

Museums Australia is the national association for museums and galleries in Australia.
ICOM-Australia (National Committee of the International Council of Museums, Paris) is a key partner.

[Museums Australia]

Australia Council Bill 2013:

Museums Australia submission to Senate Committee review of Australia Council Bill 2013
(Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee)

11 April 2013

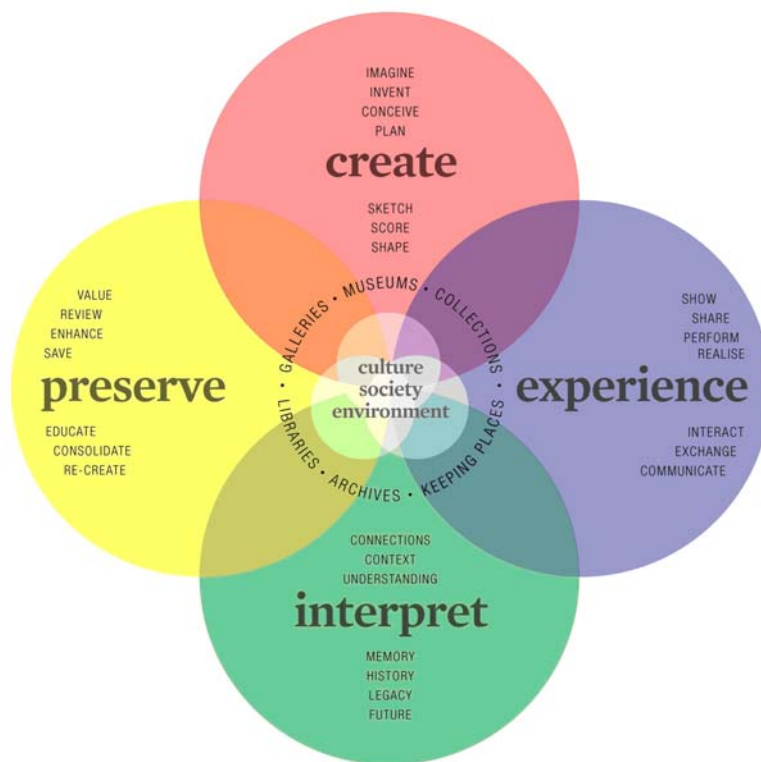


Fig.1 *The Cycle of Culture and Heritage* – A modelling of cultural process
(Museums Australia, 2008)

Preparation of submission

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National Director, Museums Australia

Museums Australia also acknowledges the input and oversight of MA President, Mr Andrew Sayers AM (Director of the National Museum of Australia) and members of the MA National Council.

Museums Australia Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (General).

That the Senate, in reviewing the Australia Council Bill 2013, ensure that the section 'Functions' (Part 2, S9) will include additional clauses that reflect important shifts in policy awareness captured in the National Cultural Policy, *Creative Australia* – anchoring all arts activity in a broader and more socially inclusive understanding of shared culture, access, diversity and community engagement in the benefits of vibrant arts development nationally, in which all Australians recognise an interconnected identity and have a common stake as a nation.

More specific recommendations follow.

Recommendation 2.

Museums Australia advocates a more inclusive recognition of *culture* and *heritage* as broad underpinning concepts in framing development and support for *the arts* in the Functions of the Australia Council.

Comment:

As presently drafted, 'the arts' have no anchorage in a broad idea of 'culture' in the new Australia Council functions – the word 'culture' does not appear in the proposed Act; neither does the word 'heritage'.

Recommendation 3.

Additional reference needs to be stated (not assumed), to guarantee recognition of the Australia Council's vital role in advancing beneficial *community impact* and *engagement* in the arts in its delivery of policy and programs.

Comment:

As presently drafted, there is no clear concept of community engagement in the arts – communities as creators and social participants in arts activities – enlisting extensive social benefits, both in the social capital of communities themselves and directly engaging communities as vital supporters of our artists and arts development nationally. A great deal of innovative policy work and program support recently has gone into bringing artists into communities and stimulating their role as spearhead agents of community cultural development, especially in regional communities. The word 'community' nowhere appears in the Functions – only the passive concept of 'audiences', and the instrumental concept of 'markets'.

Recommendation 4.

Additional reference needs to be stated (not assumed), to guarantee that the Australia Council's functions will reflect the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture's unique place in our nation's evolution, and in the distinctive character of Australia's cultural identity and interface with the world.

Comment:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts/culture are nowhere mentioned by name – at a time when so much social and political effort is gathering to have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples recognised in the Australian constitution. Goal One in *Creative Australia* is to 'Recognise, respect and celebrate the centrality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity. This needs some acknowledgment in Functions.

Recommendation 5.

Additional reference needs to be stated (not assumed), to guarantee that the Australia Council's functions will stimulate connections between the arts and Australian cultural identity.

Comment:

This is no plea for nationalism, but for a brief recognition that the Australia Council has a function of stewardship of arts development in relation to the cultural identity of all Australians.

Recommendation 6.

Additional reference needs to be stated (not assumed), that Australia's arts development is reinforced by caring for interpretation and valuing of the cultural heritage that is evolved as a consequence of a vibrant arts culture, support for artists, and their freedom of expression.

Comment:

The recent transfer to the Australia Council of the federally funded national touring programs, in particular 'Visions of Australia', brings this issue – and the wider concept of culture – into sharp relief and direct relevance to the galleries and museums nationally whose collections are a vital resource for the Visions program and its touring of our cultural heritage to communities and regions throughout Australia.