

# AMaGA

## Australian Museums and Galleries Association

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### Introduction

Given the delays in providing members with standard annual reporting, the National President and Director provide this short update and digest of AMaGA activity, to the Special General Meeting in Canberra on Tuesday 18 April, then for release to all members online.

### The national context

Recent policy actions and the legislative reform agenda of the new federal government have arguably created the most favourable conditions for the museum and gallery sector in over a decade. AMaGA is well placed to navigate how the federal changes intersect with actions at both state and local levels.

On January 30, 2023 AMaGA welcomed the launch of *Revive* - the National Cultural Policy. In addition to the important primacy of First Nations peoples, their stories and contributions to the arts, we welcome the consideration of the structures required to support the arts and the people who work within them. We are eager to see how AMaGA's *First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries* might form part of this conversation. We've been invited to a briefing in early May to learn more about the transformation of the Australia Council into Creative Australia and the establishment of a dedicated First Nations-led board and will keep members informed of developments in this space. Equally, we are pleased to see in *Revive* the inclusion of an Arts Disability plan and a focus on working conditions across the arts with the formation of the Centre for Arts and Entertainment Workplaces.

Given that over 50% of our members and stakeholders are from regional and remote areas, it is pleasing to see more funding directed to these areas through the Regional Arts Fund and look forward to hearing more about the update of Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections which assists in determining the significance of cultural and heritage objects which we identified in our own Cultural Policy submission.

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We also look forward to working with the newly formed Creative Australia to determine how service organisations such as AMaGA can be better aligned and funded to suit government priorities as well as ideas from our members, for the protection, conservation and accessibility to Australia's important collections and cultural heritage.

## **Federal institutions funding**

As flagged in *Revive* the critical funding shortages of the national cultural institutions (NCIs) were going to be addressed in the May budget. So we were delighted with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's pre-Easter announcement of the government's \$535.3m in funding over the next four years for the Australian National Maritime Museum, Bundanon Trust, Museum of Australian Democracy (Old Parliament House), National Archives of Australia, National Film and Sound Archive, National Gallery of Australia, National Library of Australia (including \$33m for the digital archive, Trove), National Museum of Australia and the National Portrait Gallery of Australia.

While we've been strongly advocating on behalf of the national cultural institutions, our responsibility is to the whole sector. We believe the relief will be felt beyond the NCIs, as these federally funded institutions resume and rebuild their leadership roles in sharing their collections and expertise with the rest of the sector, through touring exhibitions, loans and skills development.

## **Copyright reform**

Seb attended the Federal Government's Ministerial Roundtable on Copyright in late February alongside senior reps from all the broadcasters, AIATSIS, Screen Producers Australia, IGEA, Vision Australia, Australian Society of Authors, Arts Law, Universities Australia, CSIRO and about 30 other peak bodies and organisations.

Each organisation spoke for a short two minutes about three key Copyright issues in our sectors and there was an opportunity to explore reforms. Attorney General Mark Dreyfus and his department were present and listened, condensing our collective concerns to five issues to explore further. In addition to a full embrace of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP), the Attorney General has committed to roundtables this year exploring five issues for reform.

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These were orphan works (museums and library collections are full of these where the rights holder is unknown and thus they stay in limbo, often undigitised because of perceived risk); a quotation exception (bringing us into line with the Berne Convention and potentially making it easier for researchers, documentary makers, and not-for-profit museums and galleries to engage in contemporary interpretive practices); clarity over remote learning provisions (which currently have a different licensing regime to in-classroom delivery); modernisation of the definition of 'broadcast'; and lastly, a roundtable on artificial intelligence - a topic that museums and galleries need to have a stake in for research and discovery uses, alongside the interests of artists.

These future roundtables will draw other voices and experts and run over the next 9 months. You can read the official high-level summary [here](#).

It felt like a lot of previous power blocs between industry and creator groups, and peak bodies like AMaGA, ALIA, CAUL and CAARA have started to shift and realign. There is positive momentum towards potential reforms that have stalled over the past 20 years.

The positive cultural sector developments above have given us both pause to reflect on the consistent advocacy of our predecessors on the National Council, former staff, branches and chapters and the work all members have done, and continue to do, in their own contexts to advance the cause of museums and galleries in less sympathetic political environments. Despite the fact, there is as yet no direct benefits flowing to AMaGA from the new National Cultural Policy, to have our perspective sought by Ministers and our submission reflected in the policy itself (eg: revisiting Significance 2.0), provide reasons for optimism. We, therefore, acknowledge we stand on the shoulders of those who went before us and created the strong platform for advocacy that AMaGA represents.

## **Constitutional change: tonight and continuing...**

As mentioned in previous bulletins, AMaGA's constitution was adopted in 1994 with minor updates in 2013. The current National Council has been considering if this document is fit for purpose and reflects the needs of the contemporary museum and gallery sector. At this evening's meeting in Canberra, members will

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consider and vote (many thanks to those who sent in their proxy) on two resolutions:

- To change the Association's financial year to July-June and;
- To include online participation and voting at all meetings of the Association.

