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# 2015 ACT ARTS POLICY



**ACT**  
Government



# ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The Australian Capital Territory is Ngunnawal Country. The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the Canberra region. The region was also an important meeting place and significant to other Aboriginal groups. The ACT Government acknowledges the historical dispossession and its continuing legacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

# CONTENTS

Message from the Minister for the Arts.....	2
Where are we now? .....	4
How it all fits together.....	8
Our vision.....	9
Our values .....	10
Our principles.....	12
Principle 1: Participation in and access to the arts.....	13
Principle 2: Great art and great artists.....	17
Principle 3: Vitality of the Canberra Region arts ecology.....	20
Principle 4: Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures.....	23
What we will do and how we will know that we have succeeded.....	26

# MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR THE ARTS

The arts improve and strengthen communities, and a strong arts sector is essential to the cultural, social and economic fabric of a place. Around the world, art plays a key role in the creation of vibrant, culturally rich and diverse cities and in Canberra we are fortunate to have a thriving local arts scene, made up of artists, arts workers and arts organisations who use their ideas and creativity to add colour, life and movement to our city.

In 2012 I released the ACT Arts Policy Framework which intended to set a vision for the arts sector in Canberra. The arts landscape has changed significantly since then, not only have we celebrated the centenary of our city and developed a city brand, but Canberra is increasingly being recognised as a creative and cultural hub.

Canberra is also being seen as one of the world's most liveable cities and this is thanks in large part to our city culture. The 2015 ACT Arts Policy sets a vision for the future and outlines how we will support our local artists, so that Canberra can continue to be known not only as the world's most liveable city, but also as one of Australia's most vibrant artistic centres.

The new policy encourages collaboration and innovation, and respects the integrity of our local artists. If there is one constant in our arts sector, it's that it is always changing. I look forward to continuing the conversation with artists, arts workers, arts organisations and audiences to ensure our arts policy remains relevant and engaged.

Our vision for the arts is simple. We want the arts in Canberra to be a diverse and dynamic arts ecology which is valued locally, nationally and globally. As Minister for the Arts I will encourage the pursuit of excellence and innovation, and anticipate that this revised policy will support our arts sector in its many and varied creative endeavours.

Joy Burch, MLA  
Minister for the Arts  
June 2015

# WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The ACT Government recognises that arts and culture are an integral part of the lives of individuals as well as the whole social and economic fabric of Canberra. The arts help to define our community's identity and give expression to community values. Creativity is also fundamental to innovation and business growth.

The 2015 ACT Arts Policy outlines the vision, values and principles within which artsACT operates, as well as providing guidance for the work of the Cultural Facilities Corporation (CFC) and for other ACT Government agencies whose work impacts on or can be enhanced by the arts such as Visit Canberra, Innovation, Trade and Investment, Libraries, ACT Health, the Community Services Directorate and the Education and Training Directorate.

The Canberra Region has many diverse artists and arts organisations that provide inspiration and opportunity for residents within Canberra and beyond. It needs to be acknowledged that Canberra is and should continue to be a regional hub for the arts and that we have a responsibility for both state level and local engagement with the arts.

With this acknowledgement comes the need to be clear about responsibilities, especially for funding and it is for this reason that the ACT Arts Fund only supports ACT based arts practice.

Working together and making connections is essential to achieving the vision set out here and we need to build and maintain our relationships so we can achieve more. We are ready to put Canberra on the national and international stage.

Part of our commitment set out in this Policy is to work on our engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and artists to ensure that we are engaged with this important part of Australian culture and that it is celebrated, represented and embedded in what we do.

As the ACT Government's arts agency, artsACT reports to the Minister for the Arts, Ms Joy Burch MLA. artsACT provides policy and funding advice to government; manages the ACT Arts Fund and a range of other arts development and funding initiatives; manages the ACT Government public art collection; oversees the development and management of key ACT arts facilities; and maintains links with other arts and cultural organisations including the Australia Council for the Arts and the federal Ministry for the Arts. artsACT does this to recognise the integral part the arts and culture play in our community and to encourage creativity, celebration, interpretation, artistic vibrancy and exchange of ideas. artsACT is genuine in our belief that Canberra is an influential part of the arts and cultural sector nationally and internationally and want to share that story.

