



PGAV Submission

A new National Cultural Policy

Public Galleries Association of Victoria (PGAV) Submission to a new National Cultural Policy

Acknowledgement of Country

The PGAV acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where our organisation is based, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, and all Traditional Custodians throughout Victoria and Australia. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' enduring traditions and continuing connection to culture. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Office for the Arts
GPO Box 2154
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To Whom It May Concern

The Public Galleries Association of Victoria (PGAV) is the peak body for the public gallery sector in Victoria. We represent more than 60 public galleries, including 19 regional galleries, which have visual art collections worth \$4.4 billion and attract over 5.3 million visitors each year. The PGAV is responsible for building the capacity of the sector, advocating on behalf of the sector to stakeholders and promoting public galleries to new and diverse audiences.

The PGAV welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Australian Government's development of **a new National Cultural Policy**. Taking *Creative Australia* as its starting point, the Albanese Government is affirming the centrality of the arts to the lives of everyday Australians and dismantling the culture wars that have demoralised and undermined our creative sector in recent times. A new National Cultural Policy which guides investment in skills and resourcing will ensure a better future for our creative sector and its ability to provide a better future for all Australians.

Our submission is based on consultation with the public gallery sector in Victoria undertaken in 2020 and 2021, together with longitudinal benchmarking of our membership. It includes recommendations to

address the chronic sustainability challenges that are hampering Victoria's public gallery sector. If adopted, these recommendations will ensure Victoria's public gallery sector remains a driving force in Australia's creative sector and a major contributor to Australia's social, cultural and economic wellbeing.

On behalf of Victoria's public gallery sector, we are pleased to make recommendations under the 5 pillars – **First Nations; A place for every story; The centrality of the artist; Strong institutions; and Reaching the audience.**

PILLAR 1: FIRST NATIONS

Victoria's public galleries play a critical role in supporting First Nations artists and providing access to First Nations art and culture.

Our galleries have significant holdings of First Nations artwork and artefacts from across Australia in their collections, and they regularly exhibit the work of First Nations artists in their annual programs – providing readily accessible engagement with First Nations art and culture for the local community and for domestic and international tourist alike.

Importantly, Victoria's public galleries showcase local First Nations art and culture and foster reconciliation within their communities. East Gippsland Art Gallery presents *Southeast NOW* each year to celebrate local Gunnai Kurnai art and culture. Exhibiting artists are engaged to deliver workshops to school groups from across the region. The Director of East Gippsland Art Gallery, Crystal Stubbs explained, "*schools are desperate for First Nations knowledge about the land on which they teach. Not First Nations knowledge from across Australia, but the history and stories relevant to where the students live and learn, Gunnai Kurnai Country.*" A primary school student who took part in a workshop reflected, "*..we drew our own native Australian animals to stick on a huge painted landscape. Then, Alfie Hudson who was one of the artists exhibiting his own work, came in and talked about all the paintings and the wood carvings of the octopus. It was a great day to learn about reconciliation.*"



Image: School visit to East Gippsland Art Gallery to see *Southeast NOW*, 2022. Artwork: Alice Pepper, *Past, Present, Future*, Acrylic on canvas.



Image: Belinda Briggs, SAM Curator – Indigenous in front of work by Hayley Millar-Baker, Untitled (The theft of the White men's sheep), 2018, Shepparton Art Museum collection, acquired with the assistance of The Robert Salzer Foundation, 2019, © the artist, Photograph: SAM.

First Nations people are increasingly employed at public galleries, despite the structural challenges in doing so

The last five years has seen a significant increase in the number of public galleries in Victoria appointing First Nations curators. The intent of First Nations curator roles is three-fold: providing First Nations led access to First Nations art and culture; addressing barriers to engaging with local First Nations artist and communities; and building appreciation for First Nations art and culture across the wider community. Currently only 13% of public galleries in Victoria employ First Nations staff.

As outlined in our submission to the Australian Government's *Growing the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry consultation*¹, public galleries face challenges in appointing and maintaining a First Nations workforce. The reasons include:

- Inability to secure long-term funding of First Nations roles. Often these roles are funded for 12 months, making it difficult for galleries to recruit and retain First Nations staff;
- remuneration that is below that offered in allied industries and not commensurate with the expertise that First Nations people bring to the public gallery sector;
- paucity of career pathways into the public gallery sector for local First Nations people;
- scarcity of formal mentoring and professional development opportunities for First Nations staff while in these roles; and
- the cultural burden of often being the only First Nations member of staff at the gallery.

