Cover: Durrmu Arts painting workshop with Melbourne artist Suzette Wearne. Image courtesy of Durrmu Arts 2014
Minister’s Foreword

The Northern Territory is a creative, culturally rich and diverse community with world renowned artists and an incredible range of arts and cultural experiences, venues, festivals and events, for locals and visitors to enjoy and participate in across the Territory. The significance of Aboriginal arts and culture in the Northern Territory is acknowledged, valued and respected and integral to the cultural diversity of the Territory. Arts and culture are an essential element of our Territory lifestyle, enriching the lives of all Territorians and contributing to our creative, social and economic development.

Artists from the Northern Territory are renowned for their artistic and creative excellence. There are non profit and commercial arts businesses producing and presenting arts programs, developing the arts and cultural industries, supporting community cultural development and raising the profile of our arts to national and international audiences. Our museums, galleries, archives, libraries and screen industry look after our heritage, grow our cultural collections, enable us to tell our stories, celebrate our diverse cultures and histories, and contribute to a proud and Confident Culture across all regions of the Territory.

The Territory Government is developing a comprehensive Arts and Cultural Policy informed by consultation with the arts and cultural sector and the community.

It is important that government policy is based on a vision that reflects and supports the value of arts and culture to all people of the Northern Territory. I invite you to join the discussion and provide your views on how we can shape the future of arts and culture in the Northern Territory.

The Policy is an important step towards valuing artistic, creative and cultural expression for all individuals, growing and developing a sustainable arts and cultural sector, celebrating and raising the profile of the Territory through arts and culture and providing opportunities for Territorians of all ages and cultural backgrounds to access and participate in broad arts and cultural activities.

There are also opportunities to develop new markets and trade, build deeper relationships and cross cultural understanding in our region, attract visitors to the Territory and make our cities, towns and regions enjoyable, inspiring and culturally rich places to live and work.

I encourage you to have your say and consider why arts and culture is important to you, and how can we shape the future of our arts and culture in the Northern Territory. With your participation the Policy will reflect our aspirations, celebrate our proud and diverse cultures and contribute to the development of the Territory’s society and economy.

Gary Higgins

Minister for Arts and Museums
1. HOW TO GIVE FEEDBACK

*Shaping The Future: Arts and Culture in the Northern Territory Discussion Paper* invites you to provide feedback and join in the discussion on the key issues and themes to inform an Arts and Cultural Policy for the Northern Territory. The Policy will set out the vision and principles for the future development of arts and culture for our social, cultural and economic benefit.

Your valuable ideas and comments will be collated and summarised in a feedback report to help inform the vision of an Arts and Cultural Policy for the Northern Territory and to identify priorities and strategies for Government investment.

The Arts and Cultural Policy will acknowledge the value of arts and culture to the Northern Territory and guide strategic priorities and plans to develop a sustainable sector and provide opportunities for all Territorians to celebrate and participate in arts, creativity and culture.

You can participate in the online survey, provide a written submission or attend Consultation sessions in Alice Springs, Darwin, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek* in October 2015. The Discussion Paper and information about the Consultation sessions is available on the Department of Arts and Museums website:

[www.artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au](http://www.artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au)

Please submit your comments by completing the Shaping the Future: Arts and Culture online survey:

- Online: [www.artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au](http://www.artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au)

Or provide written submissions:

- via email: artsandculturefuture@nt.gov.au
- via post: Shaping the Future: Arts and Culture, Department of Arts and Museums, PO Box 496, Palmerston NT 0831

To ensure your written submission is as effective as possible, please:

- Clearly state your point of view and the corresponding section of the Discussion Paper that it addresses;
- Suggest any alternatives or ideas you believe will result in positive outcomes for the Territory;
- Suggest any other issues you consider important for the Arts and Cultural Policy; and
- Include the names and contact details of the person or organisation making the submission. Where your approval is given submissions will be published on the Department of Arts and Museums website or cited in other public documents.

Closing date for submissions is Friday 6 November 2015.

