

DISCUSSION PAPER

SCIENCE GALLERY  
MELBOURNE

DEVELOPMENT OF  
A FIRST NATIONS  
FRAMEWORK

2018  
VERSION 1.0



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We Acknowledge the First Nations Peoples of the Land and we also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present and extend that respect to other First Nations people this document may come across.

We also acknowledge the existing work in the sector by First Nations communities, organisations and government agencies that have contributed to developing protocols and building relationships that is lead to this point.

## FOREWORD

Science Gallery Melbourne (SGM) is part of the Global Science Gallery Network, a highly collaborative peer group of Science Galleries located in leading cultural and technological hubs worldwide. By 2020, the Network will see galleries in operation or development at eight leading research universities worldwide, inspired by the pioneering Science Gallery at Trinity College Dublin. As a powerful force at the forefront of the STEM to STEAM (Science, Technology, movement), the Network will inspire millions of minds every year, connected by a shared mission to ignite curiosity and discovery where art and science collide.

SGM will be a bold addition to our city, exploring the collision of art and science, and playing a vital role in shifting our understanding of science, art and innovation. The Gallery will open in 2020 as part of an innovation precinct being developed by the University of Melbourne on the corner of Grattan Street and Swanston Street. In the lead-up to opening, Science Gallery Melbourne will host a diverse program of exhibitions, performances, events and workshops in pop-up locations on The University of Melbourne Campus and within the Melbourne CBD.

The Science Gallery team is committed to building a vibrant, balanced and accessible STEAM sector and support that First Nations Peoples should be an important voice of the arts and science sector. First Nations knowledge, culture and science are crucial to multiple aspects of SGM's practice, including in both exhibitions and public events programs. Indigenous peoples have been amazingly adaptive and creative with new media technologies, applying them to their own life ways and maintaining cultural boundaries rather than simply assimilating into the dominant social order. Communities that survived the cataclysmic forces of nature and invasion are now telling their stories and constructing new forms of cultural power in the digital age and knowledge economy.

It is the duty of all Australian citizens to acknowledge the mistakes of the past and rewrite a history that includes First Nations Australians. SGM therefore aims to include First National knowledge and science in multiple aspects of our practice, including each of its exhibitions and public programs, while further providing opportunities for Indigenous scientists and artists to contribute and participate as part of the Science Gallery team.

## OVERVIEW

Traditional knowledge has had great economic advancement for First Nation Peoples in industries that range from tourism, agricultural entertainment, arts, media, and communications through to the biotechnology industry.

Australia is home to some of the world's first astronomers, scientist, inventors and agriculturist and the Melbourne Science Gallery wants to celebrate and share this rich and important culture and science of the world.

The Melbourne Science Gallery has developed this Discussion Paper to support a First Nations Framework that will guide better engagement with First Nations Peoples.

Key Stakeholders are invited to consider the ideas and aspirations in the discussion paper and provide input.

Views are sought on the following key themes:

- Building strong relationships
- Community protocols
- Guidelines for Indigenous curatorial practices

Your comments on this paper will assist in shaping how we do better business with First Nations Peoples in the Melbourne Science Gallery.



## RACISM IN THE SCIENCE SECTOR

There is no denying that the treatment of First Nations Peoples in Australia was brutal and disturbing<sup>1</sup>, and the first contact with scientists during the 1800s and early 1900s was shameful and morbid. Many science institutions had racist processes of researching and cataloging First Nations Peoples and their cultures as many scientists considered flora and fauna as a greater value. Some of the racist cataloging systems are still found in basements of museums and galleries today but repatriations of First Nations remains' and artifacts in institutions are allowing for a much-needed change to the archives and a reminded that these were very dark times in this country's history.<sup>2</sup>

Darwinism was a popular science theory at the time of colonisation and this had a major impact on the rights of First Nations Australians, as it reinforced a notion that white people were superior, thus First Nations science couldn't provide any useful information and was excluded from any science enquiries. But even though social Darwinism theory had a devastating impact on First Nations Peoples, it was Captain James Cook's decision to declare *Terra Nullius* that would lay down the foundational lie of the country.<sup>3</sup> It would take almost forty years for Australia to provide Indigenous Australians with equal rights and First Nations Australian's are still fighting to be recognised in the constitution.