First Nations knowledge is critical in the conservation of cultural materials in public gallery collections

Access to and conservation of First Nations collection items is also a significant challenge at Victoria's public galleries. Many public gallery collections feature First Nations cultural materials that have been donated by members of the local community and sourced from all over Australia as part of the tourist trade. Identifying the origins of First Nations collection items is the first step galleries must undertake in determining whether these items can be made public, or if they need to be repatriated back to Country. This is labour-intensive work that requires knowledge of First Nations cultural practices, and access to First Nations art specialists and First Nations communities to determine provenance, significance and appropriate collection care and public access.

Many First Nations cultural materials were accessioned into public gallery collections using materials and methods that were common at the time but are inappropriate by today's standards. For example: stone objects had paint applied directly to the surface to enable an accession number to be added. For First Nations people, these old-fashioned cataloguing methods are a stark reminder of the colonial mindset that has had a devastating impact upon their peoples, cultures and traditions. Remedial conservation to remove inappropriate cataloguing methods is needed so that public galleries can make their collections of First Nations art and artefacts available to the community without causing harm to First Nations people. A lack of specialist staff and resourcing is preventing this important work from being undertaken across the public gallery sector.

Victoria's public gallery sector actively participates in knowledge exchange with First Nations artists

In 2018 the PGAV partnered with the Arts Law Centre of Australia to deliver their *Artists in the Black* program at regional galleries across Victoria. For many of the Aboriginal artists that took part, it was the first time they had heard of **Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)** and they were surprised to learn that their cultural knowledge is not recognised under Australian law. A future iteration has been developed, we are now trying to secure funding for it to be delivered. Arts Law's *Artist in the Black* program is a vital service which needs greater resourcing to become widely available to all First Nations artists.



Image: Yalingwa First Nations Curator, Stacie Piper with Kent Morris's work from the exhibition *WILAM BIIK* at TarraWarra Museum of Art, 2021. Photo: Tiffany Garvie. Artwork: Kent Morris (*Barkindji*) *Barkindji Blue Sky - Ancestral Connections #11* 2021, digital print on phototex wallpaper with framed giclee prints on rag paper, 1356 x 492.5 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Vivien Anderson Gallery.

RECOMMENDATION P1.1: create a **\$11.25m First Nations Workforce Development Fund**, devolved to the PGAV **over three years** which will establish **30 one-year First Nations internships** and **30 three-year First Nations positions** at public galleries across Victoria.

RECOMMENDATION P1.2: establish a **\$5m First Nations Collection Access Fund** for research, remedial conservation, repatriation and digitisation – to increase access to First Nations collections items held in public gallery collections across Victoria.

RECOMMENDATION P1.3: legislate to provide recognition and protection for **Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)** under Australian law; increase support for the Arts Law Centre of Australia's **Artists in the Black** program to become widely available in communities across metropolitan, regional and remote Australia, and to continue to provide free legal advice and support to First Nations artists.

PILLAR 2: A PLACE FOR EVERY STORY

Victoria's public galleries are places which develop and present exhibitions of visual art that are specific to the communities in which they serve. A strength of Victoria's sector is the diversity of contexts in which each of the 63 galleries operate across metropolitan, outer metropolitan and regional areas. Another strength is their nationally significant collections – which they draw from to deliver exhibitions that tell uniquely Australian stories.

Public galleries are actively used and valued by their communities

Prior to COVID-19, Victoria's public galleries presented **542 exhibitions** featuring the work of **4,688 visual artists**. 78% of these exhibitions were self-generated, 4% of which went on to tour nationally, many through the National Exhibition Touring Support (NETS) network. They delivered

2,646 public programs – including artist and curator talks and creative workshops – attended by **140,000 people**, and **4,353 education programs** attended by **130,000 primary and secondary school students**. Significantly, they attracted **5.3 million visitors** through their doors, including **600,000** across metropolitan Melbourne and **970,000** across regional Victoria. **Galleries are part of everyday life** – on average 14,520 people visit a public gallery in Victoria each day.

Public galleries are stretched for resources

The creative output of Victoria's public galleries is being delivered by a workforce of **688 full-time equivalent staff**, supported by **1,272 volunteers** who contribute **\$3.1 million in volunteer hours**. The majority of Victoria's public galleries (60%) have **fewer than 5 full-time staff**. The typical public gallery employs a Director, Curator and a small team to support gallery operations – requiring staff to take on multiple, specialist roles to deliver their ambitious programs. With galleries open 5 – 7 days a week, and exhibitions openings and public programs taking place outside of normal business hours, **the workforce is understandably at breaking point**.

Greater investment in curatorial roles and programming budgets is vital for public galleries to have the capacity to research and tell unique stories, and to diversify not only the artists they engage, but the ways in which they engage.

