



**National Office**  
Level 1, ALIA House  
9-11 Napier Close  
Deakin ACT 2600

**Postal Address**  
PO Box 24  
Deakin West ACT 2600  
  
02 6230 0346

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## **Submission to the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts Inquiry into Australia's Creative and Cultural Industries and Institutions**

The Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to inform the Committee's Inquiry.

This submission outlines the value of our museums and galleries - which are key parts of the creative and cultural industries and institutions - addresses the five Terms of Reference and recommends a number of priorities and actions for the Commonwealth Government that should enable better return on investment in Australia's museum and gallery sector.

Before making specific comments, we will outline who we are and what we do.

### **Who we are**

AMaGA is the national membership association and peak advocacy body representing museums and galleries. We encompass a wide and diverse range of national, state, regional and community museums, art galleries, historic sites, botanic and zoological gardens, research centres, Indigenous cultural centres, and Keeping Places across Australia. Our 1400 members represent thousands of individual professionals through the large institutions and thousands more individual volunteers.

AMaGA is an advocacy, research, service and professional development organisation. We build on a history of museum professional association activity that extends back to the 1930s, have branches in every state and territory, and support professional national networks of expertise. More information on AMaGA and our members can be found at <https://www.amaga.org.au/annual-reports-0>

Representing our broad spectrum of member organisations and cultural workers, AMaGA has a number of comments, with links to further information, on the Terms of Reference. Indigenous, rural, regional and community-based organisations are well represented in our membership. 57% of our organisational members are regional or remote institutions. 48% of our organisational members are volunteer/community run.

We have also contributed to the submission prepared by GLAM Peak, and support the submissions from the FAHS, NAVA, ALIA and ICOM Australia.

### **Public value – in a nutshell**

Museums and galleries are central to wellbeing, identity, and maintaining social cohesion. They inspire a high level of trust and confidence, and connect Australians with the stories, art, heritage and histories of their community at a local, regional and national level. They are also critical contributors to national and regional economies. They help foster the creative industries which are one of the engine houses of the economy and are key drivers of successful cultural tourism and regional development.

Reports and data to support these claims can be found at the end of each Term of Reference addressed in this submission.

### **Vital Statistics**

- **Over 2,500** museums and galleries across Australia
- In 2018/19 **over 10.6 million** people visited the national collecting institutions (on + off site)
- **33%** of people with a disability had visited a museum or gallery in 2014 (*ABS General Social Survey, 2014*)
- **Over 50,000** Australians volunteer in museums and galleries
- **98% of Australians engage with the arts.** (Australia Council National Participation Survey Reports 2017/2020)

- Museums and galleries are also integral parts of Australia's arts and cultural ecosystem which is a **\$111.7bn industry that contributes 6.5% of GDP**.

## Terms of Reference

### 1. The direct and indirect economic benefits and employment opportunities of creative and cultural industries and how to recognise, measure and grow them

#### Specific Recommendations:

- 1.1** Include relevant questions in the **Census** and improve the Australian Bureau of Statistics **datasets** that inform the Cultural and Creative Satellite Accounts.
- 1.2** **Support the establishment of a Centre for Cultural Value** that brings together researchers with expertise in areas such as education, employment, health and community regeneration, with cultural organisations, historians, artists, audiences, participants and local communities. It would collaborate to advance understanding of the value of Australia's creative and cultural industries and its potential and develop rigorous evaluation of the benefits.
- 1.3** Use the inclusion by Infrastructure Australia of social infrastructure: arts and culture as **key components of national, state and local integrated infrastructure planning** to prioritise, fund, measure and grow the economic benefits of the creative and cultural industries.
- 1.4** Investigate the feasibility of a new **nationwide Vocational Education and Training (VET) scheme** focused on the creative and cultural industries, with, for example, collaborations to help more artists upgrade their skills for management and business entrepreneurship.

#### Key Comments:

Australia's museums and galleries are part of a significant cultural and creative sector which is a \$111.7bn industry that employs about 600,000 people.

There are well over 2,500 museums and galleries throughout the country. The sector is diverse, with distinct segments, comprising:

- the 22 state and national institutions
- the 250 or so public galleries and museums operated by local governments, both regional and metropolitan
- over 70 university-run art, historical, archaeological and science museums
- over 100 Indigenous art centres, mostly in remote regions
- over 2,000 volunteer-run, community organisations acting as community anchors and custodians of Australia's distributed national collection spread across regional and rural Australia.