*Other locations to be confirmed.
2. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

Principles and Values of an Arts and Cultural Policy

1. Why is arts and culture important to you and your community?

2. What principles or values should be highlighted in the Arts and Cultural Policy (ACP)?

This might include, for example, statements about the intrinsic value of the arts and individual artistic, creative and cultural expression; equity and access to resources and opportunities to participate; artistic excellence and innovation; sustainable growth and arts industry development, creative and culturally rich communities. The values become a benchmark or test for subsequent strategies, decisions or actions.

Identity

3. What are the distinctive characteristics of the Territory’s identity?

4. How should we acknowledge and describe the significance of Aboriginal culture in the ACP?

Arts and Cultural Spaces and Places

5. What are the key roles for the Territory’s museums, galleries, archives and libraries in supporting a creative and culturally rich Territory?

6. How can we enhance arts places and spaces across the Territory to increase access and participation in arts and culture?

Partnerships

7. How can we grow arts and cultural partnerships and opportunities with other sectors such as business, trade, tourism, education, heritage and health?

8. How can arts and corporate partnerships be developed to increase private sector support and enhance sustainability across the Territory?

9. How can the Northern Territory Government work with local government to develop creative and culturally rich communities?

10. What is the role of major Darwin and Alice Springs-based cultural venues and funded arts organisations to achieve the objectives of the ACP?
Arts and Cultural Sector Development

11. How can we build and retain artist and artworker skills within the Territory?

12. How can we ensure and grow knowledge and research into the value and benefits of arts and culture?

13. How should the Territory’s arts and cultural sector extend its national and international partnerships, engagement and reach?

14. What opportunities are there for the arts and cultural sector in national and international markets?

15. How can we support artists’ development, and foster artistic and creative excellence?

16. How can we engage and embrace the potential of digital technologies?

Funding

17. What are the opportunities and challenges for the Territory in the new landscape for arts funding and financing?

18. How can Territory artists and non profit arts organisations develop new funding partners and sources of income?

19. What are the priorities for Northern Territory Government funding and investment in arts and culture and what outcomes are we seeking to achieve?
3. INTRODUCTION

This Discussion Paper has been prepared to stimulate debate around key issues and themes for inclusion within an Arts and Cultural Policy (ACP) for the Northern Territory. It is not a draft ACP – that will follow at the next stage.

The paper has been informed by a review of various government reports and policies, and by initial interviews with 12 individuals from arts organisations and the education and corporate sector, as well as with Government officers. The Northern Territory Arts and Cultural Policy Reference Group also met and provided input to the development of this paper.

Individuals and organisations are invited to respond to the issues and themes included in this discussion paper either online, in writing or at the Consultation sessions. Thank you for taking part in the conversation.
4. CONTEXT FOR AN ARTS AND CULTURAL POLICY

There are several contextual issues which will influence the nature of a new ACP for the Territory:

1. The definition of what is included in arts and culture;
2. A description of what we know about the value of arts and culture to the Northern Territory including current social, cultural and economic data and evidence;
3. Government’s existing policies and priorities;
4. The purposes to which the ACP will be put, that is, ‘What is the Arts and Cultural Policy for?’
5. Identified cultural strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for arts and culture in the Territory – to inform the planning and support of arts and cultural activity across regions;
6. Priorities and strategic directions identified through the Consultation process for the sustainable development of the arts and cultural sector / industry;
7. General community priorities and the aspirations of Northern Territory residents of all ages and cultural backgrounds to access and participate in arts and culture, artistic expression and creativity – combined with a rapidly changing demographic in the Territory driven by the arrival of many newcomers;
8. Changes and priorities of future Government investment in arts and culture at both Territory and Federal Government level;
9. The opportunities for whole-of-government engagement with arts and culture, and the means of facilitating this; and
10. Opportunities for engagement with national and international stakeholders in the development of arts and culture in the Northern Territory.

Consideration of the scope or definition of arts and culture is included in Section 5

Artistic, creative and cultural endeavor occurs throughout the Territory. The ACP needs to support a community where all Territorians have access to a broad range of arts and cultural activity. It also needs to consider the challenges and greater cost of supporting activity in regional and remote communities.

Priorities identified in existing Northern Territory Government policy statements include: a commitment to building and maintaining vibrant, culturally rich and engaged communities; celebrating Indigenous culture and recognising the special role it plays within the identity of the Northern Territory; tourism development and other economic development.
In particular, the ‘Framing the Future’ strategy emphasises four main themes: Prosperous Economy, Strong Society, Confident Culture, and Balanced Environment. Confident Culture is expressed as:

- a culture that is proud and confident of the Territory and values and celebrates the diversity of people of all backgrounds, language groups, ages, genders and religions;
- a culture that supports significant occasions and events; and
- a culture that focuses on a healthy, active and enjoyable lifestyle taking advantage of the unique features the Territory offers.

Reflecting this, an ACP for the Northern Territory should include a clear and strong statement and principles about the importance and centrality of arts and culture to the lives of Territorians and the intrinsic value of artistic, creative and cultural expression for each individual. The arts should be championed first because of their intrinsic value for each individual and then also for the social and economic benefits the arts contributes to our community. To reinforce this the ACP should also emphasise a whole-of-Government approach to arts and cultural development, and recognise and respect the role and value of the artist.

Objectives and priorities that have been identified in ‘Framing the Future’ include:

- developing and showcasing the arts and strengthening cultural institutions;
- supporting signature arts and cultural events;
- supporting community access and participation in arts and cultural priorities across the Territory; and
- raising the profile and understanding of the value of arts and culture to the Territory.

_Darwin Festival 2014 - The Lighthouse Festival Park, photo by Elise Derwin_
Some of the broader Northern Territory Government priorities which have been highlighted recently include:

- giving our children the best education and keeping them active;
- promoting our great Territory lifestyle;
- strengthening our prosperous economy; and
- attracting new visitors and celebrating our unique Territory culture.

Similarly there are currently several specific Government initiatives including the development of ‘FestivalsNT’, with a focus on attracting visitors from overseas and interstate, strengthening the Territory’s role as the gateway (and meeting place) between Australia and Asia and the enhancement of significant Territory events. This includes in regional and remote areas and working to create a sense of local celebration, Territory-wide unity and to raise the profile of the Territory through arts and culture.

Emerging Federal Government policy may also hold significant opportunities and challenges for arts and cultural development in the Territory. The ‘2030 Vision for Developing Northern Australia’ considers that development, especially economic development, represents a major opportunity for Australia as a whole: “No longer will Northern Australia be seen as the last frontier: it is in fact, the next frontier”. Equally, developing stronger linkages and cooperative approaches with local governments in the Territory could enhance the impact of the ACP.

Nearly 30% of Territorians are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, compared with less than 3% across Australia as a whole. In over 75% of Australian households, English is the only language spoken at home, compared with less than 63% in the Territory. This reflects the richness of cultural diversity, alongside the continuing importance of Aboriginal languages in the Northern Territory.

The Territory also has a young population – with a median age of 31 compared with the Australia-wide median of 37.

The current process is to develop an ACP. It is not a Strategy or a Plan. The distinguishing nature of a Policy is that it provides a basis for alignment of future action and decisions, emphasising principles and high-level goals, and enabling different elements of Government to operate within a common framework.

The Policy will provide a basis for informing future investment and strategies for arts and cultural development, as resources become available and priorities are identified.

The Policy will provide a guide to inform Northern Territory Government planning and investment in arts and culture. It will aim to align programs and provide clarity and consistency for the arts and cultural sector and the community regarding Government priorities and investments.