As the Director of a regional gallery noted as part of consultation for this submission, "*the region has ample stories of local and national relevance, however the curatorial staffing levels within a small regional gallery does not allow for these stories to be fleshed out.*" Another Director noted, "*we engage independent curatorial practitioners to curate some of our exhibitions. Without these opportunities, experts (and the artists they will include in the exhibition) do not get their voices heard.*"

Public galleries realise the importance of diverse voices and are developing ways to increase representation

The PGAV is currently developing a pilot program, *All the Difference*, to support Victoria's public galleries to address barriers to engaging with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) artists in their communities. The pilot includes cultural awareness training tailored specifically for public gallery staff, which will enable galleries to review all aspects of their operations – from visitor services, to their cafes and retail, the artists they work with, the exhibitions they present and the audiences they engage. There is

great potential for this pilot to be delivered at public galleries across the state and throughout Australia.

RECOMMENDATION P2.1: create a **\$5m Independent Curators Fund** to enable Victoria's public galleries to commission independent curators to develop exhibitions that tell unique Australian stories.

RECOMMENDATION P2.2: establish a **\$5m Public Gallery Diversification Fund** to enable Victoria's public galleries to increase engagement with diverse artists and arts workers, and the delivery of exhibitions that enable diverse artists to tell stories that are relevant to new and diverse audiences.

PILLAR 3: THE CENTRALITY OF THE ARTIST

Artists are the reason public galleries exist and are central to everything they do

PGAV benchmarking undertaken in 2021 shows that Victoria's public galleries **presented the work of 4,668 visual artists** in their exhibitions, **employed 1,096 visual artists** to deliver public programs – including artist talks and workshops and **commissioned 348 visual artists** to create new work, including public art. A further **2,124 artists** were engaged as artists in residencies, to take part in artists in schools programs, feature in gallery publications and social media, and to produce unique products for gallery retail. Importantly, public galleries employ visual artists within their workforce, supplementing the intermittent, project-based income of creative practice.

Victoria's public galleries also play a key role in the professional development of visual artists – from artistic skills development to career mentoring. This



Image: Children help create Bundit Puanthong's Drawing Wall at Shepparton Art Museum (SAM), 2017.

is particularly the case in outer suburban and regional Victoria where there are fewer opportunities for visual artists to access formal and informal training opportunities.

The sustainability of visual artists is intrinsically tied to the sustainability of public galleries

The most recent data on Australian artists' incomes² reveals that visual artists earn on average \$47,000 per annum, with \$28,000 derived from arts related work and \$18,200 from non-arts related work. At \$903 per week, this is below the poverty line – which at the time was \$967.23 per week for a family of two adults, one of whom is working³

An uplift in operating funding at Victoria's public galleries will increase the sustainability of visual artists by: 1) engaging more visual artists across their exhibitions, public and education programs; 2) the payment of artists fees at NAVA recommended rates; 3) commissioning more visual artists to create new work, including public art; and 4) enabling Victoria's public galleries to increase their workforce, providing ongoing employment opportunities for visual artists.

Government investment in Victoria's public gallery sector is uneven. **Local Government invests \$15 million** in Victoria's public gallery sector operations (47% of total income) and is the sole investor in galleries across metropolitan Melbourne. The **State Government** invests \$94 million in the state's flagship institutions and **\$6 million across the wider public gallery sector** (15% of total income). While the **Australian Government invests \$1.7 million** – evenly split between the Office for the Arts and the Australia Council for the Arts (1% of total income). The PGAV calls for a **National Arts and Culture Accord**, as outlined in Creative Australia, to ensure all levels of government are contributing to the sustainability of Victoria's public gallery sector and the incomes of Australia's visual artists.

During COVID-19, we saw public galleries implement new ways to support visual artists – from commissioning billboards to new work for online audiences. Notably, the Home of The Arts (HOTA) made national headlines with **ArtKeeper** – providing six artists with fixed-term employment to work on an art project 3 days per week under the guidance of acclaimed playwright and artistic director Wesley Enoch AM. Closer to home, the Victorian Government's *Working For Victoria* program enabled galleries to employ staff for up to 6 months to undertake digitisation of their collections.

RECOMMENDATION P3.1: increase **operating funding** at Victoria's public galleries by implementing a **National Arts and Culture Accord**, as outlined in Creative Australia, to ensure all levels of government are contributing to the sustainability of Victoria's public gallery sector.

RECOMMENDATION P3.2: support a **\$6.3m Visual Artist Job Program** over three years at Victoria's public galleries.

RECOMMENDATION P3.3: implement the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) call to establish an **Industrial Award rate for the visual arts and crafts**, which legislates the payment of artists' fee. Ensure Victoria's public gallery funding is contingent upon and adequate to support the payment of these fees.

RECOMMENDATION P3.4: implement NAVA's call to trial a **Basic Income Scheme for artists and arts workers** to address the financial instability caused by intermittent, periodic and project-based work in the visual arts.