The CFC is a statutory enterprise of the ACT Government managing the Canberra Theatre Centre, Canberra Museum and Gallery and three ACT Historic Places run as house museums. The CFC has a vision for Canberra to be a creative capital that values the arts for their intrinsic qualities, their contribution to building a more inclusive and resilient society, their support for making the city an exciting place to live and an attractive destination for business and tourism, and their important role in the economy of the ACT. The CFC seeks to enable our distinctive institutions to provide enriching cultural experiences that contribute to Canberra's identity.



This 2015 ACT Arts Policy was developed following a review of the ACT Arts Policy Framework which was released in 2012. The feedback received throughout the review process was invaluable in refreshing the Framework to create a new vision and refined principles.

The first step in the review process was the appointment of an independent Reference Group on 16 January 2015. The role of the Reference Group was to guide the consultation process.

The second step involved consultation with local arts organisations, artists and the public. The consultation involved a range of methodologies in order to garner a wide range of views, including a community forum attended by over 65 people, sector workshops attended by a total of 62 people, a closed Facebook group comprising 63 young and emerging artists, an online survey completed by 116 people and 26 written submissions. Overall, artsACT estimates that over 300 individuals and representative organisations were engaged in the consultation process.

A Consultation Report was developed to record the comments and views of the community through the review process. The Report is available on the artsACT website [www.arts.act.gov.au](http://www.arts.act.gov.au).

# HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER

## Our vision for the arts

To be a diverse and dynamic arts ecology valued locally, nationally and globally

## Our principles

1. Participation in and access to the arts
2. Great art and great artists
3. Vitality of the Canberra Region arts ecology
4. Engage with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures

## What we do

Policy, communications and partnerships

Public Art and Infrastructure

Funding

Canberra Museum and Gallery

Canberra Theatre Centre

Historic Places

Government Business, Administration and Support

## ACT Government Arts Agency Strategic Plans

artsACT Strategic Plan

Cultural Facilities Corporation Strategic Plan

## Our values

Respect · Integrity · Collaboration · Innovation

## ACT Government Priorities

Health and education  
Economic growth and diversification  
Suburban renewal and better transport  
Enhancing liveability and social inclusion

**OUR VISION**

**TO BE A DIVERSE  
AND DYNAMIC ARTS  
ECOLOGY VALUED  
LOCALLY, NATIONALLY  
AND GLOBALLY.**

# OUR VALUES

The ACT Government adheres to the values set out in the ACT Public Service Code of Conduct (2012). Those values are respect, integrity, collaboration and innovation. The ACT Arts Policy has at its centre the same values.

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## Respect

Respect means treating others with the sensitivity, courtesy and understanding we would wish for ourselves, and recognising that everyone has something to offer. It means thinking “would I be happy if this was happening to me” and rests on a foundation of fundamental decency in our dealings with people.

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## Integrity

Integrity means being, honest, dependable, and it means recognising achievement, not shirking uncomfortable conversations and implies a consistency in our dealings with others.

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## Collaboration

Collaboration means actively sharing information and resources, working together towards shared goals and asking “who else do I need to talk with to get this right”. It means actively seeking opportunities for breaking down unhealthy silos and relies on genuine engagement with people.

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## Innovation

Innovation means asking “but why”, actively seeking out new and better ways of doing what we do (as well as better things to do), and not settling for how it has always been. It means empowering people in all the connections we make to raise new ideas and necessitates sensible and thoughtful engagement with risk.

# OUR PRINCIPLES

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## **Principle 1: Participation in and access to the arts**

Participation in the arts is a central part of what makes Canberra a vibrant and creative place. Participation can include being an engaged audience member, a student, a maker, a performer or an arts worker. Participation should be individual and accessible and it should reflect the diverse cultures, heritage, age, gender, abilities, forms, locations and scales of arts practice.

