

AMaGA

Australian Museums and Galleries Association

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National Cultural Policy Submission

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- Submission may be made public (published)

Are you submitting this submission (select all that apply)?

X On behalf of an arts peak body - The Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA)

The Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) strongly supports the development of and investment in a National Cultural Plan and welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission as part of the process and contribute to federal government policy that explicitly acknowledges the value of the arts and culture as critical to Australian society and communities.

The Covid-19 pandemic had (and continues to have) a massive impact on the arts and cultural sector and the need for a quick turnaround of the National Cultural Policy is acknowledged. However, ultimately AMaGA would like to see a ten-year National Cultural Plan (or multi-decadal plan as outlined by A New Approach's *Becoming a cultural powerhouse* submission which would work cross-portfolio to leverage and invest in the civic benefits of arts and cultural programs.

AMaGA's submission endorses the key recommendations of relevance to the museum and gallery sector outlined in the bipartisan report of the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts Inquiry into Australia's Creative and Cultural Industries and Institutions - *Sculpting a National Cultural Plan: Igniting a post-COVID economy for the arts*. AMaGA's full Inquiry submission can be found [here](#).

AMaGA: who we are, what we do

AMaGA is the national membership association and peak advocacy body representing museums and galleries. We have branches in every state and territory and support professional national networks of expertise.

We encompass a large and diverse constituency of member organisations, including national and state cultural institutions, regional galleries and local historical museums, historic sites, botanical and zoological gardens, research centres, Indigenous cultural centres and Keeping Places across Australia; AMaGA advocates on behalf of the Australian museum and gallery sector more broadly. Our members represent individual professionals working through the large institutions and many more individual volunteers.

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First Nations, rural, regional and community-based organisations are well represented in our membership, with 57% of our organisational members are regional or remote institutions and 48% of our organisational members being volunteer and community-run. More information on AMaGA and our members can be found [here](#).

We currently operate with very limited resources – financial, personnel and technological (with less than 4.0 FTE) – to meet this mandate. A new strategic plan is currently in development and its key principles have been endorsed by AMaGA National Council. The work of making the plan operational is now underway and there are many similarities to the five pillars outlined for the National Cultural Policy. The priorities below should be read as interdependencies.

AMaGA's priority areas where we work within and for the sector:

- First Peoples
- Digital Transformation
- Museum and Gallery Work
- Sustainability
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- The Funding Mix
- Collections

Vital statistics

- There are over 2,500 museums and galleries across Australia
- In 2018/19 over 10.6 million people visited the national collecting institutions (on + off-site)
- 33% of people with a disability had visited a museum or gallery in 2014 (ABS General Social Survey, 2014)
- Over 50,000 Australians volunteer in museums and galleries
- 98% of Australians engage with the arts (Australia Council National Participation Survey Reports 2017/2020)
- Museums and galleries are integral to Australia's arts and cultural ecosystem which is a \$111.7bn industry

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

AMaGA agrees with the points raised in the [Theatre Network Australia](#) submission that recommends that some pillars, namely pillars 1 and 2, need to expand across all aspects of the policy rather than being siloed and separated from each other. To address some of the limitations that the pillars have, AMaGA recommends the expanded pillar definitions put forward by [Esther Anatolitis](#) (in red) -

1. The crucial place of First Nations stories – and not just stories, **but First Nations ways of working**

AMaGA endorses the Australia Council's 2020 plan to support the development of an independent peak body or service organisation for First Nations arts which were originally developed from the National Indigenous Arts and Cultural Authority (NIACA) Consultations.

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AMaGA looks forward to the outcomes of the upcoming Purrumpa First Nations arts and culture gathering on Kurna country in 2022 and supports this model of First Nations led programming as well as the Australia Council statement in *Towards a national cultural policy 2022*.

2. Reflecting the diversity of our stories – and not just diversity, but place

As per the previous pillar, AMaGA recommends that this pillar be considered across all pillars in order to be truly inclusive.

