

4 March 2024

The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for the Arts
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Thank you for your letter of 18 January 2024 outlining your expectations for the National Museum of Australia (the Museum). On behalf of the Museum's Council, I am pleased to respond to your Statement of Expectations with this Statement of Intent.

The upcoming period sees the Museum in a strong position after a number of years of underfunding and impactful local and global events. As we look forward, the funding uplift provided by the Government in the 2023–24 budget of \$78.3 million over four years gives the Museum the financial security it needs to continue its important work as a major cultural institution that represents the diverse histories of all Australians. This funding will also enable the Museum to address serious long-term collection storage issues and develop a workforce capability plan that ensures we attract and retain skilled cultural and arts practitioners, including First Nations staff, building capability for strong leadership for national cultural institutions in the future.

We welcome the commitment this Government has made in the National Cultural Policy, *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*, recognising the significant contribution of arts and culture to Australian life. This includes the work of the Museum, which places First Nations stories at the centre of Australia's arts and culture and is central to our remit. In our Strategic Plan 2023–27, the Museum has established our commitment to implementing the five pillars of *Revive* by aligning our strategic priorities with them. The Museum's priorities through to 2027 will be:

- **First Nations first:** We will focus on truth-telling and diversity in Australian life as we collect, document, research and share the history of First Nations peoples, giving voice to them and their stories.
- **Connecting our audiences:** We commit to helping build a national sense of meaning and identity by representing and advancing the diverse histories of all Australians.
- **Telling our stories:** We will honour and embrace the diverse stories of Australian life and experience by building and strengthening our research, collection, documentation, conservation, education and public program capabilities and activities.
- **Engaging together:** We will contribute to the cultural life of the nation by building relationships and collaborating with artists, corporate institutions and community organisations across a range of heritage, cultural, artistic and creative practices.

- **Securing our future:** We will support our people and secure the Museum's future through improved organisational leadership, resilience and sustainability, and the delivery of programs and practices that build our operational capacity in order to meet the fundamental challenges of our time.

The financial year 2022–23 saw visitation to the Museum's Acton site return to pre-Covid levels, with over 600,000 visits driven by the opening of two major redevelopment projects, the Great Southern Land gallery of environmental history and the Tim and Gina Fairfax Discovery Centre for 0–6 year olds. Growth in online engagement remains strong – digital engagements now make up almost 80% of the Museum's total visitor engagements, compared to 57% in 2018–19. The Museum is also continuing its strong program of own-source revenue generation through commercial activity and philanthropic donations, albeit within a context of increasing cost-of-living pressures for its audiences and stakeholders.

The Museum looks forward to working with the Government, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, our fellow National Cultural Institutions and the broader sector to deliver on *Revive* and the Museum's Strategic Plan 2023–27, and will keep the Government updated on our progress through regular reporting. The following Statement of Intent provides detail on the actions the Museum is committed to delivering in support of the Government's expectations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maguire". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Ben Maguire AM
Chair of Council

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF THE MINISTER'S STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS

The National Museum of Australia will undertake a range of activities in support of your statement of expectations.

Provide strong leadership and foster collaboration within national and international arts and cultural sectors to promote the five pillars of *Revive*; partner with other cultural institutions to display works from the national collections and review policies and frameworks such as *Significance 2.0*

