

PGAV Submission

Infrastructure Priorities for the Regions

Public Galleries Association of Victoria (PGAV) Submission

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Dear Michael

The Public Galleries Association of Victoria (PGAV) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to Infrastructure Victoria on **Infrastructure Priorities for the Regions**. Our submission draws on research we have undertaken through industry benchmarking, member surveys and direct consultation with our regional members. This submission addresses **both Comparative Advantage and Addressing Regional Disadvantage** — to clearly demonstrate that prioritising regional gallery infrastructure will deliver on many of the key objectives of Victoria's 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy.

Seven regional galleries are planning redevelopments or new builds over the next 5 years. With budgets ranging between \$20M - \$50M, gallery redevelopments are modest in relation to roads, rail and other infrastructure. However, the feasibility studies that inform their development clearly demonstrate they will deliver significant social, cultural and economic returns to their regions. We believe there is much to be gained from regional gallery redevelopments being prioritised within *Victoria's 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy*.

ABOUT THE PGAV

The PGAV is the peak body representing 52 public galleries across Victoria, including 18 in regional Victoria. We deliver a range of services to support, develop and promote the sector within a national context. Our role is to build the capacity of Victoria's public gallery sector, enhancing their ability to present engaging visual art experiences that deliver valuable cultural, social and economic returns to their communities.



OUR REGIONAL MEMBERS

The public gallery sector in Victoria is Australia's oldest — the National Gallery of Victoria was established in 1861 and was the nation's first public gallery. It was followed by the establishment of galleries across regional Victoria — the Art Gallery of Ballarat in 1884, Warrnambool Art Gallery in 1886, Bendigo Art Gallery in 1887 and Geelong Gallery in 1896. Today the public gallery sector in Victoria is large and diverse — spanning 29 metropolitan galleries, 5 outer metropolitan galleries and **18 regional galleries**.

Our regional members are located in all 9 of Infrastructure Victoria's regions:

Barwon

Geelong Gallery

Goulburn

Shepparton Art Museum (SAM)

Mallee

Mildura Arts Centre

Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery

Central Highlands

Ararat Gallery TAMA (Textile Art Museum of Australia)

Art Gallery of Ballarat

Great South Coast

Hamilton Gallery

Warrnambool Art Gallery

Ovens Murray

Arts Space Wodonga

Benalla Art Gallery

Wangaratta Art Gallery

Gippsland

East Gippsland Art Gallery

Gippsland Art Gallery

Latrobe Regional Gallery

Loddon Campaspe

Bendigo Art Gallery

Central Goldfields Art Gallery

La Trobe University Art Institute (LAI)

Wimmera South Mallee

Horsham Regional Art Gallery

STRENGTH OF VICTORIA'S REGIONAL GALLERY SECTOR

Our 18 regional members hold over **63,000 items in their collections** with a combined value of \$365M. Victoria's regional galleries have **nationally significant collections of Australian art**, including significant holdings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. In 2018, regional galleries **attracted over 900,000 visitors** to see 347 exhibitions, take part in 982 public programs and 1,189 education programs. They **employ 127 full-time equivalent staff** and are supported by **901 volunteers**.

FUTURE PROOFING REGIONAL GALLERY INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2017, a survey of our membership revealed **12 regional galleries** (67%) were planning a gallery redevelopment or new build over the next five years. The top three reasons listed: 1) the need for additional exhibition spaces — to allow the permanent collection is on display as well temporary exhibitions; 2) improving visitor amenities — creative workshop spaces, cafes and retail; and 3) ageing buildings — collection stores that leak, inefficient air conditioning, lighting systems that have high energy demands, loading bays that cannot cope with large touring exhibitions.

Since then **Ararat Gallery TAMA** has undergone a **\$7.7M** redevelopment, **Gippsland Art Gallery** a **\$4.53M** redevelopment and **Latrobe Regional Gallery (LRG)** has completed a **\$1.1M** refurbishment. All were funded through the Federal Government, State Government and Local Government, with the exception of LRG which was funded by the Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council.

The new **Shepparton Art Museum (SAM)** is currently being built at a cost of **\$34M**. Federal, State and Local Governments each contributing \$10M, with the SAM Foundation contributing \$4.5M for the building and providing a further \$8M endowment to support future gallery operating costs. **Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery** is about to commence redevelopment as part of the **\$34M** *Our Regions, Our Rivers* initiative, which includes \$16.8M from the Federal Government.

