

# National Cultural Policy Submission

**Name:** The International Council of Museums (ICOM)

**Submitted:** On behalf of an arts peak body

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

## First Nations

1. Promote and ensure meaningful career paths into the creative industries.
2. Enshrine meaningful representation and sharing of First Peoples' voices, perspectives, languages, and cultures in all areas of cultural work, institutions and decision making.

## A Place for Every Story

1. Equity across all communities to have safe museum and collection places and the means to collect, document, preserve and share their stories in ways that is most relevant to these communities.
2. Recognise the importance of resourcing diverse collection acquisition (categories as per the Significance 2.0), collection storage and preservation, as well as protection of site-specific heritage, history, and storytelling for future generations.

## The Centrality of the Artist

1. Yes, but why only artists? This pillar should also include producers and custodians of cultural practice, intangible and tangible heritage.
2. Investigate how best to change the precarious nature of employment, income, and revenue generation for so many of our artists, cultural workers, service organisations and cultural institutions. Concepts of productivity and varied contributions to society need to be re-thought and better provisions made for individual and organisational support and recompense.

## Strong Institutions

1. Get rid of the Efficiency Dividend.
2. Core funding for the proper storage, conservation and sharing of collections and cultural heritage.
3. Core funding for interpretation and sharing of stories from collections.
4. Resilient institutions and organisations that can protect and present collections from the risks of climate change and global warming.
5. In sum, the arts, heritage, and cultural industries need to be adequately resourced, through multiple avenues, including a better funded Australia Council for the Arts and the creation of a companion Council for the Humanities.

## Reaching the Audience

1. Invest in the finalisation and implementation of the Draft National Framework for Digital Access to Collections.
2. Invest in digital programs that can share collections and content especially for school children and young people at home and in classrooms.
3. Continue to invest in programs that bring children to cultural and collecting institutions to see and engage with the real stuff.

**Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why.**

### **First Nations**

The centrality of Australia's First Nations' cultures and knowledge is vital both for justice and a shared and maturing national identity. The Australian museum and gallery sector has adopted AMaGA's ground-breaking *First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries (2018)* ("*Indigenous Roadmap*"), which ICOM has been promoting internationally.

### **A Place for Every Story**

Include support for all types of museums and keeping places, at every level of government and community support - with particular focus on the sustainability of local museums, galleries and keeping places in remote and regional Australia.

### **The Centrality of the Artist**

Artists are hugely important but are not the only people who work in the creative industries and culture. This pillar needs to be broadened to embrace as many people as possible who work with tangible and intangible heritage and cultural practice.

### **Strong Institutions**

ICOM represents the myriad of people, both paid and unpaid, who work in the museum and gallery sector to collect, conserve, protect, interpret, and advocate for the world's material culture and heritage. All organisations and institutions need to be nurtured and supported as well as valued for the passion and work they give to their communities. There needs to be protection given to institutions especially in regional Australia who are most vulnerable to climate change e.g. Northern Rivers of NSW.

### **Reaching the Audience**

Better utilisation and dissemination of research from across the sector that is already gathered as well as undertaking research to determine equity in access across Australia to culture and history.

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

See letter.

The Hon Tony Burke MP  
Minister for the Arts

15 August 2022

Re: Submission on the development of a new national cultural policy for Australia Dear Minister

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the development of a new cultural policy for the nation. Our key additional comments responding to Question 4 in the Submission Template are below, and we have also provided the completed Submission Template which makes specific responses to the questions, challenges and opportunities posed.

We would also draw your attention to our earlier submission of October 2020 to the Inquiry into Australia's Creative and Cultural Industries and Institutions by the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts, which provides more expansive rationales for the brief points and recommendations below.

### **Introduction**

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) is the largest international network of museum and heritage professionals, with more than 44,500 members around the world. In 2021, it celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its establishment.

The ICOM Australia National Committee represents the interests of over 850 individual and institutional members, located in every state and territory of the country, and complements the work of the domestic professional association, the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA).

ICOM Australia provides the international voice of Australian museum and gallery professionals, acts as a conduit for information sharing, research, and collaborations, and upholds international standards, benchmarks, and ethics.

