



A culturally ambitious nation

STRATEGIC
PLAN

2014 TO 2019

OUR CULTURE IS UNIQUE.
IT IS A CULTURE THAT IS DEEPLY
SHAPED BY MORE THAN 70,000
YEARS OF CONTINUED, UNBROKEN
INDIGENOUS STORYTELLING.
IT REFLECTS AUSTRALIA'S TWO
CENTURIES OF SETTLEMENT FROM
AROUND THE WORLD. WE ARE A
DIVERSE COMMUNITY OF IDENTITIES,
FAITHS, INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES
AND PURSUITS, YET WE HAVE MANY
SHARED VALUES AND OUR SENSE
OF NATION IS STRONG.

Front cover

Image 1: Expressions Dance Company,
Jack Ziesing in Natalie Weir's *When Time Stops*
Credit: Dylan Evans

Image 2: Lena Nyadbi *Dayiwul Lirlmim*
on the rooftop of the Musée du quai Branly

A CULTURALLY AMBITIOUS NATION draws strength from these diversities. It utilises them to expand the dimensions of our creativity. **A culturally ambitious nation** acknowledges that music, books, theatre, film, paintings, sculpture, dance and a myriad of other art forms are central to our lives. It cherishes its great artists from all regions, and across all practices.

We take great pride in our artists' achievements – locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

In a culturally ambitious nation Australians demand opportunities to gain access to and participate in the arts, be it as consumers or creators.

Creativity starts with childhood curiosity. It continues through our lives. **A culturally ambitious nation** embraces the **arts in everyday life** – at home, in kindergartens, schools and universities, in shopping centres and office blocks, at sporting venues, in the media. We want to be a nation where artistic enterprise and respect for culture are entrenched.

In Australia, we expect and anticipate that our artists will exercise our freedom of expression and be fearless, take risks, and develop and present inspiring work across national and international borders. **A culturally ambitious nation** is confident and constantly striving.

At the Australia Council, artists are our heroes. In our **culturally ambitious nation**, they take their places amongst the nation's heroes.

Rupert Myer AM
Chair

Tony Grybowski
CEO



OUR PURPOSE: TO CHAMPION AND INVEST IN AUSTRALIAN ARTS

The Council's Strategic Plan articulates our leadership role in building a vibrant arts ecology by fostering excellence and increasing national and international engagement with Australian art and artists.

We will continue to fund excellent art across all art forms. We will adapt the way we invest in the arts to increase our impact and become more open and reflective of evolving arts practice. We will change our funding programs so that artists can apply for the funding they need, without having to fit their practice into art form categories. We will make longer term funding available to arts organisations to give them the security to plan ahead. Our grants assessment will reflect the goals set out in this plan and rely on rigorous peer assessment.

The Council will embrace its role as the national advocate for the arts. Our enhanced research program will contribute significantly to the evidence base and each year we will prepare the State of the Arts Report. We will build stronger relationships with other policy areas and stimulate an informed national dialogue on Australian arts.

GOAL ONE AUSTRALIAN ARTS ARE WITHOUT BORDERS



EXPLORATION:
enable artists to discover and develop across borders

RECIPROCITY:
strengthen collaboration and partnerships nationally and internationally

STIMULATION:
captivate global audiences with diverse Australian work

EXPANSION:
grow the profile of Australian arts

Australia is known overseas more for its tourism and job opportunities than for its arts and culture. We export far fewer cultural goods and services than we import. We want to shift this balance and enable Australian arts to flourish overseas.

ART IS AN INTERNATIONAL language that transcends global borders. More than one in three Australian artists has engaged in international work. Australian artists and arts organisations continue to increase their international activity over time. However, while some barriers have been removed by new technology, vast distances and the high cost of travel can still prevent artists and arts companies from touring or collaborating within and beyond Australia.

In our region, the rapid growth of developing and newly industrialised nations means there are more artists influencing global narratives. This presents an economic and cultural opportunity for our artists and arts organisations to build connections with our Asian neighbours.

As borders dissolve, dialogue, collaboration and exchange between Australian artists and their international counterparts will be greater than ever before. New audiences will experience Australian art. More people will engage meaningfully with Australian arts here and overseas.

We will focus on enabling Australian art to travel freely across borders:

- We will enable artists to discover and develop by supporting their mobility and building a worldwide network of arts partners for Australian artists.
- We will strengthen collaborations and partnerships by developing and delivering an international development strategy.
- We will captivate global audiences by investing in strategic international buyers programs to introduce Australian work to new markets.
- We will grow the profile of Australian arts by identifying and enabling signature programs that showcase excellent Australian work to new audiences.
- We will maximise the impact of National Regional Touring Programs to increase access across regional communities.

GOAL TWO

AUSTRALIA IS KNOWN FOR ITS GREAT ART AND ARTISTS



STRENGTH:

build the capacity of artists to make excellent work

ADVENTURE:

foster experimentation and risk-taking in all art forms

EXCELLENCE:

support arts organisations to lead in innovation, collaboration and development of original work

DIVERSITY:

fuel diverse practice from artists of many different backgrounds

The arts can be seen as the research and development arm of culture: artists are experimenting with new ways to look at the human experience. It is through supporting experimentation and encouraging new and diverse artistic expressions, that public investment supports great art. Over eight in ten Australians agree it is exciting to see new styles and types of art, and a similar number agree they are inspired by the skill of great artists.