- The Museum delivers its mission through strong relationships and successful collaborations with other cultural organisations both in Australia and internationally, universities, research organisations and corporate partners. In our Strategic Plan 2023–27, the Museum commits to contribute to the cultural life of the nation by building relationships and collaborating with artists, corporate institutions and community organisations across a range of heritage, cultural, artistic and creative practices.
- The Museum will work cooperatively with other cultural institutions around Australia to loan objects and facilitate public access to the National Historical Collection (NHC). This includes continuing our touring exhibition program around the country, with six shows touring in early 2024, and implementing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Western Australian Museum that enables objects from the NHC to be on permanent rotation at the WA Museum Boola Bardip, Perth.
- The Museum is preparing to tour *Belonging: Stories from Far North Queensland*, an exhibition that supports the pillars of *Revive* through truth-telling, capturing First Nations cultural knowledge, sharing First Nations stories, and supporting First Nations artists. The *Belonging* exhibition was developed with the Indigenous Art Centre Alliance and art centres across Far North Queensland and the Torres Strait. Emerging and established artists were encouraged to explore new materials and techniques, producing more than 400 artworks that share what it means to belong. The collection, created by more than 100 artists, has been acquired for the NHC and been on show in Canberra, and the tour will enable these extraordinary works to be seen by more Australians.
- The Museum will tour its exhibitions locally and internationally, including via an ongoing agreement with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to deliver graphic panel displays to foreign diplomatic posts, such as the *Yuendumu Doors* display developed in partnership with the South Australian Museum.
- The Museum will continue to work with major international collecting and cultural institutions to bring the world's best collections to Canberra and take our exhibitions, primarily First Nations exhibitions, to the world. The recent funding uplift will ensure the sustainability of this program into the future. Highlights include:
 - A partnership with the British Museum that attracted more than 500,000 visitors to exhibitions on ancient history and contributed over \$40 million to the ACT economy.

The National Museum also partnered with the Western Australian Museum, Queensland Museum and Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum to bring these exhibitions to Australasia and share costs such as freight transport. This successful program has now been expanded to include exhibitions from other major international institutions such as *Discovering Ancient Egypt* from the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden) in the Netherlands, on display until September 2024.

- The Museum maintains MOUs with a number of Chinese institutions, bringing their exhibits to Australia and touring the First Nations-led *Old Masters* exhibition through China. The Museum also has an ongoing MOU with the Singapore National Heritage Board and the National Museum of Taiwan.
- In our Strategic Plan 2023–27, we have committed to continue this program. At least three new MOUs have been agreed with major international museums, our network of collaborative programs with museums, galleries, communities and the wider arts and cultural sector across Australia continues to develop, and we intend to tour at least four exhibitions to international audiences, with a particular focus on the Asia–Pacific region.
- The Museum looks forward to working alongside the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the Department) and other cultural institutions to review and update *Significance 2.0* and other collecting policies and frameworks.

Ensure policies and procedures are in place to promote diversity, sustainability, reconciliation and inclusion; ensure we have a current Disability Action Plan to support people with a disability to participate fully in Australia’s cultural and creative life; create a safe and secure workplace including cultural safety; compliance with codes of conduct developed by Creative Workplaces

- The Museum is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive organisation that values all people and recognises their unique qualities, ideas and perspectives. We aim to build a culturally inclusive, safe and welcoming environment for visitors, guests and staff, consistent with the codes developed by Creative Workplaces.
- The Museum has developed a Strategic Workforce Plan to align our staff with our strategic goals and objectives, safeguarding the future of our workforce capabilities and ensuring we can adapt to the evolving needs of the organisation and the broader cultural environment. Integral to the plan’s implementation is a review of the labour market and all roles in the Museum to assess critical capabilities and identify options to attract, develop and retain a diverse workforce that is reflective of the Museum’s audiences, with a particular focus on increasing First Nations employment.
- The Museum is reviewing its existing diversity and inclusion policies and action plans to develop a new Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. This will identify practical initiatives to strengthen a diverse workforce culture and ensure visitors to the Museum feel safe and respected. It will include the development and implementation of a revised Disability Action Plan, the assessment of roles for affirmative measures and trialling alternative working arrangements (e.g. flexible, remote, job-share) to support a diverse and inclusive working environment. These initiatives will be consistent with APS Diversity and Inclusion strategies and codes developed by Creative Workplaces.