In the early 1900s, Ngarrindjeri man and inventor, David Unaipon would start to change people's perceptions of First Nations Peoples. Dubbed 'Australia's own Leonardo Da Vinci', his inventions forced Australians to accept Aboriginal intelligence and consider the scientific knowledge of the world's oldest culture. Some of David's registered inventions included the centrifugal motor, a multi-radial wheel and a mechanical propulsion device. He is also said to have contributed to the helicopter, having designed its rotors pre-World War I, based on the principle of the boomerang and his fascination with perpetual motion. His legacy paves the way for younger First Nations people to unearth the First Nations science Australia has often denied.<sup>4</sup>

Only in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century as since science focused increasingly on environmental sustainability there has been an increase in awareness of the vital role of First Nations people have played in knowledges systems sustaining the country for thousands of years. While there is a widely accepted view in the science community about the role First Nations People can play in environmental science research, the extraction of First Nation Knowledge systems is yet to provide significant benefits to the knowledge holders.

Through the work of inspiring Indigenous Australians like Bruce Pascoe, Dark Emu author and agriculturist scientist, we are now realising that western science is not the only knowledge system to consider. There is no denying that First Nations sciences is vital to sustaining our environments because its has been tried and tested for thousands of years. First Nations sciences doesn't separate its self from the nature world and these sciences are holistic and embedded in cultural lore's/laws. First Nations sciences holds considerable knowledge about how we can live sustainably but this knowledge is for the community and is vital for self-determining the cultural, spiritual economic and the health and well-being of their respected communities.

The Melbourne Science Gallery is committed to ensuring that First Nations Sciences is respected and recognized as it is vital for our role to ensure we rewrite and help shape a true history about the amazing insight into science, technology, arts and media that First Nations Culture can provide.

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- 1 Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATIS), 2015 First Encounters and Frontier Conflict article, Accessed site on 09/13/2018: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/first-encounters-and-frontier-conflict>
  - 2 Paul Daley, The Guardian Article - The bone collectors: a brutal chapter in Australia's past, 2014, Sited accessed on 13/09/2018: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/14/aboriginal-bones-being-returned-australia>
  - 3 Kevin Butler, The myth of terra nullius NSW Board of Studies, 1995
  - 4 Philip Jones, Australian National University article, David Unaipon article, Site accessed on 13/09/2018: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/unaipon-david-8898>