AMaGA supports the findings of the Australia Council's *Towards Equity: A research overview of diversity in Australia's arts and cultural sector*, which presents information for eight focus groups or demographics in the Australian community.

3. The centrality of the artist – and arts workers

AMaGA suggests that this pillar be expanded to explicitly include arts workers. The diversity of artistic practice within the sector needs to be acknowledged as do the unique conditions artists work under.

4. Strong institutions – and not just institutions, but interdependencies

Australia Council for the Arts AND Culture

Terms like 'arts and culture', 'institutions' and 'organisations' mean different things to different people and although already very broad, some current definitions need expanding. AMaGA aligns with ICOM Australia's assertion that 'A cultural policy is far broader than an arts policy. The suggested five pillars are strong but do not encompass the full extent of our cultural ecosystem. The most critical gap is tangible and intangible heritage.' ***AMaGA recommends the remit of the Australia Council be expanded to explicitly include culture and heritage, with funding restored to a level that enables support for a multidimensional cultural ecosystem.***

Ministry of Culture

To align with other OECD countries AMaGA recommends the establishment of a discrete Ministry of Culture (or portfolio realignment such as Britain's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) to successfully bridge the complexities of the industry across numerous federal portfolios including Health, Employment, Education, Tourism and Communications. The Ministry would also be able to assess and evaluate the impact of culture across departments and effectively aggregate arts and culture activity and expenditure across government.

Further, following A New Approach *Imagining 2030* modelling, real mechanisms must be designed to broker cross-portfolio connections, not just at a Ministerial level, but at a bureaucratic level (e.g. roundtables), across peak organisations from different areas (led by the arts), and across sector organisations and individuals (e.g. through summits on particular topics such as young people's wellbeing).

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Intergovernmental accord

The complex relationships within the arts and culture sector and the organisations that serve them and all levels of government must be streamlined to ensure efficiencies across the three levels of government to avoid duplication and to share learning. Taking a whole of government approach to the arts through a tri-level government accord similar to that agreed upon in 2013's *Creative Australia* policy would address this gap, as would the reinstatement of the Cultural Ministers Council with the inclusion of local government representatives.

Cultural diplomacy

Arts and cultural organisations provide an opportunity to further develop and enhance international relationships through shared arts and cultural interests, touring exhibitions and repatriation negotiations. Collaboration and joined-up work in the cultural sphere for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Department of the Arts, Indigenous Affairs (currently managing repatriation and restitution processes) and an expanded Australia Council (that includes culture as well as arts) is the first step in this process of consolidating our cultural profile internationally. For example, DFAT's Cultural Diplomacy Grant Program and programs within the Australia Council's International Engagement Strategy could work in tandem to provide more resources and pathways for arts organisations and practitioners, and share learnings from past recipients of their respective programs.

The essential work of arts service organisations

Service organisations are distinct sector operators. They offer a range of professional services tailored to meet the needs of their artforms or to address broader industry priorities. Services include professional development and training for artists, arts workers, board members and staff; advocacy; business management; and marketing assistance. As well as this, service organisations provide advice to governments, and are a valuable link between governments and the industry. NAVA has been advocating for a change in the Australia Council funding model from a four to six-year model for service organisations for many years (a change that was granted but reneged on with cuts to Australia Council funding in 2015). **AMaGA recommends a discreet funding stream for arts service organisations be established as a matter of urgency.** AMaGA strongly supports NAVA's assertion that 'service organisations which often work behind the scenes to support the sector now compete against the more public producing and presenting organisations for the same small pool of funds. The impact of reduced funding to service organisations leads to declines in the capacity and economic sustainability of the rest of the sector. Significant funding increases that promote and foster the full richness and diversity of the arts ecology must prioritise the strengthening of support for working artists, smaller cultural organisations, First Nations' cultural organisations and service organisations'.

