



PUBLIC GALLERIES ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

17 July 2015

## **PGAV submission to the Creative Industries Discussion Paper: *Let's get creative about Victoria's future***

The Public Galleries Association of Victoria (PGAV) congratulates the Minister for Creative Industries, Martin Foley and the Victorian Government on its decision to develop the first Creative Industries Strategy. We welcome the opportunity to outline the challenges and opportunities facing the public gallery sector in Victoria and contribute ideas which will enable galleries to grow and enrich Victoria's future.

### **CONTEXT**

The PGAV is the peak body representing 50 galleries across metropolitan and regional Victoria. Our role is to build and strengthen the capacity of public galleries in Victoria to deliver valuable cultural, social and economic returns to their communities. There is great diversity amongst our members, which include state institutions, regional galleries, metropolitan galleries and university art museums.

Public galleries collect, conserve, commission, exhibit and promote engagement with the visual arts. Through benchmarking undertaken in 2014, we learned that our members **presented 536 exhibitions**, featuring the **work of 3,900 living visual artists**, to more than **4 million visitors**. They hold over **170,000 items in their collections** with a **combined worth of \$4.8 billion**. Our members employ over **500 full-time equivalent staff** and are supported by **1400 volunteers**. Public galleries in Victoria are a major contributor to the state's cultural, artistic, social and economic wealth.

There is growing demand for the visual arts. Recent research commissioned by Creative Victoria identifies that 91% (or 3.7 million people) engage with the visual arts sector across the state, while Australia Council research indicates we have the fastest growing participation rate of all arts sectors. Public galleries play a vital role in linking audiences with the visual arts and are well placed to increase access to the arts by more Victorians.

### **RESPONSE TO THEMES**

The PGAV has undertaken extensive research of the public gallery sector in Victoria over the past four years. Last year we also surveyed the national public gallery sector. This research has identified the key challenges and opportunities facing the public gallery sector and forms the basis of our response to the Discussion Paper themes.

- **Fostering Creative Excellence**

Local government is a major contributor to the public gallery sector in Victoria, with 64% of our members owned or operated by local government. Operating within the local government context is challenging – with galleries competing for rate payer funding

alongside other council requirements and continually being asked to demonstrate their economic return, with less regard for the contributions they make to the social wellbeing and liveability of a community. A change of local government CEO or the election of new Councillors sees galleries having to prove their worth all over again. Unfortunately, few galleries have the ability to capture the social and economic impact of their work in a meaningful way, making this process much harder and their funding more precarious. Even the highly successful Bendigo Art Gallery faces these ongoing challenges.

In 2013, the PGAV partnered with Creative Victoria, Melbourne Business School and Deakin University to develop best practice case studies of the social and economic impact of public galleries. This landmark research has assisted the four participating galleries - Arts Project Australia, Bendigo Art Gallery, Linden New Art and Shepparton Art Museum - to demonstrate their value to funders and stakeholders, including local government. This research has a finite lifespan.

Long-term, sector-wide solutions are required to enable public galleries to excel. The PGAV has identified the **development of Gallery Standards** as crucial to the stability of the public gallery sector. Gallery standards would assist galleries to secure appropriate resourcing from local government and other key funders, enabling them spend more time on their core business. Additionally, **reporting which captures qualitative rather than quantitative evidence** is vital for galleries to be able to demonstrate their value easily and effectively. Creative Victoria is about to trial the Culture Counts cultural value measurement platform in Victoria and we hope to partner on the delivery of this platform at public galleries in the future. We also look forward to the roll out of the *National Arts and Culture Accord*, which will ensure local government galleries in metropolitan Melbourne are factored into state and national statistical data. **The PGAV would like to partner in this process to ensure meaningful measures are in place which capture the social, cultural, artistic and economic impact of Victoria's public gallery sector.**