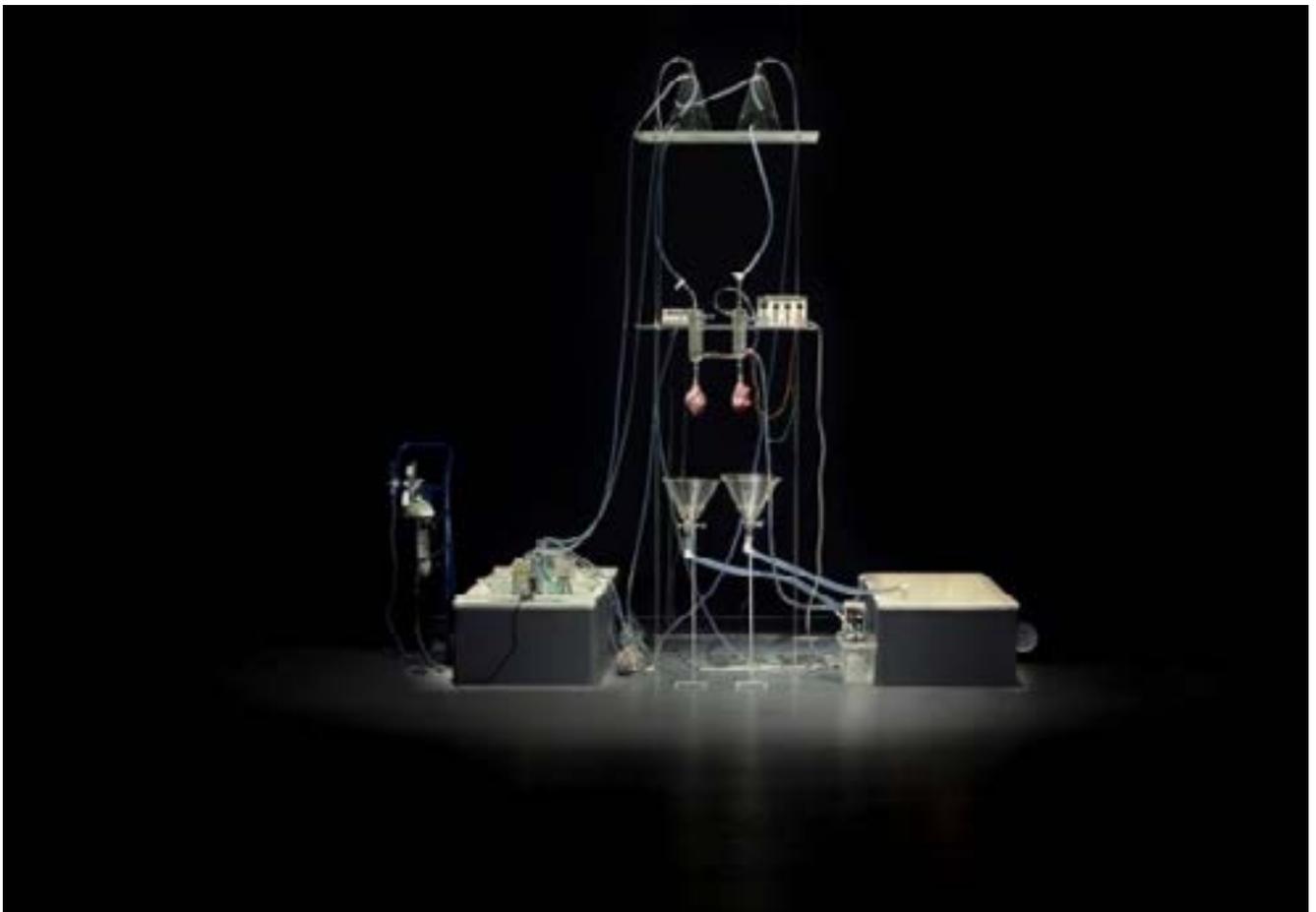
## ASSOCIATED POLICIES AND FRAMEWORKS

As the Melbourne Science Gallery is based within the Melbourne University it is guided by policies and frameworks which include:

1. The 2011 National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities.

The Framework provides Guiding Principles for Indigenous Cultural Competency. The findings of the literature review, the stocktake of practice both in Australia and overseas and the four pilot projects have informed the creation of a set of five Guiding Principles for Indigenous Cultural Competency:

- Indigenous people should be actively involved in university governance and management.
- All graduates of Australian universities should be culturally competent.
- University research should be conducted in a culturally competent way that empowers Indigenous participants and encourages collaborations with Indigenous communities.
- Indigenous staffing will be increased at all appointment levels and, for academic staff, across a wider variety of academic fields.
- Universities will operate in partnership with their Indigenous communities and will help disseminate culturally competent practices to the wider community.



These Guiding Principles provide the higher education sector with a framework for embedding Indigenous cultural competencies within and across the institution in sustainable ways which engender reconciliation and social justice by enabling the factors that contribute to social, economic and political change. The member institutions of Universities Australia are urged to adopt the Principles and seek ways to implement them that are attuned to their own circumstance and method of operation. Finally, this report suggests a way forward for the reporting of institutional progress which strikes a compromise position between formal external processes and solely internal quality assurance mechanisms.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. The Melbourne University Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-2022

### Key principles

The collective RAPs represent a University-wide commitment to using the resources of research, teaching and learning, and engagement to contribute to Indigenous development and wellbeing, and to develop the strength, depth and mutually supportive outcomes of the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians.

