



**Submission to the Federal Government Office of the Arts  
On Growing the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry  
Consultation  
From the  
NSW Aboriginal Culture, Heritage & Arts Association Inc  
(ACHAA)**

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**M&G  
NSW**

Museums & Galleries of NSW supports ACHAA and this submission with staffing and other resources.

M&G NSW is in turn supported by Create NSW

## Theme 1: Sustainable growth

### 1. What practical actions do you think will assist to rebuild the market in a sustainable way?

NSW Aboriginal artists and art centres remain dramatically underfunded from the Federal Government, including IVAIS funding, yet with the largest Aboriginal population in Australia, clearly the number of artists and the centres that support them is at least equivalent to those found elsewhere.

NSW now also has its own industry service organisation in NSW Aboriginal Culture, Heritage & Arts Association Inc (ACHAA). Like the other peak bodies IVAIS supports, ACHAA is and nfp involved in professional development, advocacy, marketing and other support for its cultural centres, knowledge centres and gallery members. Even members designated as museums and language centres have galleries and support local artists. Unlike the other peak bodies, ACHAA has yet to apply for, or be invited to apply for, Federal Government support but intends to in 2021. We have had discussions in the past with the previous NSW Office of the Arts representative who was based in Dubbo and would strongly advocate that such a position needs to be maintained. The funding pool also appears to be almost locked in annually so needs to be increased if this is to happen in an equivalent manner.

The new action plan should strongly consider its definition of Authentic Aboriginal Art as the Federal Government approach has done much to develop and promote Authentic Aboriginal Art as originating elsewhere than NSW (and Victoria and Tasmania). You are correct to identify the strong connection between culture and art and in NSW this connection is only growing stronger.

Similarly, the definition and scope of art centres should be broadened to represent the functions and diversity of the NSW First Nations arts and culture centre models. As you point out in relation to art centres elsewhere, ACHAA members in NSW are diverse in responding to the needs of the communities and contribute to social cohesion and economic benefit in a variety of ways. Nearly all members are involved in the display and sale of art but very few have the means to assist artists with the development of their art. They may run programming but lack permanent workshop space. A capital investment program for building and equipment would greatly improve this inequity. Workshop spaces would support cohesion and improve economic benefit, creating destinations where visitors can meet and watch artists at work as part of an authentic Aboriginal experience.

Finally, ACHAA has yet to be able to fund its own website, unlike the other industry service organisations. Some members are currently undertaking training in the Mukurtu Collection Management System for culturally appropriate digital storage and sharing of cultural artefacts and artworks. For total security members have expressed the desire that we have our own server with considerable space for storing oral histories and other audio-visual recordings. We consider this will be a destination website for NSW Aboriginal, culture, heritage and arts, supporting out cultural centres and the artists and communities they support (through online sales capacity). This will represent a considerable investment in capital (server), website development and ongoing maintenance and security support and again is aimed at equivalencies with what is available from industry service organisations in other states.

This is a key part of the ACHAA Strategic Action Plan 21-25 which aims to elevate ACHAA's autonomous Aboriginal owned peak body status. ACHAA is currently supported on resources by Museums & Galleries of NSW with Aboriginal staff there carry out all functions for ACHAA covering administration, secretariat, conference/workshop

organisation and travel and accommodation. ACHAA seeks support to achieve such independence by 23-34 with its own contract staff working independently and the website serving as a headquarters in lieu of permanent office space. As part of the overall ACHAA communications strategy, countering the impressions of what is Authentic Aboriginal Art and marketing our NSW centre members and their artists, we place this at a much higher priority than office space and hope that funding bodies will agree and support this even playing field.

About this playing field, it should also be stated that NSW has been hit as hard, if not harder by 2020 Covid 19 restrictions, particularly on travel and is equally deserving and needing of Federal Government support.

**2. What do you like or dislike about how the market currently works?**

See previous answer in relation to the false impression created of what constitutes Authentic Aboriginal Art, the inequity of funding to NSW Aboriginal community-owned cultural centres, knowledge centres and galleries and the need for a NSW industry service organisation website (such as ACHAA's proposal) to support culture and art through representing its member organisations.