Since 2014, economic and employment data on arts and culture in Australia – which included a specific focus on our galleries and museums - has not been collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The sector has been calling for this to be rectified for some time.

The Federal Government's Office for the Arts provides data on the impact of the national cultural institutions – for example in 2018/19, there were 649 initiatives which strengthened ties with other countries, directly and indirectly creating economic benefits. Other economic data on, for example, the multiplier effects of research and visitation, is not available.

The National Public Galleries Alliance recent snapshot of regional and local art museums and contemporary art, design and craft spaces, shows that local government provides the greatest level of government funding, and that each of these public non-commercial galleries employ an average of 4.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff.

Australia Council research shows that arts tourism by Australians tends to align with travelling further, staying longer and spending more. "Arts tourists are high value tourists." This is particularly evident in and important to regional and remote areas.

Indigenous art centres provide meaningful employment opportunities, especially to Indigenous women who make up about 70% of the artists.

The *Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019* recognised the immense value of social infrastructure: arts and culture by including it in the national priority plan for the first time, alongside such infrastructural requirements as transport upgrades and telecommunications.

#### Links to supporting Information:

UK Centre for Cultural Value <https://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/>

A New Approach, *Insight Reports One to Five* <https://www.humanities.org.au/new-approach/reports/>

Australia Council for the Arts: *Domestic Arts Tourism: Connecting the Country* (2020)  
<https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/domestic-arts-tourism-connecting-the-country/>

P S Seet and J Jones (2019) in <https://theconversation.com/indigenous-art-centres-that-sustain-remote-communities-are-at-risk-the-vet-sector-can-help-121179>

National Public Galleries Alliance <https://mgns.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Australian-Public-Galleries-Snapshot.pdf>

<https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/publications/australian-infrastructure-audit-2019>

Museum facts and data: American Alliance of Museums: <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/about-museums/museum-facts-data/>

Darren Henley, *The Arts Dividend: Why investment in culture pays*, 2016, 2019

Crossick & Kaszynska, *Understanding the Value of Arts & Culture*, AHRC, UK 2016

## 2. The non-economic benefits that enhance community, social wellbeing and promoting Australia's national identity, and how to recognise, measure and grow them

#### Key Recommendations:

**2.1** Support the implementation by museums and galleries of the relevant goals, strategies and performance measures set out in the United Nations' **Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030** – which is endorsed by the Australian Government. Australia's cultural collections sector has identified particular priorities in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. See <https://bit.ly/35bv8UP>

**2.2** Support the promotion and implementation of the **10-year Indigenous Roadmap** for reconciliation with museums and galleries: *First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries* (2019)

#### Key Comments:

An increasing body of evidence shows that "museums can bring benefits to individual and community health and wellbeing in their role as public forums for debate and learning, their work with specific audiences through targeted programmes, and by contributing to positive wellbeing and resilience by helping people to make sense of the world and their place within it..." (Dodd and Jones 2014)

Most museums in Australia are small, volunteer-managed community organisations which are embedded in their local communities and provide a range of social and economic benefits, including a sense of belonging to their community, and of contributing to society. These museums are generally significantly under-resourced. One of the most useful and cost-effective actions that governments at all levels could do for enhancing social cohesion and inclusion is to provide professional advice and an adequate level of funding support for these organisations.

In the UK, there is significant support for public investments in social participation and inclusion through the arts. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing carried out an extensive inquiry in 2016/2017. The three key messages from that inquiry were:

- “The arts can help keep us well, aid our recovery and support longer lives better lived.
- The arts can help meet major challenges facing health and social care: ageing, long term conditions, loneliness and mental health.
- The arts can help save money in the health service and social care.” (APPG Inquiry 2017)

There is growing interest, as well, on the efficacy of the arts on the prescription/social prescribing model. Evaluation of a pilot program in the UK in 2015/16 found that “Benefits of attending [the workshops] included improved reported mental health and wellbeing; increased physical activity, and an increase in social activity. A social return on investment conducted as part of the evaluation found that for every £1 invested in the programme, £11.55 was returned in social value.” (Whelan 2016)

Similarly, the work of GLAM Peak (the network of peak bodies in the galleries, libraries, archives, historical societies and museums sectors) over the last three years has revealed the power of digital discoverability and access to collections for increasing participation and social connection by people with a range of capabilities. Strategies and support for the digitisation of collections in regional and community galleries and museums would be an invaluable contribution to Australians’ social engagement as well as historical understanding.