PILLAR 4: STRONG INSTITUTIONS

The public gallery sector in Victoria is at crisis point

PGAV consultation over the past three-years reveals the sector faces sustainability challenges in relation to its workforce, ageing infrastructure and its nationally significant collections.

Staffing levels at Victoria's public galleries are critically low. As mentioned earlier, the majority of Victoria's public galleries (60%) have **fewer than 5 full-time staff**. This requires staff to take on multiple roles to maintain day-to-day operations. PGAV research shows that pre-COVID, gallery programming and attendances were growing year on year, 45% and 26% respectively, while gallery staffing remained static, growing by 2%. This situation is unsustainable.

40% of Victoria's public gallery sector is planning a gallery redevelopment over the next five years. This is driven by the need to upgrade ageing infrastructure that is no longer fit for purpose – leaking rooves, collection stores that are at capacity, air conditioning and lighting that are below internationally recognised standards, and too few exhibition spaces.

These sustainability challenges are placing Victoria's \$4.4 billion collections of Australia art at risk, preventing the loaning of artwork from state and national lending institutions, stopping major touring exhibitions and hampering support to visual artists. COVID-19 has exacerbated these challenges; the sector lost hundreds of skilled staff, more than \$22.4 million in lost income and 72% of its visitation.

Government investment in Victoria's public gallery sector is uneven and unpredictable

The Victorian public gallery sector receives funding from all tiers of government. As noted under Pillar 3, the level of funding is uneven across the three tiers of government. A high-level review of State Government and Australian Government investment into the sector over the past decade demonstrates **gallery funding is highly unpredictable** – creating challenges for galleries seeking certainty of investment, and is focused on infrastructure and touring rather than operations.

A new approach to government investment in Victoria's public gallery sector is urgently needed to avert the crisis it faces

The PGAV is calling for a **National Arts and Culture Accord**, as outlined in Creative Australia to be implemented under a new National Cultural Policy – to ensure all levels of government are contributing to the sustainability of Victoria's public gallery sector.

Ending the uneven and unpredictable government investment in the sector will ensure Victoria's public gallery sector remains a driving force in Australia's creative sector, enabling more Australians to access the visual arts and the social, cultural and economic benefits they provide.

RECOMMENDATION P4.1: increase **staffing levels and remuneration at public galleries to industry benchmarks** by implementing a **National Arts and Culture Accord**, as outlined in Creative Australia, to ensure all levels of government are contributing to the sustainability of Victoria's public gallery sector.

RECOMMENDATION P4.2: provide a **\$3.8 million Public Gallery Internship Program** to create career pathways from tertiary institutions into the public gallery sector, particularly for areas of greatest need – curators, collection managers, conservators and education staff. Increase funding to **ArtsReady to remove the 50% contribution for those galleries with a turnover of less than \$1 million**.

RECOMMENDATION P4.3: implement a **\$100 million Public Gallery Infrastructure Fund** to enable Victoria's public galleries to undertake major redevelopments that protect their nationally significant collections, provide adequate storage to allow their collections to grow and increase their exhibition spaces to be able to present major touring exhibitions that attract visitors and stimulate the visitor economy.

PILLAR 5: REACHING THE AUDIENCE

Public galleries are driving the visitor economy in Victoria

49% of overnight trips to Melbourne and 44% of day trips to regional Victoria included a visit to a public gallery⁴ to see their nationally significant collections of Australian and First Nations art, or a bespoke exhibition. Audiences have grown to expect engaging experiences when they visit a public gallery in Victoria – which motivates frequent and repeat visitation.

Bendigo Art Gallery has been a major contributor to this phenomenon, partnering with international institutions to co-produce bespoke exhibitions that attract audiences from near and far. Their latest offering, *Elvis: Direct from Graceland*, attracted over 219,000 visitors to Bendigo Art Gallery with 86% of ticket-holders coming from outside of Bendigo and over 24,000 guest travelling from interstate to experience the exhibition. The exhibition contributed \$40 million to the local economy⁵.

Victoria's bespoke public gallery exhibitions are also in demand across Australia and overseas

Prior to COVID-19, Victoria's public galleries toured twenty-two exhibitions to galleries across Australia. Many of these exhibitions were toured through the National Exhibition Touring Support (NETS) network with funding from the Australian Government through the Visions of Australia initiative.

Bendigo Art Gallery's bespoke exhibition, *Piinpi: Contemporary Australian Indigenous Fashion* toured to the National Museum of Australia in Canberra in 2021, before travelling to the Australian Embassy in Paris in 2022 to coincide with Paris Haute Couture Week and Paris Fashion Week, and is currently on tour in Taiwan at the National Museum of Prehistory. The international tour was made possible with funding through Creative Victoria⁶ and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

International touring of Victoria's bespoke public gallery exhibitions is ad hoc, relying upon informal networks established by public galleries. The PGAV is calling for a **strategic approach to the international touring of Victoria's public gallery exhibitions** through a new National Cultural Policy.