**3. What questions would you like answered in the Productivity Commission study?**

- a. How have the impressions of what is Authentic Aboriginal Art negatively impacted Aboriginal artists from south-eastern Australia?
- b. What can be done to address the inequities in services and funding for NSW Aboriginal artists and the Aboriginal community owned outlets that support them?
- c. How can a peak body in NSW such as ACHAA be better supported to in turn better support Aboriginal artists and the Aboriginal owned cultural centres/ community centres and galleries that support them?
- d. Is NSW Aboriginal arts and culture deserving of its own aggregate website such as other other industry service organisations have and who and how should fund it?
- e. This consultation report mentions that the arts centre strategy has been so successful that funding now represents often only 40% of an art centre income. This is not the case in NSW where Aboriginal community owned culture and arts facilities more typically rely on 90-100% funding support. How can this inequity be address to that these centres can diversify their income sources, become more sustainable and less reliant on Government support?

**4. Different words have different meanings for different people. Should we use 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' or 'First Nations people' in the Action Plan?**

We prefer First Nations people as a collective term. ACHAA focuses on the Aboriginal nations of NSW, its First Peoples, to address the impacts significant cultural disruption and the on-going need to be recognised for our own heritage and cultural knowledge including in terms of what is Authentic Aboriginal Art and Culture.

**5. What do you understand 'authentic Indigenous art' to mean? What type of artwork should be included in this definition?**

Indigenous art can cover art made by any Indigenous peoples around the globe and there are now many Indigenous people from other nations internationally living in Australia and practising their cultures and making their art. We prefer Authentic

Australian Aboriginal Art or Authentic Australian First Nations Art. It is any art made by Aboriginal artists defined by heritage, self-identification and accepted as such by their community or their community of origin as per the standard definition. It can be in any media, including multi media as an expression of their culture, heritage, identity and world views.

## Theme 2: Capacity building

### **6. What skills do you think are important in the industry? What ways do you build those skills? What would help you to build those skills?**

NSW Aboriginal Cultural Centre Managers need a diversity of skills, reflecting the diversity of the cultural centres themselves. While almost all have to manage collections, stage exhibitions, organise programming and manage shops and cafes, their centre may also be involved in supporting Elders, youth and children, protecting the environment and managing sites, consulting on broader regional issues such as water management as well as being hubs for their communities.

ACHAA has surveyed skills needs in the past and every year runs two conference/workshops – one at a regional member centre and one in a Sydney institution such as the Australian Museum or the NSW State Library. As well as hearing from a range of presenters from support organisations and funding bodies, members share their experiences, issues and innovations. ACHAA also hosts a Facebook page sharing members' posts which has a private members' group page where they can ask specific timely questions and issues – however, this has not been used as much in 2020 due to Covid-19 shutdowns of many centres.

ACHAA aims to continue these gatherings in 2021 but to date has only done so through project funding from Create NSW and support from the hosting organisation. Organisational and program funding for ACHAA would allow it to plan these conferences/workshops well in advance and better support members' needs/offer a wider range of skills and professional development opportunities. We have run our Mukurtu training with the Jumbunna Centre for Education and Research at UTS via zoom and would seek to do more of these, even though as a professional training series of workshops it has come with a fee.

Many members need support not just in skills but in staffing as they are under resourced for the demands and expectations placed upon them, yet funding requests have not been successful. A dedicated funding stream for arts workers and cultural officers in NSW Aboriginal community owned arts and culture centres would alleviate this strain.

### **7. Do you get the support and materials you need from your art centre?**

The two ACHAA members that have received IVAIS support, the Armidale Aboriginal Culture Centre and the Dunghutti-Ngaku Aboriginal Art Gallery in Kempsey have been able to support artists with materials. Most of the other ACHAA members are not financially able to do so but many have run programming that supports artists, both as workshop participants and facilitators.

