

AUSTRALIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS SOFT POWER REVIEW

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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Executive summary | 4 |
| Submission | 6 |
| Introduction | 6 |
| Arts and culture are potent soft power assets | 6 |
| The influence of artists and creatives is rapidly growing | 9 |
| Cultural tourism delivers soft power | 10 |
| Our cultural diversity is a soft power strength | 11 |
| First Nations arts excel globally and stand out as uniquely Australian | 13 |
| The arts powerfully contribute to social cohesion, international cooperation and security | 15 |
| Supporting the arts builds soft power | 16 |
| Conclusion | 17 |
| Policy opportunities | 18 |

ABOUT THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL

The Australia Council for the Arts (the Council) is the Australian Government's principal arts funding and advisory body. The Council is the national advocate for the arts and its purpose is to champion and invest in Australian arts. This national leadership role is achieved through supporting and building Australia's arts ecology in all its diversity including First Nations arts, fostering excellence in the arts, and increasing national and international engagement with Australian arts. This contributes to Australia's economic, social and cultural success, and enables the significant benefits generated by the arts to be experienced by the public.

Key to Council's strategic vision is supporting Australian artists and arts organisations to create and present excellent art that is experienced across Australia and abroad: one of the Council's strategic goals is 'Australian arts are without borders'. Through our support for the arts, we work to strengthen Australia's reputation as a sophisticated and creative nation with a confident, outward-looking and future focused arts sector; promote the excellence and vibrancy of Australian arts; and leverage Australia's cultural and creative industries in support of the Government's foreign, trade, and development policy priorities.

For the last two decades, the Council has invested in international arts development through a range of grants, programs and initiatives. In addition to support for regularly funded organisations working internationally, this has included touring and presentation grants; significant sector capacity building work domestically and internationally; presence at major platforms, trade fairs and biennales; incoming visitor programs that enable international influencers and presenters to experience Australian work in situ; international artist residencies; long-term strategic partnerships; and international network building.

The Council's international development work has significantly evolved from its early days as an export-driven approach to its contemporary approach that embraces the important principles of reciprocity and exchange, in recognition of the importance of long-term engagement. These principles are particularly important when engaging with our region.

The Council is the leading public investor in Australian international arts and cultural activity, supporting artists and arts organisations to take up the creative, economic and cultural opportunities offered by international mobility and connection. This in turn creates enormous public value for the Australian community and yields significant soft power benefits.

Our deep in-market intelligence and established networks have been vital in enabling and fast-tracking the international aspirations of Australian artists and in turn, their international success. Our team of International Development Managers located in key markets answer this critical need and actively build partnerships to facilitate ongoing artistic and cultural dialogue.

Our progressive approach has firmly positioned the Council as a leader on the international stage. We enjoy an excellent international reputation as a leading arts funding agency with many Council policies and strategies considered best practice and adopted internationally by other arts councils and funding bodies. This in turn has opened up a realm of possibilities for international arts exchange and cultural cooperation as well as soft power influence.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Art is an international language that transcends borders. In sharing Australian stories with the world, the arts are a highly influential and powerful tool for building national identity, cultural exchange and soft power.

Arts and culture is a latent soft power asset that has yet to be effectively tapped to its full potential in pursuit of Australia's foreign policy priorities, cultural diplomacy objectives, long-term cultural engagement and economic development.

The Australia Council has a long history supporting international engagement through the arts, fostering connections and brokering opportunities for cultural exchange between Australia and the rest of the world. Central to our International Arts Strategy is the recognition that the rapid growth of developing and newly industrialised nations in our region presents an economic and cultural opportunity for Australia's artists and arts organisations to build creative and cultural connections with our closest neighbours.

Australia's position of influence is increasingly impacted by the attractiveness of our culture. The creative and political freedom enjoyed by Australian artists contributes to perceptions about our intellectual capital and attraction as a foreign investment partner, signalling to the world that we are a diverse, open and innovative nation. The partnerships created through arts and culture strengthen bilateral relationships with existing allies and offer an accessible connection point for emerging relationships, shared knowledge and exchange.