As with the process that led up to the vote on these two resolutions, any future changes the Council propose will be presented to members with the requisite consideration period and a detailed discussion paper to inform their vote and to remain constitutional.

## **National Council election and Annual General Meeting**

2023 is an AMaGA election year and we are calling for nominations for National Council. The National Council provides the vital representative platform for the leadership of AMaGA, and its members are the recognisable interface with the sector, on behalf of the hugely dispersed footprint of AMaGA's membership around the country. Council members bring expertise and experience, source opinions, listen to needs, develop and implement policy, and undertake the strategic governance of the organisation.

Council needs representation from across the geographic spread of the country and coverage of the intellectual, practical, social and cultural diversity of disciplines and functions that make up the museums and galleries sector, as reflected in the AMaGA membership.

The Council consists of the positions:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- 6 Ordinary Members

All positions are open for nomination. Existing councillors must re-nominate.

The current Presidents of the various State/Territory Branches, or their designated representative, are automatically members of Council.

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Council service is honorary, with Councillors meeting their own individual expenses to attend in-person meetings when possible. Other meetings and executive meetings take place via teleconference throughout the year.

A National Council Handbook is available. Many frequently asked questions are answered, and more information on the roles and responsibilities of each position is outlined.

If you would like to nominate someone or get someone to nominate you, please complete the nomination form, and return it (with candidate endorsement) to the National Office by Tuesday 27 June 2023. Please note that the nominee, nominator and seconder all need to be current AMaGA members at the time of nomination, voting and election.

The election will be held at the AMaGA AGM, scheduled for the week commencing Monday 25 September 2023, time/venue TBC.

## **National conference**

The AMaGA National Conference is on Awabakal and Worimi Land/ Newcastle 16-19 May 2023 with the theme of *Discomfort: Brave conversations and new connections in a changing environment* is shaping up to be yet another unmissable event, with super topical national and international speakers over four full days. The ever-popular and consistently oversubscribed Regional Remote and Community (RR&C) supplementary day is now incorporated into the main program so all delegates have exposure to the innovation coming from the small museum sector. Accessibility has been top of mind for the conference committee and you will also see this reflected in the social program. Please register to attend if you're able and we encourage organisational members to send as many in-person staff as budgets permit while enabling the rest of your teams to engage through institutional virtual registration.

## **National awards**

The Museums & Galleries National Awards (MAGNA) and the Museums Australasia Multimedia & Publication Design Awards (MAPDA) are evolving.

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To guide this transition, a working group was formed in late 2021 to undertake an awards review. Community members from a diverse range of sector perspectives gathered to review the AMaGA awards program with the aim of uniting the two existing award streams to better showcase our fabulous sector.

The initial awards working group made a number of recommendations that will be implemented over a period of two annual cycles. In 2023, the awards will amalgamate under one title: *The AMaGAs*. However, individual award categories, for the most part, will remain the same. This work is ongoing, and we will continue to bring a diverse range of sector voices to the review process with an emphasis on accessibility and equity.

The AMaGAs are our annual celebration of the museum and gallery sector – and this year we had 44 MAGNA and 74 MAPDA entries from museums and galleries across Australia and the region. Experience the unbridled joy of sector support at the National Awards ceremony incorporated into the Welcome Reception at the Newcastle conference.

## **AMaGA website and membership management system**

To the relief of many members, we are happy to say we've revived the AMaGA website redevelopment project which also incorporates a much-improved membership portal. We've redirected some staff resources to get this project to launch by mid-year and we are contacting divisions to contribute to their pages via templates. We're looking forward to sharing this work via a site demonstration and virtual walkthrough during the Members Forum at the National Conference in May.

## **AMaGA's bottom line**

Over the last six months, our focus has been on stabilising the organisation, being modest in our staffing and budgeting with an emphasis on stakeholder liaison and implementing our new membership support system and website as mentioned above. In addition, the sector advocacy work and launch of our pilot Mentorship program (in partnership with the Emerging Professionals and Evaluation and Visitor Research National Networks) have been very fulfilling professional experiences.

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The National Office team is also on track to provide full financial statements to the first National Council Meeting of 2023, adjacent to the National Conference in May.

## **Membership price changes**

In line with membership pricing changes at ICOM Australia and general rising costs, AMaGA is investigating its own membership price increase. Being cognisant of cost-of-living pressures we are exploring weighting the rises to the largest organisational membership categories enabling individual and smaller organisation pricing to increase only slightly. If the vote to shift to a July-June financial year passes, we will be seeking advice as to when we can progress with the price rise in line with the Constitution. We intend to have a month-long 'beat the price rise' period whereby individuals and organisations are able to renew for 12 months at current rates.

Thanks to all of you for doing what you do and for the invaluable contribution you make to our small but mighty membership organisation. We look forward to seeing many of you at #AMaGA2023 in whatever way you choose to engage with the conference.

Yours in the sector,

Sebastian Chan, National President

Katie Russell, National Director