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## National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper

### Submission

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I do agree to my submission being made publicly available on the [www.culture.arts.gov.au](http://www.culture.arts.gov.au) website

1. Museums Australia Community Museums National Network [CMNN] is a group of regional and remote museums and individuals across Australia. Most of the CMNN museums are volunteer initiated organisations. CMNN represents volunteer and regional museums at Museums Australia and other national forums whenever possible and encourages the establishment of regional networks to assist with professional development, particularly for volunteer museums. CMNN is actively engaged in organisation of the regional, remote and indigenous elements of Museums Australia national conference program and at state branch level.

CMNN believes that the resources of major state and national collecting institutions are compromised when required to deliver professional development for regional and remote institutions. There has always existed a collegial approach to a distributed national collection, and the statutory institutions have willingly supported less well-resourced ones where possible. Such support should not be mandatorily enforced to the detriment of statutory institution programs. There should be separate programs to support regional and remote collections.

2. CMNN supports the development of a National Cultural Policy to provide leadership and direction to the arts and culture sectors of the Australian Community. State and Territory governments and local councils often provide fairly useful programs to support the sectors that are piecemeal and have little universal effect nor sustainable outcomes. A National Cultural Policy provides the opportunity to co-ordinate, give direction and national objectives to cultural policy, particularly for local government. A National Cultural Policy should also embrace the *National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries* and encourage regional collecting institutions, keeping places and cultural centres to actively seek to achieve the standards.

Several programs for performing arts and visual arts on a national basis have provided a basis for development of these elements of Australian society. The Regional Arts program in New South Wales is a successful model of locally controlled, centrally supported program that adds value to regional performing and visual arts. In contrast, following the failure of the Australian Government to implement the Piggott Report in the 1970s, there has been little support for the collections and cultural heritage sectors other than as an afterthought or adjunct to performing and visual arts programs. A National Cultural Policy would address the inequities. Museums Australia attempts to provide support for regional networks through its Chapter organisations in New South Wales and Western Australia. A similar style of regional networks is being developed in Victoria. When Chapters are successful, the level of engagement of volunteers organisations in professional development and with their communities is outstanding. These networks are maintained only by volunteer input and would greatly benefit from professional co-ordination and administration.

3. **Goal 1.** To ensure that the Australian Government support reflects the diversity of a 21st Century Australia and protects and supports indigenous culture, the National Cultural Policy should clearly

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identify each sector of arts and culture as having value for our society. That is, that community heritage collections, Aboriginal keeping places and cultural centres for intangible cultural heritage have a place in our society, as do performing and visual arts. Each element contributes in its own way and, despite the previous assertions of Collections Council of Australia, each element has separate needs and requires separate skill sets to achieve their best.

**Goal 2.** New and emerging technologies are used in the cultural collections sector spasmodically. A number of factors influence the uptake, including lack of resources and, most predominately, lack of knowledge / skills. A National Cultural Policy that provides incentive and information at a regional level would affect positively the lack of knowledge and skills. One element that would be useful is the development of metadata protocols so that cultural collections could be more relevant to users of the National Broadband Network. Again, this can best be achieved and implemented regionally.

**Goal 3.** To strengthen the role that the arts play in telling Australian stories, both here and overseas, a National Cultural Policy would encourage the engagement of regional and remote collecting institutions, keeping places and cultural centres with the performing and visual arts sectors. This could be achieved by providing incentives for cross-sectoral initiatives that enhance collection management, exhibition and public programs at the same time as providing a platform for visual or performing artists. Present explorations of this type of joint program tend to provide for the artist and add little value for the collection.

**Goal 4.** To increase and strengthen the capacity of the arts to contribute to our society and economy in the cultural collections sector of regional Australia a National Cultural Policy should provide incentives for achieving the *National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries*. Each collection is unique and has the potential to add social capital to its community and to the nation. Poorly presented collections distract from this potential and are usually the result of lack of skills, experience and knowledge.

4. Delivery of a National Cultural Policy would best be implemented by programs that are delivered at the regional level with the Australian Government in partnership with State, Territory and Local Government. CMNN is aware that this proposition is a big ask, but believes that leadership at the national level would develop support for programs such as Collections Care that has been trialled in the Goldfields region of Western Australia. This model is similar to the NSW Regional Arts program where a local board oversees the delivery of a regional professional development, promotion and mentoring program.
5. CMNN is not in a position to represent Museums Australia, from whom a separate submission will be made. We are able to support the implementation of a National Cultural Policy through the national network and through state branches of the Association. Having been the 'poor family on the block' for some time, any improvement in present policy and programs that benefits the sector will be welcomed whole-heartedly.
6. It would be useful if the National Cultural Policy included connections to Indigenous Affairs, Regional Development and Education portfolios as these are areas in which the regional and remote collecting institutions are involved, and yet are not recognised as having a part to play.

Yours sincerely



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