Benalla Art Gallery, Bendigo Art Gallery, Geelong Gallery, Hamilton Gallery, Wangaratta Art Gallery and **Warrnambool Art Gallery** are in the process of undertaking feasibility studies for gallery redevelopments or new builds. This is being driven by a need to meet the growing expectations of audiences — additional exhibition spaces to present an array of exhibitions at any one time, including blockbuster exhibitions, dedicated workshop space to deliver programs for people of all ages,



Image: Port of Sale and the Gippsland Art Gallery following redevelopment in 2018.

improved collection stores, preparation areas and climate controls to be able to present international and touring exhibitions, and visitor amenities that allow audiences to enjoy the gallery at their leisure. **These upgrades will enable regional galleries to deliver exciting visual art programming that drives economic activity and cultural tourism to the regions.**

Up until now, regional gallery redevelopments have been undertaken in isolation, often in competition with other galleries in the same region. The PGAV believes there are significant economic, social and cultural benefits that can be gained through regional gallery developments being undertaken in a cohesive, strategic manner.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Future regional gallery redevelopments be integrated into *Victoria's 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy*.



Images: Latrobe Regional Gallery's reception and gift shop following redevelopment in 2017. Photo: TM PHOTO / Tanja Milbourne; Ararat Gallery Textile Art Museum Australia (TAMA) following redevelopment in 2018. Photo: MDP Photography & Video.

COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE

The Department of Communications and the Arts' working paper *Cultural and creative activity in Australia 2008-09 to 2016-17* shows Australia's creative and cultural economy contributes more than \$111B of the country's total GDP (6.4%). Victoria represents 3% of Australia's total landmass, yet accounts for 22% of national GDP. Victoria's burgeoning creative sector supports 260,000 jobs (up 15% in 4 years) and contributes \$31B, about 8% to the Victorian economy. In addition, international cultural tourism was \$2B in 2017, an increase of 88% since 2013. All regional areas can take advantage of this growth area and enable their communities to share in the economic benefits of cultural tourism.

Regional Galleries are Transforming Economies

Bendigo Art Gallery and the success of the Archibald Prize touring to regional galleries across Victoria are excellent examples of the ability of regional galleries to **transform regional economies** and **drive cultural tourism**.

Bendigo Art Gallery has established a national profile for presenting high quality international exhibitions. Beginning with *The Golden Age of Couture* in 2008, *Grace Kelly: Style Icon* in 2012, *Bendigo Art Gallery & Twentieth Century Fox Presents Marilyn Monroe* in 2016, and more recently *Tudors to Windsors: British Royal Portraits* in 2019. Economic impact analysis indicates that through these 'blockbuster' exhibitions, the gallery has made a significant contribution to the Greater Bendigo and Victorian economies:

Exhibition	Greater Bendigo	Victoria
Grace Kelly: Style Icon (2012)	\$16.3M	\$2.8M
Bendigo Art Gallery & Twentieth Century Fox Present Marilyn Monroe (2016)	\$13.2M	\$2.6M
Tudors to Windsors: British Royal Portraits (2019)	\$5.5M	\$3.1M

Over the last three financial years Bendigo Art Gallery has averaged **annual attendances of 150,000+**. It has a growing regional and international audience, with on average 49% of visitors from Melbourne, 30% Local region, 10% interstate and 1% international.

Geelong Gallery presented the **Archibald Prize** in 2018 and 2019. This highly popular exhibition tours to galleries across regional Victoria every year, with galleries bidding to secure presentation rights for two consecutive years. In 2018, Geelong Gallery welcomed **58,000 visitors** to the Archibald Prize and



Image: Visitors at the *Grace Kelly: Style Icon* exhibition, Bendigo Art Gallery, 2016

generated \$7.2m for the local economy. While in 2019, the Gallery welcomed **76,560 visitors** to the Archibald Prize and **generated \$8.03 million for the local economy.** Significantly, **87%** of audiences in 2019 travelled to Geelong specifically to see the Archibald Prize. As is evident from these statistics, public galleries are major drivers of cultural tourism in regional Victoria and have a significant impact upon regional economies.