The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) draw on a number of activities and targets that are central to museums and their roles as outlined in this submission.

AMaGA, as co-convenor of GLAM Peak, has identified and adopted key focus areas and targets within the SDG for Australia’s museums and galleries to work towards over the next decade.

Museums and galleries provide valued and safe spaces to promote national identity, exploring Australians’ connected experience and aspiration, as individuals and as members of communities and the nation. Operating as spaces of civic trust, museums “promote historically informed discussion of national ideas, and strive for a fundamentally inclusive understanding of the many facets of the Australian story.” As such, “they largely avoid the accusations of populism and self-interest that have come to plague contemporary political fora.” (Breyhard, 2019)

The significance of this work is recognised in the Australian Parliament’s report *Telling Australia's story - and why it's important: Report on the inquiry into Canberra's national institutions* (2019). It acknowledges that our best institutions are able to nurture civic engagement because they are maintained as places of civic trust. As in other democracies around the world, it has much to do with long-maintained institutional cultures of independence, concern for impact, honest inquiry and equity of opportunity. (Breyhard, 2019)

Another important step is the development and adoption of AMaGA’s 10-year Indigenous Roadmap, and a revised policy for the sector. After several years of consultation and research *First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries* was launched in May 2019. It is being adopted and implemented across the country, and promoted world-wide.

The Roadmap is about helping to build more respectful and trusting relationships between museums and galleries, and Indigenous peoples. It was developed for the sector in consultation with the sector. Built on 5 Key Elements for Change, there are numerous action



options and critical pathways to success. Implementation of the Roadmap will be crucial for breaking down barriers and improving the engagement of Indigenous individuals and communities with our museums and galleries.

The participation and representation of Indigenous Australians in this sector is crucial to securing reconciliation between first and settler Australians and enabling a maturing sense of national identity.

#### **Links to supporting Information:**

AMaGA Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Nationhood, National Identity and Democracy 2019 [https://www.amaga.org.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/website-content/SubmissionsPolicies/amaga\\_submission\\_to\\_senate\\_inquiry\\_into\\_nationhood\\_national\\_identity\\_an.pdf](https://www.amaga.org.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/website-content/SubmissionsPolicies/amaga_submission_to_senate_inquiry_into_nationhood_national_identity_an.pdf)

AMaGA Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mental Health <https://www.amaga.org.au/news/amaga-submission-pc-inquiry-mental-health>

AMaGA Submission to the Commonwealth Department for Communications and the Arts on renewing the National Arts and Disability Strategy, 3 December 2018 at <https://www.amaga.org.au/news/mga-submission-national-arts-and-disability-strategy>

AMaGA Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry on Canberra's national institutions [https://www.amaga.org.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/website-content/SubmissionsPolicies/mga\\_submission\\_to\\_inquiry\\_on\\_canberras\\_national\\_institutions\\_may\\_2018.pdf](https://www.amaga.org.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/website-content/SubmissionsPolicies/mga_submission_to_inquiry_on_canberras_national_institutions_may_2018.pdf)

*Telling Australia's story - and why it's important: Report on the inquiry into Canberra's national institutions* (2019). <https://apo.org.au/node/228746>

*First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries:* <https://www.mgaindigenouroadmap.com.au/>

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing Inquiry Report, *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*, July 2017 [http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative\\_Health\\_Inquiry\\_Report\\_2017.pdf](http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017.pdf)

Shane Breynard, *pers comm* 2019

Jocelyn Dodd and Ceri Jones, *Mind, Body, Spirit: how museums impact health and wellbeing*, UK 2014 <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/publications/mind-body-spirit-report>

Kerry Wilson and Gayle Whelan, *The Art of Social Prescribing*, 2015 <http://iccliverpool.ac.uk/?research=the-art-of-social-prescribing-informing-policy-on-creative-interventions-in-mental-health-care>

### **3. The best mechanism for ensuring cooperation and delivery of policy between layers of government**

#### **Key Recommendations:**

**3.1 Initiate the development of a confident and aspirational national cultural framework** that sets aims and priorities, delineates roles, undertakes research and enables funding for implementation. As with other national policy making (for example in regional or social policy) a national cultural policy both demonstrates the public value of culture and provides a structure for strategic investment and impact.