Revive and consolidate parliamentary friends

The current system of federal parliamentary friends groups and gatherings has not worked well for the arts. Events planned during sitting weeks have patchy attendance due to the MP and Senatorial commitments or potential to be called back into the chamber. In the 46th parliament, a number of arts-related friend groups were convened including, Australian Books and Writers, Australian Music, Contemporary Arts and Culture, Museums, Libraries & Galleries, Orchestral Music and Performing Arts. These bi-partisan gatherings of parliamentarians with arts leaders, advocates and practitioners are critical forums and networking events which provide visibility for a community of practice.

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To garner bi-partisan support for a long-term Cultural Plan, AMAGA recommends the establishment of the Parliamentary Friends of Arts and Culture convened by Special Envoy for the Arts Susan Templeman, to showcase the sector in all its diversity and for arts groups to demonstrate the collective and collegiate nature of their respective artforms and advocacy.

5. Reaching the audience – **and not just audiences, but relationships**

The arts and culture sector was one of the hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, virtually reducing audiences to zero. In the wake of Covid, there is a renewed willingness within the arts sector to work together - rather than compete with each other. Broader awareness of the research highlighting that Australians consume (consciously or not, see here the Australia Council's arts participation survey [*Creating our Future*](#)) a wide variety of arts and cultural content is vitally important. However, the notion that Covid would result in audience transformation was misguided. It is therefore crucial that data and knowledge sharing occurs across the sector including broad dissemination and application of learnings in the Australian context via research organisations (such as [*The PatternMakers*](#)) and universities. Exposure to international visitation and participation trends, ie: [*Colleen Dilenschneider's Know Your Own Bone data*](#) is necessary for Australia to keep pace with international peers.

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.

1. First Nations: recognising and respecting the crucial place of these stories at the centre of our arts and culture.

Implementation of the *First Peoples: Roadmap*

AMaGA has provided a blueprint for First Nations engagement in museums and galleries that has been endorsed by Indigenous leaders and professionals across the sector. After several years of national consultation and research, *First Peoples: A Roadmap for enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries* was launched in May 2019. The Roadmap represents a ten-year plan and revised policy for the sector and is about building more respectful and trusting relationships between museums and galleries and Indigenous peoples. It was developed for the sector in consultation with the sector. Built on five Key Elements for Change, there are numerous action options and critical pathways to success. Implementation of the *Roadmap* is crucial for breaking down barriers, and creating space to negotiate shared histories and truth-telling in museums and galleries. The *Roadmap* has established a sound methodology for Indigenous agency in the sector, and its principles are currently being incorporated into the revision of the National Standards for Museums and Galleries - ready for immediate implementation. Link to *First Peoples: Roadmap* and full consultation report [here](#).

AMaGA now seeks structural support and financial investment from the government, potentially matched with philanthropic/corporate support (see **Address the complex funding mix of the arts** at the end of this document), to work with Australian museums and galleries to adopt and implement the strategies outlined in the Roadmap. This would take the form of multi-year funding for the appointment of a dedicated Indigenous position within AMaGA's National Office to liaise with museums and galleries and provide professional development for staff and volunteers as they work to adopt the Roadmap's 'Elements of Change'. The role would also be responsible for conducting and publishing annual audits of Australian museums and galleries' progress on this journey.

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2. A place for every story: reflecting the diversity of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture

Digital storytelling

The collecting organisations of Australia, big and small, tell the stories of our country. However, much of the distributed national collection, particularly items held in small to medium organisations in rural and remote areas, are not digitised or accessible. **AMaGA supports the development of a nationwide digitisation process and collections portal to ensure access and longevity of our history, along with funding for innovative programming and access for historians, archivists and artists to ensure collections and the history they hold is interpreted in a multifaceted and creative way.** Current models include AMaGA Victoria's Regional Digitisation and Bushfire project and the [Victorian Collections portal](#). These projects could be scaled up and rolled out nationally through AMaGA. The National Library's Trove portal is an approach that serves some needs well but not others - and is not well equipped to handle interactive or audio-visual works.

