

NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY

National & State Libraries Australasia (NSLA)

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Towards a National Cultural Policy

Responding to the discussion framework:

1. Culture is at the heart of our nation and the arts are the heart of our culture, feeding, and in turn, being fed by it. Australian culture is unique, diverse and vital to our present and future wellbeing.
 - a. *Australia's cultural collections - our libraries, archives and museums - are the repositories of our culture. They preserve and make accessible our culture in a very broad sense, including the arts in many forms, our indigenous heritage and voices, our identity and development, history, innovative thinking, science, technology and creative expression.*
2. Culture is expressed in many ways and reflects our way of life. It encompasses our values, traditions, attitudes and expressions and is shared by us all.
 - b. *Libraries provide free, permanent and uncensored access to Australian culture through multiple channels.*
3. It provides the intellectual and imaginative ground for broad understanding and connections. An education rich in culture and arts provides a strong foundation for learning, social engagement and skills development.
 - c. *Library collections promote conversations between the past and the future, leading to the creation of new knowledge. They underpin education and learning through all parts of the community – from business to formal education to independent study.*
 - d. *Libraries form a strong established collaborative network, connecting to people in remote communities, regional areas and in major metropolitan areas.*
4. There is a primary value in creative expression through the arts which governments actively support. Our democracy is strengthened by the diversity of cultural and artistic expression.
 - e. *Libraries enable the people of Australia to discover what it means to be "Australian".*
 - f. *Libraries work with communities to support the creation of new content (stories, digital mashups and more) which will be made accessible for this and future generations.*
5. Australian culture speaks to our identity, it is an important area of common interest which enriches our quality of life and defines us to ourselves and others. Its rich legacy provides knowledge of the past and hope for the future; above all it engages with the moral principles to which we jointly aspire.
 - g. *Libraries provide a channel, through their collections, that enables Australian citizens to understand their past. A civilised society is an informed society.*

6. The culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is the unique backbone of Australian identity; it brings meaning to our nation with a culture unbroken in song, dance and stories over millennia.
 - h. Digitisation is the means to preserve our culture for the future. We are now able to digitally preserve information and creative output originating from many different formats and will continue to develop these technologies as new formats and forms appear.*
7. Culture is a powerful source of wealth for the nation, contributing significantly to the economy and employing hundreds of thousands of Australians. It adds value, attracts students and tourists, provides valuable exports and is essential to sustainable economic activity.
 - i. Libraries deliver economic benefits. For every \$1 expended on public libraries, the community derives more than \$4 of economic benefit [Enriching Communities Report, 2008, www.sl.nsw.gov.au].*
8. Australian culture is a conversation between past understandings and future vision. Culture must both preserve and innovate, ensuring that the links between the present and past remain strong, able to incorporate new and varied perspectives.
 - j. Access via the internet is the only way to ensure equality of access – for those in remote and regional areas, for the global community to access Australian culture, and for the efficient search and delivery of historical and contemporary content and creativity.*
9. Our culture draws on the creativity found in many walks of life, in traditional forms which should be preserved and new forms yet to be imagined.
 - k. Digitisation will ensure access to our culture for future generations. In the Australian Government response to the recommendations of the 2020 Summit, the government agreed in principle to the “full digitisation of the collections of national institutions by 2020” and acknowledged the work already underway.*
 - l. Access to the internet is fundamental to ensuring access to information (see the Supreme Court judgement in the iiNet case, 2010). Government relies on the internet to inform the community, and the community is beginning to rely on the internet to respond to government*
10. Australian culture is produced by its people. The role of government is not to directly shape culture but to enable all Australians – whatever their background, beliefs and abilities – to explore and nurture their creativity and draw on the wealth of our culture to enrich us all.
 - m. National & State Libraries Australasia urges the federal government to establish a **National Digitisation Fund** to increase the digitisation and preservation of Australia’s cultural collections, following the examples of France and Norway and many other countries who have commenced industrial-scale digitisation of their national collections.*

More information:

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NSLA Libraries: Key Facts for 2008-2009

7.7 million	people visited our libraries;
132 million	pages were viewed on our websites (2007-08);
712 terabytes	of digital collections were stored;
\$26.7 million	was spent purchasing resources for collections;
\$4.3 billion	was the total asset value of our collections; and
\$938 million	was the total asset value of our buildings/sites.

NSLA Members:

