

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

1. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous engagement strategies supported by Reconciliation Action Plans (RAP) have become key policy and procedural tools in structuring and improving organisational commitments and targets relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) representation, employment, training, engagement and participation throughout the private and public sector. Having a specifically designed strategy and RAP will assist in turning good intentions into positive actions.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Strategy (the Strategy) is informed by the key principles of the QAGOMA Strategic Plan 2014-19:

- Access for all
- Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Leadership through research, learning and innovation
- Commitment to a sustainable, collaborative and inclusive culture.

Initial benchmarking in the development of this Strategy indicates that other State art museums and the National Gallery of Australia have taken various approaches to demonstrating their commitment to Indigenous engagement including through their strategic plans, and guidelines in collection and acquisition policies.

This Strategy is informed by the Federal Government's Cultural Ministers Council: Indigenous Australian Art Charter of Principles for Publicly Funded Collecting Institutions¹.

2. PURPOSE

The Strategy provides practical and ethical guidelines relating to QAGOMA's commitment to Indigenous Australian art through collection development, exhibition programming, identified employment, professional development and community liaison in the lead up to the development of a RAP.

3. SCOPE

The Strategy guides the understanding and approach of all Gallery staff in relation to the Gallery's engagement with and representation of Indigenous artists and communities, and the core business of Indigenous employment, collection development and exhibition programming.

¹ In 2010, the National Gallery of Australia adopted the Federal Government's Charter of Principles for Publicly Funded Collecting Institutions (the Charter), endorsed by the Cultural Ministers Council. The Charter is a framework for professional best practice in dealings with Indigenous artists across the nation. The Charter closely references the Indigenous Art Code and through the adoption of the Charter, the National Gallery of Australia publicly indicates – via its website and on the Indigenous Art Code's website, its strong public support for best practice dealings with Indigenous artists and the presentation and interpretation of their works of art.

The Strategy involves all Gallery employees. This includes permanent, temporary and casual employees, and volunteers, contractors and consultants working for the Gallery.

4. DEFINITIONS

ATSI refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and acknowledges the distinct tribal systems, cultural protocols and ceremonial traditions actively maintained by Indigenous communities throughout Queensland and Australia.

Intellectual property (IP) refers to the various rights which the law gives for the protection of creative and intellectual effort of individuals and organisations, particularly the protection of economic value derived from creative effort. IP is considered intangible, as opposed to physical, in character. There are various types of IP, including copyright, patents, industrial designs and trademarks.

5. NATIVE TITLE

This Strategy takes account of recent court decisions relating to Native Title. Under the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*, Indigenous people have to prove their 'ongoing' connection to the land to establish native title. The law requires a high level of evidence and Indigenous organisations have recognised the difficulty of establishing proof, especially in areas where there has been widespread urbanisation.

The land on which the Gallery is situated was part of a wider native title claim, first registered in 1998, with other claims subsequently lodged at different times. In January 2015, the Federal Court rejected the remaining applications for native title claim over Brisbane (including the Gallery site) made by the Turrbal people (first lodged in 1998) and the Yugara people (lodged in 2011). The judge found the applicants were unable to prove a continued and substantially uninterrupted system under which traditional laws and customs were acknowledged and observed as required by the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*.

Pending any appeal of the decision, developments in Brisbane and surrounding areas no longer need to comply with *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)* processes but obligations under Queensland cultural heritage legislation continue. The Gallery will continue to take advice from the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) in relation to its obligations.

6. ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The Gallery aims to manage ATSI engagement in a proactive, respectful and responsible way to deliver the best outcomes for Queensland and Australian communities. The following strategies set out the policy objectives of the Gallery in managing and implementing Indigenous engagement.

Strategy 1: Acknowledgement of Country

The Gallery will ensure that appropriate acknowledgements to Country are given at public functions.

- To determine the most effective and meaningful way to acknowledge Country, the Gallery has sought advice from relevant parties including the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) and the Gallery's Indigenous staff.
- The Gallery will undertake community consultation to inform its development of the most suitable arrangements for the provision of acknowledgements and recognition of Traditional owners.

Strategy 2: Engaging Community

The Gallery will facilitate engagement and dialogue with senior members of the ATSI community. Regular engagement is an important forum for communication and provides an opportunity to productively disseminate information on QAGOMA's Indigenous programs through the local and national art and cultural communities, and consolidate the Gallery's primary and ongoing relevance within these dialogues.

- The Gallery will host regular events to facilitate dialogue with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders, for example by hosting an annual gathering of elders, and convening an annual artists' and art workers' forum.
- The National focal points such as National Reconciliation and NAIDOC weeks and Sorry Day will continue to be used as opportunities to enrich the scope of potential activity within the Gallery's programming.

Strategy 3: ATSI Advisory Group

- The Gallery will establish an ATSI Advisory group led by the Director to provide guidance on protocol issues as well as general ATSI matters.
- The group may also consider artists' projects that require discussion and advice around Indigenous culturally sensitive material and its presentation and interpretation.

Strategy 4: Navigating ATSI Community Protocols

The Gallery will ensure that information is shared with Traditional custodians in line with the purpose of this Strategy.

- Protocols for working with communities and individual Indigenous artists will be developed and incorporated into the Gallery's Collection, acquisitions and exhibitions.
- Key organisational documents, templates and guidelines for dealings with Traditional custodians and community will include guidance on cultural protocols.

Strategy 5: Collection Development

The Gallery aims to collect Indigenous Australian art works from all regions of the country, with the rich diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and experiences in Queensland being a key focus.

- The Gallery will maintain its acclaimed commitment to the commissioning, acquisition and representation of local, State and Australia-wide Indigenous art.
- Guided by the Acquisitions Policy, the Indigenous Australian Art Collection will continue to have a strong focus on contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, fibre art, printmaking, photography, video and installation.

Strategy 6: Exhibition Scheduling and Interpretation

The Gallery is committed to scheduling and supporting Indigenous art exhibitions. The October 2014 launch of a permanent space in QAG for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art gives the Gallery a prominent platform on which to develop and enact its engagement with artists and communities.

- Innovative and sophisticated interpretive frameworks will continue to be explored and developed through the Gallery's exhibitions and displays.

Strategy 7: Intellectual Property

- The Gallery recognises the moral, intellectual and cultural rights of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders as custodians of their cultural heritage.
- The Gallery commits to managing IP owned by Indigenous individuals or communities in a culturally sensitive, inclusive manner (refer to QAGOMA IP Policy).

Strategy 8: Sponsorship and Business Partnerships

The Gallery has identified Indigenous programs and activities as key priorities for sponsorship. The Gallery's ambitions for and commitment to Indigenous collection, exhibition and employment priorities requires sustained philanthropic and corporate support. Ethical considerations in relation to the sponsorship and promotion of institutional art projects have been a prominent political issue in the past two decades for the arts, and consideration of these form an integral part of the Gallery's business decisions.

- The Gallery will continue and enhance its targeted campaign for philanthropic and corporate support of Indigenous programming, training and employment.
- The Gallery's curatorial, business development and marketing units will consider cultural sensitivities at all times in line with Gallery's Sponsorship Policy.

Strategy 9: Employment, Training and Professional Development

The Gallery has a demonstrable commitment to the employment and training of Indigenous Australians across the organisation.

- The Gallery has a commitment to a sustained and ongoing program of Indigenous Australian art exhibitions and will continue to explore possible avenues for staffing and resourcing.
- The Gallery will explore opportunities for funding and coordinating mutually beneficial traineeships and internships²
- The Gallery aims to provide Indigenous cultural awareness training to staff involved with Indigenous personnel and community, and Indigenous art projects, and who may benefit from the opportunity to increase their cultural understanding and competencies.

7. RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

An intended outcome of the Strategy will be the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The RAP will be guided by reference to the RAP program developed by Reconciliation Australia.

The Gallery's RAP will outline practical actions the organisation will take to build strong relationships and enhanced respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. A RAP will also set out the organisation's aspirational plans to drive greater equality by pursuing sustainable opportunities.

² The National Gallery of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander training in the visual arts program is a key model. Its Wesfarmers Arts Indigenous Arts Leadership Program has provided short-course training at the NGA for Indigenous arts workers from across the country, with participants selected for substantial fellowships with the NGA to develop Indigenous strategies ideas in their fields of expertise, with Indigenous digital, exhibitions, display and communications strategies having been developed through the program. To date 37 people have graduated from the program.

The RAP will establish goals, priorities and actions and be reviewed and updated annually.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Trustees is responsible for approving the Gallery's ATSI Engagement Strategy.

The Director has overarching responsibility for ensuring the Gallery has systems in place for the implementation of this Strategy and staff are adequately trained and advised of their responsibilities in respect of ATSI engagement.

The Director may delegate management of any aspect of the Strategy to an appropriate committee or officer within the Gallery. The Gallery's RAP will address roles and responsibilities for operational management of ATSI engagement.

9. ADMINISTRATION

Related Policies and Procedures

- QAGOMA Acquisitions Policy
- QAGOMA Exhibitions Policy
- QAGOMA Collection Management Policy
- QAGOMA IP Policy

Legislation

- *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*
- *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 (Qld)*
- *Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003 (Qld)*

Queensland Government Policy and Guidelines

- Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Sector 2011

Sources and References

- Cultural Ministers Council: Indigenous Australian Art Charter of Principles for Publicly Funded Collecting Institutions
- Comprehensive index of Indigenous Australian art projects at QAGOMA to November 2014
- Queensland Government Opportunities Map for cultural collaboration and engagement across the Arts Statutory Bodies – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures 2012-2105
- www.indigenousartcode.org.au
- www.reconciliation.org.au
- Generation One publication: 'Everybody's Business: A handbook for Indigenous employment'.

10. REVIEW PROCESS

The Strategy will be reviewed at least every five years.

11. PREPARATION

Preparation of this draft Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Strategy was overseen by Maud Page, Deputy Director, Collection and Exhibitions and Jason Smith, Curatorial Manager, Australian Art, and developed in consultation with Avril Quail (QAGOMA Trustee), Bruce McLean (Curator, Indigenous Art) and Aunty Joan Collins (Senior Indigenous Liaison Officer)

12. DOCUMENT OVERSIGHT

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13. DOCUMENT HISTORY

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1.0	Queensland Art Gallery Board of Trustees	April 2015	NA
1.1	Head, Governance and Reporting	24 January 2018	Web version: formatting updated to current standard and a minor change to remove a redundant date in Strategy 3.

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