Fit for purpose infrastructure to drive regional economies

Hosting blockbuster exhibitions requires **fit for purpose infrastructure.** Galleries must be of a scale to be able to host large touring shows; possess climate controls that meet international standards to secure loans of culturally significant works of art; employ appropriately qualified staff to install the art works and ensure their safety for the duration of the show; and loading docks and preparation areas large enough to take bulky exhibition crates. They must also have **visitor amenities that can accommodate large audiences** - bathrooms with disability access, sizeable cafes and retail areas, as well as parking areas for coach-loads of tourists.

In response to the success of its international exhibitions, in 2013 **Bendigo Art Gallery underwent a major \$8.5M redevelopment.** This resulted in a



Image: Bendigo Art Gallery following redevelopment in 2013.

doubling of the gallery's temporary exhibition space and the creation of a state of the art storage area that solved the long-standing problem of housing the gallery's 5000 collection items. The redevelopment has enabled the gallery to present major international exhibitions in the new spaces, alongside the permanent collection in the older spaces — meeting the expectations of visitors and significantly reducing the time and resources involved in dismantling and reinstating the permanent collection with each major international touring exhibition.

Bendigo Art Gallery is about to commence a feasibility study towards a further redevelopment — to strengthen its engagement with audiences. This will see dedicated spaces and open collection storage for its new role as a Keeping Place for Dja Dja Warrung cultural materials, improved disability access, larger retail shop — selling locally produced art and craft, and a rooftop restaurant and function space to enhance its commercial operations. Infrastructure is the means by which Bendigo Art Gallery can provide richer cultural experiences to audiences and drive additional economic activity and jobs within the region.

Benalla Art Gallery, Geelong Gallery, Hamilton Gallery, Shepparton Art Museum, Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery, Wangaratta Art Gallery and Warrnambool Art Gallery are planning redevelopments and new builds over the coming years to be able to similarly drive cultural tourism and economic activity in their regions. For instance, **Warrnambool Art Gallery** and **Hamilton Art Gallery** are planning to tap into the large numbers of tourists that travel along the Great Ocean Road, as well as the anticipated tourism for the recently listed UNESCO World Heritage *Budj Bim Cultural Landscape*. **Failure to enhance their regional gallery infrastructure** — to include temporary exhibition spaces, cafes, additional toilets, and the ability to accommodate coaches — **will prevent the Great South Coast sharing in the significant benefits of cultural tourism. This is also the case for the Barwon, Mallee, Ovens Murray and Loddon Campaspe regions if the proposed gallery redevelopments do not go ahead.** The PGAV believes fit-for-purpose infrastructure can efficiently, economically and sustainably deliver long-lasting and impactful results for regions across Victoria. These major infrastructure projects can be further enhanced through a holistic approach to infrastructure planning for the region, including transport links to Melbourne.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Infrastructure Victoria work with the PGAV on integrating future regional gallery development into *Victoria's 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy*.



Image: Geelong Gallery's Youth Ambassador Program. Photo: Levi Ingram.

ADDRESSING REGIONAL DISADVANTAGE

Regional art galleries play a significant role in ensuring the liveability, sustainability and wellbeing of local communities in regional Victoria.

Life-long learning & building social capital

Many regional galleries are delivering Public & Education Programs specifically targeting disadvantage:

- **Geelong Gallery** delivers a **Youth Ambassador Program** for people aged 16-26 from economically disadvantaged and/or culturally diverse backgrounds. The program provides training, work-experience, mentoring and participation in arts workshops over a 12 week period. In 2018 the gallery worked with young people from Northern Futures, Diversitat, Northern Bay College and Belmont High School. While the Gallery's **Art + Memory** program provides individuals living with early to mid-stage dementia a supportive environment to view and discuss art, fostering meaningful and intellectual engagement with life-long learning.
- **Wangaratta Art Gallery** recently delivered **Inside Out: Art Outreach Program with Beechworth Correctional Centre**. Over a series of workshops, participants created artworks for exhibition at the gallery and along the way developed skills and built self-esteem to support their reintegration back into society. The Gallery has also commenced a new program, **Art of Conversation**, aimed at addressing social isolation and loneliness.
- **Warrnambool Art Gallery (WAG)** delivered **Girls Are Full Steam Ahead** for female-identifying students in rural and regional South West Victoria to change the prevailing perception by girls that 'STEM is not for me'. The project featured focus groups and workshops with *Girl Geek Academy, Robotics Academy, Code Like A Girl, Tech Girls Are Superheros* and local design company *Lovelock Studio*. WAG

has since established a **Girls Steam Club**, enabling project participants to meet regularly and extending the legacy of the project.