Truth-telling, cultural safety and repatriation

Fundamental to the country's stories are those told by First Nations Peoples. AMaGA's *First Peoples Roadmap* provides a methodology and process of change and a model that prioritises cultural safety and empowers and enables Indigenous storytelling to shift colonialist mindsets in existing organisations via truth-telling processes.

The *Roadmap* also has applicability to national and international restitution and repatriation processes that many AMaGA member organisations are currently involved with and points to how Traditional Owners are the leaders in this space. Repatriation is a complex and fundamental issue that must be urgently addressed.

In addition, AMaGA recommends that the Australian government adopt international protocols for the protection of cultural property, as recommended by Blue Shield Australia who state 'Australia is a signatory to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in Armed Conflict but has yet to adopt the First and Second Protocols. The signing of the Protocols would place Australia on an international level and underline legal commitment alongside the 108 nations that are parties to the First Protocol and Second Protocol [New Zealand (2013) and the UK (2017)]'. Additional protection via ensuring the Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986 is fit for purpose by including the diversity of movable cultural heritage including digital (born-digital or digitised) is also endorsed.

3. The centrality of the artist: supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture

Arts and culture people pathways

Artists and art workers are central to the arts and culture industry and profession. Artists are also fundamental to the organisations that AMaGA represents, as caretakers of their work and generators of their employment largely through programming opportunities that bring our collections alive and interpretation that expands their understanding and access.

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Across the sector, there are significant discrepancies in pay and conditions. Even those in government paid positions fall well below their counterparts at level in government departments, including at the Office of the Arts (see [TNA's Salary Survey Report 2021](#)). When one considers the specialised skills required for institutional roles (and the high level of academic qualifications required), ironically museum and gallery workers are financially penalised for this. It is symptomatic of the misguided perception of arts and culture jobs are somehow soft and the exploitation of '[vocational awe](#)' that is rampant within GLAM professions. In addition, there is an ever-increasing chasm emerging between executive-level salaries in institutions and those of staff engaged under enterprise agreements.

However, the arts workers described above are often seen as 'lucky' within the sector, as those outside government organisations face much more precarious circumstances. Across the sector, particularly in regional and remote areas projects are funded through unpaid labour, volunteerism and goodwill. Artists often work for 'exposure' and as a result, many practitioners have to supplement work in organisations on a casual or irregular basis as ushers, educators and front of house in order to sustain their own artistic practice. Covid demonstrated just how rampant job insecurity in the arts was - and still is. To this end, AMaGA wholly supports the [recommendations presented by NAVA](#) through their extensive consultation process and Regional Arts Australia's advocacy for employment rather than project contracts for artists engaged by museums and galleries - in order for individuals to build superannuation and leave balances. In order to ensure a sustainable industry more resources need to be provided for succession planning, paid internships and mentoring. To this end, AMaGA is piloting a mentorship program for emerging professionals from 2023 which could be upscaled with government investment.

Digital capabilities

Enhancing digital capabilities across the sector underpins all of the pillars, but is particularly applicable to artists (P3) and organisations (P4). Here we refer to the Australia Council's [Digital Strategy program](#), which could be expanded if additional funding was made available. In addition, a National Digital Strategy as identified in the [Theatre Network Australia](#) and [Australia Council](#) submissions is strongly endorsed by AMaGA to ensure equitable access to digital skill development.

4. Strong institutions: providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture

Abolish the 'efficiency dividend' for federally funded institutions

The Efficiency Dividend (or annual funding reduction in real terms) has been in place at the Commonwealth level for over 30 years, with rates varying between 1% and 4%. Cultural organisations are distinct from large government departments in their ability to mitigate such 'efficiencies'. The deleterious effect the dividend has had on cultural agencies has been well documented, and its impact is now arguably eroding these institutions' ability to effectively perform their core functions.

