

NSW Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy

Key Issues for Discussion

Arts NSW
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Communities
arts nsw

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What is this Issues Paper about?

NSW Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy vision:

To foster a vibrant NSW Aboriginal arts and cultural sector that affords Aboriginal people of NSW greater opportunities to:

- ❖ ***participate in, share and strengthen their culture through arts practice; and***
- ❖ ***develop careers and businesses in the arts and cultural sector.***

Arts NSW, the NSW Government's arts policy and funding body, is developing a NSW Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy to improve the way we support Aboriginal arts and culture in this State.

Arts NSW is asking people in the NSW Aboriginal arts and cultural sector to help us to develop the Strategy. We want to involve the NSW Aboriginal arts and cultural sector in setting directions for the NSW Government's future support.

This Issues Paper will form the basis for consultation in meetings with the NSW Aboriginal arts and cultural sector that will be held in Sydney and regional NSW.

This Issues Paper contains:

- information on why NSW needs an Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy;
- information on how we are consulting about the proposed Strategy and how we see the Strategy developing;
- four proposed results that we have identified as possible priorities for the Strategy;
- questions to help us to develop specific programs and funding proposals for the Strategy.

We want to know whether you think we have the right priorities and the best ideas for improving our support for the sector over the next five years.

We want to hear your views about generating new ideas for Aboriginal arts and culture in NSW and how current programs and opportunities could be strengthened or changed to become more effective.

The information, proposed results and questions in this Issues Paper draw on a number of existing national and state policy frameworks and partnerships as well as current programs and services offered by the Aboriginal arts and cultural sector and non-Aboriginal arts and cultural organisations.

This Issues Paper comes with a background paper called *NSW Aboriginal Arts and Culture Snapshot 2009*, which describes the sector in NSW in more detail. It includes information on Aboriginal arts and cultural programs and identifies current national and state policies and priorities that are relevant to Aboriginal arts and culture in NSW. The NSW Aboriginal Arts and Culture Snapshot 2009 paper will help inform discussions about the Strategy at the consultation meetings.

The term 'Aboriginal' in the Issues Paper and the *NSW Aboriginal Arts and Culture Snapshot 2009* includes people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent living in NSW.

Please feel free to propose your own suggestions for elements of the NSW Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy, if they are not covered by the information and questions in this Issues Paper.

Why does NSW need an Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy?

Aboriginal Australians are part of the oldest living culture in the world. Aboriginal arts and cultural expression is based in traditions and practices that have existed for millennia and that have continued to evolve through more than 200 years of colonisation and other global social, cultural and economic changes.

Aboriginal arts and cultural expression is a vital part of contemporary Aboriginal society and is an important element of the social fabric of Aboriginal people and communities throughout Australia.

The NSW Government recognises that Aboriginal arts and cultural expression is fundamental to the social, cultural and economic well-being of Aboriginal people in NSW.

NSW has the largest Aboriginal population in Australia. The diverse geographic and demographic characteristics of our Aboriginal population mean that support for Aboriginal arts and culture should be flexible and responsive to the various needs of Aboriginal people in NSW.

NSW has a unique contemporary Aboriginal arts and cultural sector. The sector has an important role in maintaining, enhancing and transmitting culture as Aboriginal artists seek to develop their own practice and find inspiration through their culture. This includes developing their relationships with elders and exploring their cultural heritage. Contemporary NSW Aboriginal arts and cultural practice also continues to influence and be influenced by the wider arts and cultural environment in NSW, across Australia and internationally.

The strengths of the NSW Aboriginal arts and cultural sector continue to be the resilience of Aboriginal communities and the diversity of cultural and artistic expression.

The NSW Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy will assist the NSW Government to support the sector, acknowledging its diversity, excellence in arts practice, importance to Aboriginal society and its right to be respected and valued as a central part of the wider arts and cultural sector.

Aboriginal arts and culture in NSW also has the potential to take a more prominent role under the many national and state policies and programs that work to provide social and economic benefits to Aboriginal people.

Arts NSW also wants to increase its ability to work with Aboriginal people, arts and cultural organisations and Commonwealth, state and local government agencies to provide greater opportunities for Aboriginal people in NSW to participate in arts and culture and to develop careers and businesses in the arts and cultural sector.

Arts NSW and the state cultural institutions are now part of a new agency called Communities NSW. Communities NSW's role within government is to support the development of vibrant, sustainable and inclusive communities across NSW. This includes:

- strengthening opportunities for people across NSW to be involved in their communities;
- promoting the interests of specific population groups including children and young people, Aboriginal people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- increasing opportunities for participation in the arts and culture at all levels;
- investing in facilities and community and cultural infrastructure; and
- supporting enterprise and employment in the creative industries.

