

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Are you submitting this submission (tick all that apply):

- On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation
- On behalf of government or government body

Please send your completed submission to culturalpolicy@arts.gov.au or upload it to the short form at www.arts.gov.au/culturalpolicy.

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:

1. First Nations

AGSA is deeply committed to first things first – that is, placing First Nations artists, communities and audiences at the very beginning of our processes and programs. We recognise the importance of art in fostering the cultural understanding and respect that are vital to reconciliation across the broader community. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art is not separate from the national story but an essential part of it. Our approach, through projects such as Tarnanthi (from 2015), the Ramsay Art Prize (from 2017) and the Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art (from 1990) have nurtured ambitions, developed skills, raised profiles and created opportunities at a national level for First Nation artists to express themselves and their stories and provides a platform for self-determination.

It is our collective responsibility to strengthen relationships through consultation with First Nations people on reconciliation and truth telling. The arts sector can provide a safe space in which to help lead conversations and demonstrate practical steps towards reconciliation.

The National Cultural Policy must advocate and champion First Nation artist led projects, kinship-based leadership models, knowledge-sharing, education, and collaborative pathway opportunities for their creative enterprises. In doing this best practice exemplars will emerge and create new benchmarks.

2. A Place for Every Story

Art has the power to enrich lives and communities, and should be accessible to all people through free, dynamic and frequently changing experiences. It does this through story telling, whether that be in physical or digital dimensions. Stories have been told on this continent for the longest time in human history and hence we are well placed to be renowned story tellers. AGSA's ambitions for the future of the arts sees Australia propelled further onto the global stage, positioning the arts as a cultural incubator that is celebrated locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Guided by a new National Cultural Policy, the Australian arts sector has the potential to establish a widespread reputation as a leader, as a place celebrated for its investments in cultural infrastructure and support creative endeavors and passion for intercultural dialogues. A well-supported arts sector can help to attract

the best thought leaders, underpin prosperity and cultural incubators of international renown. This approach must be for all with multiple pathways for people in the sector that are equitable, accessible and diverse and supported by strong policy.

3. The Centrality of the Artist

Working with artists from across Australia, AGSA is conscious of its role in accelerating the careers and profiles of Australian artists, arts workers, and their creative collaborators. It is vital to continue to explore new ways in which we can support excellence and innovation and celebrate and value artistic practice. The National Cultural Policy should advocate for new and evolving business structures within artistic practice and their markets and educate through cultural and creative programs and policies across whole of government.

As the Ramsay Art Prize is one of the key biennial programs for AGSA, we acknowledge that prizes, fellowships, scholarships, and government grants play an important role for artists. The National Cultural Policy needs to urgently review the current policies for this type of funding and should move a motion that the cash awarded be tax exempt for those who receive these opportunities.

Arts accolades need to attain the respect and status of sports prizes and not be a further disadvantage to makers and creators who are already among the country's lowest wage earners.

With the appointment of The Hon Tony Burke MP, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for the Arts, the synergies between this dual portfolio provide the perfect platform to align innovative, ambitious, and sustainable visibility and economic opportunities for cultural and creative practitioners, organisations and enterprise.

4. Strong Institutions

The cultural sector is undervalued and under-resourced, nation-wide. Compounded by the ever-increasing competitive fiscal climate, the support from federal, state and local government bodies has significantly decreased over the last decade resulting in serious challenges and consequences. The development and management of cultural assets, programming, education, infrastructure, pathways and workloads are unsustainable within most institutions and as a result face a multitude of risks.

The cultural sector needs investment, not funding. The National Cultural Policy needs to prioritise the creation of new governance structures and policies. The alignment of the cultural sector with other public agencies and their planning, regulations and investment policies could prove advantageous in reimagining cultural advocacy for the nation.

Greater investment in organisations that excel and maximize economic impacts will build confidence and have positive impacts on the broader arts sector. This should include establishing a State Indemnity Scheme (to underwrite insurance) in SA and a Major Exhibitions Touring Fund to expand the potential to both initiate and host major national and international exhibitions. This investment would generate significant returns. Like festivals, major ticketed exhibitions contribute powerfully to the economy and economic impact for the sector.

5. Reaching the Audience

Considering the uniqueness of our culture and arts in Australia, the National Cultural Policy urgently needs to address inequitable and accessibility barriers, nationally. These include arts literacy, digital engagement strategies, socio-economic impacts, accessible and culturally safe spaces, and investment in artistic practices. We need to think holistically, forming a national network of colleagues in every state and territory to work collaboratively and reposition the value of culture and the arts.