### **8. Is there more that can be done to encourage the development of Indigenous-owned and operated businesses in the industry?**

As above under Sustainability:

- Greater recognition of NSW Aboriginal artists and their art as Authentic Aboriginal Art

- Provide funding in support of this to NSW Aboriginal community owned cultural centres, knowledge centres and galleries
- Provide funding ACHAA to better service its membership and achieve autonomous peak body status<sup>4</sup>

### Theme 3: Access to Market

#### 9. What can be done to assist artists to better connect with the art market?

As above, under Sustainability and Capacity-Building:

- The impression of what is Authentic Aboriginal Art needs to be broadened, so that Aboriginal artists from South Eastern Australia are fully recognised and supported within this definition, including at all levels of Government.
- NSW Aboriginal community owned cultural centres, knowledge centres and galleries need to be supported Federally to the equivalent level of funding as the art centres in Central Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia. This funding should support operational, including staffing, programming and skills development
- Infrastructure funding for workshop spaces and equipment would also help these centres support their artists and create destinations for Authentic Aboriginal Experiences (including meet the artists)
- - Supporting ACHAA as the peak body for these Aboriginal cultural centres would also support their marketing, professional development and networking.

#### 10. How can digital technologies overcome the challenges of remote locations?

Due to a lack of plane and train services, about six ACHAA members are only accessible by road. Sometimes this involves a car trip of more than four hours to the nearest airport yet these centres are not considered within the definition of remote. Perhaps another classification can be added.<sup>4</sup>

As above under sustainability and capacity building, ACHAA members would benefit greatly from the development of ACHAA's own website. As well as pages devoted to Members' cultural facilities, it would host resources, consultants register, gallery and shop. Utilising the training members are currently undertaking in Mukurtu Collection Management System, staff would be employed at regional members centres to start building these digital collections. On the ACHAA site, this would start to build an aggregate picture and understanding of NSW Aboriginal cultural knowledge. As a destination site, this will help address some of the inequities described above facing NSW Aboriginal artists across all artforms.

As mentioned above, ACHAA would continue with zoom workshops as funding for trainers and facilitators permits. We would also consider whether this could be a shared facility available as part of the membership and possibly embedded in the website for special broadcasts such as cultural events, again enhancing the site as a destination devoted to NSW Aboriginal culture, heritage & arts.

#### 11. How significant has selling artwork online been for your art centre through COVID-19? How could you improve how your art centre sells work online?

N/A – see above comments about funding for ACHAA's destination website with gallery and shop.

#### 12. Is there more that needs to be done to engage with the international arts market as well as tourists in Australia?

Sydney is a key international destination and the gateway to NSW which is more accessible to international visitors on short stays. Addressing the issues outlined above would support more intrastate travellers from overseas. Support for a NSW Aboriginal cultural centre in a prominent Sydney tourist destination such as Barangaroo or The Rocks would also stimulate interest and spending on NSW Aboriginal art.

**13. If overseas activities were to be supported, would this assist in engaging in the international market and do you consider this should be a priority?**

This is largely an unknown to us at present, but we would support any initiatives that encourage recognition and support of our NSW Aboriginal artists and community owned cultural centres.

## **Theme 4: Legal Protections**

**14. Is the current framework protecting Indigenous cultural expressions good enough?**

More should be done to stop the production and importation of fake art. A National Indigenous Arts and Cultural Authority should be established and funded on a minimum 3-5-year cycle.

**15. Should there be a mandatory Indigenous Art Code? If so, how do you think that should work?**

M&G NSW is a member of the Indigenous Art Code and ACHAA is considering joining on behalf of its members. ACHAA had held workshops with the Indigenous Art Code, the Copyright Council and the Arts Law Centre of Australia's Artists in the Black program and we support the work of all and encourage consideration of increased funding to support their important work.

ACHAA members receive stickers and certificates to show they are members to visitors. If we joined the Indigenous Art Code, we would request to incorporate this membership into our own membership identification. Such Indigenous Art Code identification should apply to all galleries and dealers.

The establishment of the National Indigenous Art and Culture Authority could support this and its enforcement.