How will the consultation meetings with the NSW Aboriginal arts and cultural sector work?

A five member Steering Group of professional artists and arts administrators in the Aboriginal arts and cultural sector is providing advice and guidance to Arts NSW about the development of the Strategy.

Mr Peter White, the Indigenous Cultural Development Officer at Arts NSW, will lead a series of consultation meetings, assisted by a member of the Steering Group and Arts NSW's Capacity and Development Team. Consultation meetings will be held in Lismore, Dubbo, Wollongong and Western Sydney.

Non-Aboriginal arts organisations in NSW that work with the Aboriginal arts and cultural sector will be invited to the meetings but we want to hear in most detail the views of Aboriginal people in the arts and cultural sector.

We have identified the following four proposed Results for the Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy for discussion at the consultation meetings:

Result 1: Increased participation of NSW Aboriginal people in arts and cultural activity

Result 2: Greater appreciation of NSW Aboriginal arts and cultural practice and greater recognition for NSW Aboriginal artists and arts organisations

Result 3: Improved Aboriginal community cultural engagement

Result 4: More jobs and business development for Aboriginal people within the publicly funded cultural sector and creative industries

These Results reflect current national and state policy priorities, as well as the work of the Indigenous Cultural Development Officer at Arts NSW in assisting Aboriginal communities and organisations to identify opportunities for new sustainable arts and cultural programs.

Under each of these four Results listed above, this Issues Paper provides some contextual information and asks questions about whether current programs supported by Communities NSW – through Arts NSW and the state cultural institutions – work well or could be improved. These questions also seek to identify new ideas for the Government's support for Aboriginal arts and culture in NSW.

More contextual information is in the attached *NSW Aboriginal Arts and Culture Snapshot 2009* background paper.

Questions for Result 1

Result 1: Increased participation of NSW Aboriginal people in arts and cultural activity

Context

Funding is provided to support participation by Aboriginal people in arts and cultural activity through a range of Commonwealth and state programs. In NSW, the Arts Funding Program administered by Arts NSW is the main source of direct funding.

Providing opportunities for Aboriginal people to be involved in the arts as creators, participants and audiences is a specific policy priority of the Arts Funding Program. However, there is limited targeted support for Aboriginal arts and cultural activity. In addition, the Arts Funding Program involves a competitive application process and Aboriginal organisations have had limited success in accessing Arts NSW's funding.

Building capacity in the Aboriginal arts and cultural sector in order to increase participation could be achieved by:

- professional development and training opportunities for arts practitioners and managers;
- supporting cultural infrastructure – including buildings, facilities, organisations and specialist staff; and
- more effective funding programs.

The *NSW Aboriginal Arts and Culture Snapshot 2009* contains more detail on a range of existing programs to support capacity-building in the Aboriginal arts and cultural sector, including Arts NSW's Arts Funding Program¹.

Question 1:

What do you consider are successful examples of arts and cultural training and professional development opportunities that assist Aboriginal people in NSW to participate in:

- Aboriginal arts and cultural activities?
- the wider arts and culture sector?

What do you consider are the barriers to successful arts and cultural training and professional development opportunities?

¹ See pages 22 to 24 of the *NSW Aboriginal Arts and Culture Snapshot 2009*.

Question 2:

Are existing programs supported under Arts NSW's Arts Funding Program providing effective support for Aboriginal arts and culture? Which programs are the most effective? Which programs are not effective?

Question 3:

What is needed to increase and strengthen Aboriginal arts and cultural infrastructure in your community and across NSW?

Questions for Result 2

Result 2: Greater appreciation of NSW Aboriginal arts and cultural practice and greater recognition for NSW Aboriginal artists and arts organisations

Context

The need for greater appreciation of NSW Aboriginal arts and cultural practice and greater recognition for NSW Aboriginal artists and arts organisations applies to the whole arts and cultural sector: to cultural organisations such as museums, cultural centres and keeping places, to all art forms – visual arts, music, film, theatre, dance, literature and history, multimedia and new media – and to arts managers and administrators.

The Arts Funding Program aims to encourage a creative and diverse arts sector in NSW through support for excellence and opportunities for Aboriginal people to fulfil their artistic potential.

The state collecting institutions² have significant holdings of cultural material, including unique and comprehensive collections of Aboriginal art and cultural material.

² The state cultural institutions comprise five collecting institutions – the Art Gallery of NSW, Australian Museum, Historic Houses Trust of NSW, Powerhouse Museum and State Library of NSW – the Sydney Opera House and Screen NSW. For more information on the state cultural institutions, see pages 11 to 14 of the *NSW Aboriginal Arts and Culture Snapshot 2009*.