### **Key points**

- Museums and galleries are integral parts of the Australian social, cultural, educational, and economic landscape.
- ICOM Australia supports the development of a new national cultural policy (which is long overdue).
- It is unequivocal that the culture and experiences of Australia's First Nations are fundamental to the new cultural policy. We welcome the Minister's decision to elevate the First Nations pillar to be the first.
- Recalibrating the original 2013 Five Goals is a sensible start. However, the national and international context has changed significantly in the last decade, for example:
  - There are the ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic; the acceleration of climate change and its impacts; the international volatile strategic environment; developments in the Asia-Pacific region and the rise of China; attacks upon democracy, transparency, and critical thinking in many parts of the world; the digitisation of everyday life.

- There is the impoverishment of much of Australia’s cultural infrastructure (both organisations and people, such as artists, historians, and other cultural workers) over the last 20 years through lack of vision and investment at the national level. There is an over reliance on an ageing volunteer workforce especially in remote and regional areas of Australia.
- Access to and participation in cultural activity is proven to be significantly positive for individual and societal health and wellbeing.
- Building cultural infrastructure is as necessary as other forms of infrastructure, as now formally recognised by Infrastructure Australia.
- These and other trends and influences must be taken into account in developing the new policy.
- 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.
  - Heritage is a core component of the cultural policies of most other countries, such as the UK. Sweden’s cultural policy, for example, aims to “promote a dynamic cultural heritage that is preserved, used and developed.”
- Other gaps in goals which should be rectified are:
  - sustainability
  - concepts of work, value, and recompense
  - cultural diplomacy
  - interconnectedness with and contributions to societal health, education and wellbeing.
- The policy must also provide a framework for sustained investment, and link with the cultural plans of the states and territories.

### **Key recommendations**

1. The policy will not operate in a vacuum – it should explicitly recognise and be guided by relevant international principles, declarations, and charters, such as the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals for 2030; the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People; the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions; the World Heritage Convention; and the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.
  - A priority, to bring Australia into good practice alignment with other countries, would be a commitment to ratify the two Protocols to this Hague Convention.
  - Industry standards and best practice should also provide guidance and benchmarks, such as ICOM’s *Code of Ethics for Museums*, Australia ICOMOS’ *Burra Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, and AMaGA’s *First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries*.
2. The new cultural policy needs to rectify the absence of heritage. There has been a structural imbalance for many years between Commonwealth investment in arts development through the Australia Council, and in culture and heritage. The Australia Council has generally not been able to fund the majority of museums or museum organisations in Australia and this has led to disproportionate levels of support, development, and accessibility to culture.

- Australia requires a new national body to deal with the needs of our great collecting institutions and allied local and regional institutions that promote creativity and knowledge of our history, heritage, environment, and society. It would address a significant gap in the arts and cultural sector and bring Australia into line with other comparative economies. (One model is the USA's National Endowment for the Humanities, which is a companion to their national arts body).
- Alternatively, the remit and resourcing of the Australia Council for the Arts should be expanded to include strategic and funding support for cultural heritage.
- Another option would be to establish a new strategic investment program in the department, perhaps in a renamed Office for Culture and the Arts.

**3. The cultural policy should have additional pillars and goals of:**

- **Sustainability** – both for cultural infrastructure and the cultural industries, and in our contributions to national and global environmental sustainability. This would include disaster preparedness and mitigation strategies and funding.
- **Re-imagined definitions** of work, culture, inclusion, public value, and recompense. This is particularly important for artists and community heritage workers.
- **Removing the “Hunger Games” attributes** of inadequate grants funding. Eligibility-based, demand-driven grants programs should be considered, as is the case with other industry support programs such as the Australian Government's Export Market Development Grants Program (EMDG).
- **Strengthened interactions and co-funding** with key national priorities in health, education, and community well-being. This would include contributing to the Treasurer's new Wellbeing Indicators.
- **International impact** – promoting international and intercultural exchange and co-operation in the cultural sphere. Well-resourced cultural institutions and creators carrying out cultural diplomacy in these times of global insecurity and misunderstanding are more vital than ever.

ICOM Australia is ready to provide advice and support for action to address these policies and proposals, and supports the submissions of the Australian Museums & Galleries Association (AMaGA), and the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material (AICCM). We will continue to work on behalf of our members and the sector more broadly, in the service of the national interest.

**ICOM Australia National Committee**