



NSW Arts and Cultural Policy  
Arts NSW  
PO A226  
SYDNEY SOUTH NSW 1235

8 January 2014

Dear Ms Darwell,

The Australian Academy of the Humanities welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Discussion Paper *Framing the Future: Developing an Arts and Cultural Policy for NSW*.

The Academy is one of Australia's four Learned Academies and has a primary interest in strengthening and supporting research, education and engagement in cultural practice and expression in Australia.

Our brief response to Art NSW's Discussion Paper draws on a submission we made to the National Cultural Policy in 2011.<sup>1</sup> We note that the Discussion Paper references this earlier exercise, and its development has been informed by feedback from respondents to the national consultation.

The Academy's submission to this current process in NSW focuses on the policy framework and principles, and makes a number of recommendations with regard to mechanisms for strengthening and sustaining arts and cultural practice for the wider benefit of society.

### **Policy framework and principles**

- The Academy welcomes the NSW Government's commitment to developing an arts and cultural policy in support of a wide range of cultural practices. Arts and cultural policy development should be informed by a broad definition of culture underpinned by principles of cultural diversity.
- A policy framework for cultural development needs to support cultural heritage, creative industries, cultural maintenance, and tradition at all levels – in research, in education, within public institutions, within media and within

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Academy of the Humanities, Submission to the *National Cultural Policy* Discussion Paper, October 2011  
[http://www.humanities.org.au/Portals/0/documents/Policy/Submissions/text/POL2011\\_6.pdf](http://www.humanities.org.au/Portals/0/documents/Policy/Submissions/text/POL2011_6.pdf)

the content development industries. However, the Discussion Paper focuses heavily on traditional arts funding policy, and thereby threatens to exclude other important kinds of creative cultural production that also take place and need support – for example, non-fiction writing and non-performance arts, and popular culture.

- Non-tangible heritage – languages, cultural practices, values, and social structures – is a relatively overlooked aspect of the document. Intangible heritage could be considered among the most important of all heritage and culture policy principles because it links ‘tangibly’ to the psychological health and wellbeing of communities and society more generally. The retention and support of these across generations is important for the psychological health, cultural integrity and sense of place and belonging of communities and to communities. At a time of globalisation with its risk to the sense of place, nation and community, fostering non-tangible heritage is an investment in a more trusting, secure and integrated community.

The Academy recommends the Paper scopes in a broader range of cultural expression, production, distribution and consumption: including digital culture, media, and music alongside cultural heritage (tangible and intangible), Indigenous arts, culture and language, and linguistic diversity.

- The benefits of a thriving, inclusive culture to the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities is well documented.<sup>2</sup> UNESCO’s recently released *Cultural Economy Special Report* (2013) observes ‘there is far more to culture-led development than the purely economic benefits generated by the creation, production, distribution and consumption of cultural goods and services’ (p39). It is increasingly the case that governments are looking to develop more nuanced measures (other than macro-economic indicators, such as GDP) that might help identify a more multi-dimensional view of a successful society.<sup>3</sup> Arts and culture can re-invigorate regional communities, for instance, but it is business development in hand with social inclusion that makes for long term transformation. On this point, we note that that in its opening preamble the Paper uses the term ‘impact’ where it might be more appropriate to actually talk in terms of the benefits of culture (see p3).

The Academy recommends inclusion of a much stronger statement about the value and benefits of culture – beyond the economic bottom line.

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<sup>2</sup> See most recently in UNESCO’s *Cultural Economy Special Report* (2013) <http://www.unesco.org/culture/pdf/creative-economy-report-2013.pdf> Also see Julianne Schultz, ‘Creating a Place for Culture in Policy’, *Humanities Australia*, No. 4, 2013, pp.8-16. [http://www.humanities.org.au/Portals/0/documents/Publications/HumanitiesAustralia/Issue\\_4/HumAust4\\_WebOpt%5B1%5D.pdf](http://www.humanities.org.au/Portals/0/documents/Publications/HumanitiesAustralia/Issue_4/HumAust4_WebOpt%5B1%5D.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Work underway in Australia includes Treasury’s Wellbeing Framework, the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ MAP 2.0 Measures of Australia’s Progress, and the Australian National Development Index (ANDI).

## Practical policy mechanisms for strengthening and sustaining arts and culture

- The Paper references the leadership role that both NSW and the city of Sydney itself could play in the Asia Pacific region. That leadership role needs to be thought through in terms of regional exchange and cooperation. The lens of cultural diplomacy would be useful here.

The Academy recommends that in its articulation of NSW's international cultural presence that the policy be informed by developing a strategy for international engagement which includes provision for building people-to-people connections, as well as building capacity within Australia in language and cultural understanding.

- There is an overlooked opportunity for scoping in support for arts and cultural research and teaching, which is foundational to developing knowledge of our own history and culture and that of other nations and people. The UNESCO *Cultural Economy Special Report* points to the way in which the creative economy involves a range of networks and participants:

This creative field consists of both the network of firms and their interactions, as well as the facilities and social overhead, such as schools, universities, research establishments, design centres, etc., that complement or feed the innovative capacities of these networks. Each of these factors is susceptible to blockages and failures of various sorts, each one presenting challenges to policymakers. Taken together, these factors generate the processes of large-scale agglomeration that are among the necessary conditions for the emergence of creative localities.

- One of the areas singled out for development in the Paper is the transformative potential of digital technologies. We would note that the digitisation of cultural and research resources will advance knowledge across the research domain and dramatically transform research practice across the disciplines as well as leading to better access for the broader community.

The Academy recommends that the Paper explores the place of education and research in the development of the policy as part of a larger assessment of the connections and interrelations between these sectors and the arts and cultural economy, including the digitisation of cultural content of NSW's key collecting institutions.

- An issue on which we have received feedback from our NSW-based Fellows is the difficulty of securing sustainable, long-term funding for arts and cultural programmes. This makes it very difficult for cultural organisations to plan ahead. The development of a specific arts and cultural policy is a welcome step towards developing a practical agenda. As we argued in our response to the National Cultural Policy consultation, policy leadership and commitment will

be vital. Professor Julianne Schultz AM FAHA, a Fellow of the Academy of the Humanities, and former Chair of the Creative Australia Reference Group has argued that Australia needs a cabinet-level Ministry of Culture to elevate the role of arts and culture.<sup>4</sup> This Discussion Paper is an opportunity for the NSW Government to think through the ways in which it develops an integrated policy framework. In its discussion of disability access and creative ageing the Discussion Paper flags a number of portfolios – notably health and social services – outside the arts and culture domain which have a bearing on arts and cultural policy development.

The Academy would be very pleased to elaborate on any of the observations contained in this brief submission. Please direct your initial queries to the Academy's Executive Director, Dr Christina Parolin via email to [christina.parolin@humanities.org.au](mailto:christina.parolin@humanities.org.au) or phone on (02) 6125 9860.

Yours sincerely,

Emeritus Professor Lesley Johnson AM FAHA  
President

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<sup>4</sup> Julianne Schultz, 'Where to from here ... after the National Cultural Policy', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 2013 <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/stage/where-to-from-here-after-the-national-cultural-policy-20130813-2ru3i.html>