

Submission from the Council of Australasian Museum Directors for A renewed National Cultural Policy consultation

Council of Australasian Museum Directors (CAMD)

The Council of Australasian Museums (CAMD) comprises the leaders of the 22 major museums in Australia and New Zealand. CAMD museums' charters range from those with explicit focuses, such as social history (Sovereign Hill), governance (Museum of Australian Democracy), film and moving image (Australian Centre for the Moving Image) and science education (Questacon), to those with broad charters including science and natural history such as Te Papa, the Australian Museum and the Western Australian Museum.

CAMD was established to provide a forum for directors/ CEO's of the major regional, state and national museums in Australia and New Zealand to share experiences and ideas, consider strategic issues of interest to the museum profession nationally and internationally and to facilitate research and policy development in agreed areas. A current list of members identifying the CAMD executive and a list of CAMD museum sites is attached. CAMD was established in 1967 and incorporated under the Victorian Associations Incorporation Reform Act in 2005.

CAMD museums:

- are among the most trusted institutions in the community (- CAMD, IPSOS & Univ of Canberra 2021)
- they care for, and provide connections with, what we value as a community. Museums are part of what brings us together and are safe and trusted places with universal interest and access.
- are curators of Australasia's foundation environmental, social and cultural history collections, and facilitators of research and education across the sciences and humanities based on these collections.
- are an important part of Australia's creative and cultural landscape, and within the creative and cultural economy, museums make substantial contributions across economic, environmental, social and cultural domains.
- enjoy attendance and performance comparable with similar museums globally. CAMD museums are the major Entertainment and Heritage attractions (- as defined by TRA) within Australasia's tourism industry,
- business models have been severely impacted by Covid-19 as a result of closures, restrictions and reductions in visitation.

RESPONSES TO THE 5 PILLARS (- as identified in submission template)

Pillar 1: First Nations: First Nations: Support thriving and self-determined First Nations creative ecosystems.

COMMENT ON PILLAR 1 DESCRIPTION

Consider inclusion of the role of arts and culture in achieving Closing the Gap targets

How/why this pillar is important to CAMD

Major collecting and exhibiting institutions that hold significant and extensive First Nations' cultural material play a key role in fostering and strengthening First Nations cultural sustainability, innovation and creative ecosystems, both within and outside those institutions. Australian CAMD museums who are custodians of First Nations materials are endeavouring to address repatriation of ancestral remains, and of culturally significant items in line with community priorities, and the issues of colonisation in museum practices in line with the Australian Museums & Galleries Association (AMaGA) Indigenous Roadmap

Challenges

- The repatriation of culturally significant First Peoples' open collection material in the majority of Australian CAMD museums remains unfunded at a Federal level
- Further Federal funding and focus is required for the repatriation of ancestral remains from museum collections nationally and internationally.
- A commitment to preserve and promote the use of Indigenous languages is crucial element of "First Nations Creative Ecosystems"

Opportunities

- self-determined First Nations creative ecosystems should include empowering First Nations people to define how their art and culture is described and held within the policy.
- Articulate how the policy will "Close the Gap" Opportunity to provide a national statement regarding the role of arts and culture in achieving Closing the Gap targets
- Programs and strategies that support First Peoples career pathways, recruitment and retention within cultural organisations.

Recommendation: National initiatives that supplement First Peoples recruitment and retention strategies, including initiatives to support racially literate and culturally competent workplaces, capacity building, leadership development pathways and self-determination.

- The majority of CAMD museum venues are regarded as places of care for First Peoples cultural material (both national and international), knowledge and programs, making them important places for both First Peoples communities and all visitors to museums

Recommendation: Support access to First Peoples through travel funding and other initiatives.

Recommendation: Support increased access and provenance research of First Peoples collections through resourcing collection digitisation programs and other initiatives to enable wider online access.

- Education, curriculum and engaging students in First Peoples histories and cultures.

Recommendation: Provide national funding to support museums to achieve stronger outcomes with First Peoples-led education programs, exhibitions and resources that support our nation's students, including delivery of nationally developed education programs through digital channels.