**The Framework** should:

- set out a coherent Roadmap for Recovery and future Resilience that understands and supports the interconnectedness between industry policies/programs such as tourism, regional development, health and education
- link with recommendations and decisions coming out of the Bushfires Royal Commission and the Senate Inquiry into the Impacts of COVID-19
- include cross-governmental strategies and programs
- support local/community/place-based recoveries as well as investment in touring
- provide new and expanded grants programs to help with adaption to any “new normal” that arise from COVID-19 impacts
- have sustained, strategic investment over the next decade including doubling the funding available to the Australia Council for the Arts and expanding its remit to include museums and galleries
- support massively increased digitisation of collections and public programs
- include a public campaign to state the value of Australia's culture and to rebuild confidence
- engage with and support associations and peak bodies to deliver services, advice and support.

**3.2 Provide Commonwealth funding directly to local governments** to enable them to “increase its involvement in the support of local, regional and community museums and historical societies” in line with the Australian Local Government Association's Arts and Culture Policy Position (2020). In addition, include **full local government representation** on Ministerial Councils for arts, heritage and culture.

**Key Comments:**

At the Commonwealth government level, the lack of a national cultural policy framework and inadequate associated resourcing, data management, strategic planning and support for cultural infrastructure has significant negative effects across the country. There has also been, until several pandemic-prompted rescue packages, a generally piecemeal and under-funded approach in most states and territories to their own cultural institutions and activities. Some states have recognised this – South Australia has a well-argued but underfunded Arts Plan for 2019-2024, and Victoria and Queensland have Creative Industries Plans.

In several states, some local councils are picking up the slack for their own communities, with overall per capita expenditure by Australia's local government on culture increasing by 11% over the last decade.

The think-tank, *A New Approach*, found that there have been unsettling significant shifts in public expenditure on arts and culture. “Without strategic and co-ordinated effort across all levels of government, Australia risks deterioration in its cultural fabric and a loss of the benefits it provides.”

Australia's cultural infrastructure is a wellspring of creativity, imagination and innovation – it is in the national interest to support it with coherent long term investments. This includes both capital and capability investment in the national institutions and joined up strategies and programs with the states and territories, which includes more support for local governments and their communities.

**Links to supporting Information:**

AMaGA Submission to the *Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019*  
[https://www.amaga.org.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/website-content/SubmissionsPolicies/amaga\\_submission\\_to\\_infrastructure\\_australia\\_31\\_october\\_2019.pdf](https://www.amaga.org.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/website-content/SubmissionsPolicies/amaga_submission_to_infrastructure_australia_31_october_2019.pdf)

A New Approach, *Insight Reports One to Five* <https://www.humanities.org.au/new-approach/reports/>

<https://visualarts.net.au/advocacy/industry-advisory-note-covid-19-response/navas-submission-covid-19-senate-inquiry/>

#### 4. The impact of COVID-19 on the creative and cultural industries

##### Key Recommendations:

- 4.1 Following consultation with the sector, the Commonwealth government to **invest in a culture/creative-led recovery** as part of the overall Government response to the crisis over the longer term.
- 4.2 Establish a **new Commonwealth grants program for volunteer/community museums, galleries and historical societies** to facilitate their survival and post-COVID-19 re-opening and recovery. These organisations are in every electorate and local government region.
- 4.3 **Provide exemption** for the national cultural institutions from the **Efficiency Dividend**.
- 4.4 **Provide new or additional support to national and state arts and heritage services and professional organisations, such as AMAga**, to enable them to provide informed and targeted advice and support to different segments of the cultural and creative sector.
- 4.5 Investigate the USA model of the **Heritage Emergency National Taskforce** to protect cultural heritage from the damaging effects of natural disasters and other emergencies, and establish and resource a similar public/private partnership of museums, galleries, national service organisations and government agencies. See: <https://culturalrescue.si.edu/hentf/>.

##### Key Comments:

The impacts of COVID-19 upon Australia have been and will continue to be extreme. The pandemic has also created a destructive cumulative impact on those organisations, regions and communities who are reeling from the bushfires and extreme weather events in late 2019 and early 2020.

In Australia, along with the tourism industry, hospitality and higher education, the cultural and creative sectors are the most affected by the current coronavirus crisis. Museums and galleries – of all types, sizes, funding sources and governance arrangements – are no exception.

