

11 March 2022

Ref MS21-002325

NLA 21/9

The Hon Paul Fletcher MP  
Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure,  
Cities and the Arts  
Parliament House ACT 2600

Dear Minister

### **Statement of Intent 2021–22 – National Library of Australia**

Thank you for your letter of 21 November 2021, setting out your expectations for the National Library of Australia in 2021–22. The Library is pleased to respond with this Statement of Intent.

As outlined in the Corporate Plan – our principal planning document – the Library's primary purpose is to collect documentary resources, particularly relating to Australia and its people, so that the Australian community, now and in the future, can discover, learn and create new knowledge to support industry, health, education, communications, regions and the arts throughout Australia.

We pursue this goal across four priorities:

- Collect – We collect today what will be important tomorrow
- Connect – We connect with communities and connect communities with their national collections
- Collaborate – We collaborate with others to maximise the national impact of cultural collections
- Capability – We build on strong foundations to maximise the nation's return on its investment in the Library.

While the Library's mission has long been to collect, connect and collaborate, the ways in which we have carried out that mission have changed dramatically. The digital era has fundamentally reshaped creative and research practices, knowledge production, and community expectations through the opportunities that new technologies offer.

The Library has responded to and anticipated these changes, building an astounding collection, developing world-leading digital platforms, connecting with more Australians than ever before, and collaborating with other agencies to develop digital culture infrastructure on which the nation relies. We are committed to continuing this proud record of service to the Australian people. As you know, we have a sound and thoroughly grounded plan for extending our digital platform expertise to benefit more cultural institutions, should additional investment become available. We thank you for your recognition of the impact of these activities, and especially for your recognition that the Library's prioritisation of digital services means that we have been able to serve the Australian people in their homes across the country, during a time of great community disruption.

The Library greatly appreciates the additional funding provided by the Australian Government in acknowledgement of the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the arts and cultural sector and the activities of National Collecting Institutions.

Thank you for the strategic priorities you have asked the Library to focus on in 2021–22. In pursuing these priorities, the Library intends to:

**Provide leadership and foster collaboration within national and international library sectors as they recover from the effects of COVID-19**

The Library collaborates strategically to deliver its role as a leader in the library, cultural heritage and research sectors across Australia by maintaining and enhancing national infrastructure that underpins the work of cultural and research institutions large and small, across every part of Australia, and at every level of government.

As a National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) member, the Library drives delivery of digital preservation and web archiving initiatives, has expanded services to enable publishers to lodge large volumes of material with libraries electronically, and contributed to national discussions on media literacy. The Library has also actively supported delivery of a Culturally Safe Libraries program in all Australian NSLA libraries, focusing on respecting and understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

The Library engages in strategic collaboration internationally to amplify its impact and advance sector capability. The Library is a member of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), and the Director-General is Vice-Chair of the Conference of Directors of National Libraries (CDNL) and a frequent participant in CDNL global and regional meetings. Through this international network, the Library contributes to the promotion of international cooperation, research and development in all library and information fields globally.

**Contribute to Australian economic and cultural activity as restrictions ease, institutions reopen to the public and tourism resumes**

The Library creates value for the whole of Australia by providing onsite and digital services that support research, lifelong learning, creativity, knowledge production, and cultural enrichment. Digital content provided via Trove supports the increasing investment by local communities in regional heritage activities. Trove also delivers the rich content needed by creators across the book, audio-visual, performing arts, heritage and – most recently – fashion industries. Combining local entrepreneurship with high quality heritage content from a trusted source means that Australia’s rich and diverse stories can be told by regional communities, as many Australians re-engage with their own ‘backyard’ through regional tourism. Trove’s Collection Features support members to curate digital mini-exhibitions, and to reach a very large audience with an invitation to explore the cultural wealth held in regional institutions.