The public gallery sector has changed dramatically over the past 5-10 years – galleries have become outward focused on their communities, providing places for people to experience the visual arts and be socially engaged. The public gallery sector is also incredibly diverse, ranging from small galleries with an average of 2.6 FTE staff to medium sized galleries with up to 25 FTE staff through to the National Gallery of Victoria. The PGAV works closely with our members to understand the challenges they face. We commission research, foster the exchange of knowledge and deliver specialist programs to help them build their capacity. **Our members see us as integral to the future of public galleries in Victoria, but we are under resourced and are exploring ways to grow.**

Last year, the PGAV surveyed the national public gallery sector and learned that galleries across Australia are facing similar issues to those in Victoria. 89% of respondents are interested in joining a national peak body for public galleries to ensure this vibrant part of the arts is represented nationally. **The PGAV wants to lead a national conversation about the visual arts by forming a peak body to address the needs of public galleries across the country.** The body would set national standards to support the sustainability of public galleries, deliver professional development opportunities including leadership programs, national and international internships for staff in the sector; recognise and reward excellence through National Awards; promote best practice and foster the sharing of knowledge; and be an advocate for institutions which commission and present visual arts.

**The PGAV calls for Creative Victoria to commission an independent review of the peak bodies and service organisations currently supporting the visual arts sector in Victoria – the PGAV, Museums Australia (Victoria), NETS Victoria and Regional Arts Victoria – to determine where there are synergies, duplications and gaps. This will ensure the visual arts sector is receiving the support it needs to be able to excel.**

- **Building audiences and markets**

Our research has identified that building and engaging audiences is **one of the top three challenges facing public galleries**. While there is increasing interest in the visual arts, galleries are finding it difficult to make the most of this opportunity.

For small-to-medium galleries, the difficulty lies with staffing levels. On average, small to medium galleries in Victoria employ 2.6 staff. Only 30% of public galleries in Victoria employ marketing staff, 28% public programs staff and 24% education staff. **We welcome increased funding for the small-to-medium arts sector to enable them to employ specialised staff to build audiences and markets**. Additional staff will enable small-to-medium public galleries to grow in line with the demand of visual art audiences.

For larger galleries, the difficulty lies in attracting funding for unique projects. This includes the development phase of exhibitions – often spanning 12-18 months, the commissioning of artists and residencies, as well as international programming. Larger galleries usually have marketing staff and/or access to publicists, however there is limited funding available to undertake innovative marketing initiatives to grow their audiences, including those offered through digital applications. **We seek a broadening of Creative Victoria’s project funding guidelines** to allow for multi-year funding of developmental projects and quarterly funding rounds so that public galleries can respond to new opportunities as they arise. **We recommend Creative Victoria’s Collaborative Marketing Initiative and the Marketing Innovation Fund be extended to two rounds each per year** to increase the reach of these innovative funding programs.

- **Cultivating skills, entrepreneurship and innovation**

The PGAV delivers a range of professional development programs for the public gallery sector in Victoria to meet the specialised needs of its highly qualified arts workers. We provide a mix of professional development forums, workshops and networking events as well as internships at the NGV.

The PGAV has identified a need to foster greater entrepreneurship amongst senior staff within our public galleries to enable them to think big and take up new opportunities. **We have partnered with Melbourne Business School to develop a specialised MBA program for arts leaders. We look forward to working with Creative Victoria to find ways for this program to be delivered to leaders across the creative industries in Victoria.**

- **Harnessing the opportunities of digital technology**

The PGAV recommends developing a state-wide digitisation program to increase access to Victoria’s public gallery collections. A survey of our members revealed 20% have their collections available online, with 76% wanting to put their collections online. Working with our members we have learned the barriers to digitising their collections and making them available online are staffing, followed by specialised knowledge and access to technology.

**We recommend a Digital Technology Fund be established to assist small-to-medium galleries to digitise their collections and make them available online.**

Public galleries operating within local government have had limited access to social media other digital platforms. Slowly this is changing. **We welcome research into best practice approaches to digital platforms within the arts sector** (from small through to large organisations, across all art-forms) to demonstrate their value and assist public galleries to harness the opportunities of communicating directly with audiences.

