

# National Library of Australia

27 March 2024

Ref NLA24/296

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

Dear Minister

## **Statement of Intent 2024 – National Library of Australia**

Thank you for your letter of 18 January 2024 setting out your expectations of the National Library of Australia and strategic priorities you have asked the Library to focus on over the next year. We are pleased to respond with this Statement of Intent, and to advise you of some specific commitments and actions that are now underway.

The Library's principal purpose is to collect documentary resources relating to Australia and its people so that the Australian community can discover, learn and create new knowledge to support industry, health, education, communications, regions and the arts throughout Australia. This purpose closely aligns with the Government's National Cultural Policy *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*.

The Library's 2023-24 Corporate Plan articulates our commitment both to placing First Nations First and connecting Australians with national collections, thus enriching our understanding of who we are and our place in the world. We are currently developing our 2024-25 Corporate Plan with a view to calibrating our connection to *Revive* and to help track our performance against its pillars – First Nations First, A Place for Every Story, the Centrality of the Artist, Strong Cultural Infrastructure and Engaging the Audience.

### ***First Nations First***

The Library will continue the vital work of fostering an appreciation and understanding of First Nations culture and knowledge systems. We have a range of policy frameworks, such as our Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) protocol, that demonstrate our commitment to implementing activities that are First Nations-led and centred.

The proactive implementation of the Library's ICIP protocol is a significant change to the custodianship and care of collections containing First Nations material, positioning First Nations people as cultural authorities over their cultural knowledge. By conducting projects and managing requests in accordance with the



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principles of the protocol, the Library is creating and fostering opportunities for First Nations-led interpretation and management of First Nations arts and culture. To that end, we will continue to commission First Nations people to scope and conduct oral history projects and to host the successful Deadly Dialogue in-conversation events. We will also continue our publishing program of First Nations stories in First Nations voices and will ensure that First Nations people have a say in how their ICIP and other materials are accessed, used, and interpreted.

The Library's flagship Trove service has focused on delivering culturally appropriate collections to First Nations people since 2020. In addition to a cultural warning system and a First Australians landing page, Trove enables searching across 241 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages, utilising the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies AustLang codes (as of December 2023, more than 11,000 AustLang language codes have been added to Trove items). Through the Trove Collaborative Services program, the Library also offers a series of First Nations-led webinars about recognising ICIP, better managing language materials and culturally appropriate description practices. These have been attended by representatives of hundreds of cultural organisations.

### ***A Place for Every Story***

The Library continues to build a collection that is representative of the Australian community's cultural diversity. We have worked for several years to increase and improve the representation of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the collection. Specifically, large-scale collaborative collecting efforts are focussed on Australians with Chinese heritage, Fijian Australians and Indian Diaspora communities.

Each year, the Library commissions over 1,000 hours of oral history recordings and, in the last financial year, six per cent of interviewees were First Nations, while 40 per cent had culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.<sup>1</sup> Where appropriate, oral history interviews are recorded in languages other than English.

The Library is working with self-publishers and independent publishing communities to raise awareness of legal deposit, what it is and why it's important. This will ensure that as much as possible the works of independent authors across contemporary genres such as flash fiction, slam poetry, graphic novels and 'Cli Fi' (climate science fiction) form part of the national collection for enjoyment and research, now and into the future.

### ***Centrality of the Artist***

The Library strives to balance the rights of content creators with its obligations to make material available to the Australian public. A framework of policies and procedures regarding copyright and access rights across

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<sup>1</sup> Current and planned oral history projects with First Nations content include the long-running *Seven years on: continuing life histories of Aboriginal leaders and Reconciliation Australia* projects led by Peter Read; *First Nations Mothers and Climate Change* in Wadawurrung Country, to be led by Carla Pascoe Leahy and Julia Hurst; *Contemporary Indigenous Music*, to be led by Torres Strait Islander radio personality Rhianna Patrick; and interviews on the pearling industry with Elders in Far North Queensland and the Torres Strait, to be led by First Nations researcher Nerelle Nicol. Examples of oral histories recorded in language include Vian Zixin Lin and Manko Shi (Mandarin), Hsiung-Wei Shih (Paiwan), and at least 11 subjects interviewed by Christopher Cheng in Cantonese and other dialects for the Australians with Chinese heritage oral history project.

the Library's collection ensures that the intellectual property rights and moral rights of creators are robustly maintained. The Library is also committed, in close consultation with creators, to promote comprehensive access to their collections for everyone.

Enabling researchers and creators to access the Library's collection - whether it be the digitised collection via Trove, or in our reading rooms, or online references services and resources - is central to our work. Since the mid-1980s, the Library has provided a program of fellowships, scholarships and grants that make it possible for researchers, creative artists and PhD students to undertake research residencies at the Library. In 2024, a total of 23 residencies have been awarded, funded by donations and bequests.

National Library Publishing and the National Library Bookshop are strong supporters of Australian writers, artists, illustrators, graphic designers and publishers. In the last five years, we have worked with 40 authors, 12 illustrators and 15 designers, including eight First Nations creatives. The Library also connects the public with the creative content industry through public events and learning programs, showcasing writers, researchers, artists and musicians.

