13 December 2019
Ref NLA17/240

The Hon Paul Fletcher
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts
Parliament House ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Statement of Intent 2019-20 – National Library of Australia

Thank you for your letter of 21 October 2019, setting out your expectations for the National Library of Australia in 2019-20. The Library is pleased to respond with this Statement of Intent.

As you know from our Corporate Plan – our principle planning document - the Library’s purpose is to collect documentary resources 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.

The Library’s mission has long been to:
- 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.

The ways in which the Library carries out its mission continue to evolve. The Library has anticipated the opportunities of new technologies and has built world-leading digital platforms that allow more Australians than ever before to connect with the Library’s astounding collection. The platforms support collaboration with other libraries and organisations to develop a digital research infrastructure on which Australia relies.

Thank you for the strategic priorities you have asked the Library to focus on in 2019-20. In pursuing these priorities, the Library intends to:

Ensure the Library contributes to economic activities, particularly in regional areas, through outreach activities

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. Connecting our communities, in our regions and our cities, with their national collections is a key priority.

The Library will continue to develop 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.
The Government’s Modernisation funding has been invested in the Library’s online platform, Trove. In early 2020, a refreshed Trove will be delivered, modernising the platform, ensuring an enhanced user experience, and expanding the discovery of digital materials. The Library will also endeavour to make Trove more welcoming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as they explore their culture, history and identity.

The Library also continues to develop its digital offering by live streaming lectures, book launches and conversations, winning a strong regional audience for this rich cultural content.

**Provide leadership to the arts sector as an employer of choice**

In 2019/20 the Library’s structure will be revised to maximise its capacity to deliver its strategic priorities. Building our workforce capability is an essential element of this transformation. The Library’s training and development investment will enhance staff competency to engage with Indigenous collections and communities, support our philanthropic ambitions, and focus on commercial competence in a cost-recovery context. The Library’s first Reconciliation Action Plan will also be implemented.

Available funds will be carefully allocated, in compliance with the Library’s Conservation Management Plan, to ensure the work place continues to be safe and fit for purpose. An asbestos remediation project will be undertaken with funding allocated in the 2019-20 Federal Budget.

**Accept opportunities to shape and promote Australian identity through the Library’s public-facing activities both national and internationally**

The Library is building a collection for Australians that represents the cultural diversity of the Australian community. In 2019-20, it will continue to collect Australian publications, pictures, manuscripts and oral histories to enliven the national story with unique voices and viewpoints. The Library will also collect works from overseas, particularly Asia and the Pacific, that enrich the Australian community’s understanding of its place in the region.

The Library’s flagship lecture series will continue to deepen conversations on key aspects of Australian cultural life through discussion of current issues engaging the community.

The 2019 Kenneth Myer Lecture was presented in October this year and was delivered by award winning journalist Professor Peter Greste who spoke on press freedom in Australia. Emeritus Professor Judith Brett delivered the annual Seymour biography lecture providing a fascinating account of the parallels between two Australian Prime Ministers, Alfred Deakin and Sir Robert Menzies.

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 2020 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.

In January 2020, *Beauty Rich and Rare*, a digital exhibition drawn from the Library’s collection, will be officially opened at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington DC. This important opportunity will showcase a re-imagined aspect of Australian history and present it in an international arena. We believe this to be the first time Australian flora and fauna have been featured in an exhibition at the prestigious Smithsonian Institutions.
Consider opportunities to create and meet demand for inbound tourism

The Library’s exhibitions continue to be a popular attraction, making the Library a destination on the national and international tourist calendar.

The Library’s current exhibition Story Time: Australian Children’s Literature will run through the summer months and has already delighted and attracted audiences from local and far reaching locations. In late March 2020, Australian Dreams: Picturing our Built World (working title), focusing on the way artists and photographers depict Australia’s built environment will be on show in our Exhibition Gallery. It aims to attract a diverse audience seeking to know more about this fascinating part of Australian history.

The Library participates in the culture bus loop. Inbound tourists can experience the Library’s exhibitions, explore Australian literature and craft at the Library’s bookshop, and enjoy the Library’s cafe.

Provide leadership in the delivery of collection management, arts education and public programs

Working in partnership with the National and State Libraries Australia network (NSLA), the Library developed the National edeposit initiative which you launched in July this year. Using this platform, the Library will share investment and responsibility for developing, preserving and providing access to a comprehensive collection that reflects Australia’s published digital record. The Library will also work with the NSLA collaborators on opportunities to share national-scale collection, storage and preservation of other forms of digital heritage.

In its first four years, the Digital Classroom has reached over 500,000 students across Australia, connecting the Library’s collection with the national curriculum. In 2018-19 alone, the Digital Classroom reached 218,492 students with broad regional engagement. In 2019-20, content will include modules for secondary students addressing the visual arts, drama, history and literature curricula.

In the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages the Library, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), and State and Territory libraries held a national code-a-thon to identify and ‘tag’ items in Indigenous Australian languages with an Australian Indigenous language code.

Trove now includes 8017 library records with an Australian Indigenous language code representing 465 unique Australian Indigenous languages and variants. These tags are being imported into local library catalogues making these materials easier for Indigenous Australians to source.

The Library will also collaborate with partners in the Pacific region to improve knowledge of and access to Pacific cultural heritage resources through participation in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade funded Pacific Virtual Museum.

Continue to explore opportunities to grow private sector support and increase own-source revenue

The Library will seek to build a significant and sustainable 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 will be implemented in 2019-20, leveraging your Government’s $10 million seed funding over 4 years announced in the 2019 Federal Budget.
A Director of Philanthropy has been engaged who will lead the Library’s Treasured Voices Campaign which, as you know, aims to inspire philanthropic support and raise $30 million in private funding over ten years. We have already secured our first major gifts under the campaign.

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.

Your caution regarding the availability of additional financial support in the short term is noted. The Council is considering whether and how any reserves could be used to support outstanding capital works.

You can have every confidence that the National Library of Australia will continue to remain a leader in the national and international library community and a truly National Library without geographical, economic or other boundaries, which proudly connects Australians with their stories.

The Hon. Dr Brett Mason
Chair of Council

Dr Marie-Louise Ayres
Director General