RECOMMENDATION P5.1: increase **NETS Australia's capacity** to tour public gallery programs across Australia and **streamline funding of national touring** through the **National Arts and Culture Accord**.

RECOMMENDATION P5.2: extend the **remit of NETS Australia and Visions of Australia to include international touring** of public gallery exhibitions of Australian visual art.



Images: Visitors to *Elvis: Direct from Graceland* at Bendigo Art Gallery, 19 March - 17 July 2022; Installation View, *Piinpi: Contemporary Indigenous Fashion* at Bendigo Art Gallery, 31 October 2020 - 17 January 2021. Photos: Leon Shoots.

Education Programs are vital to building the next generation of artists, arts workers and audiences

Pre-COVID, 130,000 primary and secondary students took part in an Education Program at a Victorian public gallery as part of their school curriculum. These programs range from guided tours of current exhibitions and art making workshops to back-of-house gallery tours, during which students get to meet gallery staff and learn about the ins and outs of staging an exhibition and caring for collections. These programs provide students with skills in visual literacy, creative thinking and problem solving, pathways to a career in the public gallery sector, and a lifelong engagement with the visual arts.

Gallery directors tell us that despite the high demand from primary and secondary schools for their Education Programs, it is extremely difficult to secure funding for Education staff. This is reflected in only 39% of members having Education staff, 40% of which are part-time roles. The PGAV is calling for **significant new investment in Education staff at Victoria's public galleries** to safeguard Australia's future artists, arts workers and audiences.

RECOMMENDATION P5.3: increase investment in **Education staff and programs** at Victoria's public galleries through the **National Arts and Culture Accord**.

Health and Wellbeing Programs – an unfunded essential service

A growing body of research demonstrates that the arts can meet pressing challenges to our mental health and wellbeing.⁷ This was made evident during the Black Summer Bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, with Victoria's public galleries providing their audiences with a sense of connectedness and creative expression at a time of unprecedented upheaval and social isolation.

Many of Victoria's public galleries are delivering the National Gallery of Australia's Art and Alzheimer program, providing intellectually stimulating programs for people living with dementia. **This work is often unfunded, driven by the commitment of gallery staff to meet the needs of their communities.**

The role of public galleries in the health and wellbeing of their communities is undervalued – these programs are seen as a 'nice to have' rather than an essential service that is part of core business.

The PGAV is calling for a commitment to developing an **Arts and Health Framework**, as outlined in Creative Australia, to be carried through to a new



Image: Geelong Gallery's Art + Connect program, 2021. Photographer Hails and Shine.

National Cultural Policy⁸. Drawing on the policy work currently being undertaken by the Australia Council for the Arts⁹, we expect the Framework to include appropriate levels of investment to enable Victoria's public galleries to deliver these programs as part of core business.

RECOMMENDATION P5.4: commit to developing an **Arts and Health Framework** as part of a **National Arts and Culture Accord**, with all levels of government enabling Victoria's public galleries to deliver health and wellbeing programs as part of their core business.

Digital programs at risk

In response to COVID-19 lockdowns, public galleries in Victoria quickly pivoted to delivering their exhibitions, public and education programs online – providing income for visual artists hit hard by job losses in higher-education and hospitality, and enabling the community to continue to access the arts and gain a sense of connectedness at a time of incredible upheaval. The move to digital delivery required a rapid upskilling of staff and investment in technology. Research released by RMIT University found that the pivot to digital delivery of services was unevenly distributed across the public gallery sector, with national institutions based in capital cities experiencing fewer barriers and having better access to digital skills than the arts and culture sector as a whole.¹⁰ Anecdotally we know that as the lockdowns continued, the quality of online programs improved commensurate with gallery budgets – increasing the need for strategies to improve digital inclusion at small to medium public galleries.

Digital program delivery during the pandemic enabled Victoria's public galleries to engage new audiences. Importantly, it provided them with an opportunity to showcase Australian visual artists to international audiences. **Over 49 million people took part in digital programs** delivered by Victoria's public gallery sector in the first twelve months of the pandemic.



Image: Students collaborating with artist Kathy Holowko on the installation of the *Wild City* exhibition in Hyphen - Wodonga Library Gallery's Playspace Gallery, 2021.

Now that Victoria's public galleries have re-opened, they are having to redirect their staff and resources to gallery operations making it **difficult to maintain their digital program delivery**. A gallery Director told us, "*While we consider digital delivery extremely important, we will continue to a lesser extent because we do not currently have the financial or human resources to continue hybrid programming.*" Another gallery Director said, "*Would love to continue digital delivery but it will come down to staff resourcing. Online programming takes as much time to create as onsite physical programming but we still have the same staff EFTs and the demand for onsite programming has returned.*" The PGAV is calling for an **investment in Digital Commissioning for Victoria's public galleries over the next 3 years**, to enable galleries to build an evidence base to ensure digital programming is integrated into their future operating budgets.

