

Protection of Indigenous Knowledge in the Intellectual Property System

Submission from National and State Libraries Australia (NSLA)

30 January 2019

National and State Libraries Australia (NSLA) welcomes this consultation into the protection, use and management of Indigenous Knowledge in ways that promote its cultural integrity and economic potential.

NSLA libraries are Australia's major research libraries. We hold rich collections that serve the education, research, innovation and cultural needs of Australians every day. In 2017-2018, 11.3 million people visited our libraries and there were 66.3 million visits to Trove and our library catalogues and websites.

In the management of Indigenous collections, NSLA libraries continue to be guided by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network (ATSILIRN) *Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services* as well as by our own *National Position Statement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Services and Collections* (2014).

As outlined in our submission to IP Australia's 2014 Indigenous Knowledge Consultation, this includes a commitment to:

- The right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be informed about collections that exist relating to them, their culture, language and heritage.
- The right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to determine use and access provisions for heritage materials which reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture, language and perspectives.
- The inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in decision making processes, at all levels, to achieve informed and appropriate directions and agendas across the library and information sector.
- The development of strategies to increase employment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within the library and information sector.
- The development of strategies to strengthen cultural competency across our workforce, including knowledge and awareness of issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library users.
- The development of strategies to return usable copies of collection material to cultural owners to support cultural and language maintenance or revitalisation.

NSLA recognises that accurate and appropriate identification, attribution and access to the Indigenous collection materials in our libraries plays a significant role in how that material is interpreted, re-used, cited and acknowledged. Four examples of initiatives designed to improve the management and description of Indigenous collections are outlined below.

1. *Identification of Australian Indigenous languages – National Library of Australia*

The National Library of Australia has partnered with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) to improve discoverability and identification of Indigenous collection material through AUSTLANG, a thesaurus of Australian Indigenous languages developed by AIATSIS. The National Library has implemented AUSTLANG codes as

standard practice in collection description. The codes have now been added to the Library of Congress's MARC Language Codes list, which is used by libraries all over the world, meaning that Australian and international library collections can use a common standard to accurately identify language materials. Over 19,000 catalogue records in the National Library have been enhanced with these language codes to date.

2. Re-classifying local collections – Northern Territory Library

In 2017, the Northern Territory Library and East Arnhem Regional Council partnered to introduce a new system for the classification of Aboriginal community collections in Yol u Matha according to local cultural concepts at the Galiwin'ku Community Library. This is believed to be the first time in Australia that a public library has arranged its collections using Aboriginal cultural concepts rather than Western classification systems, such as the Dewey Decimal System. The Northern Territory Library plans to expand the program to other community libraries.

3. Storylines – Ara Irititja software at the State Library of Western Australia

The State Library of Western Australia (SLWA) launched the Storylines platform in 2013. Based on Ara Irititja software, the platform allows objects, people, places, stories, plants and animals to be tagged and linked, to create knowledge profiles which reflect the many perspectives of Aboriginal Western Australia. This allows for the digital repatriation of photographs and other materials directly to Aboriginal communities. The platform has been adopted successfully by the Mowanjum Aboriginal Art and Cultural Centre in the far north of Western Australia, and by the Nyamba Buru Yawuru Aboriginal Corporation in Broome as well as a large number of communities in the Northern Territory.

4. Cultural Learning Project – NSLA libraries

Building on a number of former projects around Indigenous services and collections, NSLA has established a project specifically to improve cultural competency for staff. All members of NSLA have invested in a national roll-out of the CORE Cultural Learning program developed by AIATSIS. This online learning program is designed for staff in government, corporate and cultural institutions and improves cultural competency by building greater awareness of the history and cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. NSLA libraries are designing role-specific training to follow CORE training for those library staff working directly with Indigenous collections, and developing principles for sustaining our libraries as culturally safe public spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

NSLA supports the aspiration of IP Australia to identify policy options that will promote the cultural integrity and economic potential of Indigenous Knowledge. In particular, we recognise the vital importance of initiatives that improve education and awareness of the concepts of Indigenous Knowledge and IP (Proposal 12). NSLA supports the establishment of an Indigenous Advisory Panel (Proposal 11) and suggests the inclusion of an Indigenous representative from the library sector.

NSLA will advocate for continuous improvement in the identification and attribution of Indigenous Knowledge within and beyond our cultural institutions, allowing for the creation of new works inspired by that knowledge in a respectful and informed environment.

Kate Torney
Chair, National and State Libraries Australia
www.nsla.org.au
nsla@slv.vic.gov.au