- Reconciliation is a living practice at the Museum, responding to both internal and external changes. The Museum has signalled its ongoing commitment to reconciliation through its 'Stretch' Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), launched in August 2022, which sets out our vision for reconciliation and the actions we will take to promote reconciliation at the Museum and in our wider sphere of influence. The RAP is part of a broader reconciliation framework, including the First Nations Rights and Engagement Policy and the Diversity and Inclusion policy. Details are available here: <https://www.nma.gov.au/about/corporate/plans/reconciliation-action>
- In recognition of the environmental impact of its operations, the Museum launched its inaugural Environmental Sustainability Action Plan 2023–30 (ESAP) in June 2023 (<https://www.nma.gov.au/about/corporate/plans/environmental-sustainability-action>). Through this plan, we commit to reducing our impact on the environment in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, and to empower and communicate with audiences to work towards a more sustainable future. This has included initiatives such as installing solar panels on our roof; replacing fleet vehicles with electric cars; launching the new environmental history gallery *Great Southern Land*; and featuring environmental themes in programs for children and young people. In late 2023, the River Country community day brought together First Nations custodians, non-Indigenous scholars, artists and educators and around 2,000 visitors to participate in conversations, workshops and performances exploring the cultural significances of the Murray-Darling river system. We are committed to continuing and expanding this program, stimulating dialogue on climate change and environmental issues.

Continue to foster appreciation and understanding of First Nations arts, culture and knowledge systems; contribute to a professional, viable and ethical First Nations arts sector in line with the principle that First Nations arts and culture are First Nations led; and support the telling of First Nations stories in the cultural sector

- The Museum's Strategic Plan 2023–27, in line with *Revive*, confirms that we will continue to focus on truth-telling and diversity in Australian life as we collect, document, research and share the history of First Nations peoples, giving voice to them and their stories.
- The Museum continually demonstrates itself to be a trusted source of expertise and high-quality content related to Australia's First Nations people, as evidenced by feedback from general and educator audiences. The Museum also works with universities and academics, contributes to research publications, and supports government departments on First Nations culture and history, particularly the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which whom the Museum has a strong working relationship.
- Since its inception in 1980, the Museum has demonstrated its commitment to the repatriation of human remains and objects to their traditional custodians, assisting with the return of more than 1,800 people and 350 secret/sacred objects to their communities. As part of this work, the Museum has long supported the La Perouse Aboriginal community, including the Gweagal people and the broader Dharawal nation, the La Perouse Aboriginal Land Council and the Gujaga Foundation, to seek the return of four spears taken from Kamay (Botany Bay) in 1770 by HMS *Endeavour* voyagers. Trinity College, Cambridge, United Kingdom has agreed to return the spears to their rightful home on Country and the Museum will continue to support the La Perouse community during this process.