Onsite exhibitions continue to draw on the richness and depth of the Library’s collection. While COVID-19 restrictions and community behaviour have seen smaller than desired audiences for exhibitions in the first half of the year, the Library hopes that as tourism resumes, many visitors will enjoy our upcoming *On Stage* exhibition, highlighting our superb performing arts collections – some of which are now also available online thanks to a generous philanthropic donor.

***Support recovery in regional, remote and outer metropolitan areas through collection touring, exhibitions, and outreach activities***

Connecting our communities, in our regions and our cities, with their national collections is a key priority. A new Engagement Strategy has been developed with a particular focus on digital engagement and rural, regional and remote communities are identified as a priority audience. Consistent with this strategy, the Library will continue its digital outreach programs to extend national reach and engagement, in particular to regional areas, to increase the number and diversity of Australians interacting with and benefiting from the Library's collections. In addition to the learning programs, lectures and conversations provided, the Library will continue to deliver digital services such as Ask a Librarian to Australians across the country.

Trove continues to reach across Australia. From the Kimberley to Cape York to Burnie to New England, Trove users find and enhance local and national resources. With additional funds provided, the Library will continue to work with small, regional and community organisations to make their collections shine in Trove, at no cost to these organisations. A new Trove Strategy is being developed, to ensure the service supports creation as well as consumption of heritage materials.

**Promote inclusion, diversity and social cohesion by providing greater opportunities for all Australians to access arts and culture, including through digital channels**

The Library is building a collection for Australians that represents the full cultural diversity of the Australian community. The Library will continue to collect Australian publications, pictures, manuscripts and oral histories to enliven the national story with unique voices and viewpoints. We have and will continue to build strong collections around contemporary events, including collecting websites and oral histories around the impacts of the pandemic.

In addition to Trove, the Library continues to develop its digital offering by live streaming adult learning webinars, book launches and conversations, winning a strong regional audience for this rich cultural content. There was a marked increase in delivery and uptake of these online services throughout 2021.

The National Library's publishing program will mark its 50th year in 2022. Through an innovative range of titles sold nationally, this program takes the Library's collections into homes, schools and libraries across the country. New titles this year cover topics including an introduction to Wiradjuri language for children, vintage knits, and scholarly publications on Australia's mountains and the colonial art of George French Angus.

The Library will also actively expand engagement with linguistically and culturally diverse communities through delivery of high-quality learning experiences and outreach programs, via a wide range of platforms and delivery mechanisms, for Australians of all ages. The Library has nominated Fijian-Australians and the long history of the Chinese diaspora in Australia as key communities to focus on for our collection and outreach activities during 2021–22. While COVID-19 has delayed some planned activities, the building blocks for this focused engagement is in place.

Philanthropically funded Fellowships and Scholarships will continue to support scholars to work closely with the Library's collection to research and build on existing stories to inform and shape the nation's identity. Their stories will be shared via a live streamed lecture series to reach audiences across the globe through the Library's social media networks. The 2022 Fellows will explore a diverse range of topics covering Indigenous history and culture, literature, music, art, photography, the Asia and Pacific region and Australian history.

**Continue to foster appreciation and understanding of Indigenous arts, culture and knowledge systems, and contribute to a professional, viable and ethical Indigenous cultural sector**

Since June 2020, Trove has included features to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to explore, tell their own stories, and to enrich community language and culture. We are delighted that the Trove First Nations portal has proven extremely popular since launch, and is useful to both Indigenous Australians, and those wishing to explore Australia's rich Indigenous cultures.

As set out in our 2021–22 Corporate Plan, the Library will continue to build our collection of materials that hold cultural importance to Indigenous Australia.

As an organisation, we are continuing our reconciliation journey through our Reconciliation Action Plan. A key milestone of this will be the finalisation of the Library's Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property protocol early in 2022.

***Engage in activities to enrich arts and cultural education at all levels***

The Library's Learning Program – delivered primarily via digital channels – is highly valued by learners of all ages, and across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote Australia.