This raises the question of the purpose to which the ACP will be put and how it will inform action across Government not only through the Department of Arts and Museums, but also through tourism and economic development, education, community capacity-building, CBD and regional and remote development, and other fields. How it will drive partnerships building locally, nationally and overseas. How it will be reflected in the work of government-controlled cultural entities and in the work of independent organisations, artists and creative businesses.
5. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

One person’s understanding of the scope of arts and culture, including creative enterprise, may differ from another’s. For this reason, it will be important to define the range of activity which is intended to be covered by the ACP. The UNESCO framework for cultural statistic domains provides a useful starting point, embracing traditional notions of arts activity, but also creative industries, heritage and natural environment. The framework acknowledges the relationship with tourism, sports and recreation. However, it does not clearly reflect the evolving role of libraries and archives in a rapidly changing digital environment nor, bearing in mind its importance in the Northern Territory, emphasise the significance of Indigenous culture.

For these reasons a modified version of the UNESCO framework is proposed, and is appended to this paper (Appendix 1). The framework may be helpful in promoting a holistic or ecological approach to all aspects of cultural and creative activity, and creative enterprise.

Based on this modified framework, the following draft definition of arts and culture is proposed for purposes of the ACP:

The arts represent an outlet of expression that is influenced by culture and which in turn helps to change culture. The arts are a physical manifestation of the internal creative impulse. Major branches of the arts include literature, music and performing arts, visual and screen arts, design, and digital forms of expression.

Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, kinship, religion, cuisine, social habits to music and arts. It can be seen as the growth of group identity fostered by social patterns unique to the group. Culture, therefore, also embraces heritage and – for the purposes of policy development – heritage-related assets and activity.

Students enjoy the Albert Borella exhibition at the Northern Territory Library.
It is normal for a policy document to commence with a series of statements regarding the principles or values which underpin the policies. In the current case they might include, for example, equity, access, participation, artistic excellence, or innovation. The values become a benchmark or test for the policies and subsequent strategies or actions.

1. Why is arts and culture important to you and your community?

2. What principles or values should be highlighted in the ACP?

The Northern Territory has a unique identity. It is partly about climate, topography and natural environment, as well as remoteness from the major Southern capitals. It is about the significance of Aboriginal culture and knowledge and the connection to the land. It is also about self-reliance, proximity to Asia, small and remote communities, and its distinctive demographic.

3. What are the distinctive characteristics of the Territory’s identity?

4. How should we acknowledge and describe the significance of Aboriginal culture in the ACP?

If there are new or strategic approaches to events, how can these build on the Territory’s distinct identity – and how can they integrate with existing arts and cultural infrastructure and networks to support development, including in regional communities?

Both contemporary cultural expression and broader notions of community identity draw upon, or respond to, previous practice and traditions. Libraries, archives, galleries and museums are guardians of this heritage but are also expected to evolve in step with changing technologies, engagement strategies and trends in cultural consumption. The Territory’s collections including library and archive collections are outstanding and need to be made accessible to the widest possible audience, including through harnessing digital technologies.

5. What are the key roles for the Territory’s museums, galleries, archives and libraries in supporting a creative and culturally rich Territory?

6. How can we enhance arts places and spaces to increase access and participation in arts and culture?
The Government has emphasised the importance of making arts and culture a part of Territorians’ lives. The Territory’s libraries, archives and museums collect, protect and make accessible Territorians’ cultural heritage. The valuable collections in these cultural institutions have inspired many artistic and creative endeavours. To **maximise community engagement** artistic activity needs to be accessible and affordable, and must have relevance and impact for Territorians. In Australia audience development and arts marketing have become increasingly sophisticated disciplines, improving the clarity with which arts and cultural organisations understand and target their communities, through segmentation and the use of digital media.

Beyond Darwin valuable cultural infrastructure exists in Alice Springs, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek and elsewhere in the Territory. The cultural assets throughout the Territory can continue to build community engagement. Signature events such as the Darwin Festival and the Territory’s many regional and remote community festivals – from Barunga and Garma, to the Alice Desert Festival, Milpirri in Lajamanu and Desert Harmony in Tennant Creek - can leverage their profile to reach out to new sections of the community. The ACP will need to reflect the importance of regional and remote arts and access to equitable resources.