### ***Strong Cultural Infrastructure***

The Library will continue to play a leadership role within national and international library sectors, including through the Australian Library and Information Association and National and State Libraries Australasia, to support and enhance the infrastructure that underpins the knowledge sector.

We continue to connect to regional and metropolitan communities by collecting and making their national stories accessible. For example, Trove is used by millions of Australians across the country, holding a story for every place and a (digital) place for every story. The Library plans to gradually replace vulnerable back-end systems (a process that started in July 2023 with replacement of the metadata engine), essentially safeguarding our services and collections. In August 2023, the Library launched the Trove Content Contributor program, enabling small and large organisations to make their collections visible and discoverable in Trove at no cost. From this year, we will also introduce handwritten text recognition technology to enable deep searching of Australia's most significant archival collections.

We are implementing a program to constantly monitor digital infrastructure and increase capability to resist and as necessary recover from cybersecurity events, and implementing technology roadmaps and architecture to support cultural infrastructure systems, including a new library management system and data analytics platform.

### ***Engaging the Audience***

The Library will continue to deliver its digital outreach programs to extend national reach and engagement, particularly to regional areas. We will actively expand engagement with linguistically and culturally diverse communities by delivering high-quality learning experiences and outreach programs via a wide range of platforms and delivery mechanisms.

The Library strives to provide rich opportunities for all Australians to access culture through a variety of exhibitions, programs, events and digital offerings. In 2024-25 our temporary exhibitions will include Australia's Migration Stories and a feature on the Fairfax photography archive, and we will also feature the

works of noted Australian photographer William Yang, and a showcase of the Jamie and Michael Kassler collection which contains a significant number of rare books, music, manuscripts and ephemera.

Our reach extends to a broad national audience, and we seek to provide an engaging onsite experience alongside other National Collection Institutions. Local activities include showcasing the Library's collection through the recent Enlighten Festival and our exhibition program. The Library also conducts a series of flagship lectures, where leading creative minds and writers are given a platform to explore topics that contribute to current national conversations.

The Library also provides learning to school students across Australia through its Digital Classroom. Designed for teachers, it connects the Library's collections with students in line with the Australian curriculum.

Our Trove 2030 Collaborative Strategy will guide our work with partners to provide comprehensive digital access to Australian collections. Complementing this work, a Digital Access to Collections Strategy is guiding the Library's digitisation priorities to serve the broadest possible cross-section of Australian society.

### ***Philanthropic and private sector opportunities***

The Library has raised \$9.35 million in philanthropic funding since July 2018 to support improved access to our collections, particularly by digitising and sharing our national collections on Trove. There are over 30 digitisation projects (delivered or in progress) with philanthropic funding support. These projects include: the Papunya readers digitisation project; our forthcoming digitisation of the speeches of Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue; the digitisation of local history collections (now underway) with an emphasis on place-based stories; and performing arts digitisation projects about artists like Dame Nellie Melba, Sir Robert Helpmann, Miriam Hyde, Kristian Frederikson, Kenneth Rowell, Gertrud Bodenwieser and Eileen Kramer.

### ***Information management***

Based on the National Archives check-up information management survey, the Library is sufficiently and consistently compliant with information management expectations. We have an information management strategy and five-year roadmap, and we are building information management capability across the organisation.

### ***Funding Commitment***

The 2023-24 Budget provided the Library with a significant funding uplift, which will allow us to not only care for and promote Australia's culture and history, but also to appropriately grow our workforce. The Library's Council and Audit and Enterprise Risk Committee will continue to closely monitor the allocation of resources to ensure our financial sustainability.

We have been working closely with the Office for the Arts and the Department of Finance to progress critical and urgent building works, such as designing and replacing a waterproof membrane and roof for the high-voltage substation and chemical store area to prevent recurring water ingress caused by root penetration, and waterproofing external stairs and access ramps.

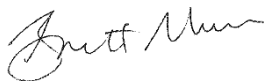
As part of 2023-24 Budget funding, the Library increased investment in preventative maintenance and repairs, such as by updating and reprogramming the Strategic Asset Management Plan and Lifecycle Cost Plan for all its facilities. The first tranche of works will focus on upgrading the Parkes building's core security system, replacing remaining chiller plant and electrification of boilers, and upgrading lighting and other work at the Hume Storage Repository. The remaining tranche of work is currently being mapped and costed to understand future preservation and maintenance pressures.

The Library was pleased to provide the first biannual update of our financial performance in February 2024, which included plans, costings and progress for all critical building improvement and maintenance projects, and key capital works projects such as the windows refurbishment, base building services upgrade works, and the construction of the northern end extension of the Hume Repository (all funded in whole or part via specific purpose government funding). We are pleased to advise that these projects are on track.

Finally, the Library provides a safe and inclusive workplace and continues to strive to be a workplace of choice. The Library's Disability and Inclusion Action Plan is in the final stages of development. It outlines the Library's commitment to enhancing disability access and inclusion for our workforce, our onsite users and users of online services.

You can have every confidence in the Library continuing to be a leader in the national and international library community and a truly national institution without geographical, economic or other boundaries, which proudly connects Australians with their stories.

Yours sincerely



The Honourable Dr Brett Mason  
Chair, National Library of Australia Council



Dr Marie-Louise Ayres FAHA  
Director-General, National Library of Australia