

Submission to the Inquiry into the National Cultural Policy
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications

The Australian National Maritime Museum (ANMM) connects Australians with our past, our present and our future as an island nation – in the Asia Pacific – shaped by sea. As a world leading maritime museum, the ANMM is uniquely placed to capture and communicate the spirit of our island nation. Situated at Darling Harbour in Sydney, on the Bamal and Badu of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, we are home to a distinctive floating fleet and the National Maritime Collection. Our exhibitions, programs and educational activities are dedicated to telling the stories that explore who we are as a nation and as a culture, as shaped by the seas.

The ANMM therefore warmly welcomes the release of the National Cultural Policy – *Revive* (the Policy). At the heart of the Policy is the goal to ensure a place for every story and a story for every place. This intent aligns seamlessly with the vision of ANMM and the goals of the Policy allow us to flourish as an institution and strengthen our work to shape a more informed, connected and inclusive community.

ANMM is one of nine National Collecting Institutions (NCIs). These National Collecting Institutions, together with other state and regional collecting organisations, are the repositories of the stories and voices of our Nation. They are places for telling the stories of all Australians, reflecting the diversity of Australia and building social cohesion. They allow people to come together to share and address relevant issues, providing a space for all voices. The Policy recognises the special place the NCIs hold in Australia's cultural infrastructure and acknowledges the on-going issue with respect to long-term neglect of core funding for their operation.

The Policy provides a framework for the creative industries for the next five years and is structured around five interconnected pillars which set out the Government's strategic objectives. ANMM engages all five pillars to achieve its purpose, and we support the vision and objectives of a National Cultural Policy, recognising the potential social, cultural and economic impacts such a policy could have at a time of geopolitical and climate uncertainty.

The National Collecting Institutions are well placed to play a leadership role in implementing the Policy and realising the cultural sector's potential for connecting and enriching all Australians. As noted in the ANMM's submission to the National Cultural development process, research undertaken in 2021 shows that *at a time when trust in most sources of information is declining, museums have proven resilient, retaining their status as super trusted institutions. Australians see museums as a trusted social intermediary with the citizenry uniquely placed to perform five key roles in community governance:*

- *fostering critical educated citizens in their areas of expertise;*
- *combating ‘truth decay’ in their areas of expertise;*
- *providing safe spaces for enabling community participation on historical, social and environmental issues;*
- *ensuring that the perspectives of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples are represented; and,*
- *there is majority support for delivering programmes of various kinds to help integrate marginalised groups into the community and give voice to their current needs and aspirations for the future.¹*

The intention of the Policy is to change the trajectory of the creative sector and deliver momentum to the art, culture and heritage industries. The Policy, together with additional funding commitments from Government, will enable Australia’s National Collecting Institutions, such as ANMM, to play a leading role in Australia’s future.

The ANMM wholeheartedly endorses the National Cultural Policy, and it looks forward to working with Government to implement the recommendations, actions and objectives outlined in the policy.

¹ Museums as guardians of our civic culture – what museums could and should do by Prof Mark Evans and Council for Australian Museum Directors.