



GLAM PEAK AND THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG)

GLAM Peak is a group of the peak representative national bodies for galleries, libraries, archives, museums, historical societies and humanities research in Australia. GLAM Peak's initiatives include sector-wide advocacy and the federally-funded Digital Access to Collections project.

The GLAM sector's strongest response to the SDG to date has been at an institutional and peak body level, but the SDG are highly relevant for everyone involved in arts, culture and heritage – for curators, librarians, archivists, historians, researchers and the public who benefit from our work.

GLAM PEAK SDG PRIORITIES

On 29 October, 2019, participants at the GLAM Peak meeting at the State Library of Queensland developed a draft set of sector-wide SDG priorities. Members identified five themes – access, diversity, environmental sustainability, economic contribution and collaboration – and 12 priorities for further exploration.

Museums and galleries, through AMaGA, have identified several further themes with associated goals and targets.

1. ACCESS

The GLAM sector has long recognised that the value of our collections lies in their visibility, accessibility, and usability. Knowledge which is hidden away, obscured by language incomprehensible to the lay person, reflects bias, or is only available to the privileged few, is of little value. GLAM Peak identified four priorities for improved access to collections, all of which are underway but require further focus over the coming decade.

1.1 Plain language

The language we use should be accessible without 'dumbing down'. Item descriptions on exhibits, for example, should leave people with a clarity of understanding of what they have experienced; wayfinding should be intuitive and assisted by clear signage; websites should be easy to navigate and collection items should be discoverable without the need for a deep understanding of Dewey.

Goal 10, Target 10.2



1.2 Accessibility

Whether in the physical or virtual space, people's different abilities should be considered and our institutions and collections should be made accessible by design. New facilities and online platforms should be designed to be accessible from launch and there should be a plan for retro-fitting accessibility for older sites.

Goal 11, Target 11.7

1.3 Digital access for all

Accessibility is greatly aided by digitisation and online delivery of content. This enables researchers in regional and remote areas to connect easily with information held in city institutions; online content can be turned into the spoken word using assistive technology for people with print disability; the richness of collections held by multiple institutions can be accessed through linked data. Additional funding for digital access is essential yet patchy and we need to convince government of the value of investing in this aspect of arts, culture and heritage.

Goal 9, Target 9c

Goal 16, Target 16.10

1.4 Free and open access

While access to some content must be governed by permissions, for example contemporary government records, and materials holding special meaning for Indigenous people, more information and artefacts can and should be made freely and openly accessible. There have been significant recent breakthroughs in copyright law reform, for example with the agreement to the same terms of copyright for published and unpublished works in 2017, and GLAM Peak welcomes government initiatives to share and release datasets into the public domain.

Goal 1, Target 1.4

2. DIVERSITY

GLAM Peak supports our institutions, which are making a concerted effort to **redress the narrow perspectives of the past**. However, in order to support diverse perspectives, we need greater diversity in our workforce, and this has been recognised as a priority area of focus for recruitment and training.

2.1 Decolonisation

Australian history has been written from a colonial perspective, but there is a strong movement across GLAM to support decolonisation of our institutions. This is being expressed through our collections, exhibitions, programs and services. Cultural competency training is being introduced for staff to improve understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture; to enable respectful and informed interaction with communities and to help create culturally safe places.

Goal 1, Target 1.4



2.2 Workforce

ABS Census data shows the GLAM workforce to be out of step with the diversity of the population. Institutions are looking at ways to address this; to improve entry level opportunities; to recruit younger people as well as culturally and linguistically diverse staff; to increase the number of Indigenous professionals, and to look at gender equality issues in terms of pay, terms and conditions and promotion prospects.

Goal 5, Target 5.5; Goal 8, Target 8.5

3. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Arts, culture and heritage institutions are presented with many excellent opportunities to demonstrate public leadership as they reduce their environmental impact and increase their levels of sustainability, but there are still ways we can reduce our footprint and increase our levels of sustainability. This includes recognising environmental sustainability as an ethical commitment in sponsorship, partnership, procurement and investment guidelines.' [I think this partly addresses the divestment suggestion.