Further recommendations:

- Implement an Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) framework that provides a consistent national approach to acknowledgment and protection of First Peoples' work, including appropriately reflecting cultural knowledge, understandings and cultural ownership in contracts with curators and creators.
- Support collaboration and exchanges across multiple institutions nationally to enable our institutions to learn from each other, cross promote and reach more First Peoples communities.

Pillar 2: A place for every story: Participation and inclusion: Create opportunities for all Australians to participate in and contribute to arts and culture.

COMMENT ON PILLAR 2 DESCRIPTION

Suggest reframing this pillar to focus on participation and inclusion, providing an opportunity to embrace the diversity of Australia and the large percentage of people who participate in arts and culture

How/why this pillar is important to CAMD

CAMD museums are repositories for nations' stories. By providing access to the museum collections through community and research visits, exhibitions, educational programs and digital offerings, our museums play a key role in reflecting and inspiring the national imagination.

Through our museums and destinations, we engage with, welcome and celebrate all communities onsite and beyond our walls, providing welcoming, captivating and unmissable experiences for visitors of all ages, abilities, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds.

Challenges

- Engaging audiences with limited opportunities to participate due to geographic distance
- Engaging under-represented audiences and particularly where English is not the primary language spoken.
- Overcoming the perception that digital events are free or of low value, despite high production costs

Opportunities

Expand opportunities for creative practitioners from diverse communities to engage with museum collections and support initiatives to reduce barriers to participation by, and engagement with, diverse audiences.

Recommendations:

- Support funding and partnership programs to create new opportunities for museums to engage with under-represented audiences; to create a cultural landscape that is representative of a diverse, dynamic and contemporary Australia; and to realise long-term benefits for cultural institutions, audiences, communities, and the arts and culture sector.
- Strengthen the Cultural Gifts Program to encourage people to donate and streamline systems to reduce barriers to donating. Enable certain cultural materials to be donated directly to First Peoples communities without requiring Museums to first accept those materials.
- Invest in programs that support participation and digital engagement, and improve access by all communities to museums' collections, research, education and experiences. Such programs can develop connections between the sciences and the arts provide important bridges across perceived divisions.
- Shifting perceptions from STEM to STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Arts & Maths) is important in reinforcing the value of the arts as a key element for interdisciplinary thinking and learning, and for facilitating community involvement across the sciences and the arts. Citizen Science projects provide powerful examples of the potential for community involvement eg the Australian Museum-led *FrogID* program now has over 600,000 participants nationally while the South Australian Museum runs the national *Insect Investigator* program where scientists and schools come together to discover, describe and document Australia's biodiversity.
- Continue existing national funding to make hybrid models or digital-only offerings permanent, and support offering digital equivalents and alternatives to increase audiences (streaming or on-demand).
- Develop models for effective First Peoples' digital collaborations including valuing ICIP; that support risk and innovation while respecting Culture; and accessible, high quality scanning technology.
- Support museum outreach programs and infrastructure that provide opportunities for regional and rural access to museum content and experiences.
- National funding for digitisation of stories and collections.
- National funding for preservation of collections, particularly formats with less than a decade of remaining useable life.
- National funding for place-based research.

Pillar 3: The centrality of the artist: Thriving arts and cultural sector: Support skilled, diverse ecologies of artists and organisations.

COMMENT ON PILLAR 3 DESCRIPTION

Suggest reframing to A thriving arts and cultural sector and recognise the significance of arts and science partnerships in the diverse ecology of institutions such as museums

How/why this pillar is important to CAMD

The majority of CAMD member museums operate collecting and exhibiting institutions, that provide care and access to our nations' collections, enabling artists to draw important connections between histories, collections and contemporary implications, and to inspire opportunities for ongoing co-creation.