The Sydney Opera House showcases the best performing arts from Australia and international companies. Their standing as flagship organisations means that they, along with the State's major performing arts companies such as Bangarra Dance Theatre and organisations recognised under the national *Visual Arts and Crafts Strategy* (such as the Museum of Contemporary Arts) are recognised as benchmarks for excellence in the sector.

The state cultural institutions' expertise in curatorial services, research, outreach programs, cadetships and mentoring are valuable resources to assist the development of the arts and cultural sector in NSW, including Aboriginal arts and culture.

Arts NSW provides funding for peak service and advocacy organisations within the arts and cultural sector including:

- Museums and Galleries NSW (MGNSW);
- Regional Arts NSW (RANSW);
- Ausdance NSW;
- National Association for Visual Arts (NAVA); and
- MusicNSW.

The work of these peak organisations includes recognition, support and promotion for Aboriginal cultural expression and encouraging communication and partnerships between Aboriginal arts and cultural organisations and the wider arts and cultural sectors.

Question 4:

How can we increase the profile of NSW Aboriginal arts and culture?

Question 5:

What do you consider are successful examples of existing programs run by the NSW state cultural institutions to support Aboriginal arts and culture? What do you consider are the barriers to successful programs?

Question 6:

What do you consider are successful examples of the work of existing peak bodies in advocating for the development of the Aboriginal arts and cultural sector in NSW? What do you consider are the barriers to successful programs?

Questions for Result 3

Result 3: Improved Aboriginal community cultural engagement

Context

Aboriginal arts and cultural practice is fundamental to the social, cultural and economic well-being of Aboriginal people in NSW and is an integral part in building Aboriginal cultural resilience within NSW.

Through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), all levels of government have agreed to work in partnership with Aboriginal communities to close the gap of Aboriginal disadvantage.

The main frameworks in NSW for community cultural engagement programs for Aboriginal people are the *State Plan, Two Ways Together* and DAA's *Regional Action Plans*. These frameworks emphasise the importance of working across government and in partnership with Aboriginal organisations to improve social and economic support for Aboriginal people.

Across government, many agencies and non-government organisations provide community cultural engagement programs for Aboriginal people in NSW. Information on support for these programs, including Arts NSW's *ConnectEd Arts* partnership with the NSW Department of Education and Training, is in the *NSW Aboriginal Arts and Culture Snapshot 2009*.³

Question 7:

What do you consider are successful examples of arts and cultural programs as part of existing community cultural engagement programs within your community and across NSW?

Question 8:

What could Arts NSW do to ensure arts practice is an integral part of programs designed to improve the social and cultural well-being of Aboriginal people?

³ See pages 20 to 26 of the *NSW Aboriginal Arts and Culture Snapshot 2009*.

Question 9:

What linkages can be improved between Arts NSW and other NSW government departments and agencies to support community cultural engagement?

Question 10:

What community cultural development priorities require a partnership approach by funding agencies and sources?

Questions for Result 4

Result 4: More jobs and business development for Aboriginal people within the publicly funded cultural sector and creative industries

Context

The creative industries encompass business sectors that have creativity at their heart. This includes advertising and marketing, architecture, design and visual art, music and the performing arts, publishing, software and interactive content such as electronic games, and film, television and radio.

The NSW Government is developing a Creative Industries Strategy to support this important sector of our economy. Information on the profile of creative industries in the NSW Aboriginal arts and cultural sector and ways to support the growth of Aboriginal creative industries in NSW are relevant to the development of both the Creative Industries Strategy and the Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy.

The Government is also working on a NSW Aboriginal Economic Development Policy to encourage job creation and business development for Aboriginal people.

The cultural knowledge, creative practice and expertise of Aboriginal people working in the arts and cultural sector help to make Aboriginal businesses viable – and more competitive within the wider creative industries sector. Information on protocols to protect intellectual property within the Aboriginal arts and cultural sector is in the *NSW Aboriginal Arts and Culture Snapshot 2009*.⁴

⁴ See page 21 of the *NSW Aboriginal Arts and Culture Snapshot 2009*.

Question 11:

How can we help to develop opportunities for employment and businesses, including Aboriginal creative industry businesses, to increase:

- local jobs;
- national and international export opportunities;
- cultural tourism?

What happens after the consultation meetings?

Arts NSW and the Steering Group will review all the information from these consultation meetings.

The results of the consultations will inform the final Strategy. The final Strategy will outline the Government's directions for Aboriginal arts and culture in NSW, identify key stakeholders and recommend specific initiatives and funding programs.

Information and statistical data will need to be collected to evaluate the progress of the Strategy and to help us to measure its success. We will keep Aboriginal people involved in the Strategy – as creators, participants and audiences – to help evaluate the progress of the Strategy.