Data from AMAga's Membership Surveys in May and August on COVID-19 Impacts shows that:

- 86% of organisations have been or anticipate to be financially affected – through loss of income (events, visitation, rent, donations, sales, education visits, sponsorship and budget cutbacks by the funding organisation).
- When organisations were asked whether the Commonwealth government's economic packages were available to them, 67% replied No to *Job Seeker* and 66% replied No to *Job Keeper*.
- When they were asked whether the amount of government assistance was sufficient, 53% said they did not qualify, or were unclear at this stage, while a further 26% said No. Only 21% replied Yes.
- Most museums in Australia are small, volunteer-managed community organisations which are embedded in their local communities and provide a range of social and economic benefits, including a sense of belonging to their community, and of contributing to society. Thus it is no surprise, but deeply troubling, that in May 77% of responding organisations were concerned by their lack of engagement with the community (for example, through cancellation of events/exhibitions or no online engagement, and in August, over a third of the respondents stated long-term sustainability would be an issue for them.

- When asked what support they needed now and over the next 6-12 months, the standout was immediate and ongoing financial support, along with public statements of their value.
- For many museums and galleries at all levels, uncertainty about their future operations and viability is a consistent concern.
- 75% asked for AMaGA to provide skills development at this time. This we have done through a greatly expanded national webinar program – funded by members, not government.

During this period, many organisations are also recognising opportunities to rethink business models and operating processes, and experiment with new modes of community engagement. 66% of surveyed organisations highlighted increased online content as a key adaptive strategy.

The national and state museums and galleries have demonstrated great flexibility in re-purposing programs to deliver experiences and education online, as well as developing new materials, such as virtual tours.

Those smaller regional and metropolitan galleries and museums who have retained professional staff in their primary roles are undertaking a range of innovative public programming (both digital and offline) as well as managing their collections and supporting artists and their local communities. Their resilience and creativity is contributing to community health, wellbeing and continuing education during this extended period of stress and disruption.

The community/volunteer museums, galleries and historical societies continue their unsung roles.

*"We are a small, rural based, volunteer run, Historical Society and were burnt out before this, it is hard to remain positive at times, then I look at one of our brilliant 10,000 digitised glass plate negatives, think of all that hard work and take a deep breath and start again."*

### **Longer term impacts**

A critical concern is the loss of young, early-career museum and gallery workers through the lack of job opportunities. They are the future of the industry.

Artists have also been hard hit and many may leave their profession.

National cultural institutions will be dealing with static or shrinking operating budgets as the government manages its way out of a years' long recession. The removal of the mis-named Efficiency Dividend would bring some relief, and is well overdue. Research has long shown how damaging it is for these small Commonwealth government agencies.

Many volunteer-run community organisations are likely to lose their workers and possibly not re-open at all if there is not careful and targeted support and safety for them to return. AMaGA and the Federation of Australian Historical Societies (FAHS) have proposed a collaboration to administer a new Commonwealth funding program for these organisations, to cover shortfalls in income and stimulate new commitment, projects and accessibility.

In all these cases, if unaddressed, there will be inestimable damage to the mental health of individuals, to the institutions, and to Australia's cultural industry and cultural life.

These sorts of disastrous events will recur. National co-ordination in disaster recovery for cultural organisations will be required. A proven model is the United States' Heritage Emergency National Task Force (HENTF), which is co-sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Smithsonian Institution. It is a partnership of 60 national service organisations and federal agencies.

Ramped up investment in this type of national co-ordination is supported by the *Disasters – Cultural Response Roundtable – National Service Organisations* which was established by AMaGA in January 2020 in the midst of the rampant bushfires season. This unfunded



Roundtable provides advocacy, information-sharing, communication materials and support through the Australian disaster season on behalf of the cultural and creative arts sectors. Since March, it has also focused strongly on the impacts of COVID-19 and the compounding effects of loss and stress, while now preparing for the next season of natural disasters.