CAMD museums contribute to the art ecosystem by engaging artists for creation of new works – for example, the *Wiripil and Wangi* artwork by Tati artist Brendan Kennedy and the visual artists and composers engaged for the immersive digital experience and exhibition *Tyama: A deeper sense of knowing* were commissioned by Museums Victoria while the *Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards* (Telstra NATSIAA) is delivered annually in partnership with the Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

Challenges

Within the creative community and Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums (GLAM) sector there are:

- Uneven digital skills
- Outdated or limited infrastructure, and limited access to funding for infrastructure and digital content
- Challenges in keeping pace with technological changes, especially when trying to follow industry trends
- note the importance of acknowledging Covid pandemic's negative impact on the museum sector
- STEM and HAAS should be viewed holistically – the mistaken perception that STEM graduates are more employable, has been responsible for the 'cost-bias' against arts, humanities and social science degrees in universities. Ironically, data shows that there are many more jobs for students emerging with HASS degrees than with STEM degrees. The differential costs to undertake degree studies introduced under the last government should be reversed as a matter of priority.

Opportunities

Recommendations:

- Recognise, as an overarching principle in the National Cultural Policy, the critical role our museums play not only in the arts and cultural sector but in delivering skills-development objectives across government, including in education, STEM/ STEAM and innovation; the role of museums in creating what kind of heritage our future will have; and museums' responsibilities to artists and creative practitioners of the past, present and future.
- Support a national framework of digital capabilities and competencies amongst arts workers, artists and institutions.
- Support cultural intuitions to lead and enable capacity-building through training in leading-edge skills, knowledge-sharing and mentoring.
- Build national knowledge for monetisation of digital experiences and digital-only/ hybrid events through supporting audience development, product development and commercial models.

Pillar 4: Strong institutions: Public value: Strengthen the capacity of the creative sector to deliver benefits to Australians.

COMMENT ON PILLAR 4 DESCRIPTION

CAMD strongly endorses the acknowledgement of the role for strong institutions in connecting community & tourist visitors and culture, and to building shared understanding and strong communities.

How/why this pillar is important to CAMD

CAMD museum research, collections, education programs, exhibitions and experiences help our community learn about the deep connections we have with one another and our environment. We work in collaboration with government instrumentalities, universities and community partners across Australia and internationally, to address a wide range of contemporary issues through research. CAMD museums deliver substantial benefits across the economy, identity, belonging, health and wellbeing and education, including with First Nations individuals and communities, the disability sector and other priority groups.

Challenges

- Infrastructure is a key challenge for all cultural organisations — our collective infrastructure needs to be healthy and strong, and supported by skilled workers
- Resourcing, interpreting and maintaining heritage sites and buildings
- Slow adoption of new technologies by the creative industries due to skills and financial barriers
- Developing a national audience for localised storytelling and content creation
- For collecting institutions in particular, lack of access to research funding can be frustrating. Two initiatives that could address this dilemma would be, firstly, re-imagining priorities and distribution of National Research Infrastructure Funding (NCRIS) which has traditionally been focused on medical, engineering and scientific research. Secondly, a review of the Australian Research Council funding rules, which would allow any major institution (*ie* rather than just universities) to lead ARC linkage grant applications and projects, and their staff to become Chief Investigators on such projects.

Opportunities

Recommendations:

- Commit to national funding programs that support:
 - preservation of the nation's movable cultural heritage
 - digitisation of the nation's cultural heritage, including state collections, to increase and encourage access to national audiences
- Address long-term systemic neglect of systems (e.g., content aggregators such as Trove) and address 'single point of failure' scenarios where key skills and tasks reside with only one person in an organisation.
- Government to re-examine existing mechanisms – across all levels of government – to manage its obligations to preserve cultural heritage sites (as a signatory to the *1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*).
- Address the limited investment available for the Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums (GLAM) sector and lack of established networks to support partnering and philanthropic activities, and create incentives for industry innovation investment partnerships.
- Support educational offerings beyond museum walls to include virtual tours, online workshops, curriculum-aligned materials, and programs live-streamed into classrooms and through dynamic digital channels to deliver museum experiences for education audiences, wherever they are.

