and recruitment

THEME 3 - ACCESS TO MARKET

ITEM	CONTEXT/ISSUE	ACTIONS
Online sales	<p>Covid 19 has resulted in art centres having a greater reliance in online sales than previously.</p> <p>As the first major event on the Indigenous art calendar Revealed was scheduled to open during the first weeks of lockdown. Revealed ran a fully online exhibition which was the highest selling exhibition in Revealed history with \$135,104 in sales, compared to \$99,832 in 2019.</p> <p>Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair (DAAF) online sales market resulted in \$2.61m in sales with approximately 65% of sales occurring in the first two days.</p>	<p>Recognise that Indigenous art centres are independent organisations who should be able to determine their own organizational priorities (including website capacity) and should be consulted before any decisions are made about funding a central Australian national Indigenous art sales platform.</p>
IT support	<p>Due to a combination of remote geographical location and diversity of need, ongoing accessible technical support is required to enable art centres to operate with confidence in the digital world. The ad hoc nature of current IT support being accessed puts art centres at a disadvantage and impacts on access to market (online etc).</p>	<p>An audit of WA art centre's digital technology, IT, Website and online services is required to fully capture the needs of the sector so they can be fully addressed and updated or supported appropriately.</p>
Role of peak bodies	<p>AACHWA launched its new website in 2020. Member art centres have reported increased visitation to their website due to AACHWA's strong social media presence and ability to channel visitors through their interactive map of WA.</p> <p>www.aachwa.com.au</p>	<p>Recognise that peak bodies all have a website that features information about ethical purchasing of Indigenous artwork and a map of their membership area with links to art centres websites. These are effective online spaces in educating the public and providing links and connections to art centres directly.</p>

THEME 4 - LEGAL PROTECTIONS

ITEM	CONTEXT/ISSUE	ACTIONS
Ethical purchasing advertising campaign	The Inquiry into the growing presence of inauthentic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'style' art and craft has highlighted the need for better education of consumers around the purchase of artworks.	Undertake ethical purchasing advertising campaign linked to online sales opportunities on multiple platforms sustained over a period of time.
Legislation	The Indigenous Art Code, Copyright Agency and the Arts Law Centre of Australia are calling for tougher laws to protect against the misrepresentation of fake art in the wake of the Federal Court's findings against Birubi.	AACHWA recommends the continued support of legislation for the protection from misappropriation of the traditional cultural rights of Indigenous artists, which deprives indigenous artists and communities of livelihoods, devalues Aboriginal cultural heritage and insults our collective national heritage.
Copyright and licensing	There is a need for greater transparency and fairness in licensing agreements with Indigenous artists.	Increased support for artists to access legal advice pertaining to agreements, copyright and licensing

WHAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW

There are a number of activities underway right now that have the potential to grow Indigenous art and culture significantly. There is need for federal government leadership in this space to support these initiatives. This section identifies those that are connected to AACHWA, but we also recognise that there are many community, state and territory and national organisations with their own activities and projects in existence.

Product Development Project

Products produced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) artists are intrinsically connected to the creative expression of culture, connection to community and respect for Country. The unique qualities of ATSI products attracts significant domestic and international market demand with shopping activities (including gifts and souvenirs) representing 12%, or \$16.3 billion of total visitor consumption spend in 2016-17 (Australian Tourism Research). The scale of this economic opportunity has led to the misappropriation and misrepresentation within the ATSI arts and crafts industry and unethical practices dating back to the 1800s.

AACHWA is currently the lead organisation in the delivery of the Product Development Project, an industry led project. This project will address a number of the recommendations made by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs Inquiry report into Inauthentic art and craft in the style of First Nations peoples. This project is the first of its kind attempting

to disrupt an existing market and reset the parameters for best practice, demonstrating that ATSI artists can meet the demands of this market and generate new economic opportunities for over 90 art centres representing over 14,000 ATSI artists nationally. By breaking down barriers to accessibility of authentically made product that is economically and culturally viable this project will reclaim ownership and authority over the market and what products are represented within it.

The objective of the Product Development Project is to develop a framework and subsequent resources that help realise the current opportunity to capture demand for authentic ATSI art and product through the participation of ATSI artists and art centres in the Australian merchandise and souvenir market. The objective of the project is to provide greater opportunities for ATSI artists within the industry to have greater claim in the market financially whilst reclaiming ownerships and authority over the products entering the market. Enduring the market values and respects ATSI culture.

Funding has been secured for stages one and two of the project and results will become available in 2021. The project will need additional funding towards the completion of stages three and four. Stage three requires funding to raise awareness and educate manufacturers, retailers and consumers about the value and importance of authentic ATSI products.

Aboriginal Arts Worker Program

AACHWA Our Future: Aboriginal Arts Worker Program is currently funded to run from 2020-2022. For the first time in WA a peak agency has engaged the TAFE to provide qualifications specific to Aboriginal Arts Workers job pathways. The creation of this program has been developed through consultation with member art centres and research into the successful Indigenous Ranger Program model.

A new approach to the delivery of the IVAIS Indigenous arts worker program will deliver significant capacity building outcomes for regional and remote arts workers in WA art centres.

The AACHWA Our Future: Aboriginal Arts Worker Program is successful because the internships provide special real-world, on-the-job experience for emerging professionals, allowing them to be directly involved in preparing and installing work with very strong cultural significance and exposing them to the broader Indigenous arts industry. This program is coupled with practical learning experiences within regionally based art centres.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AACHWA acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of this country and its waters.

We pay our respect to the Wadjuk Noongar traditional owners, for this is the country on which AACHWA is located, and all other Noongar cultural groups.

We acknowledge Tim Pearn who was engaged to contribute to this submission with AACHWA personnel.

