

National Cultural Policy Submission

Queensland College of Art (QCA) and Griffith University Art Museum (GUAM) at Griffith University welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the new National Cultural Policy (NCP). This submission was prepared by Professor Elisabeth Findlay (Director, QCA [REDACTED]) and Angela Goddard (Director, GUAM [REDACTED]). Words from this submission may be used as part of the NCP and published on the website.

1. What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you?

Summary

This submission is focused on the visual arts and the significant contribution that universities can make to the NCP. The *Creative Australia National Cultural Policy* of 2013 acknowledged the role of universities in educating practitioners but did not fully recognise the integral place of universities in the arts ecosystem. Art schools such as QCA and university art museums such as GUAM are active across a broad range of areas. This submission highlights the strengths of Griffith University and how QCA and GUAM are poised to make a significant contribution to the five NCP pillars. The key points of this submission are:

- Griffith University is Australia's undisputed leader in Indigenous visual arts education and research, particularly in showcasing contemporary urban Indigenous artists, and is ideally positioned to take a national leadership role in this area.
- Targeted funding for Indigenous students to attend University would significantly increase participation.
- QCA and GUAM nurture an inclusive environment for every story to be told and are important places for practitioners to feel safe to push boundaries, experiment and challenge dominant paradigms.
- University art museums provide unique public spaces to address challenging contemporary social issues such as truth-telling and the inclusion of diverse perspectives.
- QCA and GUAM are very active in establishing networks of creative practice across urban, regional and remote Queensland and it would be highly beneficial if universities were directly resourced to nurture and grow these connections.
- Art schools and university art museums are critical in capacity building and preparing artists for successful professional careers.
- Creative arts education is important more broadly and it is critical that Australian society recognises that 'creativity' is emerging as a key skill in the future world of work.
- One of the major priorities of the NCP should be the addressing the 'statue wars', with universities ideally placed to lead informed public debate on the future of public monuments.

First Nations

QCA is home to the internationally acclaimed and unique Bachelor of Contemporary Australian Indigenous Art (CAIA), established 1994 and now the undisputed national leader in Indigenous art education. The success of CAIA is based on the program being run by Indigenous staff for Indigenous students only, providing a safe place to explore issues of identity. QCA's list of Indigenous alumni is internationally renowned and includes: Gordon Bennett, Tracey Moffatt, Vernon Ah Kee, Tony Albert, Bianca Beeton, Carol McGregor, Robert Andrew, D Harding, Ryan Presley and Mandy Quadrio. **Griffith recognises that our First Nations students have unique needs, often requiring additional pastoral care, networks of peer and financial support, as well as practical support such as accommodation if coming from regional areas. Targeted funding to these areas would increase the impact of this program, and others that follow its model.**

Urban Indigenous art is an area of expertise at QCA. It is very important that the NCP accounts for not only traditional forms of Indigenous art making but also pro-actively supports contemporary artists who are engaging with Australia's troubled colonial past. Amongst QCA staff working in this area are Dr Fiona Foley who for decades has dismantled historical stereotypes and the emerging artist Warraba Weatherall who

presents alternate ways of seeing to contribute to cross-cultural exchange. GUAM is also very active in supporting contemporary Indigenous artists with practices focussed on truth telling. For example, GUAM staged a major solo exhibition of Archie Moore's work addressing Aboriginal politics and racism, has supported D Harding and Gordon Hookey's international careers with their first published monographs, and in 2022 GUAM co-published a monograph on the artist and activist Richard Bell with Documenta. GUAM has in the past provided critical institutional support through acquisitions, sometimes the first institutional acquisition of a CAIA-graduate's career,

Griffith University's proven track record in advancing Indigenous visual arts practices means that it is ideally placed to take a major leadership role in this area. In a recent review of QCA the review committee was highly impressed by the success of CAIA. As the chair Professor Tim Marshall (Deputy Vice Chancellor, Design & Social Context, RMIT), stated:

"...it is "incredibly difficult" to develop Indigenous knowledge practices at other institutions to the same scale and depth as has been achieved at Griffith."

The location of the CAIA program, and QCA and GUAM, presents a unique opportunity for the Federal Government to support a major infrastructure project and education facility to support emerging First Nations artists, showcase their work and bring complex issues into public discourse.

A place for every story

Griffith University places a strong emphasis on social justice and promotes a highly inclusive environment. These values are championed in QCA and GUAM and are particularly reflected in our exhibition programs. University exhibition spaces do not have the commercial imperatives of private galleries or the pressure to produce the blockbusters of large national institutions and therefore open dynamic spaces that can be highly inclusive. For example, GUAM has a long tradition of showcasing the work of major Australian women artists, including Elizabeth Newman, Bonita Ely, Davida Allen and Jenny Watson.

