

## NSW Museum Strategy – development and approach

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### NSW Museum Strategy (commencing November 2021)

The NSW Museum Strategy will provide a pathway towards addressing both the challenges and future opportunities for the museum and cultural heritage sector of NSW.

The Strategy approach is informed by recent NSW Government investment in cultural infrastructure, sector feedback and policy work on the museum and heritage sector in NSW. Desktop research by Create NSW has included submissions to Parliamentary Inquiries and other public forums, a review of current literature including museum conferences and reports, NSW stakeholder publications and programs and previous sector consultation and research undertaken by Create NSW and Museums and Galleries of NSW.

The Museum Strategy will roll-out in three stages:

1. Inter-agency Consultation – Engagement with NSW Government offices, agencies and departments where their operations and policies may intersect with the museums and cultural heritage sector. Create NSW will also commence engagement with relevant Cultural Institutions, and the museum and heritage sector’s peak body, Museums and Galleries of NSW.

2. Sector Consultation – A fast-tracked consultation process over three months, which will engage in surveying the sector, and working with targeted focus groups from different parts of the museum and heritage ecology.

3. Action Plan Delivery – An action plan, informed by the outcomes of consultation with the Strategy’s focus groups, which will present a range of outcomes and goals for the sector, to be considered and implemented across the short-term (6 months – 1 year), medium-term (2 to 3 years) and long-term (5 years +).

Strategy outcomes will be realised through utilisation of funding resources, including the Arts and Cultural Funding Program (ACFP) and the Creative Capital program, new policy directions, collaborations

across organisations, and partnerships with other NSW State Government agencies that have a stake in the success of the sector.

## **Objective of the Museum Strategy**

The development and implementation of the Museum Strategy is intended to ensure that the unique issues, challenges and future opportunities meeting the state's cultural heritage and history museums are addressed, so that NSW can continue to lead the way in museums best practice and innovation.

Some of the key issues for the sector identified through Create NSW's preliminary research include:

- Sustaining volunteer and community-run museums
- Enhancing and harnessing the leadership potential of the cultural institutions
- Ensuring First Nations self-determination in the protection and management of their cultural heritage, allowing greater understanding and respect of NSW Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Adopting emerging technologies and the potential of digital/virtual tools
- Supporting and encouraging innovative practices in museum programming
- Collaborating and partnering across the sector
- Ensuring accessibility of State collections
- Securing and maintaining resources and funding
- Reviewing current museum legislation and the role of peak bodies and cultural institutions
- Addressing the lack of a current museum strategy at state level

A consultative and action-based approach will be defined to address these issues, ensuring any gaps in the sector's outputs, sustainability and growth are considered by relevant stakeholders, including the NSW Government and the State Cultural Institutions.

## **Scope**

For the purpose of the Museum Strategy the definition of 'museum' will include:

- Heritage museums (both independent and local government operated)
- Keeping places
- Cultural institutions
- Other constructs engaged in the acquisition, collection management, conservations, interpretation, communication and exhibition of heritage objects and artefacts<sup>1</sup>.

There are currently more than 760 museums in NSW, comprised of internationally renowned museum State Cultural Institutions, public and regional museums, community run and managed museums and Aboriginal cultural centres and keeping places.

The scope of the Strategy does not include the visual arts sector, or fine art galleries that hold primarily historical art collections for the majority of this strategy. However, cross-institution collaborations and other visitation strategies may incorporate work alongside the visual arts and other sectors.

### **Stage 1 – NSW Government Agency Consultation (September 2021 – November 2021)**

The museum and cultural heritage sector intersects with the work of many NSW Government agencies through their policies, programs and projects. Create NSW has identified eight Departments and agencies to consult with around both their active projects and future plans. These are:

- Aboriginal Affairs
- Heritage NSW
- Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
- Destination NSW
- Regional NSW
- Office of Local Government
- Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner
- NSW Treasury

This consultation was commenced by Create NSW in September 2021 while most museums and cultural heritage organisations in NSW were closed or experiencing reduced attendance due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This consultative work aims to capture up-to-date work across the NSW Government that impacts museums, and to receive feedback on the initial desktop research. The consultation will furthermore provide

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/7E83A77782BB8E88CA257D240011D1AB?opendocument>

Create NSW with an opportunity to identify where cross-government collaboration may be mobilised within the Museum Strategy's Action Plan.

Initiating work with the state's Cultural Institutions and Museums and Galleries of NSW, will also provide real-time insight into their current and future work, which may not be adequately represented in the desktop research, which relies on publicly available information.

## **Stage 2 - Sector Consultation (November 2021 – February 2022)**

From the issues identified through Create NSW's preliminary research for the Strategy, five key themes have emerged which will be used to guide sector consultation. They are:

1. Leadership
2. First Nations
3. Audiences & Programs
4. Collections
5. Sustainability

Sector consultation guided by these themes will be deployed by Create NSW through two connected processes:

**A. Survey** – Engaging with the Strategy themes and priority issues, a comprehensive state-wide survey will capture current NSW museum data, and provide opportunity for the broader museums and heritage community across NSW to contribute to the agenda for subsequent consultation processes.

The survey distribution will be supported by peak body, Museums and Galleries of NSW.

**B. Focus Groups** – Create NSW will establish four focus groups to support the second stage of the consultation process to define the Strategy's Action Plan.

- Focus Group 1 – NSW cultural institutions and peak bodies
- Focus Group 2 – First Nations museums, keeping places, cultural centres and networks
- Focus Group 3 – the medium to small museum sector (independent and LGA)
- Focus Group 4 – independent, academic interstate and international museum professionals

Focus groups will each be provided with the Strategy's survey analysis, the Issues Paper researched by Create NSW, and other sector research compiled to inform the Strategy. Create NSW will announce a process for public nominations to these focus groups in due course.

### **Stage 3 Action Plan Publication (March 2022)**

The Action Plan publication will indicate the second phase of the strategy, which will set a timeline and objectives for the delivery of implementable actions for different parts of the museums and cultural heritage sector in the short to medium term as well as provide a long-term vision for NSW.

The five themes and their objectives – to be identified and established by the Focus Groups – will guide the Action Plan to ensure the Museum Strategy and its deliverables are developed with the sector's priorities and goals in mind. Create NSW will invite further feedback and consultation on the Plan from the sector as it is finalised.