They are also part of our long-term vision for national reconciliation through our contribution to improving a range of Indigenous outcomes particularly in education, health and employment. As such, the target measures and accountabilities in our Reconciliation Action Plan April 2018 – December 2022 will:

- align with existing University accountability structures
- build and extend on the University's core business activities – research, teaching and learning, and engagement
- be integrated through the University's planning cycle
- enable and empower Academic Divisions to design and implement reconciliation strategies that are appropriate to their contexts
- foster the incorporation of Indigenous engagement and recognition across the breadth of University activity.

The development of these Signature Projects was guided by key external documents and mapped to the Reconciliation Australia Framework. They are focused around four Themes:

- Theme 1: Leadership for Change
- Theme 2: Our Place
- Theme 3: Purposeful Partnerships
- Theme 4: International Engagement.

This shift to Signature Projects also recognises that a range of University-wide and Divisional-level frameworks and plans (see opposite), which address the Action Areas incorporated in our previous RAPs, are now firmly embedded in the University's planning architecture and operations. These plans generally span 3–5 years and are regularly reviewed.<sup>6</sup>

## 3. Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities Principles and guidelines for Australian museums working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage

Continuing Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities is the result of an extensive process of review and consultation over several years and a staged process involving review, redevelopment, consultation and further redrafting.

<sup>5</sup> The National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities which, Site accessed on 13/09/2018: <https://www.google.com.au/search?q=%E2%80%A2+The+National+Best+Practice+Frame-work+for+Indigenous+Cultural+Competency+in+Australian&oq=%E2%80%A2+The+National+Best+Practice+Frame-work+for+Indigenous+Cultural+Competency+in+Australian&aqs=chrome..69i57.465j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#>

<sup>6</sup> The Melbourne University Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-2022, Site accessed on 13/09/2018: <https://reconciliation.secure.force.com/API/services/apexrest/Attachment?id=00P6F00001zNUibUAG>

It seeks to acknowledge that museums and galleries have modified their approach to Indigenous cultural material and collections to incorporate:

- Custodianship and care taking rather than ownership Recognition of the value of stories and other intangibles associated with objects
- Acknowledgement and recognition within museums of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices
- The creation of genuine relationships of recognition and reciprocity between traditional custodians and museums and galleries
- New and emerging factors that have influenced Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities include:
  - Native title laws and processes
  - Return of Indigenous Cultural Property Programs
  - Our Culture our Future: Report on Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights
  - Protocol documents
  - Technology <sup>7</sup>

#### 4. Inspire Australia, Indigenous Science Engagement Strategy

Inspiring Australia is a national strategy led by the Federal Department of Innovation, Industry, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIICCSRTE) with the broad aim of realising the full social, economic and environmental benefits of investment in science and research. Expert working groups have been formed to investigate priorities and make recommendations proposing various ways forward. One such priority is to target Indigenous Australians in urban, regional and remote locations with measures to develop their potential and interest in science and science-based careers and thereby increase the capacity of the scientific workforce.

The Expert Group on Indigenous engagement drafted the following themes and recommendations:

##### Theme 1. Indigenous knowledge systems

###### Recommendation 1

- Resource and support the maintenance and enhancement of Indigenous knowledge systems and intergenerational transfer of Indigenous knowledge.

###### Recommendation 2

- Recognise and increase support for Indigenous languages as integral to the health of Indigenous knowledge systems.

##### Theme 2. A National Indigenous Science Agenda

###### Recommendation 3

- Develop an Indigenous Australian Science Agenda that is guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

###### Recommendation 4

- Develop cultural competency tools and programs that enable scientific communities to:
  - Understand how Indigenous knowledge systems deepen the value and relevance of science in Australia.

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<sup>7</sup> Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities Principles and guidelines for Australian museums working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage, Museums Australia, February 2005, Site accessed on 13/09/2018: [http://www.nma.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/3296/ccor\\_final\\_feb\\_05.pdf](http://www.nma.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/3296/ccor_final_feb_05.pdf)

Engage in full and equitable partnerships with Indigenous communities in scientific research and engagement.

Funds for seed grants to assist the implementation of the strategy.

