NORTHERN TERRITORY
INDIGENOUS ARTS STRATEGY

Building Strong Arts Business

Northern Territory Government
Department of Community Development, Sport & Cultural Affairs
The Northern Territory benefits from an exceptionally rich artistic and cultural heritage. The cultural practices of Indigenous Territorians reflect the ongoing and unbroken traditions of many millennia. At the same time, contemporary developments in Indigenous visual and performing arts, building on these traditions, are extending Northern Territory arts in new and exciting directions, attracting world interest and acclaim.

Artistic endeavour and cultural expression are vital to a sense of our history, language and community identity. Indigenous artists and craftspeople assert creativity, spiritual and political values, and a celebration of relationship to country through the visual and performing arts.

In addition, the arts and heritage industries are a significant part of our economy, directly through employment, marketing and sales, and indirectly in terms of visitor experience and support for tourism. These are expanding industries and a growing source of employment and income generation in the Territory.

My Government believes that we have a responsibility to enshrine protection for the intellectual property rights of creative artists.

I have committed my Government to developing an Indigenous Arts Strategy to assist in the promotion and further development of the Territory’s Indigenous arts sector to its full potential. With a focus on Indigenous control of the industry, the Strategy will protect integrity and maximise benefits for all.

I am very proud that the Northern Territory is the first jurisdiction in Australia to develop a comprehensive Indigenous Arts Strategy and I commend it to you.

Clare Martin
Chief Minister, Northern Territory
The Northern Territory Indigenous Arts Strategy Building Strong Arts Business focuses Government programs and services to grow and strengthen the Northern Territory’s Indigenous arts sector.

The Strategy’s six year life span is designed to ensure that there are adequate timelines for developing and setting new initiatives and cooperative arrangements and that achievements are well grounded and sustainable.

Building Strong Arts Business recognises that the Indigenous arts sector in the Northern Territory delivers direct economic, social and cultural benefits to the whole Territory community and the Australian nation.

The Strategy is a whole of government initiative that has been developed cooperatively. It will be driven and monitored by an Interdepartmental Committee in partnership with an Indigenous Arts Reference Group.

Building Strong Arts Business is designed to complement the principles of the NT Government’s social and economic development strategies, “Building our Community” and “Building a Better Territory”. It will also form an important part of Government’s strategies for Indigenous economic development by linking with the following initiatives:

- Building Stronger Regions – Stronger Futures
- Building Stronger Territory Trade
- NT Tourism Strategy
- NT Employment, Education and Training Strategy
- Investing in the Arts in the Northern Territory.

Building Strong Arts Business will result in increased employment and training for Indigenous artists and arts workers and will contribute significantly to economic development, including through tourism.
Northern Territory Government programs, services and initiatives are based on the foundation of partnerships with Indigenous people to:

• build strong regional communities
• foster cultural and artistic development
• celebrate cultural diversity
• provide opportunities for Territory youth
• protect Indigenous rights, and
• facilitate economic and employment growth.

Building Strong Arts Business, is built on the general principles of:

♦ a recognition of the needs and aspirations of Indigenous Territorians and addressing these in government policy, programs and services
♦ a commitment to consultation, openness and honesty in all dealings with Indigenous people, and
♦ regional and community determined cultural development and the enrichment of community life.

The Strategy is based on the following principles:

♦ Indigenous arts practice draws its inspiration from Indigenous people’s connections to country
♦ Indigenous arts and culture make an essential contribution to the Territory’s social health, wellbeing, education and sense of individual and community identity
♦ Indigenous arts and culture contribute to the economy through employment, industry, business, trade and tourism
♦ Indigenous arts and culture are a vehicle for nurturing mutual respect and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage
♦ Indigenous artists’ rights should be respected, promoted and protected
♦ Indigenous artistic and creative excellence should be encouraged, showcased and promoted
♦ Indigenous people have the right and authority to determine cultural priorities, and
♦ All Territorians should have equal opportunity to actively participate in arts and culture.
The Northern Territory Indigenous arts sector – visual arts, music, dance, film, new media, theatre and literature is:

- vital to the economic and social development of the Territory
- a major attraction for national and international visitors
- central to defining Territory culture.

The sector is a significant employer and source of income especially in regional and remote communities where opportunities for market engagement are rare.

The sector supports a range of positive cultural and social outcomes including community well-being and the potential for improved health through:

- income generation
- education and training opportunities
- allowing families to remain on country to work together, engage in customary economic activities and to pass on knowledge.