3.1 Reduce, reuse, recycle

We can review energy use, for example the temperature at which we keep our storage facilities. We can look at our operations to identify areas where we can reduce our use of plastics. We can do more work on reuse and recycling of materials.

Goal 12, Target 12.5

Goal 9, Target 9.4

3.2 Disaster management and recovery

Australia is prone to major weather events; buildings, collections, monuments and sites are regularly at risk from natural disasters. The GLAM sector acts through Blue Shield Australia, the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross, to promote disaster preparedness and share learnings about disaster response and recovery. Participants at the workshop endorsed their support for the work of Blue Shield Australia.

Goal 11, Target 11b

3.3 Digital greening

Digital access delivers benefits in terms of environmental sustainability: by making more of our content accessible online, we lessen the need for people to travel to our institutions; printed materials remain in demand, but electronic resources reduce our use of paper and the environmental cost of distribution; digitisation of collections is one of the strategies recommended for disaster preparedness. While a digital copy will never fully replace an original item, if the original is lost in a fire or flood, information about the artefact remains available. There are many reasons why we need to pursue funding for increased digital access to collections (1.3).

Goal 11, Target 11.4



3.4 Research and Education

Protecting the world's cultural and natural heritage is dependent on knowledge and commitment. The GLAM sector, for example in museums of natural science and social history, undertakes fundamental research into ecosystems, biodiversity, social groups, and technologies. Increased funding for and support of this research, development and conservation of irreplaceable collections and associated traditional knowledge, and the dissemination and application of knowledge will be critical elements in our efforts to safeguard heritage.

Goal 11, Target 11.4

Goal 2, Target 2.5

3.5 Collaboration with land and water management authorities

Goal 15, Target 15.5

4. ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

We know from Australian and international studies that arts, culture and heritage make an important contribution to society and to the economy – whether this is through promoting creative thought, encouraging entrepreneurship, activating cultural tourism, or making a significant return on investment in terms of community wellbeing.

It is important to assess the current and future potential economic contribution of the sector and our institutions in order to build the business case which will help generate the funding we need for future innovation from government, business and philanthropic sources.

Goal 8, Target 8.3

Goal 8, Target 8.9

5. COLLABORATION

Our institutions constantly battle funding constraints to deliver the kind of experiences that will bring most benefit to Australians. **Our immediate community's** needs are a priority, however, we are also very aware of our responsibility to our neighbours in the Indo-Pacific region and especially to the needs of emerging nations.

5.1 National collaboration

GLAM Peak will be celebrating its fifth anniversary in June 2020. The coming together of the peak bodies for galleries, libraries, archives, museums, historical societies, other collecting and research organisations, has resulted in a stronger sector, reinforcing the support network for smaller, less well-resourced entities and encouraging a joined-up approach to future-thinking, especially around digital access to collections. Continued collaboration was confirmed as a necessary foundation for the future success of the GLAM sector in Australia by workshop participants.

Goal 17, Target 17.8



5.2 Regional collaboration and capacity building

Funding support is rarely available, but we are able to share knowledge with colleagues in other parts of the Indo-Pacific region. Australian archives, for example, work with PARBICA; the federal Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is a partner in the Pacific Portal for cultural collections, which is being developed by the National Library of New Zealand; Australian libraries support the education of information professionals at the University of the South Pacific; and there are many other examples of regional partnerships and collaboration. There was agreement that support for emerging nations should be a priority in GLAM Peak's response to the SDG.

Goal 16, Target 16.8

Goal 17, Target 17.9

6. AWARENESS-RAISING

Many GLAM sector organisations have a strong education and truth-telling objective. Evidence-based community awareness raising on climate change or sustainability, for example, is a key goal for natural history museums and science centres.

Goal 12, Target 12.8

Goal 13, Target 13.3

NEXT STEPS

This draft set of GLAM Peak SDG priorities will be used to consult with members of the sector's individual peak bodies.

There will be further discussion at the first meeting of GLAM Peak in 2020, with the aim of confirming the priority areas of focus by mid-2020.

The agreed document will then be used to inform the thinking of institutions and other stakeholders about the SDG; to drive SDG-related activities in the sector, and to act as indicators of progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

*GLAM Peak
30 October, 2019*