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18 December 2020

Submission to the Office of the Arts in Response to the Consultation Paper on Growing the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry

The Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to inform the development of an Action Plan to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander artists, and their cultural and economic interests.

Before making specific comments, we will outline who we are and what we do.

Who we are

AMaGA is the national membership association and peak advocacy body representing museums and galleries. We encompass a wide and diverse range of national, state, regional and community museums, art galleries, historic sites, botanic and zoological gardens, research centres, Indigenous cultural centres and Keeping Places across Australia. Our 1400 members represent thousands of individual professionals through the large institutions and thousands more individual volunteers.

AMaGA is an advocacy, research, service and professional development organisation. We build on a history of museum professional association activity that extends back to the 1930s, have branches in every state and territory, and support professional national networks of expertise. We set standards, develop ethical policies and provide guidelines. More information on AMaGA and our members can be found at <https://www.amaga.org.au/annual-reports-0>

Public value – in a nutshell

Museums and galleries are central to wellbeing, identity, and maintaining social cohesion. They inspire a high level of trust and confidence, and connect Australians with the stories, art, heritage and histories of their community at a local, regional and national level. They are also critical contributors to national and regional economies. Museums and galleries help foster the creative industries which are one of the engine houses of the economy and are key drivers of successful cultural tourism and regional development.

More specifically, Museums and galleries are critical parts of the Indigenous visual arts ecosystem, through curation, exhibitions, conservation, collection management, acquisitions and commissioning, community relationships, custodianships, publications and promotion, repatriation, research and shared learning.

Galleries and museums are, therefore, key participants in helping develop and deliver an Indigenous Visual Arts Action Plan.

Preliminary Comments on the Consultation Paper

AMaGA is pleased to see the opening statements on the importance of Indigenous art to Australia and Australians and recognises the various forms of support to the sector provided by the Commonwealth government.

We agree that the impacts of COVID-19 have been severe, and it is currently difficult to identify the full impact over the longer term on both the Indigenous art sector and, we would add, the cultural sector as a whole, which has been dramatically and disastrously affected.

We note the Government's commitments in response to the House of Representatives Report on the impact of inauthentic art and craft in the style of First Nations peoples.

We would stress, as a core principle, that Indigenous art is inextricably linked with Indigenous culture, heritage, traditional knowledge, ceremony, language, land and waters. All nurtures all.

Key Research and Principles

AMaGA is committed to supporting a greater and deeper level of Indigenous engagement in museums and galleries. This means respecting, connecting and collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – artists, knowledge holders, cultural workers, traditional owners, custodians, communities and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) protocols, in all aspects of museum and gallery activities and projects.

AMaGA's feedback in this submission is grounded in the following research and policies:

1. FIRST PEOPLES: A ROADMAP FOR ENHANCING INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT IN MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

AMaGA has developed a 10-Year Indigenous Roadmap to embed change in the cultural sector. Launched in 2019, its implementation will be crucial for breaking down barriers, providing cultural safety and increasing participation of Indigenous individuals and communities in the museum and gallery sector. Most importantly, the Roadmap points to a future where Indigenous communities have control of their cultural material.

The Roadmap was developed in 2017-2018 in conjunction with an Indigenous Advisory Group, and Terri Janke and Company. Terri Janke and Company ran extensive consultations in order to understand what the sector needed to change in order to effectively implement the Roadmap. This consultation involved surveys, an audit report, a literature review, 13 national workshops, direct teleconferences, attendance at national and international conferences, and meetings with leaders throughout the sector.

Drawing on this research, five Key Elements for Change were crafted, with associated action options and critical pathways to success. These five elements are the backbone of the Roadmap. They highlight where the sector needs to improve and how it can do so. They are:

- Reimagining Representation
- Embedding Indigenous values in museum and gallery practices
- Increasing Indigenous opportunities
- Two Way caretaking of cultural material
- Connecting with Indigenous communities.

2. FIRST PEOPLES: CONNECTING CUSTODIANS

Principles and Guidelines for Australian museums and galleries working with First Peoples cultural material

Over the last 50 years there have been shifts towards changing the relationships between museums and galleries and Indigenous people. To assist in this, our organisation developed its 1993 policy, *Previous Possessions: New Obligations: Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* and then in 2005, the revised policy, *Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities: Principles and guidelines for Australian museums working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage*. These documents set standards of Indigenous employment, care of collections, repatriation and management of sacred and secret material.

Under the terms of reference for the 10-Year Indigenous Roadmap project, Terri Janke and Company were contracted to make recommendations for updates to the 2005 *Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities* policy.

The recommendations were drawn from insights and information gained during the extensive consultations for the development of the Roadmap. In particular, the recommended updates incorporate some shifts in perspective from the needs of museums and galleries to those of Indigenous communities in their relationships with the sector.

There is consultation on the proposed updates and the final policy will be endorsed in 2021.

The policy provides a framework for Indigenous engagement in museums and galleries. It aims to:

- Recognise and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights to access, maintain, control and benefit from their cultural heritage in line with the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People;
- Enshrine best practices for engagement and relationship building with Indigenous peoples, culturally appropriate two-way interaction and knowledge sharing;
- Promote respectful use of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP), as well as establish best practices for ICIP management;
- Advise and guide museum and gallery staff, partners and collaborators concerning standards that must be met in relation to Indigenous engagement and ICIP rights;
- Publicly acknowledge and encourage the wider recognition and respect for Indigenous people and their cultural heritage in museums and galleries; and
- Enhance trust of Indigenous individuals, communities and groups by demonstrating appropriate respect or acknowledgement of cultural rights.

This policy promotes best practice for engagement with Indigenous people by reference to the following national and international documents:

- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007;
- UNESCO, Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003;
- Our Culture: Our Future, Report on Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights, 1999;
- Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian visual arts (Australia Council for the Arts, 2007 and the forthcoming 2019 update);
- Pathways and Protocols: a filmmaker's guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts (Screen Australia, 2009; to be updated in 2019);
- Indigenous Art Code, 2009; and
- Indigenous Australian Art Charter of Principles for Publicly Funded Collecting Institutions, 2009.

It is recommended that the Office of the Arts draws on the relevant data, critical pathways, and action options in the Roadmap, and the Guidelines for Policy and Procedure in the Principles document, in considering options for the Action Plan to grow the Indigenous visual arts industry.

These documents can be downloaded from: amaga-indigenous.org.au

In conclusion, AMaGA recognises that its membership plays a critical role in supporting and promoting Indigenous art and it aims to enhance that role through the Roadmap for the benefit of Indigenous artists and their communities across the nation. We support the co-development of an Action Plan for Growing the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry. To ensure effective implementation, such a plan would need to be adequately resourced and reviewed. The Action Plan should be developed in conjunction with a broader national plan, set of policies or a framework for cultural development in Australia that would assist in recovery and resilience-building of communities and enable sustained, evidence-based strategic investment in arts and culture over the next decade.