**The strength and importance of the Indigenous arts sector in the Territory:**

- Indigenous people are an estimated 29% of the Northern Territory population and 72% of these people live on Aboriginal Land
- More than 40 Indigenous languages are still spoken in the Territory with cultures that encompass many different responses to history and homelands
- Approximately 5,000 Indigenous visual artists live and work in the Northern Territory representing 70% of Indigenous visual artists and almost 25% of all visual artists in Australia *
- $38 million was spent on Indigenous art and craft in the Northern Territory in 2001-2002 **
- Northern Territory remote art centres generate approximately $10 million per annum from direct sales of art and crafts ***
- Sales through commercial galleries in the Northern Territory and other States contribute substantially to an overall market estimated at a minimum of $100 million per annum
- $31 million was spent on Indigenous cultural tours in the Northern Territory in 2001-2002 **
- The nation’s most prestigious and richest Indigenous contemporary art award, the Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award (NATSIAA), is hosted by the Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin
- The Desert Mob exhibition, a unique showcase of central desert art and craft, is hosted by the Alice Springs Cultural Precinct
- Over 60 arts centres in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia are represented by the two peak Territory based Indigenous visual arts support and advocacy organisations: Desart and the Association of Northern Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists (ANKAAA)
- Territory Indigenous visual and performing artists have worldwide recognition
- The Territory is a leader in the development of Knowledge Centres in regional and remote regions, redesigning libraries to better suit community and cultural needs.

**Sources**

*Myer Report of the Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry
**NT Travel Monitor
***Positive Solutions Report 2002
Building Strong Arts Business includes three strong pathways for future development:

**Talking Arts Business** – Negotiation and Partnerships

**Doing Arts Business** – Service Delivery

**Sharing Arts Business** – Showcasing Opportunities

These Pathways will achieve the following broad goals:

**YEAR ONE** – improve delivery of arts development and support through:

- establishing appropriate Government infrastructure
- initiating and brokering partnerships to deliver the Strategy

**YEAR TWO** – improve and strengthen the Indigenous arts industry sector through:

- increased resources for infrastructure
- increased creative and cultural development
- increased training and employment outcomes, and
- scoping of needs of underdeveloped art form areas.

**YEAR THREE** – improve and increase the profile of Indigenous arts through:

- increased and more effective showcasing
- increased marketing and export.

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**From 2003/2004**

- Indigenous Arts Development Unit
- Indigenous Arts Reference Group
- Arts Centres Infrastructure and Employment Action Plan
- State/Territory collaborative cross border arts development strategies: “Across the Top. Down the Middle”
- Indigenous visual and performing arts project support through Arts Sponsorship program
- Showcasing through existing visual arts events
- Performing Arts Scoping Project
- Intellectual Property and Copyright Strategies
- Export Action Plan
- Performing Arts Action Plan

**From 2004/2005**

- Arts Centres Infrastructure and Employment Action Plan providing employment for Indigenous artists and arts workers
- Export Action Plan providing increased employment opportunities
- Performing Arts Action Plan

**From 2005/2006**

- Employment and training opportunities working through an Indigenous Tourism Action Plan
- Visual Arts Expo
- Review of Strategy and Plan for years four to six
Developing strong and strategic partnerships with Indigenous arts practitioners, Commonwealth, State and Territory Government sector organisations to ensure the sustainable growth of the sector.

The Strategy will ensure the following outcomes:

- Effective implementation through coordination and monitoring by a whole of government Interdepartmental Committee

- Ownership by Indigenous people, consultation on the future of the Territory’s Indigenous arts sector, hearing Indigenous artists’ needs and addressing them through an Indigenous Arts Reference Group with regional and artform representation

- A stable, well-planned and conducive environment for arts and employment development through brokering stronger and more strategic policy and funding partnerships with all key Commonwealth, State and Territory Government sector stakeholders

- Integrated planning and delivery of Indigenous arts services and programs across the Territory through strong partnerships between Northern Territory Government services

- Identification and integration of all related Government strategies.
Providing strong and culturally appropriate services to encourage arts development and to provide Indigenous arts practitioners with advice, support and opportunities for training and employment in the arts.