- The Museum will continue activities that contribute to a professional, viable and ethical First Nations arts and cultural sector. We have committed to developing cultural competency and safety across our organisation and are implementing a cultural capability program ‘Sharing Country: Building Cultural Capability Program’ for staff. The program aims to provide our staff, current and new, with an overview of our First Nations strategy and actions that support the First Nations First strategic priority at the Museum.
- The Museum has established a First Nations Outreach team that will implement a new community outreach and engagement model, with a focus on strengthening cultural and professional capabilities. The intention is to foster new partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to support First Nations employment and professional development. The Museum will further support First Nations employment in the arts and cultural sector through its Encounters Fellowships Program (<https://www.nma.gov.au/about/encounters-fellowships>). The program offers six First Nations cultural workers the opportunity to gain hands-on professional experience in the museum sector, both in Australia and overseas, while focussing on cultural safety in their professional development. The Museum also supports the Western Australian Museum’s Emerging Curators Program by hosting a professional development residency in Canberra. The Outreach team will also build the Museum’s internal capacity, skills and confidence in collaborating with First Nations communities.
- The Museum brings First Nations stories to the world, and with the funding uplift will expand this program. After a successful showing at the Museum’s Acton site in 2017-18 where it received nearly 100,000 visits, *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters* has toured throughout Europe – including over 100,000 visits at the Musee du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris, alone – and the exhibition will continue to tour Europe and eventually the US and Canada. The Museum also developed a separate pop-up digital experience *Walking through a Songline* which has toured domestically and in South-East Asia, where it has received over 250,000 visits to date. Also on tour is the film *Ochre and Sky* by filmmakers Alison Page and Nik Lachajczak with an accompanying installation by Chinese-Australian artist Zhou Xiaoping in China, where so far it has received nearly 50,000 visits.
- In line with Museum’s community engagement model, we are working with the traditional custodians involved in the *Songlines* exhibition to create a formal role for them as cultural ambassadors. This seeks to acknowledge traditional custodians as official cultural representatives of their lands, adopting a title that formalises and reflects their complex role in bridging the gap between their remote communities and national and international cultural institutions.
- The Museum has developed, hosted and toured major exhibitions on contemporary and historical First Nations stories, including bringing First Nations objects from the British Museum back to Australia through *Encounters: Revealing stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander objects from the British Museum*, and marking the 250th anniversary of HMB *Endeavour’s* 1770 voyage to Australia with the untold stories of Cook and the First Australians. In 2022, the Museum hosted the world premiere of the innovative *Connection* immersive experience. The Museum is committed to continuing this program, expanding it to address new topics that are supported by First Nations participation.

- The Museum is developing a new permanent exhibition about the colonial foundations of the nation, including the Australian Wars and the broader range of historical experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the Australian frontier. This is a key deliverable under the Museum's Strategic Plan 2023–27 priority of First Nations First and a step towards a much fuller and ambitious redevelopment of the Museum's First Australians gallery.

Support and promote artists and ensure they are remunerated appropriately; provide sustainable pathways for artists and creative workers throughout the different stages of their careers

- The Museum supports artists and creative workers through its collections, exhibitions, events and programs, including:
 - The NHC holds collections of textile and ceramic collections, sculptures and playable instruments.
 - The Museum hosts concerts by Australian artists, including an upcoming concert from multi-ARIA award winner Joseph Tawadros in support of the *Discovering Ancient Egypt* exhibition.
 - To mark the 20th anniversary of the Museum, Slava and Leonard Grigoryan composed 18 original works inspired by objects from the NHC, and these objects are now on display at the Western Australian Museum Boola Bardip. The Museum also commissioned *Breathing Space* by renowned musician and composer Genevieve Lacey, installing the soundscape as a permanent experience in the Museum's Garden of Australian Dreams. The development of *Breathing Space* supported a creative team of 12 artists, 21 musicians performing the compositions, 12 sound artists, and 32 spoken word performers speaking the words of Waanyi writer Alexis Wright, including Yorta Yorta Dja Dja Wurrung artist and leader Dr Lou Bennett.
 - The Museum is partnering with the Alastair Swayn Foundation and the Swayn Centre for Australian Design to appoint the Swayn Senior Fellow in Australian Design and promote the advancement of design knowledge. This partnership explores the identity and characteristics of contemporary Australian design through links with the design profession, peak bodies and the National Museum of Australia's vast collection. This includes a Fellowship for a design industry professional with work aimed at increasing public awareness and connection to design, through collections, collaborations with industry, exhibitions, events and research, currently held by Swayn Senior Fellow of Australian Design Dr. Lyndon Anderson.
 - The Museum will also support the broader arts community in Canberra through partnering with other Canberra cultural organisations including the Canberra Writer's Festival, Canberra Symphony Orchestra, Canberra Music Festival and Design Canberra.

Provide greater opportunities for all Australians to access arts and culture, including through a diverse range of exhibitions, programs, events and digital offerings; and engage in activities to enrich arts and cultural education at all levels

- Australia's Defining Moments Digital Classroom has been an enormous success since its launch in October 2020, expanding from 75,000 page visits in 2020–21 to 845,195 in 2022–23 as more teachers incorporate its resources into their teaching plans. The funding uplift

will enable us to expand the site's content over the next 2 years and ensure that the site and the Museum remain a leading source of learning experiences for teachers and students across Australia.