*Milpirri 2014 Lajamanu Tracks Dance, photo by Peter Eve*
Building cultural activity ‘from the ground up’ is a means of engaging the public directly, and encouraging a sense of ownership. In an age when customisation of products and services has become normal, a ‘co-creation’ approach opens up new possibilities which also requires new skills.

Art is for all ages. A genuinely inclusive approach to community engagement will include creative experiences from pre-school to seniors. Internationally, there is a growing body of evidence regarding the educational and health benefits of arts engagement, and a recognition that a vibrant arts sector can contribute significantly to community well-being and cohesion. Events and festivals play an important role in broadening engagement, and create opportunities for generating employment for local artists. Events which have strong roots in the community and those which are maintained for the long-term (such as the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award) are both valuable and a significant contributor to sustainability.

7. How can we grow arts and cultural partnerships and opportunities with other sectors, such as business, trade, tourism, education, heritage and health?

8. How can arts and corporate partnerships be developed to increase private sector support and enhance sustainability in the Territory?

The production and presentation of arts and cultural activity requires both hard and soft infrastructure. The hard infrastructure includes formal and informal spaces for performance and exhibition, as well as facilities for the conservation, storage and presentation of cultural artefacts, and places to accommodate arts workers and organisations. The soft infrastructure includes the people, skills, market data and networks that facilitate cultural and creative activity.

In recent years several state and territory governments have undertaken detailed audits or mapping exercises to take stock of the current cultural infrastructure and to inform future strategies, particularly in relation to arts spaces. Equally, several have invested in major new facilities which have broadcast their cultural credentials – the Gallery Of Modern Art in Brisbane, the Melbourne Recital Centre, and Glassworks in Canberra. The redevelopment of the Chan building into a gallery space for the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin is a significant initiative in this regard.

At The Dakota receive the People’s Choice Award at NT Song 2015.
Image courtesy of Music NT, photo by Paz Tassone
A challenge for governments and communities is meeting the costs of new and existing cultural infrastructure and developing business models that can sustain the ongoing operational and maintenance costs. Another is the concentration of infrastructure in capital cities, and the need for strategies and resources to support regional and remote solutions and access to facilities and activities. And a third is the need for collaboration and coordination across different levels of government with responsibilities for the resourcing, development and provision of infrastructure.

The cultural facilities throughout the Territory have an important role to play in the realisation of an ACP. Expectations will especially fall upon the larger facilities, which have a Territory-wide or leadership remit: the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, the Northern Territory Library, the Northern Territory Archives Service, Araluen Arts Centre, the Darwin Entertainment Centre and the Darwin Festival.

9. How can the Northern Territory Government work with local government to develop creative and culturally rich communities?

10. What is the role of major Darwin and Alice Springs-based cultural venues and funded arts organisations to achieve the objectives of the ACP?

Soft infrastructure relates to people and knowledge. Here, the scale of the market and the existence of critical mass are important. Attracting and retaining skilled artists, technicians and managers is easiest in a large capital city, hardest in small and more remote communities. Providing training and support services for creative workers also becomes less economic and more challenging in a small community. Nevertheless, the Territory has many first-rate artists, arts and cultural leaders and inspirers and the ACP should recognise and celebrate this.

Soft infrastructure also includes the networks, advisory and support services which help artists and arts organisations to operate more effectively. The ACP provides an opportunity to reflect on the support services which are most needed to underpin a healthy sector.

At the boundary of hard and soft infrastructure sits the rapidly evolving world of digital technology. Digital platforms are both a communication medium and a tool for creating. While artists and organisations will realise digital potential in their own way, there may be a need for occasional training, access, or other interventions to ensure that the Territory’s creatives are able to harness the great opportunities that exist.

Throughout Australia and elsewhere arts and cultural organisations struggle with building good market data, such as trends in audience development, best practice in the use of social media and other communication mechanisms, and artform developments.

Much market research has to occur at a level above that of the individual arts/cultural organisation, partly for cost reasons. Peak bodies and Government agencies have played an important role in commissioning and disseminating such research.

