NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

28 January 2026

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

Ref NLA26/21/08

Dear Minister

Statement of Intent – National Library of Australia

Thank you for your letter of 4 November 2025 setting out your expectations of the National Library of Australia, and the 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 industries and regions throughout Australia. This purpose, our priorities outlined in *Treasured: the National Library of Australia Strategic Vision 2025-2033 and our 2025-26 Corporate Plan* closely align with the Government's National Cultural Policy *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*.

First Nations First

Our Corporate Plan articulates our commitment to placing First Nations First. In 2026, the Library will deepen Australians' appreciation and understanding of First Nations culture and knowledge systems, while connecting respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Our Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property protocol guides our approach, acknowledging the complexity of managing cultural knowledge in national institutions. Development of detailed requirements is underway for Culturally Safe Digitisation at the Library, and for a digital platform to facilitate community consultation.

A highlight in 2026 will be our exhibition *Wangka Wakanutja: The story has been written*. Co-curated with members of the Papunya community, this exhibition tells the story of the Papunya Literature Production Centre and the hundreds of bilingual readers produced from the 1960s to the 1990s and how they came into the Library's care. With an accompanying digitisation and Trove feature, this is just one example of our First Nations-led approach to highlighting Aboriginal culture.

We will also continue our collecting and publishing program of First Nations stories in First Nations voices. The Library's flagship Trove service enables searching across 241 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages, utilising the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies AustLang codes.

A Place for Every Story

The Library continues to build a collection that is representative of the Australian community's cultural diversity. We work proactively with creators and publishers to raise awareness of legal deposit, what it is and why it is important. We have worked for several years to increase and improve the representation of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the collection.

Each year, the Library commissions up to 1,000 hours of oral history recordings. In the last financial year, 7% of interviewees were First Nations, with 14% of projects being First Nations led, and 30% of interviewees had culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Where appropriate, oral history interviews are recorded in languages other than English.

The Library's Collecting Strategy 2024-2028, demonstrates our focus on collecting material created in Australia, by Australians, about Australia and about selected countries in our region, to share with a wide range of audiences, now and in the future. Collecting from, and about, the countries of Asia and the Pacific is the Library's highest priority after its Australian collecting responsibilities. In recognition of our cultural links and regional proximity, the Library prioritises countries in Melanesia, focusing on Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, New Caledonia and Timor-Leste.

From 2025 to 2028 the National Library is undertaking a Pacific Peoples in Australia project which aims to improve representation of diverse Pacific diaspora communities in the collection through a community-led collecting project. This project will rely strongly on external stakeholder engagement including Australia-wide Pacific diaspora communities and community contact points.

Centrality of the Artist

The Library balances the rights of content creators with its obligations to make material available to the Australian public. A framework of policies and procedures regarding artificial intelligence (AI), copyright and access rights across the Library's collection ensures that the intellectual property rights and moral rights of creators are robustly maintained.

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. A total of 16 residencies have been awarded for 2026, funded by donations and bequests.

National Library Publishing and the National Library Bookshop are staunch 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's leadership of Trove — as digital infrastructure that supports regional and metropolitan communities by collecting and making their national stories accessible — gives it a unique place in Australia's cultural infrastructure capability. Trove is used by millions of Australians across the country, holding a story for every place and a (digital) place for every story. Given the importance of this infrastructure, the Library implements its strategic technology plans to ensure service continuity and sustainability. This includes constant monitoring of digital infrastructure and strengthening capability to resist and, as necessary, recover from cybersecurity events.

The Library's contribution to strong cultural infrastructure goes well beyond the digital realm. For example, the Library is actively involved in the Department of Home Affairs' Inter-Departmental Committee on Social Inclusion, advocating for and facilitating recognition of Australian libraries as social and cultural infrastructure that can be leveraged for issues of national importance, such as building stronger and more connected communities.

The Library is compliant with the provisions of the *Archives Act 1983* and with the requirements of the whole-of-government 'Building Trust in the Public Record' policy. We have implemented a five-year road map to enhance the Library's information management maturity.

Engaging the Audience

The Library will deliver a vibrant program of community engagement activities that create meaningful, memorable experiences for learners and audiences of all ages and extend the Library's national reach. Major exhibitions, interactive programs and signature events will invite audiences to explore the collection. Our flagship lectures will bring leading thinkers and creatives to the national stage to spark timely national

conversations. Our digital approach ensures these experiences are accessible across Australia through live-streamed events, on-demand content and interactive online learning.

We will deepen connections with First Nations peoples and culturally and linguistically diverse communities by co-creating programs, including our Deadly Dialogues series, that reflect First Nations languages, histories and contemporary voices.

We will broaden our audio storytelling with a new podcast series drawing on the Library's rich Oral History collection, offering another way for audiences to engage with the stories held in the national collection.

Through the Digital Classroom, we will continue to support teachers and inspire students with curriculum-aligned resources that bring primary sources to life. W will continue to expand our Lifelong Learning resources, assisting people of all ages to engage with the collection to achieve their own learning goals.

Provide strong leadership and collaboration within national and international libraries

The Library continues to play a leadership role within the Australian library system, and more broadly the Australian galleries, museum and archive sector.

In addition to working with 900 libraries, archives, museums and galleries to ensure Trove is a truly national service, the Library also provides the National eDeposit service, a single, efficient and sustainable service used by the National, State and Territory libraries to develop, preserve and provide access to a comprehensive collection of Australian publications.