The business case for a new **Shepparton Art Museum**, endorsed by the Greater Shepparton City Council, outlines that **the new SAM will have a positive economic impact upon the region over 10 years, and would generate event greater social benefits than its economic benefits — significantly growing the desirability of Shepparton as a place in which to live, work, invest and to visit.** The new SAM will become the home for Kaiela Arts, the local Aboriginal community arts centre; showcase an important collection of Indigenous Australia artworks; develop Indigenous art industries in the region; and become a leader in Indigenous art and culture. As SAM's Director Rebecca Coates writes, *"The new SAM has the potential to become a building that brings people together, to enjoy art, to meet and relax with friends, as a place to work, or as a place to visit and get involved. The success is built in part on SAM's activities and the growing role that it plays in Shepparton's community. The current SAM already does many of these things, with activities, exhibitions and programmes. But through expanded partnerships, collaborations, and working together, the vision and ambitions that all have for the new SAM will be a collective and shared achievement and experience. This is the next stage in the exciting life of a regional art museum, with a unique collection focus and remit to audiences near and far."*

The social, cultural and economic value of regional galleries to their communities has not been specifically analysed, making it difficult to understand the impact these assets have when planning for the regions.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Infrastructure Victoria partner with the PGAV, Creative Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and the Municipal Association of Victoria to analyse the social, cultural and economic impact of regional gallery infrastructure. This will ensure regional gallery developments are part of local and state government planning and meet the unique service needs of their regions.

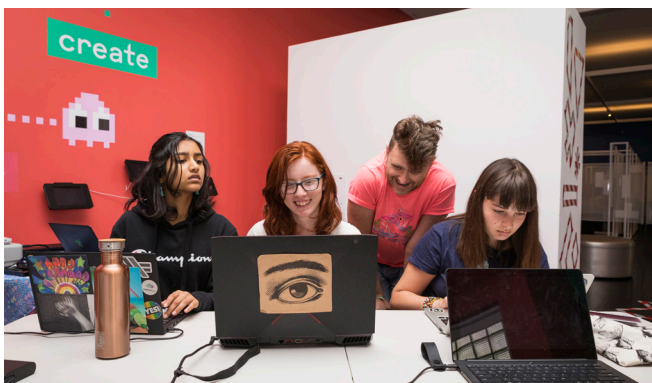


Image: Warrnambool Art Gallery's *Girls Are Full Steam Ahead* program.



Image: Louise Tegart, Director of the Art Gallery of Ballarat.

Staffing for success

PGAV research shows that attendances at public galleries grew 26% and programming increased by 45% between 2017 and 2018, while staffing remained relatively static — growing by 2%. Galleries are delivering more programs to larger audiences with less resources — a situation that is not sustainable. Regional galleries face additional staffing challenges in attracting and retaining appropriately qualified and experienced staff. The PGAV developed a *Fact Sheet on Staffing Levels & Position Titles* to address staffing challenges in the sector. The majority of regional galleries are small galleries, employing less than 5 FTE staff — well below the staffing levels recommended in the *Fact Sheet*.

Professional staffing is vital for appropriate asset management, maintenance and operation of regional galleries. Pressure on budgets and staffing levels has led to static staffing levels and the amalgamation of roles within local government arts and culture departments. The attenuation of professionalism reduces jobs, which is particularly relevant in regional areas, and devalues the role regional galleries play in delivering social, cultural and economic returns to their communities. This is particularly the case when addressing disadvantage in the regions, where Public Programming & Education staff at regional galleries are few and far between.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Infrastructure planning in regional Victoria would be strengthened by taking regional gallery staffing quality and quantity into account when considering new investment. New and refurbished infrastructure is expensive and requires long-term commitment from all stakeholders to service regional communities effectively and to meet the changing needs of these communities.

First Nations Economic Development

Regional galleries are major collectors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art works. They hold extensive collections — from early bark paintings through to contemporary art. Regional galleries also support the economic development of First Nations artists through their exhibition programs and the commissioning of art, craft and design for sale in their gallery stores.