RECOMMENDATION P5.5: boost the digital knowledge and skills of Victoria's public gallery sector by **extending the Australia Council for the Arts' Digital Culture Initiative for a further 3 years**. An extension of the suite of programs will ensure more of the sector can access these vital programs.

RECOMMENDATION P5.6: establish a **\$2.5 million Digital Commissioning Fund** for each of the next 3 years to enable Victoria's public galleries to continue digital program delivery and build an evidence base for it to become part of their core business.

Increasing access to Victoria's public gallery collections

Victoria's public galleries hold over 900,000 items in their collections with a combined value of \$4.4 billion. Featuring nationally significant Australian and First Nations art, Victoria's public gallery collections are a vital part of the Distributed National Collection (DNC) - "the memory bank of the nation and a key to its future."¹¹

Digitisation is an important way to increase access to public gallery collections

Currently only **58% of Victoria's public gallery collections have been digitised** – we rank fifth in Australia, lagging behind Queensland and Western Australia at 83%, New South Wales at 74% and Tasmania at 70%. While the Victorian Government has provided funding for digitisation, it has been through incremental budget allocations that have not met the scale of the task. Of the collection items that have been digitised, **only 52% are available online**. A key barrier is the staff time involved in gaining copyright approval from artists or their estates, exacerbated by there not being a central registry of artist and estate contact details. For example, it took the PGAV 5 weeks to secure copyright licences from 100 artists for a publication.

Victoria's public gallery collections at risk

Despite holding extremely valuable collections, PGAV benchmarking reveals that **only 50% of the sector has dedicated Collections Management staff** to care for their collections, and they are **spending less than 1%** of the total value of their collections **on conservation** each year. Anecdotally we know that gallery collection stores are at capacity, while their ageing buildings make it difficult to safely store and display their collections. Inadequate investment in gallery operations and infrastructure is placing Victoria's public gallery collections at risk.

The PGAV is calling for an **urgent review of collection management and conservation needs** at Victoria's public galleries to identify needs and prioritise investment to futureproof their nationally significant collections.

Increasing access to National Collections

We note that Creative Australia identified improving access to the National Collection Institutions across Australia as a priority¹². Addressing the current challenges of collection storage and environmental controls at Victoria's public galleries will enable an increase in the number and significance of works that can be loaned from the National Collection Institutions. In the meantime, the PGAV welcomes the opportunity to contribute ideas to increasing access to Australia's national collections.

RECOMMENDATION P5.7: establish a **\$9.4 million Collection Digitisation Fund** to enable Victoria's public galleries to complete digitisation of their nationally significant collections and make them accessible online.

RECOMMENDATION P5.8: commit to a **\$250,000 review of collection management and conservation needs at Victoria's public galleries** to identify solutions to safeguard their nationally significant collections for future generations.



Image: Photographing artwork by Ah Xian as part of the Digitisation Program at Hamilton Art Gallery. Artwork: Ah Xian, born China 1960, arrived Australia 1990. *Bust 35 China China* series 1999, porcelain in underglaze cobalt-blue. Purchased by Hamilton Gallery Trust with support from Jason Yeap OAM and Jacqueline de Kievit. Hamilton Gallery Collection. Copyright the artist. Photo: Madi Whyte.

Conclusion

Despite the significant contributions public galleries make to their communities, the sector in Victoria is at crisis point. It faces critical sustainability challenges in relation to its workforce, ageing infrastructure and the care of its nationally significant collections.

These challenges are placing Victoria's \$4.4 billion collections at risk, preventing the loaning of artwork from state and national collections, putting a stop to major touring exhibitions and hampering support to visual artists. COVID-19 has exacerbated these challenges – the sector lost hundreds of skilled staff and volunteers, more than \$22.4 million in earned income and 72% of its visitation.

In our submission to a new National Cultural Policy we have made 20 recommendations to guide investment in skills and resourcing to ensure a better future for our creative sector and its ability to provide a better future for all Australians. Key amongst these recommendations is **a new approach to government investment in Victoria's public gallery sector**. Implementing a **National Arts and Culture Accord** will ensure all levels of government are contributing to the sustainability of Victoria's public gallery sector.

Ending the uneven and unpredictable government investment in the sector will ensure Victoria's public gallery sector remains a driving force in Australia's creative sector, creating jobs and enabling greater access to Australian and First Nations visual arts and the social, cultural and economic benefits they provide.

In closing, we provide permission for the PGAV's submission to be made public, published online and excerpts to be included in reports.