- **Increasing participation and social impact**

The PGAV undertook extensive visitor evaluation as part of our research into *Branding the Public Art Museum Sector: A New Competitive Model*. We learned that access is an issue – from opening hours to building a deeper engagement with the visual arts. Our members have identified transportation costs as a major impediment for school groups wanting to attend their local gallery, be that in metropolitan Melbourne or regional Victoria. **We welcome a state-wide approach to supporting children to access public galleries across Victoria.**

Our research *Demonstrating Impact – Four Case Studies of Public Art Museums* reveals that public galleries deliver significant social impact to their communities. The difficulty for public galleries is capturing and articulating this impact. **The PGAV welcomes Creative Victoria’s trial of Culture Counts cultural value measurement platform and we are ready to partner with Creative Victoria to enable public galleries across Victoria to access this tool.**

The new Creative Industries portfolio offers great potential for public galleries to attract new audiences and increase their social impact. **We believe Creative Victoria is well placed to act as a broker between the PGAV and other areas of government** which will lead to public galleries delivering greater social outcomes within their communities.

- **Supporting Aboriginal arts and culture**

Public galleries across Victoria play an important role in supporting Aboriginal artists through the commissioning and acquisition of artwork. Galleries also raise awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal art and culture through their exhibitions and public programs.

There are very few Aboriginal arts workers within the public gallery sector. **We would like to partner with Creative Victoria, other government departments and the university sector to increase the number of Aboriginal arts workers in the public gallery sector.** This might be through fast-tracked entry to relevant courses at universities (currently being piloted at Melbourne University) to fully funded internships at public galleries across Victoria.

- **Advancing regional Victoria and outer metropolitan Melbourne**

The PGAV represents 18 galleries in regional Victoria and 4 in outer metropolitan Melbourne. Increasing awareness of public galleries in these regional will drive visitation. Local government plays an important role in marketing and promoting public galleries to their communities. There is significant opportunity for local governments to pool their resources to promote a region, which could be expanded and enriched by partnering with Creative Victoria and Tourism Victoria.

PGAV benchmarking of public gallery visitation suggests that public transport plays an important role in the number of people attending public galleries in outer-metropolitan and regional Victoria. Galleries with limited access to public transport have lower visitation than similar sized galleries in similar regions that have good access to public transport. **We support Creative Victoria partnering with Public Transport Victoria to trial additional train services in regional areas in conjunction with arts events** – for example the Wangaratta Jazz Festival or the Benalla Walls Festival to determine the benefits that an increase in public transport has upon the creative industries in these regions.

- **Enhancing international engagement**

In surveying our members about their challenges and opportunities for this submission, the PGAV was surprised to see a significant increase international engagement. Public galleries want to work with international artists, particularly through residencies. Asialink is an important partner for visual arts projects in the Asia Pacific region. However, with significant cuts to the Australia Council over the next four years we anticipate greater demand for Creative Victoria's project grants to cover international activities. **We encourage the Victorian Government to increase funding to Creative Victoria to address the increased demand for international engagement.**

- **Increasing tourism**

Bendigo Art Gallery has set the national benchmark for cultural tourism, demonstrating that galleries can attract large audiences from across Australia and drive economic investment in regional communities. However this success did not happen overnight and stemmed from unique circumstances: an entrepreneurial Director, an enviable governance structure, significant investment from local and state governments, partnering with Major Events and its proximity to Melbourne. While Bendigo is unique, there is great potential for public galleries to work collaboratively to drive tourism to regions across Victoria. **We are keen to work with Creative Victoria, Tourism Victoria, Cultural Tourism Victoria to explore a "region-based" approach to cultural tourism.**

**The PGAV supports the Victorian Government's proposed *Country Capitals of Culture* program.** We see this initiative as an opportunity for public galleries in the focus region to work with Creative Victoria, Tourism Victoria and Major Events to undertake large scale visual arts programs which attract national and international visitation to regional Victoria.

The PGAV welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the first Creative Industries Strategy.

For further comment, please contact:

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