- The Museum's commitment to creating a welcoming and safe environment for its visitors and staff is ongoing. We will continue our programs to foster inclusion and accessibility, including multicultural festivals, community days, a daily Acknowledgement of Country and events to mark Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC week and the International Day of People with Disability.
- Supported by the funding uplift, the Museum will expand its onsite, curriculum-linked education programs based on both our permanent and temporary exhibitions.
- The Museum is committed to lifelong learning and we are particularly focused on our early childhood program, facilitated through the Tim and Gina Fairfax Discovery Centre, and the Museum is planning to expand its early childhood program. The Museum will continue to enable access to its content for children and families through family community days and multicultural festivals, targeted activities and accessibility initiatives such as quiet hours.

Allocate Government funding across staffing, suppliers and asset replacement responsibly and prioritised by need; maintain an accurate Asset Management Plan and remove the highest risk items; maximise own-source revenue through philanthropic and private sector opportunities; and identify capital works funding pressures through biannual reports.

- The funding uplift provided in the 2023–24 budget, which will provide the Museum with an additional \$78.3 million through to 2026–27, enables the Museum to undertake the activities set out in this Statement of Intent with a degree of certainty not previously available. We acknowledge that this funding comes with the responsibility for effective management and transparency in reporting.
- Replacement of Museum assets has not been up to date as a result of shortfalls in available funding. In 2022 the Museum reinvigorated its engineering asset management plan and the funding uplift has enabled urgent and unavoidable interventions including updates to critical IT infrastructure, the building management system and fire systems through new policy proposal funding.
- From 2024–25, the Museum will have insufficient capital funds to maintain the current asset base in the Museum's Asset Management Plan. The Museum will also have future funding needs in the coming few years for the redevelopment of the now out-of-date Gallery of First Australians.
- The Museum has doubled its own-source revenue in the past decade, with 2022–23 delivering a record \$8.2 million. We will continue to maximise opportunities for own-source revenue through venue hire, the cafe and the shop, which is also delivering a financial return to First Nations artists and communities through the sale of their artworks and products.
- The Museum will continue to develop our donor and philanthropic networks, corporate partnerships and communities of interest, including our Museum Friends membership program, to raise funds for redevelopment, programs, exhibitions, acquisitions and research.

Maintain an information governance framework with clear accountabilities for information management; have in place comprehensive and up-to-date information management policies; identify and mitigate specific risks and implement procedures to ensure timely and appropriate compliance with the requirements of the *Archives Act 1983* regarding the transfer of records to the National Archives; and guide and support staff in the use of major information systems and the application of information management policies, including through structured training specific to the Museum

- The Museum's existing information governance framework ensures that we comply with the requirements of the *Archives Act 1983*, including to identify and mitigate specific risks and ensure clear accountabilities. The Museum is planning a major review of all information management policies, including its Information Governance Framework, in 2024.
- In recent years, the Museum has reconsidered its approach to records management. A proposal by the Museum to move the National Museum of Australia Records Authority to the National Archives of Australia (NAA) supported Cultural Collections Records authority is currently under consideration by the NAA and, if approved, would increase the efficiency of record transfers. We are also investigating other efficiencies that may be gained through the use of Sharepoint as the Museum's primary Electronic Document and Records Management System.
- All Museum staff receive training in the use of major information management systems, including in recent years conducting Sharepoint training. The Museum will also ensure staff complete the mandatory Learn Hub module on information management, and we will continue to provide structured and specific training in records management, including continued Sharepoint training, in future.
- The Museum will conduct further reviews of its Information Management Governance Framework and information management policies when changes are made to the Records Authority, to ensure that these policies remain up-to-date.
- The Museum will maintain its commitment to digitising paper-based records and provide details as part of the annual check-up survey.