Yours sincerely



Louise Tegart
PGAV President

Anne Robertson
PGAV Executive Officer



Images: Visitors viewing photobooks at launch of *Not standing still: new approaches in documentary photography*, Monash Gallery of Art, 2021. Photo by Zan Wimberley; Jessica Row, NETS Victoria Touring Coordinator and Gallery Curator Alison Eggleton installed *FEM-aFFINITY* at Horsham Regional Art Gallery; Bendigo Art Gallery School Holiday Program, September 2021. Photo: Leon Schoots.

Summary of PGAV recommendations to a new National Cultural Policy

RECOMMENDATION	INVESTMENT	OUTCOME
PILLAR 1.1: Create First Nations Workforce Development Fund , devolved to the PGAV.	\$11.25 million , over three years.	Create 30 x 1 year First Nations Internships , and 30 x First Nations positions at Victoria's public galleries.
PILLAR 1.2: establish a First Nations Collection Access Fund	\$5 million	Increase culturally safe access to First Nations collection items held in Victoria's public gallery collections.
PILLAR 1.3: provide recognition and protection for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) ; and increase access to the Arts Law Centre of Australia's Artists in the Black program.	To be determined with Arts Law.	Increase First Nations artists' legal protection.
PILLAR 2.1: create a \$5m Independent Curators Fund .	\$5 million	Victoria's public galleries diversify the artists they present and the stories they tell.
PILLAR 2.2: establish a Public Gallery Diversification Fund .	\$5 million	Victoria's public galleries increase engagement of diverse artists and arts workers and attract new and diverse audiences.
PILLAR 3.1 : increase operating funding through a National Arts and Culture Accord .		All levels of government contribute to the sustainability of Victoria's public gallery sector and the artists they support.
PILLAR 3.2: support a Visual Artist Job Program at Victoria's public galleries.	\$6.3 million , over three years	Victoria's public galleries provide employment opportunities for visual artists.
PILLAR 3.3: establish an Industrial Award rate for the visual arts and crafts ; ensure payment of artists fees at the award rate.		Ensure visual artists are appropriately remunerated; funding of Victoria's public galleries ensures payment of award rates.
PILLAR 3.4: trial a Basic Income Scheme for artists and arts workers .		Visual arts practice is sustainable, with income above the poverty line.
PILLAR 4.1 increase staffing levels at Victoria's public galleries through the National Arts and Culture Accord .	To be developed in partnership with the PGAV.	Public gallery workforce meets industry recommendations and is remunerated at industry benchmarks.
PILLAR 4.2: provide a Public Gallery Internship Program ; Increase funding to ArtsReady, removing the 50% contribution for galleries with a turnover of less than \$1 million.	\$3.8 million	Establish career pathways from tertiary education to Victoria's public galleries. Smaller galleries can access ArtsReady traineeships.
PILLAR 4.3: implement a Public Gallery Infrastructure Fund .	\$100 million	Victoria's public galleries are fit-for-purpose, able to present more of their own collections, loan more works from state and national collections, and present major touring exhibitions – attracting visitors and stimulating the visitor economy.
PILLAR 5.1: increase NETS Australia's capacity and streamline funding of national touring through the National Arts and Culture Accord .	To be developed with NETS Australia.	Increase number of exhibitions able to be toured nationally.
PILLAR 5.2: extend the remit of NETS Australia and Visions of Australia to include international touring .	To be developed with NETS Australia.	Victoria's public gallery exhibitions tour internationally, boosting awareness and appreciation of Australian visual arts.
PILLAR 5.3: increase investment in Education staff and programs through the National Arts and Culture Accord .	To be determined with PGAV.	Victoria's public galleries are able to meet demands of primary and secondary schools for curriculum based Education Programs.

PILLAR 5.4: commit to developing an Arts and Health Framework as part of a National Arts and Culture Accord .	To be determined in response to the Australia Council's policy paper.	Victoria's public gallery funded to deliver health and wellbeing programs as part of their core business.
PILLAR 5.5: extending the Australia Council for the Arts' Digital Culture Initiative for a further 3 years.	To be determine with the Australia Council.	More of Victoria's public gallery sector has access to the Australia Council's Digital Programs and digital know-how and skills are increased.
PILLAR 5.6: establish a \$2.5 million Digital Commissioning Fund .	\$2.5 million , for each of the next three years.	Victoria's public galleries can continue digital program delivery & build an evidence base for it to become core business.
PILLAR 5.7: establish a Collection Digitisation Fund .	\$9.4 million	Victoria's public galleries can complete digitisation of their collections and make them accessible online.
PILLAR 5.8: commit to a review of collection management and conservation needs at Victoria's public galleries.	\$250,000	Enable Victoria's public galleries to safeguard their nationally significant collections for future generations.