Better cultural boards and engaged governance

AMaGA recommends the establishment of a National Commissioner of Public Appointments (Britain has had a similar role in place since 1995) to provide the public with independent assurance and a degree of transparency as to the appropriateness of individuals' qualifications, experience and expertise for the critical appointments they are undertaking. The cultural institutions themselves should

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also be enabled to have input into the selection process of their boards or councils in order to acquire the right mix of skills, disciplines and backgrounds appropriate to the functions of the organisations.

Coordinated support/representation for the National Cultural Institutions

While unique in their mandates and collections, the National Cultural Institutions (NCIs) all function separately and in many cases under a specific Act of Parliament. This is a critical moment for the NCIs to make a collective appeal to the Commonwealth government for sustained support as custodians of our national narratives. As the one professional organisation of which all the NCIs are members, ***AMaGA is uniquely placed to work with government and play an intermediary role in coordinating the NCIs and encouraging efficiencies between them*** - for example, in the areas of disaster management, exploring collection storage options, training and interpretation of visitor data and developing shared collection access tools. AMaGA staff have broad understanding and experience across many of the NCIs to leverage or broker relationships and seek solutions of mutual benefit to all parties and the broader museum and gallery sector.

Disaster preparedness

With the increase of natural disasters across Australia, it is essential that our cultural organisations - big and small - are equipped to prepare and manage collections and infrastructure in the face of floods, bushfires and other climate related emergencies. AMaGA is well placed to advocate for organisations when faced with emergency situations as a conduit for the distribution of micro-grants and other emergency relief. AMaGA is already a pillar member of [Blue Shield Australia](#), the ideal coordinating body to develop and deliver disaster preparedness training across Australia, particularly for small and medium organisations and historical societies located in regional and remote areas.

There is much to be said for the role of arts and culture in rebuilding communities in the wake of disasters - for brevity we refer to and endorse the work of the [National Taskforce for Creative Recovery](#).

Continuation of the Culture, Heritage and Arts Regional Tourism (CHART) Program

In 2021 AMaGA was awarded the administration of the Culture, Heritage and Arts Regional Tourism (CHART) program on behalf of the Commonwealth Government. This \$3 million program was designed to support community cultural, heritage and arts organisations in regional Australia as they recovered from the impacts of COVID-19 delivered through grants of up to \$3,000 per organisation. The program promoted participation in, and access to, Australia's arts and culture through developing and supporting cultural expression and sharing stories of community and historical significance. The program recognised and benefited some of the most vulnerable in the sector; community-run arts and cultural organisations that included community museums, galleries and historical societies.

The continuation and expansion of CHART into an annual Commonwealth funded grant program would guarantee that small and medium organisations have continued access to a source of funds to ensure availability of essential resources and services, maintenance and program development.

Ecosystems of infrastructure, knowledge, collaboration and sustainability

The arts ecology and the capacity of the staff within the ecosystem need to match and keep pace with cultural infrastructure investment. Long term sustainability of the sector, including the buildings, people

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and collections that preserve and foster it must be considered in order to future proof the sector. While AMaGA supports the development of new cultural organisations and capital works projects, more consideration and funding towards the whole-of-life of organisations and their operations must be considered prior to breaking ground. An example of this is the proliferation of First Nations cultural centres as large infrastructure projects currently in development across the country. It is important that these centres work collaboratively to create a powerful national network of First Nations-led cultural experiences and approaches that maximise collective strengths and reduce/eliminate duplication. This is a complex process as outlined in AMaGA's *First Peoples: Roadmap*. A broader ecosystem approach, grounded in respective local Indigenous knowledge of place and a culture of safety will create and support a new and powerful focus for cultural and educational tourism both nationally and internationally.