Funds to develop tools to improve the cultural competencies of scientists.

### Theme 3. Indigenous priorities

#### Recommendation 5

- Enable Indigenous communities to develop local and regional priorities for science engagement, research and communication.

#### Recommendation 6

- Provide Indigenous communities with the scientific resources to build community capacity to deliver on local community priorities.

#### Recommendation 7

- That, in developing their science engagement and research agendas, government, researchers and their organisations ensure:

Local and regional Indigenous priorities are integrated into the development of their projects.

The meaningful participation and empowerment of local Indigenous knowledge holders in project design, delivery and evaluation.

Project outcomes deliver clear and sustainable benefits to the livelihood of local communities.

#### Recommendation 8

- That governments, researchers, communicators and their organisations have research 'impact measures' that include priorities and outcomes for local Indigenous communities.

### Theme 4. Communication

#### Recommendation 9

- Develop an Indigenous media and communication strategy to engage Indigenous people in science, to inform the wider community about Indigenous science achievement, and to create a new appreciation of the value of Indigenous knowledge systems amongst the Indigenous and broader scientific communities.

#### Recommendation 10

- Develop and sponsor science awards to recognise and profile Indigenous achievements in science.

#### Recommendation 11

- Develop educational and outreach programs that engage Indigenous young people in science, leading to professional careers in science and science-related areas

#### Recommendation 12

- Map and monitor Indigenous student enrolments and graduates in science and science-related areas to establish a clear picture of achievements and any 'gaps'. Develop promotional material and information for Indigenous science students and graduates to inspire, motivate and support Indigenous young people to undertake science-related careers.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Inspire Australia, Indigenous Science Engagement Strategy which was developed by an Expert Working Group on Indigenous Engagement with Science, Site accessed on 13/09/2018: <https://www.science.gov.au/scienceGov/Documents/Indigenous%20Engagement%20with%20Science.pdf>

## 5. Australia Council for the Arts First Nations Protocols and Guidelines

The Australian Government agencies have adopted protocols and guidelines when working in Indigenous communities to respect and honour the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, unique to Australia. The Indigenous cultural protocols guide processes when involving Indigenous affairs; from avoiding exposure of sacred sites to speaking to an appropriate representative of a community. It also guides the conduct of reporting on deceased persons in their respected communities.

The protocol guides are available free on the Council website:

6. [Music: Protocols for Producing Indigenous Australian Music](#)
7. [Writing: Protocols for Producing Indigenous Australian Writing](#)
8. [Visual Arts: Protocols for Producing Indigenous Australian Visual Arts](#)
9. [Media Arts: Protocols for Producing Indigenous Australian Media Arts](#)
10. [Performing Arts: Protocols for Producing Indigenous Australian Performing Arts](#)<sup>9</sup>

These guidelines were the result of the sector building better respect and relationships with the Indigenous communities across Australia and to reflect the diversity within the country.

## 6. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The Declaration, a product of more than 20 years of research and discussion at the United Nations, is a non-binding document that sets out how existing human rights standards apply to the recognition and protection of Indigenous peoples' rights internationally. It provides a framework for countries with different histories and circumstances to help reduce levels of disadvantage and discrimination experienced by many of the world's 370 million Indigenous people. The Australian Government officially endorsed the Declaration on 3 April 2009. Although the Declaration is non-binding, in issuing its statement in support of the Declaration, Australia accepted the document as a framework for recognising and protecting the rights of Indigenous Australians.

The Declaration contains 46 different articles that outline the rights given. These rights fall into eight different categories:

- Self-determination and foundational rights
- Life and security
- Language and cultural and spiritual identity
- Education, information and employment
- Participation in decisions that affect us
- Country, resources and knowledge
- Self-governance, culture and cultural property
- Implementing and interpreting the Declaration

The Australian Human Rights Commission together with the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples created a [community guide](#) to the Declaration in 2010 and a [website](#) to help Indigenous Australians to know their rights and ensure they are put into practice.<sup>10</sup>

9 The Australia Council for the Arts, Article, 2017, Site accessed on 13/09/2018: <http://www.austliacouncil.gov.au/about/protocols-for-working-with-indigenous-artists/>

10 The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Guidelines, 2007, Site accessed on 13/08/2018: [https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)



## FIRST NATIONS REPRESENTATION IN THE ARTS AND MUSEUM SECTOR

### Australian's Engagement with Indigenous Arts and Culture

In recent years museum and gallery curators are starting to understand how important the First Nations arts are to the culture and identity of Australian, however new to this conversation is the science and technology aspect that is embedded into First Nations culture.