- CAMD members include Australia's major state and territory natural history museums whose collections and research capacity are key elements of Australia's provide science research infrastructure. These museums play a vital role working within State and Federal governments on key issues including, for example,
 - pests and invasive species
 - impacts on biodiversity due to Climate Change and urbanisation
 - impacts from natural disasters including fire and floods

Pillar 5: Reaching the audience: Creative economy: Build sustainable, networked and globally recognised creative industries.

COMMENT ON PILLAR 5 DESCRIPTION

Consider the interconnectedness of creative and cultural industries as a major economic driver (- recognising the interconnectedness and scope of cultural and creative industries drawing from, for example, the UK model which includes design, marketing, gaming *etc*)

How/why this pillar is important to CAMD

Through engagement and shared experiences, CAMD museums equip communities for a rapidly changing world by connecting them to essential narratives of our existence: the stories of life on our planet, the wonder of the universe and of diverse human experiences. Creating and exchanging knowledge has become central to the transformation of our economy. In this context, the intellectual assets at the heart of CAMD museums residing in our collections, research, expertise and education and learning resources embody extraordinary potential. There is a compelling opportunity for museums to explore new ways to engage with creative industries of all kinds, with the potential for increased contributions to the economy through new products, innovation and design.

Challenges

Museums are critical to the long-term investment in our creative economy However impact is often seen from a short-term perspective, with a focus on benefits to our present generation. As collecting and educational institutions, museums connect the past to the present and the future, and are essential to the sustainable ongoing success of Australia's cultural vibrancy and creative economy.

Opportunities

Recommendations:

- Support for industry collaborations that encourage innovation and risk taking to be shared between partners including developing frameworks for intellectual property, knowledge sharing and collaborating with First Peoples and other communities.
- Provide incentives to develop international touring exhibitions and international collaborations so we can take the best of Australia's museum content overseas and encourage tourists to Australia.
- Develop national digital infrastructure that is available at a state and local level to support the creative industries, including distribution platforms that engage internationally, hosting and capacity building.

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

1. ***Illuminate the role of STEM and research in culture:*** Culture is not just historic or static, it is continually changing. Technological innovations and scientific research have played, and will continue to play, a fundamental role in cultural evolution. Museum research and collections inspire inquiry and discovery, creating new knowledge that shapes our understanding of our place, our past, our society and the relationship between this region and the world.

Museums, as cultural and scientific institutions, have the unique ability to communicate the outcomes of the research they conduct, in a creative, story-telling way, direct to the general public. Despite its palpable contribution to the nation's culture and history, STEM disciplines, and associated research, have been under-represented in Australia's cultural policy and associated funding.

2. ***Re-establish mapping of the nation's distributed collection*** (across all States) to:
 - Better define and share the nation's distributed collection
 - Avoid duplicating collections and resourcing and encourage collaboration
 - Identify where rare and specialised skillsets are likely to reside (e.g., taxidermy, traditional book binding).
3. ***Create structures to share social and economic impact data:*** Cultural organisations and practitioners are increasingly required to demonstrate the social value of their work, yet few funded, ongoing projects or positions exist to collect this data. There is an opportunity to create a central, integrated database to pool collected social and economic impact data (e.g., research on arts and culture and health outcomes) to become a shared nationwide resource and a valuable resource for further data analysis.
4. ***Establish a national centre for cultural institutions to share appropriate datasets*** (e.g., audience insights data, collection care and preservation frameworks and research).
5. ***Ensure the National Cultural Policy includes definitions of key concepts and terms***, including culture, the arts, digitisation, and other words that are used and interpreted differently.
6. ***Establish a national network for collection care and conservation*** to provide training and access to people to develop specialist skills.
7. ***The power of cultural diplomacy*** in an unstable world should not be underestimated. This is not 'soft diplomacy,' as it is often characterised but is often the first and primary method of building mutual cultural understandings, and for re-setting strained relationships. In some cases, this may involve repatriation of collection items that may have been, or perceived to have been, 'stolen' from the country or communities in question.

Contact officer: Stephen Forbes, Executive Officer, Council of Australasian Museum Directors

E eo@camd.org.au

W www.camd.org.au