Through improved audience engagement and thought leadership, Australia can attract new and diverse audiences to arts experiences across the nation. Australians should all have equal access to the rich and diverse arts activities and experiences on offer.

The sector can improve audience engagement and access through a range of measures, including:

- Employment programs for First Nations artists, creatives and producers in the sector to ensure self-determination, particularly in governance and leadership roles. Art has a capacity not only for cultural maintenance, but also for achieving social democracy and self-determination.
- Expanding cultural awareness training for staff and volunteers.
- Increasing investment in exemplar digital solutions for collection access democratising the collection and helping to deepen education and scholarly research.
- Undertaking more research about audience engagement through the tertiary sector, including projected demographics.
- Increasing funding for improvement of regional galleries to museum standard, to allow touring exhibitions to reach regional audiences.
- Increasing regional and international audience engagement through a dedicated touring program.
- Fostering collaborations between city, regional and remote organisations to take art and education to the whole state.
- Expanding outreach programs and building reciprocal exchanges with targeted community groups.
- Increasing funding for access improvements such as lift and mobility upgrades.
- Increasing funding to meet universal access and inclusion requirements.
- Meeting best practice in diversity inclusion through language, signage and wayfinding.
- Developing programs and opportunities for young people building on the success of programs such as AGSA's Start (ages 3-12) and Neo (ages 13-17) and sharing these programs across the country.

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

AGSA has set a benchmark in best practice with its commitment to working with First Nations artists and communities respectfully, ethically and in culturally appropriate ways. Projects are artist-led, with the artist always in control. Consultation is continual, deep listening is vital. AGSA was the first cultural institution in the Country to present to the public the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The three pillars of the Statement and the subsequent Yarrabah Affirmation are embedded in our education resources and programs and professional development.

Whether talking with artists, supporting their projects or presenting their completed works of art, AGSA follows Tarnanthi's five guiding principles: Let the artist's voice shine; Open mind and open heart; Challenge perceptions; Artistic excellence; Grow, share, respect. AGSA's approach has helped to empower artists and expand aspirations, careers and livelihoods. It has shaped how AGSA and partner organisations build enduring, respectful relationships with artists and communities. And it is improving understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and culture in Australia and around the world.

2. A Place for Every Story

AGSA belongs to the people of South Australia – it is the peoples' gallery, and prides itself on its accessibility and its history of delivering robust and engaging public programs to nurture a lifelong connection with the arts. Artists, collectives, and their representatives exhibited at AGSA are stories of local, national, and international importance. These opportunities amplify their reputation on a global scale and often provide leverage for future commissions and exhibitions.

The arts can positively influence all parts of society and a central advocacy body should promote the arts through the economic, trade, tourism, skills, health, education and other government agencies. By way of example, New York City's Create NYC cultural plan recognises and promotes the arts to improve public health and safety, educational outcomes, civic participation and community wellbeing and resilience. <https://www.createnyc.com/>

Research by the Warwick Commission in the UK shows that the cultural and creative industries have a crucial role to play in local and regional regeneration. https://warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/finalreport/warwick_co mmission_final_report.pdf

While in South Australia, recent Flinders University research has identified the health and wellbeing benefits of art creation in Aboriginal communities and offers innovative approaches to health promotion. <https://news.flinders.edu.au/blog/2018/12/18/remote-art-centres-phd-scholar/>

3. The Centrality of the Artist

AGSA presents exhibitions (permanent, temporary, and touring) an annual art fair, artist talks, performances, workshops, and a ground-breaking education program, offering a multitude of platforms for artists from across the country to share important stories through artistic excellence, illuminating the diversity and depth of

art and culture in communities nationwide. It encourages new beginnings by providing artists with opportunities to create significant new work and to extend their practice.

This applies to all our nationally significant projects, which nurture and empower First Nation artists (such as Tarnanthi), recognise contemporary artistic excellence (the Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art) and encourage the brightest emerging talent (the Ramsay Art Prize). Our ambitions are to expand the reach of the collection and these projects as catalysts for artists' and arts professionals' career development.

Through a new National Cultural Policy, we look forward to opportunities to extend the scope, strength and reach of distinctive artistic programs. Australia's creative sector sparks from its intimate scale. This brings greater opportunities to ignite new partnerships through a multitude of artistic programs. Greater collaborations between the creative, industry, government and education sectors can assist with mentorship and leadership programs, networking and business development opportunities. In addition, new connections with universities can link graduates to creative opportunities and develop a young generation of cultural leaders ready to pursue local opportunities. The role of the creative industries in driving the economy can be further supported by government or tertiary-sector research into the impact of these industries, ensuring that their economic value is recognised and expanded.