Detailed below is a snapshot of Reconciliation Australia's 2014 Barometer key finding for the audiences' engagement with First Nations art and culture:

- 77% saying First Nations culture is important to Australia's national identity.
- 83% believe that Indigenous art is important to Australian culture.
- 42% of Australians say that they have an interest in First Nations Australian Art, and 25% show strong interest.<sup>11</sup>

The key finding indicates that there is a growing acceptance that First Nations culture is important, however with only 25% of Australian's who show strong interest it seems like the arts and museum sectors can do better to enable better relationships and audience engagement with First Nations art and culture.

### First Nations Engagement in the Arts Sector

Living Culture presents arts and culture data from the ABS's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) about Indigenous Australians' engagement with First Nations arts, festivals, languages and broadcasting, and attendance at arts and cultural venues and events.

The 2017 Living Culture report key findings;

- 59% of First Nations people attend an Indigenous or non-Indigenous arts and cultural venues and events an increase in those 37% attending libraries, museums and art galleries.
- 21% of First Nations attendance at theatre and concerts.
- Younger First Nations people are more likely to attend arts and cultural venues and events than older First Nations people.
- People who speak First Nations languages are less likely to attend. This contrasts with the age and language stories for First Nations arts participation and First Nations festival attendance.

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11 Reconciliation Australia Barometer Report, 2014, Accessed site on 13/09/2018: [https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=2ahUKEwiii8zCqLfdAhUixIQKHeFdDWMQFjAAegQI-ARAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.reconciliation.org.au%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2017%2F10%2FRR7200-Ba-rometer-Brochure\\_WEB.pdf&usq=AOvVaw3ruc441zgKaoZIQOxGUo4a](https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=2ahUKEwiii8zCqLfdAhUixIQKHeFdDWMQFjAAegQI-ARAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.reconciliation.org.au%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2017%2F10%2FRR7200-Ba-rometer-Brochure_WEB.pdf&usq=AOvVaw3ruc441zgKaoZIQOxGUo4a)

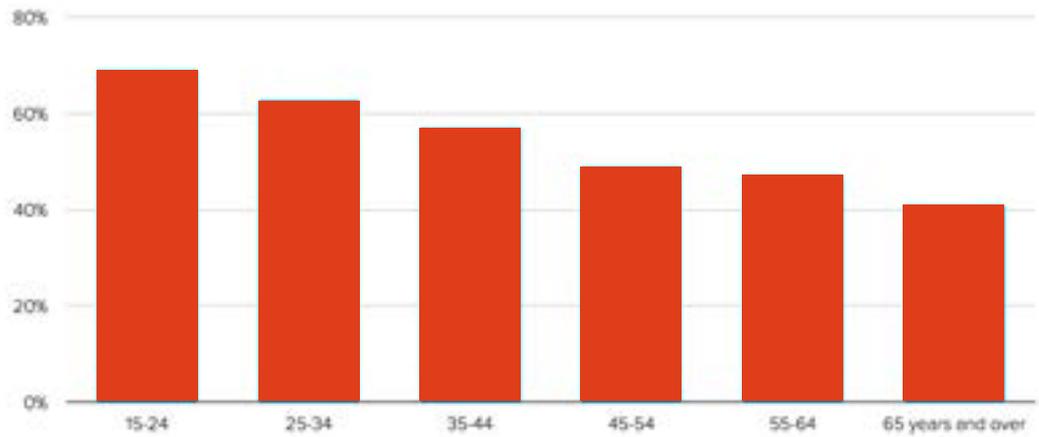


Figure 1: First Nations attendance at arts and cultural venues and events by age group