The Strategy will ensure:

- Improved research, support, advice, and development assistance delivered to Indigenous artists, and networking and negotiation to enhance support for the industry through the specialist Indigenous Arts Development Unit at Arts NT.
- Direct employment and training outcomes and sustainable operations through development and delivery of an Arts Centres Infrastructure and Employment Action Plan.
- A coordinated approach to Indigenous visual and performing arts skills development, training and resourcing by working with Government education and employment agencies to establish linkages with programs available in schools and other educational and training institutions.
- Increased support for remote Indigenous artists, organisations and arts centres, through existing and potential regional resourcing and service networks, by taking a ‘whole of government’, coordinated approach and working proactively with peak bodies and other stakeholders.
- Increased Indigenous arts development and production capacity assisted through bilateral negotiations with the Commonwealth to secure a high level allocation of matched funding to the Territory to achieve secure and predictable funding for development and sustainable growth.
- Improved delivery of arts development resourcing through cooperative arrangements with Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia in Across the Top, Down the Middle joint programs focusing initially on visual arts storytelling and literature.
- Across border, State/Territory strategies to develop and support Indigenous arts through strong strategic partnerships negotiated with State and Territory Government arts agencies by the Indigenous Arts Development Unit.
- Improved support and development of the Indigenous performing arts sector through scoping and implementing a Performing Arts Action Plan.
- An increase in Indigenous visual and performing arts projects funded through the Arts Sponsorship Program assisted by increasing funding available through the Program and by maintaining regional and Indigenous representation on the Northern Territory Arts Grants Board to encourage and support Indigenous arts projects and to ensure that cultural protocols are observed.
- Increased protection for Indigenous artists’ Intellectual Property rights through an Action Plan that takes a coordinated approach to artist, consumer and trader education, and investigates best practice and appropriate ways to address issues of authenticity, copyright, moral rights, licensing and copyright issues for artists’ descendants.
- Policy and services matched to sector needs and desired results through monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the way we do business.
- Decisions and actions informed by robust statistical data on the sector.
Creating opportunities to promote and showcase the Territory’s Indigenous arts sector to local, national and international markets to maximise cultural and economic returns for artists and to encourage respect and understanding of Indigenous culture.

The Strategy will ensure:

- Maintenance of national prominence for Northern Territory Indigenous arts through the role of the specialist Indigenous Arts Development Unit and promotion of the Strategy at national, local, Government and academic forums

- Increased showcasing opportunities at existing annual Indigenous visual arts events in the NT, including at the Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award at the Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin and at the Desert Mob exhibition at the Alice Springs Cultural Precinct

- Growth in exports of Indigenous arts through a culturally appropriate action plan under the Northern Territory International Trade Strategy 2002-2007. The Export Action Plan, providing assistance with business planning and marketing, will be developed jointly with the Department of Business, Industry and Trade Development, and ANKAAA and Desart, the peak Indigenous visual arts advocacy organisations for the Northern Territory

- Indigenous Performing Arts showcase events staged in Darwin and Alice Springs in collaboration with the Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin Festival, Garma Festival and with the Alice Springs Cultural Precinct and the Alice Springs Festival

- Increased marketing and employment and training opportunities through an Indigenous Tourism Action Plan and partnerships negotiated between the Northern Territory Tourist Commission, the Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin Festival, Garma Festival, the Department of Employment, Education and Training, Desart and ANKAAA.

- Continued strengthening of the national position of the Territory Indigenous arts industry and maintaining its comparative advantage in artistic innovation and excellence at the national level through promotion at forums such as the Cultural Ministers Council.
Indigenous Performing Arts resourcing, potential funding partners employment and supporting creative opportunities for skills training and issues

Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft centres

Building Strong Arts Business Community Capacity Building - strengthening communities through Sponsorship program organisations to improve the benefits employment pathways, profiling and

Music

• Continuing to support and assist development of Indigenous music and develop a strategy to provide improved employment pathways, profiling and showcasing

• An Indigenous Music Awards scheme and a Local Touring Strategy

Film and New Media

• Working in partnership with the NT Film Office and with Indigenous film and new media artists and organisations to improve the benefits to the Territory that accrue from national success and recognition

Literature

• Working to build a greater profile for Indigenous writers by providing increased support through the Arts Sponsorship program

Building Strong Arts Business , the Indigenous Arts Strategy complements and supports the Northern Territory Government’s inter-linked, ‘whole of government’ arts policy and funding framework:

Investing in the Arts in the Northern Territory

• Industry Development - a strong and sustainable creative community

• Community Capacity Building - strengthening communities through participation in creative activity and cultural development

• Arts and Education - creativity in life-long learning

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Professor Altman’s Issues and Recommended Framework Papers are available at: http://www.arts.nt.gov.au

INFORMATION

For information on any aspects of the Strategy or on other issues relating to arts and culture in the Northern Territory including applications for grants, membership of the Arts Grants Board or membership of the Indigenous Arts Reference Group, please contact:

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