



**THE CHAMBER  
OF ARTS AND CULTURE**  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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*27 February 2020*

## **RESPONSE TO A PATH FORWARD: DEVELOPING THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S ABORIGINAL EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comment on the Western Australian Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy.

The Chamber of Arts and Culture WA is the State's representative arts and culture body, providing an independent, unified voice for the sector in Western Australia. It has a membership of approximately 250 organisations and individuals including a number of Aboriginal arts and culture companies. These include Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company, Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre, Aboriginal Arts Centre Hub WA, Ochre Dance Company, Magabala Books and Madjitil Moorna Inc. We also have a number of collecting institutions, community or individual members involved in the delivery of Aboriginal arts programmes.

We commend the whole of government approach and attempt to create a strategy that recognises the interrelated nature of many issues.

We appreciate that this document attempts to set in place a set of principles and guiding framework that can be used consistently across different areas of government. As such, one of the most important things about this document is that it signals a new approach and a new set of processes that will guide the working methodology

This will require a significant shift within the culture and systems of the organisations tasked with realising this strategy, if it is to be successfully realised. This challenge – to build understanding and respect for Indigenous cultures across the whole of our society is a key starting point. We look to senior leadership from all political parties to lead this important conversation and keep it high on our public agenda.

We support the formation of the formation of the Western Australian Aboriginal Advisory Council and hope that this generates a continuous community consultation process that informs the implementation of this Strategy.

## **Overall Goal**

***Aboriginal people, families and communities being empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation.***

Whilst this is an adequate statement to describe the intention of government policies and services, it does not address the fundamental question of the relationship between the Crown and our Indigenous peoples.

We support the ongoing discussion raised by the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the need to resolve the question of sovereignty as a path for self-determination. Without this key principle being addressed, we continue to undermine participation by Indigenous peoples as equal partners.

It would also affect the interpretation of the five sets of principles outlined in the paper and how Aboriginal people participate in enacting them.

We strongly support **Putting Culture at the Centre** as the first of the six strategic elements of the Discussion Paper. The arts and culture sector have long recognised the fundamental importance of supporting a strong, dynamic living culture. Our sector primarily supports the expression of culture through arts, performances, ceremony, contemporary culture, literature, film and digital channels. It has long been recognised that this contributes to deeper outcomes for individuals and communities.

Reports such as the 2016 Learning from the Message Stick Report have shown the links between culture and overall well-being and the vital role it can play in education and health outcomes. Despite this, funding for Indigenous culture made up just 1% of total direct expenditure for Indigenous Australians in 2015–16 (Productivity Commission Indigenous Expenditure Report 2017).

Culture is ultimately a set of shared values that form a sense of identity and connection. Understanding those values is the basis for any meaningful dialogue and response to individual or community needs. Key events such as the recent Perth Festival Indigenous led programme and Boorna Waanginy in Mooro Kaarta have shown how powerfully we can build connection through sharing of culture.

We also believe arts and culture programmes have a role to play in **preventative and early intervention initiatives**. Whilst the current education priorities are focussed on STEM subjects we have argued for the equal importance of arts and culture in our curriculum. More particularly this is an area where we should be instilling pride in our Aboriginal cultures and creating culturally safe spaces within which children can flourish. If this is to succeed as an intergenerational strategy, we feel this is an urgent priority.

The Chamber's current policies also support:

- boosting programmes that strengthen cultural participation (particularly in urban areas);
- foregrounding Aboriginal culture in public spaces and organisations such as use of Aboriginal language and place names;
- investment in development pathways for Aboriginal artists and cultural leaders;
- the development of an appropriate tourism strategy that supports the growth of Aboriginal owned businesses;
- including Aboriginal participation in any international engagement strategy.

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## **THE CHAMBER OF ARTS AND CULTURE WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

### **ABOUT THE CHAMBER OF ARTS AND CULTURE WA**

The Chamber is the state's representative arts body, providing an independent, unified voice for the sector in Western Australia.

The Chamber was formed in October 2010 following the amalgamation of the WA Arts Federation and the Cultural Chairs group with a high-profile Board of Management made up of key WA business leaders, cultural policy-makers, and arts practitioners. The inaugural chairman was Sam Walsh AO. The current chairman is Phil Thick and the deputy chairman is Gaye McMath.

The Chamber is a not-for-profit organisation with DGR status that brings the Western Australian arts sector together to debate, discuss and to address the major issues that impact on the promotion and development of arts and culture in Western Australia. Our activities include professional development, research, and the promotion of the value of arts and acts activity for individual and community wellbeing.

It has a membership of 230 arts organisations, individuals, and businesses across the broad spectrum of the arts, individual members, and associate members. The membership includes the not for profit arts and culture sector in Western Australia as well as businesses and individuals with an interest or engagement with arts and culture.

### **CHAMBER OF ARTS AND CULTURE WA MEMBERS**

#### **ARTS ORGANISATION MEMBERS**

Aboriginal Art Centre Hub WA

Alliance Francaise de Perth

ART ON THE MOVE

Artrage Inc

ARTrinsic Inc

Arts Margaret River Inc

ARTS Narrogin Incorporated

Artsource

artsouthWA Inc

Ausdance WA

Australian Cinematographers Society

Australian Screen Editors (WA)

Australian Society of Archivists, WA  
Branch

Australian Writers' Guild (WA)

Awesome Arts Australia Ltd

Barking Gecko Theatre Company

Black Swan State Theatre Company

Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre

Carnamah Historical Society & Museum

Centre for Stories

Charlesworth Ballet Institute

CinefestOZ  
CircuitWest Inc  
Circus WA  
Community Arts Network WA (CANWA)  
Contemporary Dance Company of  
Western Australia  
Country Arts WA  
DADAA  
Fashion Council WA  
Fliptease Pty Ltd also training as Access  
Circus  
FolkWorld Inc.  
FORM building a state of creativity Inc.  
Fremantle Arts Centre  
Fremantle Chamber Orchestra  
Fremantle Press  
FutureNow  
GAWA (Glass Artists of WA)  
Heritage Perth  
History Council of Western Australia  
International Art Space (spaced)  
JCG (John Curtin Gallery)  
JMGAWA Inc  
JumpClimb  
Just Improvise  
Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture  
Centre  
Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery  
Lost and Found Opera  
Madjitol Moorna Inc  
Mandorla Art Award  
Mandurah Performing Arts Inc  
Meaning Maker  
Media Entertainment Arts Alliance  
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Museums Galleries Australia Western  
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Musica Viva  
North Midlands Project  
Parallax Productions Pty Ltd  
Performing Arts WA  
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Perth Centre for Photography  
Perth International Arts Festival  
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Perth Symphony Orchestra  
PICA  
Professional Film Crew of Western  
Australia  
Professional Historians Association (WA)  
Propel Youth Arts WA  
Push Management  
Regal Theatre Foundation Limited  
Revelation Perth Film Festival  
RTRFM 92.1  
Screenwest  
SHEILA A foundation for women in visual  
art  
Spare Parts Puppet Theatre Inc  
Strut Dance  
Sunset Studios Ltd  
SymbioticA  
The Actors Hub  
The Actors Workshop  
The Blue Room Theatre  
The Creative Corner Inc.  
The Gelo Company  
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The Literature Centre Inc.  
The West Australian Music Industry  
Association Inc.  
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Turner Gallery  
Umbrella Works Inc  
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Voyces  
WA Museum Foundation  
WA Venues & Events Pty Ltd  
WA Youth Jazz Orchestra Assoc.inc  
WA Youth Orchestra  
WASO  
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Performing Arts  
Western Australian Opera  
Western Australian Youth Theatre  
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