The key findings from the report give an insight into the engagement with First Nation youth in the arts and museums. The primary audience for the Melbourne Science Gallery is youth and we believe that through our programming we can develop and deliver projects and programs for First Nations youth that will positively reflect the social, economic and wellbeing of First Nations communities.<sup>12</sup>

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12 Australia Council for the Arts Living Culture report, 2017, Site accessed on 13/09/2018: <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/living-culture/>

## DISCUSSION TOPICS

The following three topics form the basis of discussion for developing a Best Practice Framework for Science Gallery Melbourne.

### 1. BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

The success of the Melbourne Science Gallery will depend on strong community engagement, including engaging with the First Nations communities in Melbourne and across Australia. We believe a closer relationship built on reciprocity between Indigenous peoples and the museums and galleries sector will result in a more accurate, more truthful and ultimately a more complete understanding of Australian history.

Science Gallery Melbourne currently has a collaborative relationship with The University of Melbourne's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Oversight (ATSICHO) Committee and works directly with First Nations artists (for example, Peta Clancy and Judy Watson for BLOOD and Naretha Williams for PERFECTION). The gallery has also established the position of 'First Nations Curatorial and Production Assistant' within the team to foster a work culture of diversity and opportunity.

To further build relationships with First Nations communities, Science Gallery seeks recommendations that relate to fostering existing relationships and building new connections.

Key questions for consideration:

1. What can the Gallery do to ensure stronger lasting relationships with First Nations Peoples and Communities?
2. How can visitors to the gallery better appreciate and respect First Nations sciences?
3. Can you give an example of positive projects build of strong relationship and reciprocity?
4. Any further comments and/or suggestions?

### 2. COMMUNITY PROTOCOLS AND SOCIAL NORMS

The Melbourne Science Gallery seeks to be guided by First Nations cultural frameworks that support proper protocols when developing and delivering curatorial and engagement projects. These protocols will also be embedded in Science Gallery Melbourne's policies and procedures and reflected in wayfinding and exhibition design.

Key questions to consider:

1. What are some factors that the Gallery should consider when conceptualising projects and programs with First Nations communities?
2. Do you have examples of successful museum/gallery projects that followed First Nations community protocols?
3. What are some negative experiences which you have experiences in the arts and museums sector?
4. Any further comments and/or suggestions?

### 3. GUIDELINES FOR INDIGENOUS CURATORIAL PRACTICE

Integral to the success of the Gallery is the creation of a curatorial practice that is inclusive to First Nations artists and scientists. This includes a curatorial process that ensures representation of Indigenous knowledge in all Science Gallery exhibitions and opportunities for First Nations individuals to develop skills and experience in art/science and trans-disciplinary practices.

Science Gallery currently develops themes via its Leonardo and Sc Curious think-tank groups, both of which have First Nations representation. The Science Gallery Melbourne Leonardo Group includes Brook Andrew, Peta Clancy, Luke Briscoe and Rae Johnston. Curatorial selection of works within themed exhibitions is via a curatorial advisory panel and with the assistance of Science Gallery's First Nations Curatorial and Production Assistant.

Key questions to consider:

1. Can you suggest other existing state and federal policies that might impact on First Nations works?
2. What strategies would you recommend implementing to ensure Indigenous culture is selected and showcased in Science Gallery exhibitions?
3. What creative opportunities should Science Gallery offer First Nations people?
4. What are some fundamental guidelines to consider when developing the Framework?
5. What can the Gallery do better to ensure a culturally safe environment?



## SEEKING YOUR VIEWS

Public consultation will occur between November 2 to January 2, 2019. Targeted discussions with key stakeholders will also occur during this time.

Written submissions will be required by December 12, 2018 to meet timeframes for developing The Framework.

Information on making submissions — including an on-line submission template — is available at:

A survey is also available from the website to allow people to have input into the review of the Act without having to make a submission.

Following consultation, consideration of submissions and the results of the survey, a decision will be made on which policies are to be taken forward.

For further information, please contact:

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