5. Reaching the audience: ensuring our stories reach the right people at home and abroad

Diverse conversations

The varied nature of museums should allow for the interpretation of their collections on multiple levels and admit multiple viewpoints, but this is not standard practice. Many stories of our country are still told through a transmission mode of communication whereas museums and galleries need to consider themselves in dialogue with their audiences. AMaGA is involved in a number of research projects that explore this 'wicked' problem, including partnering with Deakin University Business School on their [Organisational Change for Audience Diversity Project](#). Further investment is required to support this research within core arts organisations. As a corollary, reinstating the importance of independent research and the humanities within universities is a fundamental need for the sector.

Expanding the tourism portal to a national culture map

AMaGA supports the development of the tourism portal as identified in the *Sculpting a National Cultural Plan* Standing Committee Report but would like to see the scope of such a tool extended beyond 'events' to include the details of museums and galleries and other cultural sites across Australia. AMaGA has long recognised the need for such data to be publicly available.

Currently, there is no comprehensive digital 'map' of museums and galleries in Australia. This would inform domestic tourists about the nature of collections and accessibility details of the museums and galleries in towns on their itineraries – to the benefit of local economies.

A pilot mapping tool and program has already been developed in one state, which revealed many previously unknown museums and galleries in the regions – this could be upscaled to a national level. The advantages of a national map of museums and galleries are numerous; in addition to the economic benefits of increased cultural tourism, identification of museums and galleries would allow Australia's museum and gallery network to understand which facilities provide opportunities for touring exhibitions or what upgrades might be needed to make these facilities/collections more publicly accessible. Such a step seems a natural extension and enhancement of the collaboration currently underway between the Office of the Arts and AMaGA – the Culture, Heritage and Arts Regional Tourism (CHART) Program.

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Significance 2.0 - Develop community competence in significance assessment

AMaGA supports investment in revisiting Significance 2.0 and the establishment of updated case studies that are broader in scope to expand the application of its methodology and frameworks across cultural collections. ***A review, scaling up and rollout of Significance training and resources across the sector is something AMaGA is well placed to coordinate.*** Significance 2.0 is highly regarded internationally and is the 'go-to' methodology both within Australia and abroad. Assessing the significance of collections large and small is integral to collection management. Increasing the capacity of staff and volunteers to be able to articulate the significance of their collection to stakeholders, means they can interpret and provide public access to their collections more effectively, better care for their collections, and formulate better-informed disaster preparedness plans.

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

Address the complex funding mix of the arts

AMaGA welcomes Minister Burke's statements that this cultural policy will see the integration of [Creative Partnerships Australia](#) into the Australia Council. Funding for the arts in Australia needs to include centralising the ability to empower and enable arts organisations to develop relationships with funders in order to leverage synergies that exist between donors and supporters and the sector wide connections of the Australia Council. For further strategies see [Philanthropy Australia's submission](#).

A review of the application of the Modified Monash Model system for arts and heritage

Through the administration and delivery of the CHART grant program, AMaGA has been made aware that the system used by all levels of government to assess regional eligibility for funding has many limitations, some would say flaws. The Modified Monash Model (MMM) is a geographical classification that categorises different areas in Australia into seven remoteness categories. ***We assert that a system designed for the deployment and allocation of medical staff and resources to regional areas is not the best way to assess the needs of small arts organisations***, as demonstrated in the following examples:

A small arts centre/house museum in Queanbeyan NSW was not eligible for CHART funding because of the size of the population of the town in which it is located. Outer suburban heritage sites such as Richmond and Windsor in NSW were also ineligible because by MMM reckoning, Greater Western Sydney extends to Springwood in the Blue Mountains.

A review of the MMM assessment system for the arts and culture sector is essential to ensure equity across the sector.

Please do not hesitate to be in touch for an elaboration (including costings) of any of the information within this document.



Katie Russell, National Director | Australian Museums and Galleries Association

Attribution: Australian Museums and Galleries Association submission to government - National Cultural Policy, August 2022

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