**16. Do you like the idea of a certification trade mark scheme for authentic products? How do you think it should work?**

This has been tried in the past and failed, probably in part due to lack of wide spread maker support. A National Indigenous Arts and Cultural Authority could take this on, identify the gaps in previous attempts, develop a scheme and oversee roll out, participation and awareness building.

**17. Do you like the way the Resale Royalty Scheme works?**

In general, yes but there could a revisit of the awareness and education scheme to increase participation of Aboriginal artists and community owned cultural centres NSW.

**18. Is there more that could be done to increase awareness of moral, cultural and intellectual property rights?**

A National Indigenous Arts and Cultural Authority could do this with appropriate funding.

**19. How do you think that Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property protections could work in practical terms?**

A National Indigenous Arts and Cultural Authority should be responsible and funded appropriately.

## **About ACHAA**

The NSW Aboriginal Culture, Heritage & Arts Association Inc (ACHAA) is an Aboriginal owned and managed not for profit organisation. Its core voting membership comprises NSW Aboriginal community owned arts and cultural facilities, representing cultural centres, knowledge centres, galleries, museums, language centres and keeping places. Associate members (non-voting) comprise major cultural institutions (Australian Museum, NSW State Library, Art Gallery of NSW and Museum of Contemporary Art), community bodies such as trusts developing a cultural centre (eg Baaka Trust, Wilcannia), some regional public galleries with significant Aboriginal engagement and/or collections (eg the Museum of Art and Culture/yepang at Lake Macquarie) and council run facilities such as the Dhiyaan Centre in Moree.

According to its Constitution, ACHAA's objectives are:

- a) Create a sustainable and resilient network of NSW Aboriginal Culture, Heritage & Arts organisations
- b) Provide and facilitate training and development for those who work and volunteer in the NSW Aboriginal culture, heritage and arts-place-based sector
- c) Promote the value of NSW Aboriginal culture, heritage and arts and artists to the broader arts, heritage and culture sector and wider community
- d) Engage with all levels of government and non-government organisations for the support and promotion of NSW Aboriginal culture, heritage and arts.

ACHAA's 15 core members are: Armidale Aboriginal Cultural Centre; Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative; Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Centre; Dharrivaa Elders Group (Walgett) Dungutti-Ngaku Aboriginal Art Gallery (Kempsey); Henry Bolt Museum (Mindaribba Lalc); Minjungbal Aboriginal Cultural Centre (Tweed Heads); Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre (Newcastle); Monaroo Bobberer Gudu Centre (Eden); Muda Aboriginal Corporation (Bourke); Muru Mittigar Aboriginal Cultural Centre (at Rouse Hill Farm); Murrook Cultural Centre (Williamtown); Wungunja Centre (Trangie); Yarrowarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Wadjar Gallery (Corindi Beach) and Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre (Deniliquin). Another 3-4 new members are expected in 2021.

Founded in 2015, ACHAA has been supported by Museums & Galleries of NSW through its part time Aboriginal staff of Steve Miller and Melissa Abraham to provide secretariat, administration, communications and co-ordination. It has been funded by Create NSW for conferences and workshops. ACHAA's new strategic plan seeks for it to become an autonomous peak body by 2023-24.

## **About Museums & Galleries of NSW**

Museums & Galleries of NSW helps small-medium museums, galleries and Aboriginal cultural centres create exciting experiences for visitors and, through this, thriving local NSW communities.

We don't run museums, galleries and cultural centres but we care about those who do. We develop their skills, connect them with others in the industry, provide funding, point visitors their way, and give them access to ground-breaking exhibitions.

We have a special allegiance to the tiny, the volunteer and the remote organisations and have several programs which address their special needs.

As an organisation we're involved with program delivery, professional development, small grant funding and Aboriginal cultural development projects. Put simply, everything we do is designed to improve the visitor experience.

Through its Aboriginal Programs staff, Museums & galleries of NSW supports ACHAA for secretariat, communications and co ordination of program delivery such as conferences and workshops.

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(The M&G NSW office is the registered address for ACHAA)

Consent is given for this submission to be published on the Office of the Arts website

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