11. How can we build and retain artist and artworker skills within the Territory?

12. How can we ensure and grow knowledge and research into the value and benefits of arts and culture?
There are some very positive examples of Territory artists and creative organisations establishing national and overseas partnerships. These linkages provide an opportunity to leverage resources from elsewhere and to keep the Territory’s artists connected with national and international practice, as well as enabling others to benefit from the unique cultural assets of the Territory. Given a relatively small and dispersed population, and because Darwin is the least-populated of the state and territory capitals, there is a lower concentration of arts and cultural organisations across the Territory than elsewhere. The possible benefit of entering into partnerships, including those which are initiated or driven from outside the Territory, is correspondingly greater.

Overseas links also represent relationship-building opportunities for the Territory. Cultural diplomacy is well established as an effective means of opening doors, reducing barriers and developing trade. It can be used at city level, state and territory level, as well as by the Australian Government. With the Territory’s proximity to East Timor, Indonesia and other countries, it has unique opportunities to build links and harness its own distinctive cultural identity. In turn, stronger links with Asia will enhance the Territory’s assets and attractiveness in engaging with partners within Australia.

13. How should the Territory’s arts and cultural sector extend its national and international partnerships, engagement and reach?

14. What opportunities are there for the arts and cultural sector in national and international markets?

Artistic practice does not stand still, as evidenced by hybrid artforms, co-creation of work, and a greater say by the audience in determining the nature of the art-product or the way in which it is ‘consumed’. Some creative industries – publishing and music are the standout examples – have been transformed by new technologies. In some areas the ‘art’ has not changed – but its dissemination and consumption has been dramatically altered. In others there has been a transformation in creative practice and cultural expression. These trends offer exciting possibilities for enhancing access for creative practitioners and connecting arts and cultural practice in remote communities.

15. How can we support artists’ development, and foster artistic and creative excellence?

16. How can we engage and embrace the potential of digital technologies?

The exploration of new forms of financing for the arts has been evident in recent years, including the growth and professionalisation of philanthropy, low-interest loans, impact investing and other initiatives. These new sources of funding and forms of finance add value to government investment and create opportunities for organisations to strengthen their income generating capacity.

Examples include the recent Arts Business Innovation Fund in Queensland, the introduction of social impact bonds in NSW, and Creative Partnerships Australia’s MATCH program.
Significantly, the new financing mechanisms encourage more entrepreneurial thinking on the part of creative practitioners and organisations, and the consideration of new models for doing business. Over time this is likely to have wide-ranging impacts for the arts and cultural sector. It presents some exciting opportunities for artists and arts organisations – and some interesting challenges for their managers and boards who will need to acquire knowledge and systems to cope with new arrangements.

17. What are the opportunities and challenges for the Territory in the new landscape for arts funding and financing?

18. How can Territory artists and non profit arts organisations develop new funding partners and sources of income?

The Department of Arts and Museums will conduct a review of their funding programs and resources to align with the principles, strategic priorities and outcomes of the ACP. The grant program review will also ensure transparency, equity and accountability in the management, administration and distribution of grants.

19. What are the priorities for Northern Territory government funding and investment in arts and culture and what outcomes are we seeking to achieve?

Finally, the Northern Territory Government has an objective of reducing red tape where possible. One area where Government can make a positive contribution is to make grant application and acquittal procedures proportionate to the level of Government investment.

In recent years there has been progress in harmonising application processes between state/territory and federal agencies – such as the format of business plans or financial information required from applicants. Short-form processes and self acquittal for small grants or quick-response schemes, and simplified online submission and acquittal processes are all ways of saving applicant and officer time.

Beanies from Willowra wokshops 2014. Image courtesy of Alice Springs Beanie Festival
4. FEEDBACK

Please refer to section 1. How to Give Feedback of this Discussion Paper. Your feedback is welcome on any of the questions posed, or other issues you consider important for the ACP, no later than Friday 6 November 2015.

If you have any queries about the ACP Consultation or how to give your feedback, please contact Positive Solutions on email info@positive-solutions.com.au.
Previous image: Slides on display as part of Cyclone Tracy Anniversary White Glove Tours