The stories of regional and remote Australia should be central to this pillar. *Creative Together 2020-2030: A 10-Year Roadmap for Arts, Culture and Creativity in Queensland* emphasises the need to strengthen communities and in line with that vision QCA has been highly active in the regional Queensland. QCA's goal is to create strong and authentic partnerships across regional Queensland. For example, QCA is working closely with Longreach Regional Council and in July QCA staff and students were commissioned by Longreach to paint a mural on a pipeline but the critical part of this work was facilitating community workshops so that there was local input, ensuring local stories were weaved through the design. **Direct lines of funding that support university arts and culture outreach in regional and remote Australia would make a direct and positive impact.**

The Centrality of the Artist

QCA's regional activities are also focused on the centrality of the artist. QCA runs student workshops and professional development for art teachers throughout Queensland. These outreach programs are critical to guiding aspiring regional artists on a pathway to a professional creative career. We work from the maxim that 'you can't be what you can't see'.

Universities are pivotal in the training of artists and are the bridge between high school and a successful professional career. Yet, arts subjects are currently actively discouraged in senior secondary schools - data from the [Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority](#) found there was a reduction of more than 44 per cent in the number of students enrolled in arts subjects (music, visual art, drama, dance and film) since 2012.

This is very concerning for the future of a creative Australia. One of the most critical challenges of this Pillar is to demonstrate the viable career pathways available to students who study visual arts. **The scaling penalty to creative arts subjects needs to be removed and/or consistent alternative entry modes such as interview or portfolio implemented nationally.**

Work-integrated-learning and internships are all valuable gateways to connect students to industry and community art projects, which would benefit from targeted support. QCA and GUAM run highly successful internships and industry projects but these demand high levels of resources.

It is also important that the NCP recognises the importance of 'creativity' as a skill and champions it as a skill that has value beyond an arts career. A considerable amount of government policy has taken a very reductive approach to employability and has been focused on preparing students for an existing profession. It is important that government policy looks to the jobs of the future. In recent studies on jobs of the future, such as the [World Economic Forum's The Future of Jobs Report 2020](#), states 'creativity, originality and initiative' as number 5 in the top 15 skills that will be in high demand by organisations by 2025. **The university cultural sector should be seen as a key resource for developing creativity skills which will be increasingly in demand in globally.**

Strong Institutions

The strength of cultural institutions relies heavily on partnerships and collaboration. Universities are at the forefront of forging these partnerships. QCA employs many of Australia's leading contemporary artists and they and GUAM spearhead the University's engagement with the wider cultural sector, devoting many hundreds of hours to supporting the wider arts community, from judging art prizes and peer reviewing funding schemes to running workshops. QCA and GUAM have created productive partnerships with QAGOMA, The Sydney Biennale, Documenta, the University of Ghent, Power Publishing, Artisan, Flying Arts, Queensland Art Teachers Association, Brisbane Portrait Prize, and the Brisbane Festival.

Universities have respected and ongoing relationships with international counterparts, including sister institutions, and this presents opportunities for cross-cultural collaborations, taking Australian art to global audiences, and exposing Australian students to the work of international arts practitioners. This could be achieved if arts and cultural activities were extended through existing structures such as The New Colombo Plan or through competitive grant funding.

Also, university institutions provide strong support to various fields of research such as remedial therapies for major health issues such as mental health, alzheimers, autism etc by taking cross disciplinary approaches to both teaching students in this field and facilitating research and programs for healthcare providers. **There is potential for significant new interdisciplinary research in these areas with increased federal support.**

Reaching the Audience

D Harding, a CAIA graduate and one of Australia's leading Indigenous artists commented his exhibition at TATE Modern, 'if the work doesn't relate to your family and your community then what is the point?'. It is critical that the cultural sector engages with a broad audience, without necessarily needing to be populist, and understands the role it can play in shaping national values and sentiment.

A key avenue for visual arts to reach a broad audience is through public art projects. The so-called 'statue wars', particularly around Sydney's Hyde Park statue of James Cook and Hobart's statue of William Crowther, demonstrate how public art works have become lightning rods for confronting national conversations. **The 'statue wars' need careful consideration and university institutions such as QCA and GUAM are ideally placed to research competing viewpoints, promote public debate and present practical solutions.** QCA is home to public art practitioners, such as Justene Williams who has recently been awarded a major sculptural commission at Queen's Wharf and the Indigenous artist Dr Carol McGregor who has undertaken major public art projects for the State Library of Queensland, who are actively changing the public art landscape.

QCA and GUAM currently are very active members of the visual arts community and are ideally positioned to nurture and promote the vibrancy, accessibility and impact of creative arts in Australia. Griffith University has high levels of expertise, leadership experience and enthusiasm to support the development of all five pillars of the new National Cultural Policy.