Beyond these technical roles, the Library provides leadership across a range of policy and technical matters, ranging from management of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, copyright, digital preservation, and descriptive standards. We welcome participation in the refresh of *Significance 2.0* and will leverage our national role to ensure strong input from the Australian library sector. Our key role in and commitment to the work of National and State Libraries Australasia makes a major contribution to ensuring that Australian library services are as efficient, effective, consistent and sustainable as possible.

At the international level, the Library is seen as a digital leader on multiple fronts. For example, at a major international conference held in London in December 2025, it was clear that the Library's implementation of AI-enabled Handwritten Text Recognition – at production level across well over 1 million pages of digitised manuscripts – was well ahead of and an inspiration to similar organisations. Our AI Framework, published in March 2025, was the first major statement by an Australian cultural organisation, and among the first in the world setting out the full range of considerations required for ethical and effective use of AI in cultural settings.

The Library continues its strong relationships with the national libraries and archives of New Zealand, Canada and the United States of America, fostered during intensive and strategic engagement in north America in late 2024, with a March 2026 meeting in New Zealand set to consolidate this work.

In collaboration with the National Library of New Zealand, the Library is focusing on collecting Pacific documentary heritage, including sharing information on collecting approaches, web archiving of Pacific content and exploring opportunities for capacity building in the Pacific.

Beyond the strategic, the Library's international contributions are also intensely practical, particularly in the Pacific arena. The Library has been a member of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau since 1968. This membership continues to assist with the long-term preservation and accessibility of the documentary heritage of Pacific nations. As the Australian conduit for digital content entering the Department of Foreign Affairs funded Digital Pasifik, the Library ensures that peoples across the Pacific can access, enjoy and learn from digital copies of cultural materials held in Australian institutions.

Ensure policy and procedures are in place to promote diversity, sustainability, reconciliation, disability access and inclusion

The Library provides a safe, accessible and inclusive workplace and continues to be a workplace of choice. In 2024 the Library launched its Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2024-2026 and has since implemented actions from the Plan that demonstrate our ongoing commitment to enhancing disability access and inclusion for our workforce, our onsite users, and users of online services. Our highest priority is to improve accessibility of entry

to the Library. The Library's current ramp does not meet code and does not offer the frail, aged or those with disability a safe and dignified way of entering the Library's iconic building. The Library is fortunate to have access to the knowledge of the Deputy Chair of the Council who has lived experience of disability.

The Library has made considerable progress in building its First Nations cultural capability, especially through the practical and daily work of implementing its Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property protocol at scale. The Library is currently reviewing its progress on respectfully engaging Indigenous Australians and plans to publish a new Indigenous Engagement Strategy in 2026.

The Library is committed to sustainability goals and has committed to an Environmental Action Plan to reduce emissions within the constraints of our function as a collecting institution within a heritage building.

Philanthropic and private sector opportunities

The Library has raised $12.5 million in philanthropic funding since July 2018 to support improved access to our collections, particularly by digitising and sharing our national collections on Trove. More than 50 digitisation projects have been delivered or are in progress with philanthropic funding support. All National Library Fellowships and Scholarships are made possible through the generous support of Library donors and bequestors.

The Council has recently established a Foundation as a subcommittee of Council, to steer the Library through the next phases of its philanthropic strategy. Former Council member and Chair of the Library's Audit and Enterprise Risk Committee, Doug Snedden AO, has agreed to chair the Foundation. The Library's Investment Policy – made possible through legislative reform in 2021 – has proven a strong attractor for those intending to leave a bequest to the Library. Bequestors can now be confident that the Library will invest their gifts for the long term, taking more risk than is possible under rules governing Commonwealth funds, and using earnings, rather than the principal, to achieve bequestor aims.

Funding Commitments and Capital Work

The 2023-24 Budget provided the Library with a significant funding uplift, which allowed us to have confidence in secure funding for the care and promotion of Australia's culture and history.

This funding has enabled the replacement of several end-of-life systems that support Trove, significantly improving safeguarding of our services and digital collections. Trove's continuing and indexed funding is also enabling expansion of services. For example, the Trove Content Contributor program now enables 326 small and large organisations to make their collections visible and discoverable in Trove, and the introduction of handwritten text recognition technology is deepening search capability across Australia's most significant archival collections.

The Library is well advanced in progressing its critical building improvement and maintenance projects. The end of life base building services upgrades and the construction of the northern end extension of the Hume Repository have reached practical completion. The multi-year refurbishment of the Library heritage windows is on track for completion in 2027, with funding announced at MYEFO 2025 enabling the final stage to proceed. A forward program to upgrade the remaining building services that are approaching end of life is under development. If funded, these will complete the midlife refurbishment of the Library's base building services by 2030.

Future consultation on the National Cultural Policy

The Library welcomes participation in consultation on the next iteration of the National Cultural Policy. The Library recognises that *Revive* was published at the end of a period of significant disruption in the performing arts sector and that content on cultural infrastructure focused on the needs of this part of the cultural sector, and the need to reinvest in National Cultural Institutions.

The Library is in an excellent position to, and eager to ensure that the concept of Strong Cultural Infrastructure recognises the critical role cultural organisations – large and small, national, state and local – play as infrastructure.

As a single example, there are more than 1700 public library service points across Australia, around one-third of Australians are members of the local public library, and each of those members visits their local library an average of seven times per annum. Physical visitation, and physical and digital loans are all increasing. In

2023-24, more than 7 million Australians participated in public programming in these libraries, with literacy and lifelong learning sessions leading the way.

It is this context that has seen the Department of Home Affairs partner with the Australian Library and Information Association to deliver social inclusion and cohesion programs at more than 125 Australian libraries. The Library is in a unique position to ensure this system wide view can make the next version of the National Cultural Policy even stronger.

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 which proudly connects Australians with their stories.

Yours sincerely

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