



Australia's international museum body welcomes the new national cultural policy, *Revive*, as an overdue first step and looks forward to seeing the gaps addressed

Response Submission to Revive

Date 7 March 2023

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) Australia welcomed the recently released national cultural policy, *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*. We believe that it is the first crucial step for the museum and gallery sector to enable the development of a comprehensive policy and strategic framework for sustained investment.

The announced initiatives such as the commitments to First Nations artists and culture, re-instating cultural data collection, and significant support for the performing arts, literature, and workers' rights are to be commended. The vision statement by author, Christos Tsiolkas, and historian, Clare Wright, is outstanding in its aspirations.

However, the policy framework itself has some troubling gaps, such as overlooking the issues of climate change and sustainability, minimising the roles of heritage and the humanities, and understating Australia's international cultural responsibilities and potential impacts.

ICOM Australia continues to identify the lack of a national body to deal with the needs of our great collecting institutions and local and regional institutions that preserve, present and promote creativity and knowledge of our history, heritage, environment and society. Such a body would address a significant gap and bring Australia into line with other comparative economies.

The policy makes several small-scale specific funding recommendations for some national collecting institutions, ICOM Australia strongly supports the confirmation of this funding especially set within the wider cultural policy priorities.

Key Gaps

- National Body to address a significant gap in the arts and cultural sector and bring Australia into line with other comparative economies. (One model is the USA's National Endowment for the Humanities, which is a companion to their national arts body). Alternatively, the remit and resourcing of the Australia Council for the Arts should be expanded to include strategic and funding support for cultural heritage. Another option would be to establish a new strategic investment program in the department, perhaps in a renamed Office for Culture and the Arts.
- The cultural policy should include priorities or goals for:

- **Sustainability** – both for cultural infrastructure and the cultural industries, and in our contributions to national and global environmental sustainability. This would include disaster preparedness and mitigation strategies and funding.
- **Re-imagined definitions** of work, culture, inclusion, public value, and recompense. This is particularly important for artists and community heritage workers.
- **Removing the “Hunger Games” attributes** of inadequate grants funding. Eligibility-based, demand-driven grants programs should be considered, as is the case with other industry support programs such as the Australian Government’s Export Market Development Grants Program (EMDG).
- **Strengthened interactions and co-funding** with key national priorities in health, education, and community well-being. This would include contributing to the Treasurer’s new Wellbeing Indicators.
- **International impact** – promoting international and intercultural exchange and co-operation in the cultural sphere. Well-resourced cultural institutions and creators carrying out cultural diplomacy in these times of global insecurity and misunderstanding are more vital than ever.

ICOM Australia continues to be ready to provide advice and the perspectives of the wider sector regarding the policy.

Background

ICOM is the largest international network of museum and heritage professionals, with more than 44,500 members around the world. ICOM Australia provides the international voice of Australian museum and gallery professionals and upholds international standards, benchmarks and ethics.