The AGSA collection plays a key role in the decolonising process. It is imperative that contemporary artists play an active role in the historic archive and collection. One recent example is the major new body of work titled *Psychoscape* by Trawlwoolway artist Julie Gough. Drawing on the traumatic histories of her ancestors included moving image and sculptural works positioned alongside colonial Tasmanian paintings and furniture from the AGSA collection to expose some of Australia's hidden truths.

The AGSA building itself calls for decolonising and artists are also critical to this process. A recent example includes Vincent Namatjira's moving image projection made for the Gallery's North Terrace façade in 2022 titled *Going Out Bush*, which across two weeks and three weekends attracted more than 714,000 people. Presented as part of the Illuminate Festival, the colonial façade of the Gallery is temporarily relocated to the Central Australian desert.

4. Strong Institutions

As custodian of South Australia's state art collection, AGSA plays a key role as a champion of the state and nations future. AGSA's exceptional collection exists for our audiences – to comprehend the past, to navigate the present, and as an avenue to imagine the future. The rapid growth of our collection and audience requires urgent building upgrades and expansion so we can meet and exceed international standards. Also, rethinking how we provide access to the collection is also critical, investing in digital solutions that respond to audience desires. These needs have been robustly endorsed through an independent business case.

These concerns resonate with many organisations and institutions, with the legacy of ad hoc upgrades, storage and budget pressures compromise partnerships and opportunities with international galleries, jeopardising the presentation of blockbuster exhibitions and loans.

New and upgraded cultural infrastructure is essential for the sustainability of the arts in Australia. As other states invest in dynamic new projects, Adelaide becomes less competitive and is less able to host large events that attract high attendances and achieve strong economic outcomes. AGSA is looking forward to working with the Federal and State Governments towards the realisation of new infrastructure, sharing our long-standing relationships with artists from across the country and our significant collection to build a strong audience.

Rethinking how we provide access to the collection and programming is also critical, investing in digital solutions that respond to audience desires. The arts are a bigger drawcard for international tourists than wineries, casinos or sport (<https://australiacouncil.gov.au/news/media-releases/arts-a-bigger-drawcard-for-international-tourists-than-wineries-casinos-or-sport/>). Marketing Australia's cultural brand to the world through new and memorable art experiences will strengthen the national and international reputation and influence while driving economic outcomes. This is paramount to ensure Australia competes with global cultural tourism trends.

5. Reaching the Audience

AGSA's identity is defined by creating encounters that are unexpected and surprising, not defined by conventions. AGSA's displays and public programs attracted more than one million visitors a year, making it the most visited art gallery in the country per capita.

South Australia's role in the Australian arts sector is well respected and renowned for its recurring festivals and arts events. However, with more support, the arts ecology can grow and offer more diversity all year round so that daily life is infused with creativity and vibrancy. Greater investment in organisations that excel and maximise economic impacts will build confidence and have positive impacts on the broader arts sector.

CASE STUDY: Since launching in 2015, AGSA's Tarnanthi has inspired audiences' artists, creatives and stakeholders on a growing scale with many of its most powerful and enduring impacts reaching beyond the walls of the Gallery.

- 1,616,775 people have attended Tarnanthi exhibitions and events
- 56,450 people have visited the Tarnanthi Art Fair
- 6114 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists have exhibited their work at AGSA and partner venues 4000+ artists from across Australia have been represented at the Tarnanthi Art Fair
- \$25 million editorial value with a potential readership of 62.6 million people
- 34,104 students and teachers have attended Tarnanthi exhibitions and events
- \$72.07 million of economic expenditure has been generated
- \$5.4+ million in Tarnanthi Art Fair sales, with profits going direct to artists, art centres, and the Purple House Foundation

Projects that have engaged new creatives, such as Closer Productions, have gone from strength to strength. Over the last six years, the digital anthologies that have been produced with the team have generated a living archive that transports the artists story telling direct from Country to audiences globally.

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should all have equal access to the rich and diverse arts activities and experiences on offer. Effective place-making needs the expertise of the creative sector to realise places that the community wants to visit.

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

Our final thoughts:

1. Art is our global brand. Australia is a cultural incubator providing the ideal physical scale for the creative economy to thrive. This must be taken seriously by the government and not relegated to the category of 'entertainment;'. The arts are the touchstone of the Australia's cultural identity on the international stage and should be marketed to attract residents, students, businesses and tourists.
2. We need to radically rethink the remote. What is the contribution that central, northern and western art sectors can share with the eastern art sector? Our agility, local networks and international collections can strengthen intercultural and geographical dialogues.
3. Invest for a confident future. Infrastructure investment, including digital, will catapult Australia's cultural reputation, driving tourism, wellbeing and economic outcomes.