#### **Links to supporting Information:**

AMaGA Submission to the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

[https://www.amaga.org.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/field\\_f\\_content\\_file/amaga\\_submission\\_to\\_covid\\_19\\_senate\\_select\\_committee\\_28\\_may\\_2020.pdf](https://www.amaga.org.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/field_f_content_file/amaga_submission_to_covid_19_senate_select_committee_28_may_2020.pdf)

AMaGA Submission to the Bushfires Royal Commission

<https://www.amaga.org.au/news/amaga-submission-royal-commission-recent-bushfires>

Heritage Emergency National Taskforce <https://culturalrescue.si.edu/hentf/>

## **5. Avenues for increasing access and opportunities for Australia's creative and cultural industries through innovation and the digital environment.**

### **Key Recommendations:**

5.1 Develop and resource a **National Investment Plan for digital access to cultural collections**. A Plan would include:

- strategies and funding for the Digital Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at tertiary level, new collaborative research infrastructure through the Department of Industry, and steady support for Trove
- the adoption of national, state, territory and local government digital access to collections strategies and plans, which link to the new collaborative research infrastructure plan
- initiatives to help build the capacity of smaller cultural institutions
- dedicated funding for digitisation and digital access at every level

### **Key Comments:**

The work of GLAM Peak (the network of peak bodies in the galleries, libraries, archives, historical societies and museums sectors) over the last three years has revealed the power of digital discoverability and access to collections for increasing participation and social connection by people with a range of capabilities. Strategies and support for the digitisation of collections in regional and community galleries and museums would be an invaluable contribution to Australians' social engagement as well as life-long learning.

It is important to note that "Australia has always been one of the leaders in this area, from Australian Museums On Line ([AMOL](#)) in the late 1990s to the National Library's Trove and, for natural history collections - the Atlas of Living Australia ([ALA](#)) - collection sharing and collaboration has been a part of the cultural sector's digital innovation here for well over 20 years hampered by uneven funding and national network connectivity." (Seb Chan, ACMI 2017)

Providing digital access is the most effective way of ensuring Australian arts, scientific collections, and heritage, in all its many forms, can be discovered and enjoyed by audiences in Australia (both in cities and in the regions and remote areas) and worldwide. There are many stories about the positive impact digital access has had on the lives of individuals and there are a number of examples of how digital access has led to important scientific and policy outcomes.

National and state galleries and museums are strong leaders in this arena. The National Portrait Gallery has an award-winning application for school visitors using iPads, and has largely digitised its collection. Questacon is collaborating with CSIRO's Data 61 on

gamification of research in biodiversity and Australian stories. Questacon has also taken a leading role in boosting the teaching of STEM in schools across Australia through the Smart Skills Initiative which delivered online as well as hands-on inquiry based workshops as well as virtual excursions.

Innovative use of new technologies such as Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality are also used to achieve heightened emotional responses in museums around the world and in Australia. See for example, the ground-breaking Dome Lab - "*Travelling Kungkarakalpa*" – developed as a digital sanctuary for the National Museum of Australia's award-winning *Songlines* exhibition: <http://www.niea.unsw.edu.au/research/projects/domelab>

However, the cost of innovation in the digital environment and maintaining a vital online presence does not come cheap, and it needs more regular major renewals than, for example, permanent exhibition fit-outs.

As a sector, it is not simply collections access that is facilitated by digital. The role of galleries and museums in the visitor economy is predicated on giving visitors and tourists timely appropriate information and responsive service, which increasingly means through provision and engagement with sophisticated digital tools across multiple agencies (such as media, transport infrastructure, and tourism marketing).

Drawing on the extensive work of GLAM Peak, we support the development of state-wide Digital Access Plans for each state's cultural collections. The development of digital accessibility to collections nation-wide must be led and funded in a coherent and efficient way, following the national framework. This is best done at state and territory level, through policies, plans and funding programs, guiding and supporting local initiatives, and feeding into a national picture. Currently, NSW, WA and Tasmania are developing plans, which should be given long-term infrastructure funding support.

Digital technology is also at the centre of the transformative research infrastructure that is required for Australia's research sector to develop new knowledge and applications. Next generation technology platforms and research infrastructure have the power to drive transformations in the way researchers discover, access, curate and analyse social and cultural data, as they have with the sciences.


Museums and galleries hold a wealth of knowledge in their collections. A longer term investment in helping museums, galleries and historical societies to provide digital access would power a wave of creativity, new research, and innovation.

#### **Links to supporting Information:**

GLAM Peak and Digital Access frameworks: <http://www.digitalcollections.org.au/framework>

Six case studies in developing digital access to collections in 2016:  
<http://www.digitalcollections.org.au/case-studies>

GLAM Peak *Guidelines for Developing State and Territory Digital Access to Collections Plans* (2020): [GLAM Peak - Guidelines for Developing State and Territory Digital AccessFIN.pdf](#)



Alexandra Marsden  
National Director