IT IS IMPORTANT that all artists should be able to express their art, no matter from where they come. Australia has the highest proportion of overseas-born people amongst large OECD nations. However, only two-thirds of Australians agree that the arts currently reflect the cultural diversity of Australia. We want to change this by supporting a more diverse range of artists in our work.

A resilient stable infrastructure of arts organisations offers career pathways for artists through small, medium and major companies. We will continue to support the stability and flexibility of this infrastructure across all art forms.

Australian artists will be known for their expression, daring and skill. They will create experiences that enrich lives, locally and globally. Arts organisations will enable artists to achieve great art.

We will focus on supporting great art and artists:

- We will strengthen the capacity of artists to make excellent work by identifying and fast tracking the development of exceptional artists to become an internationally acknowledged talent.
- We will foster experimentation and risk-taking in all art forms by stimulating artists and organisations to experiment in their artistic practice.
- We will continue to invest in initiatives that drive innovation and artistic vibrancy in arts organisations.
- We will fuel diverse practice from artists of many backgrounds by investing in a Cultural Diversity Program.
- We will create a more efficient and flexible grants program to enable artists to express their artistic vision.

GOAL THREE THE ARTS ENRICH DAILY LIFE FOR ALL



ABUNDANCE:

infuse everyday life with arts and culture

INCLUSION:

ensure more Australians have access to and engage with the arts

NEW GENERATION:

strengthen artistic experiences by, with and for children and young people

LEVERAGE:

increase public and private investment in the arts

Australians know that art can enrich us. Over eight in ten believe the arts make for a richer and more meaningful life. Nine in ten feel the arts are an important part of a child's education.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH the arts is high and has grown over the past few decades. More people are creating art than ever before and attendance and reading have increased steadily. Research shows that this is good for Australia: artists make an important contribution to society, building our ability to express ourselves and our identities, our sense of wellbeing and happiness, and enhancing our creativity.

We will promote greater appreciation for the arts, and a deeper understanding of their value.

Attitudes towards the arts have evolved over the last fifteen years. Two in three Australians now think that the arts are affordable and relevant to them. We want Australian audiences to have even greater access to the arts.

Every Australian should be able to experience the transformative power of art, no matter where they live, what language they speak, or how much they earn.

We will focus on bringing art into our daily lives:

- We will infuse everyday life with the arts by helping the arts to reach new audiences in unexpected places, events and communities.
- We will ensure more Australians have access to the arts by partnering with states, territories and local governments on targeted arts development in regional and urban areas.
- We will strengthen artistic experiences by, with and for children and young people by facilitating collaboration between young people and more established artists to create new work.
- We see the opportunity to increase public and private investment in the arts. We will develop a strategy to leverage additional funding.

GOAL FOUR

AUSTRALIANS CHERISH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ARTS AND CULTURES



ENRICHMENT:

embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures into Australian arts

BRILLIANCE:

boost investment in artistic excellence

BELONGING:

increase Australians' experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures

JOURNEY:

support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to practice and experience their culture

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are the longest continuous art and culture makers on earth. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are culturally active, with two in three attending a cultural event each year. Research shows almost all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders want to participate more in cultural activities, but there is a real risk that culture will be lost as elders pass away.

AUSTRALIANS AGREE INDIGENOUS culture is an important part of Australian culture, and many say it is not well represented; and as a result only a minority actually engages with Indigenous arts in a regular way. Two in three Australians have a strong or growing interest in Indigenous arts, however, only two in five have actually engaged with Indigenous arts in the past year.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures are precious. More Australians should be able to experience them. Oodgeroo Noonuccal said "The artist educates the public" - now is the time for us to cherish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists will be celebrated as heroes. More Australians will have the chance to engage meaningfully with Indigenous arts and cultures.

We will focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures:

- We will embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures into Australian arts by creating a brokerage service to support organisations to collaborate and program Indigenous created work.
- We will boost investment in artistic excellence by investing in the development of signature works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and organisations.
- We will increase Australians' experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures by creating an Indigenous market and audience development strategy.
- We will support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to practise and experience their culture by supporting an intergenerational transfer of Indigenous arts and culture knowledge.



THIS PLAN

This document sets out our vision for the arts in Australia. It also defines the goals and strategies that will guide our work over the next five years. It responds to our new legislation and is informed by sector and nationwide consultation.

ABOUT US

The Australia Council for the Arts is the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body. The Australia Council was originally established as an independent statutory authority through the *Australia Council Act 1975*. On 1 July 2013, the *Australia Council Act 2013* commenced, updating the functions of the Australia Council. The Australia Council is accountable to the Australian Parliament and to the Government through the Minister for the Arts.

Image 1: New Australian Pavilion, Venice
Credit: Image courtesy of Denton Corker Marshall
Image 2: Anita Hegh, Tom Usher, Lachlan Elliott and Nathaniel Dean in Sydney Theatre Company's *The Secret River*
Credit: Heidrun Löhr

- Through our grants we fund a range of arts activities including the creation of new work, collaborations, touring, productions, exhibitions, performances, publishing, recording, promotion, marketing and audience engagement.
- We provide multi-year funding to arts organisations across Australia that create and present work and service the arts and artists.
- Through targeted programs and strategic initiatives we support the arts sector and lead change where needed.
- We advocate for the arts sector and deliver original research and analysis to inform policy and strengthen the arts industry.

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This plan references *Arts in Daily Life: Australian Participation in the Arts*, an Australia Council report released in May 2014.