Regional galleries are leading the way in the employment of First Nations staff to build stronger relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and communities. Shepparton Art Museum with the appointed an Aboriginal Engagement Officer in 2016, Bendigo Art Gallery became a Keeping Place for the Dja Dja Warrung people and appointed a First Nations Curator in 2018, Warrnambool Art Gallery established a Maar Nation Advisory Panel several years ago and appointed a Curator of Cultural Engagement in 2019, TarraWarra Museum of Art appointed a First Peoples Curator in 2019 and Gippsland Art Gallery appointed an Indigenous Engagement Officer, also in 2019.

Regional galleries require support in building and sustaining arts and culture infrastructure for the social and economic empowerment of Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Regional gallery commitment to First Nations economic development be supported and integrated into infrastructure planning.



Regional rail & public transport infrastructure

Blockbuster exhibitions at Bendigo Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Ballarat and Geelong Gallery have all benefitted from access to and the frequency of V/Line services. While Shepparton Art Museum reported a significant uplift in visitation during the 2018 Victorian Seniors Festival when V/Line services were free to senior citizens. Cost is a very real issue. As a point of comparison — the train fare from Newcastle to Sydney (2hr57m) costs \$8-\$11 each way, while the train fare between Shepparton and Melbourne (2hr46m) is \$13-\$26 each way. **Clearly there is a significant opportunity to boost cultural tourism and regional economies through improving V/Line services and lowering the cost of fares to regions with public galleries.**

As the background paper "*The Role of Infrastructure in Addressing Regional Disadvantage in Victoria*" notes, disadvantaged people live in places with poor access to services and opportunities. When Wangaratta Art Gallery designed its new program **Art of Conversation**, aimed at overcoming social isolation, they aligned it to the local bus timetable. The infrequency of bus services on weekends limited the duration of the sessions, and also made it difficult for those relying on public transport to take part in post-event socialising. Wangaratta is not alone — regional bus services across Victoria are infrequent in the evenings and at weekends — the times when most regional galleries hold their events. Further, many regional galleries rely on philanthropy to ensure primary and secondary school children can visit the gallery and take part in Education Programs.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Increasing V/Line services and lowering the cost of fares to regions with public galleries to boost cultural tourism and strengthen regional economies.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The PGAV strongly supports the improvement of local bus services in regional Victoria to enable everyone in the community to take part in regional gallery programs.

Images: *Ever-present*, installation view at Shepparton Art Museum, 2018. Photo by Emiliano Fernandez; Belinda Briggs, SAM Community Engagement Officer – Indigenous in front of work by Haley Millar-Baker acquired for the SAM permanent collection.

Energy Savings & Emissions Reduction

Regional galleries are resource intensive. Many have yet to transition to lower cost LED lighting. While those that have permanent collections of visual art, or that present touring exhibitions or loan artworks for their exhibition programs must meet international climate control standards to ensure the long-term preservation of art works. This means the majority of regional galleries have air conditioning systems that run 24/7 to maintain humidity and temperature at safe levels.

Benalla Art Gallery, East Gippsland Art Gallery, Hamilton Gallery and Horsham Regional Gallery have recently taken part in Sustainability Victoria's "Local Government Energy Saver Program" to install solar panels and LED lighting. It is important to note that not all regional galleries are owned or operated by local government and cannot benefit from this program.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Infrastructure planning for regional galleries include solar energy and other energy saving initiatives to reduce operating costs and greenhouse gas emissions for both local government and the wider non-profit sector.

Digitisation of Collections

In its *Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025+*, the NSW Government has set a goal for the state-wide digitisation of its collections. This will enable researchers and the public to access and benefit from the state owned collections. The Victoria Government has commenced on the digitisation of small regional gallery collections, up to 1000 items.

RECOMMENDATION 9: *Victoria's 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy* include a goal to digitise Victoria's entire collection of art works. This will see the current digitisation program extended to include large regional gallery collections.



Image: Photographing artwork as part of digitising the permanent collection at Ararat Gallery TAMA.

CONCLUSION

As our submission makes clear, prioritising regional gallery infrastructure will drive cultural tourism to the regions, while additional gallery staffing will lead to the creation of jobs, both of which will contribute to the transformation of regional economies. It will also enable galleries to play a vital role in addressing regional disadvantage - enabling everyone in the community to share in the social, cultural and economic benefits that regional galleries provide.

We welcome the opportunity to expand upon the recommendations outlined in our submission. We are very happy to liaise with our members to provide business plans, feasibility studies, program evaluations and other evidence to support aspects of our submission.

Yours sincerely

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