A new Bill that will allow the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) to increase philanthropic donations and the acquisition of major art works has been introduced into Parliament today.

Minister for Arts and Museums Matt Conlan said a new Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory Act will establish a new Board of the MAGNT as an independent Statutory Authority funded by the Northern Territory Government.

“Our arts and museums are rich, diverse and like nothing else in Australia. We have something incredibly special to offer locals and tourists from around the world and the new Act will allow us to showcase our arts better and fight harder for that tourism dollar,” Mr Conlan said.

“A thriving arts and culture sector in the Territory is critical to this Government’s plans to grow our tourism industry and build a more prosperous Territory economy.”

The new Board will be responsible for the management and financial affairs of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory at Bullocky Point and the facilities it manages and delivers services through Darwin and Alice Springs.

“Allowing the Board of the MAGNT to become an independent statutory authority will strengthen our museums and galleries to ensure they can be enjoyed by future generations of Territorians,” Mr Conlan said.

“The new structure will also MAGNT to attract more philanthropic donations and corporate sponsorship that will further enhance exhibitions and programs through the acquisition of major art works or scientific material or items of significance to the Territory’s cultural heritage.

“It will also enable the institution to place more focus on Asian Engagement, a key objective of the Country Liberals Government,” Mr Conlan said.

“The MAGNT will have the ability to define new programs, exhibitions and cultural exchanges in the region in the coming years and the new Act will also have a strong mandate to provide support to regional museums.

MAGNT director Pierre Arpin welcomed the introduction of the Bill, saying it will bring the popular tourist attraction into line with many cultural institutions around Australia.

This move will mean that the MAGNT will benefit from a more actively engaged Board of Directors that will be responsible for charting a course for the MAGNT’s future.

“The Board will have responsibility for the management of the MAGNT and for ensuring that it secures expanded sources of revenue from the corporate and private sector,” Mr Arpin said.
"Business and other MAGNT stakeholders will be able to directly engage and conduct business with MAGNT, thereby reducing red tape."

Museums and Art Galleries Board of the NT chairman, Mr Allan Myers AO QC, has played a crucial role in communicating the importance of strengthening MAGNT’s Board independence and said the move would greatly benefit the hundreds of thousands of people who visit MAGNT each year.

"In the cultural sector, it is generally accepted that private donors and corporations are more willing to invest in an independent body rather than a government department," Mr Myers said.

“Today’s introduction of the Bill will provide the Board with strengthened functions and powers to ensure that the Board is responsible to Government for the management and financial affairs of the MAGNT, and the venues through which it manages and delivers services to the community.”

The MAGNT showcases the Territory’s rich history, arts and culture and the Territory Government is committed to maintaining and promoting this important institution.

“That’s why we provided $11.9 million in the 2013-14 Budget for the Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory, which included an increase in repairs and maintenance of $1.0 million,” Mr Conlan said.

Provisions have been incorporated into the Bill to ensure the Board is required to meet financial accountability and reporting obligations.

The new Bill is expected to pass through Parliament early next year and new Act is expected to take effect from 1 July 2014, with the new Board commencing from this date.

The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory attracts about 200,000 visitors every year.

As the Territory’s premier cultural institution, the NT government is committed to providing free admission to the MAGNT at Bullocky Point and this will not change under the new Act.

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