The ACT Government works in partnership with the community and the arts sector to fund, enable and deliver arts activity and programs. It is through these respectful partnerships where genuine engagement with the arts leads to the cultural vibrancy we all value.



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## Case Study

In 2013 Parkinson's ACT and Belconnen Arts Centre collaborated to present the first ever weekly dance program in the ACT specifically designed for people with Parkinson's disease. Due to their success, classes are now held at both the Belconnen and Tuggeranong Arts Centres, where participants are led through a carefully planned program of appropriate, enjoyable, engaging and challenging dance activities.



*“The classes are a great social outlet and it’s also very important for my Parkinson’s to do as much exercise as possible.” – Class participant*

For people with Parkinson’s disease, rigorous dance classes led by trained teaching artists are becoming internationally renowned as a beneficial addition to the portfolio of recognised and researched exercise and therapy interventions. By approaching movement as dance students, not as patients, people with Parkinson’s can focus on specific concerns like mobility, balance, rhythm and flexibility in an enjoyable, social and communal environment.

Participants report that the classes boost their confidence levels, transform their attitudes about living with a chronic illness, and help them manage some of the symptoms associated with Parkinson’s disease. Social interaction within the dance class helps to combat social isolation and depression whilst empowering participants with a sense of physical possibility and artistic achievement.



*Canberra Multicultural Fringe 2015.  
Photograph by Martin Ollman.*

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## **Principle 2: Great art and great artists**

The concept of excellence is one which draws heated debate. What is excellent art and how does it relate to the process or the outcomes for the artist and participants? We want to avoid the narrow definitions of excellence and talk about the impact that art has, innovation in creative industries, risk taking particularly in emerging artforms and the development of ideas. We want to support great art and great artists as well as the pursuit of greatness.

Central to this is innovation, originality and integrity as well as the development of artists and artforms. The placement of Canberra Region art and artists in the local, national and global context is an essential component of what we need to be doing.

We need to be promoting the art and artists of the ACT within and outside our borders to show that we are a force to be reckoned with in the arts industry.



*Canberra Glassworks 8th birthday celebration and opening night of the Canberra International Music Festival. Image courtesy of Adam McGrath.*

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## Case Study

Canberra Glassworks is a dynamic, professional working glassworks providing local, national and international contemporary glass artists with access to state-of-the-art equipment and a unique context to explore, develop and realise new Australian work. It is the only arts institution of its type in Australia, completely dedicated to contemporary glass, one of few like it internationally. It is valued by nationally and internationally renowned artists for its sophisticated equipment and facilities which allow them to work collaboratively and to a large scale. Its annual program includes exhibitions, artist access programs and community engagement programs and it provides contemporary glass for sale.

Operating since 2007, it was established as a special initiative of the ACT Government through artsACT. It is a tourist attraction and approximately 50,000 people visit each year to see and engage with artists working throughout the building.

It is housed in the historic Kingston Power House in the developing and visionary Kingston Arts Precinct.

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## Principle 3: Vitality of the Canberra Region arts ecology

Artists, arts organisations, arts workers and arts audiences are all elements of the arts ecology in the Canberra Region. These elements may be supported by government but are often supported through other means. The ecology as a whole needs recognition and support to ensure ongoing sustainability, viability, to encourage innovative practice, support critical reflection and undertake evaluation. How the Canberra Region arts ecology fits nationally is important, especially given the location of National Cultural Institutions here in Canberra. With all of this comes the need to be clear about responsibilities, especially for funding and it is for this reason that the ACT Arts Fund only supports Canberra based arts practice.

Sector development will assist in the vitality of the ecology by strengthening and supporting an effective, cohesive and dynamic sector. This in turn will assist the sector to meet the challenges of a changing world, improve practice and build capacity through the provision of information, training, networking, resource development, collaboration and partnership for artists, arts workers, arts organisations and arts businesses. Recognition of the close link between creativity and innovation and the important role of the arts in improving Canberra's attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit can be supported through innovation, capability and capacity building.