ENDNOTES

- 1 PGAV submission to *Growing the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry*, February 2021. See: <https://pgav.org.au/PGAV-Submission-GROWING-THE-INDIGENOUS-VISUAL-ARTS-INDUSTRY~6080>
- 2 *Making Art Work: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*, David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya, 2017, page 74.
- 3 The Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, September 2016 Quarter. See: <https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/publications/poverty-lines>
- 4 *Domestic Arts Tourism: Connecting the Country*, Australia Council for the Arts, 2020 (pages 42 & 50); and *International Arts Tourism: Connecting Cultures*, Australia Council for the Arts, 2018.
- 5 *Visitors Can't Help Falling In Love with Elvis* Exhibition, Creative Victoria, 13 July 2022. See: <https://creative.vic.gov.au/news/2022-2/visitors-cant-help-falling-in-love-with-elvis-exhibition>
- 6 *Piinpi goes to Paris*, Creative Victoria, 2022. See: <https://creative.vic.gov.au/resources/fashion-industry-news/piinpi-goes-to-paris>
- 7 *Creating Our Future: Spotlight on health and wellbeing*, Australia Council for the Arts, 2020. See: <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Creating-Our-Future-Spotlight-on-health-and-wellbeing.pdf>
- 8 *Creative Australia: National Cultural Policy*, Australian Government, 2013, page 24.
- 9 *Arts, Creativity and Mental Wellbeing: Research, practice and lived experience*, Australia Council for the Arts, 2022. See: <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/advocacy-and-research/arts-creativity-and-mental-wellbeing-policy-development-program/>
- 10 Holcombe-James, I. *COVID-19, digital inclusion, and the Australian cultural sector: A research snapshot*. January 2021. Digital Ethnography Research Centre, RMIT University, Melbourne. See: <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2021-01/apo-nid309894.pdf>
- 11 *Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections*, Collections Council of Australia, page 12. See: <https://www.arts.gov.au/sites/default/files/significance-2.0.pdf>
- 12 *Creative Australia: National Cultural Policy*, Australian Government, 2013, page 22.

PGAV Members

The PGAV represents 63 public galleries across metropolitan, outer metropolitan and regional Victoria:

Art Gallery TAMA
Art Gallery of Ballarat
ArtSpace at Realm
Arts Centre Melbourne
Arts Project Australia
Australian Centre for Contemporary Art | ACCA
Australian Centre for the Moving Image | ACMI
Bayside Gallery
Benalla Art Gallery
Bendigo Art Gallery
Bundoora Homestead Art Centre
Bunjil Place Gallery
Burrinja Cultural Centre
Buxton Contemporary
Cardinia Cultural Centre Gallery
Carlisle Street Arts Space
Castlemaine Art Museum
Central Goldfields Art Gallery
City Gallery at Melbourne Town Hall
Counihan Gallery in Brunswick
Craft Victoria
Deakin University Art Gallery
Duldig Studio
East Gippsland Art Gallery
Eltham Library Community Gallery
Geelong Gallery
Gippsland Art Gallery
Glen Eira City Council Gallery
Grainger Museum
Hamilton Gallery
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Horsham Regional Art Gallery
Hyphen - Wodonga Library Gallery
Ian Potter Museum of Art
Incinerator Gallery
Koorie Heritage Trust
La Trobe Art Institute | LAI
Latrobe Regional Gallery | LRG
Linden New Art
Manningham Art Gallery
McClelland Sculpture Park + Gallery
Mildura Arts Centre | MAC
Monash Gallery of Art | MGA
Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA
Montsalvat
Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery | MPRG
National Gallery of Victoria | NGV
Old Quad
Queen Victoria Women's Centre
RMIT Design Hub
RMIT First Site Gallery
RMIT Gallery
Science Gallery Melbourne
Shepparton Art Museum | SAM
Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery
TarraWarra Museum of Art
The Dax Centre
Town Hall Gallery
Walker Street Gallery
Wangaratta Art Gallery | WAG
Warrnambool Art Gallery
Whitehorse Art Space
Wyndham Art Gallery



Images from top: Opening event, *Who's Afraid of Public Space 2021–2022*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. Photo: Zoe Eley; Visitors to the exhibition *The Overwintering Project: Westernport* at Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, 2021. Photo Mark Ashkanasy; Launch of the exhibition *Not standing still- new approaches in documentary photography*, Monash Gallery of Art, 2021. Artwork by Max Pinckers. Photo: Zan Wimberley; Visitors to the Archibald Prize at Gippsland Art Gallery, 2021.

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Cover image:

Young visitor at the opening of the exhibition, *Beci Orpin: PLAY EVERYDAY/EVERY DAY PLAY* at Hamilton Gallery, 2022. Photo: We Met In June Photography.