The Library's new exhibition, *On Stage: Spotlight on Our Performing Arts*, draws on the Library's wonderful performing arts collections and celebrates some of the key moments, productions and performers in the history of performing Arts in Australia. Opening in Autumn 2022, the exhibition showcases a wide range of our cultural treasures, vibrant characters and milestone moments from Australia's performing arts history. It includes photographs, posters, playbills, sheet music, costume designs, set designs, and rare books and the earliest document printed in Australia – a theatre playbill from 1796. *On Stage: Spotlight on Our Performing Arts* opened on Friday 4 March, running until Sunday 7 August 2022, and is a feature of our 2022 Enlighten display. The *On Stage* exhibition will also be shared with online visitors through a digital tour, and other online activities to share with a broader Australian community. The Library will also continue to work in partnership with other National Cultural Institutions to attract and connect visitors with the collections across the Arts portfolio.

The Library delivers regular webinars on subjects as diverse as how to use a vast new digitised resource available on Trove, *Indian Emigration Passes to Fiji 1879-1916*, to how the Library preserves its enormous digital collection. Our Digital Classroom provides structured learning – leveraging our unique collections – for teachers and students from Years 3 to 12. The resources align with multiple curriculum subject areas including History, English, Science, Health and Physical Education, and Geography. Topics are as diverse as 'The use and influence of science', 'The Asian-Pacific world', Sport and Australian Culture and 'World War 2 Internment'. The Digital Classroom, which is available to teachers and students in every part of the country, has developed a solid audience and ensures that classroom enquiry is based on primary resources.

**Maintain and strengthen the financial sustainability of the Library by increasing own-source revenue, philanthropy and private-sector support**

The Library is building a significant philanthropic revenue stream to digitise the most important, impactful and unique areas of its collection, and to make them accessible through Trove. A new fundraising strategy was implemented in 2019-20, leveraging the Government's \$10 million seed funding over four years announced in the 2019 Federal Budget.

The Library's Treasured Voices Campaign aims to inspire philanthropic support and raise \$30 million in private funding over ten years. We have continued to secure substantial gifts under the campaign with \$6.8 million raised to date.

The Library's successful partnership program has seen Commonwealth, State and local organisations fund digitisation and delivery via Trove of a broad array of publications, harnessing economies of scale to achieve shared national aims. The Government's recent announcement of \$5.7m funding over 2 years to support Trove to June 2023 is welcome.

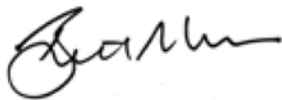
The Library's own-source revenue, philanthropic and other private-sector support primarily assists the Library to increase access to the Library's collection through digital activities. While this provides great benefits to the Australian community, it does not assist the Library with most of its functions, including developing, describing and storing the collection, maintaining its heritage building and onsite services, and maintaining and developing the capability required to deliver digital value.

As you outlined in your letter, the Library is working cooperatively with the other National Collecting Institutions, and the Office for the Arts on the scoping study on shared storage facilities. The Library and its Council have identified that a priority in 2022 is to identify short and long term solutions for the Library's pressing storage needs. An enduring solution is required for 75 kilometres of material to meet our collection requirement until 2050, with 18 kilometres of storage required no later than 2025, as the ability to store at the National Archives of Australia's Hume facility comes to an end by January 2026.

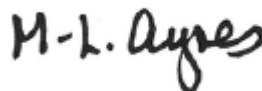
The Library looks forward to continued participation in the Department of Finance sustainability review of national cultural institutions over the course of the year.

You can have every confidence that the National Library of Australia continues as a leader in the national and international library community, and as a truly National Library without geographical, economic or other boundaries, proudly connecting Australians with their stories.

Yours sincerely



The Honourable Dr Brett Mason  
Chair, National Library of Australia Council



Dr Marie-Louise Ayres FAHA  
Director-General, National Library of Australia