We need to maintain and develop our existing cultural infrastructure to support the ecology and consolidate the work we have undertaken so far on hubs to understand roles and responsibilities in their further development.



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## Case Study

The Canberra Theatre Centre has a dynamic program of structured workplace learning for secondary students. It includes work experience and vocational education and training.

In Year 10, work experience students work under supervision alongside professional staff, helping to set up and work backstage while learning theatre skills. Students in the vocational education and training stream are working towards a Certificate II or Certificate III. They work throughout the year on major productions and learn all facets of setting the stage, as well as stage lighting and sound. Competition for places on these programs is intense.

The students finish Year 12 industry-ready and able to join the workforce in a commercial theatre anywhere in Australia.



*Opposite: Canberra Theatre Centre staff member Loki Clarke demonstrates how to set a dead (guide) in the rope when flying in scenery. Image courtesy of Greer Versteeg.*

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## **Principle 4: Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are an important part of Australian culture and they need to be celebrated, represented and embedded in what we do.

artsACT has a lot to learn and a long way to come in working with both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. We need to establish ways to build the capacity of, develop and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, organisations and community within the ACT. We will encourage relationships, advocate for and acknowledge the important cultural role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have in the ACT.



*Natalie Bateman  
Acknowledgement of Country 2013  
Acrylic on canvas  
Canberra Region Cancer Centre  
Arts and Health Program, ACT Health*

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## Case Study

This Acknowledgement of Country was funded by medical officers of the Canberra Region Cancer Centre (CRCC) from their personal incomes, to show their commitment to 'closing the gap' in their field.

The key policy objective of the Arts in Health Program is to enhance the Canberra Hospital and Health Service's delivery of health services to the Canberra community and catchment area. Following the endorsement of the National Arts and Health Framework in 2013 there is increasing awareness of the impressive national and international research that has repeatedly demonstrated that arts programs and activities make significant contributions to health outcomes.

In this work Natalie Bateman, a Yuin woman from the NSW South Coast, shows the Rainbow Serpent bringing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from the ACT and surrounding region in need of treatment to the CRCC with comfort, reassurance, guidance and spiritual strength.

In commissioning Natalie Bateman it was anticipated that her work would generate a sense of safety, a sense of validation and confidence in the CRCC as a place of excellence and supported learning.

# WHAT WE WILL DO AND HOW WE WILL KNOW THAT WE HAVE SUCCEEDED

The 2015 ACT Arts Policy will be implemented through the work of artsACT and by guiding the activities of the CFC and other ACT Government agencies involved in the arts. The ACT Government is working on whole of government connections and together with the arts community we can work in partnership to support development and innovation. It is important to recognise that the arts can play a vital role in the delivery of services to our community and that other areas of government can provide a role in supporting the arts.

We have listened to the community and it is clear that there are many operational and practical elements of the work of artsACT which require clarification. We also know that the impact of what we do needs to be measured to inform planning and the best use of resources.

The priorities and actions which will see this Policy implemented are set out in the strategic plans of both artsACT and the CFC. Sitting alongside these strategic documents will be a number of operational plans which are to be developed by artsACT on issues such as: research and data; cultural infrastructure; communications; community arts and cultural development; and funding.

We will know that we have succeeded by using the measures set out in our strategic plans. There are a number of quantitative ways of measuring our success including through attendance and participation rates, number of people employed in the arts sector, and the achievements of our artists interstate and overseas. We recognise, however, that to paint a full picture of our arts ecology, we also need to look at qualitative information such as the public value and social, community and health impact of the arts. artsACT will develop a research and data plan in order to provide a comprehensive framework for the development and management of research undertaken and supported by the ACT Government as well as the Australian Government. This research will play an important role in our strategic planning, program development and overall evaluation of the impact of what we fund.

An important part of the implementation of this Policy will be promoting our successes: sharing the stories of artsACT, the CFC, artists, arts workers and arts organisations. Our engagement with the sector and the community will be essential in ensuring that we develop, grow and deliver.





# ACCESSIBILITY

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