Artists are among Australia's greatest assets for 'standing out' in an international context, playing an integral role in how Australia is perceived globally. With rapid technological and societal change, the influence of artists and creatives is growing: artists and creatives are increasingly positioned as major global influencers alongside the increasing recognition that global leadership in fostering creativity is needed to drive economic growth.

The role of arts and culture in driving innovation and growth is becoming ever more economically valuable as creativity underpins the jobs of the future: artists' skills and capabilities are considered to be among those least likely to be automated and increasingly sought. Fostering Australian arts will foster an innovative and creative nation that is competitive, attractive and dynamic. Arts and culture drive direct and indirect investment in Australia, the development of a national brand and international business partnerships.

The arts are increasingly part of the itinerary for international visitors to Australia¹ and cultural tourism delivers soft power, presenting opportunities for cultural exchange on a much larger scale than traditional diplomacy. International tourists develop their sense of the Australian identity and our quality of life through arts and cultural experiences. Asia is our largest market for arts tourism, making tourism an influential asset in support of our most significant trade partnerships.

Australia is home to the oldest living culture and one of the most culturally diverse populations in the world. This diversity places us in a unique and powerful position of having shared stories and histories across the globe, and is a major soft power strength. First Nations arts and cultures provide a connection point with the Indigenous communities of other countries, and we have an opportunity to leverage the extraordinarily diverse diaspora who have made Australia their home. The soft power value of these deep connections

¹ Based on Tourism Research Australia's International Visitor Survey.

cannot be underestimated as they facilitate dialogue and influence through language and cultural understanding.

Our regional position adds to this strength: our growing connections to our neighbours in Asia and the Indo-Pacific position Australia to important North American influencers as a key access point to Asia. Australia's rich First Nations arts are a significant soft power asset which has yet to be fully recognised. First Nations arts excel globally and stand out as uniquely Australian, playing a central role in developing perceptions of our national identity and driving tourism.

The arts powerfully contribute to international cooperation and security in a world that is more connected yet more divided than ever. In an environment of global disruption and a rise in nationalism, arts and culture can be a major soft power asset by facilitating points of connection and trusted partnerships which promote mutual understanding, tolerance and social cohesion. The arts can strengthen communities by replacing fear, misunderstanding and stereotyping with insight and empathy. Art as social commentary, as a political tool for change and a way to help us think differently are all the reasons why the arts matter. Artists can shape the future of our national and global story for long-term cultural change.

Globally, many countries have already recognised the importance of arts and culture to their cultural, social and economic success and international competitiveness, and are investing in arts and culture accordingly. This includes the United Kingdom which tops the Soft Power 30; Canada which has recognised that investing in arts and culture is an economic imperative; and New Zealand which has also invested significantly in their national brand. With digital platforms increasing communication, participation and engagement with different audiences, cultural diplomacy has become an important element in achieving foreign policy goals. As a result, non-state actors increasingly have become stakeholders of and partners with government in achieving foreign policy objectives.

Australia is yet to fully recognise the value of arts and culture to soft power and our foreign policy goals. Greater investment in arts and culture could increase our soft power capabilities and support the goals of the Foreign Policy White Paper.

POLICY OPPORTUNITIES

- 1. Integrate investment in Australian arts and culture within a whole of government approach to amplify our soft power and support Australia's interests internationally, and particularly in our region.**
- 2. Australia's soft power capabilities could be significantly increased through scaling up existing programs and strategies.**
- 3. Prioritise investment in First Nations arts and culture, including cultural tourism.**
- 4. Develop an overarching partnership between government and industry that is focused on long term soft power development through arts and culture.**

SUBMISSION

INTRODUCTION

This submission aims to articulate the soft power inherent in Australia's arts and cultures and present policy options designed to boost Australia's soft power capabilities. A nation's culture is fundamentally connected to its stories, which in turn are transmitted with great effect through its arts. Soft power offers an alternative solution to addressing the complexity of international relations by employing culture as the foundation of international influence.²

Soft power is widely recognised as a vital component of the suite of foreign policy skills. It is considered essential to the theory and practice of international relations and is at the forefront of media, political and practice discussions of how countries successfully engage with each other. Soft power influences attract international visitors and studies, and increase commerce and a country's global political clout. These influences include an array of economic indicators, political institutions, cultural processes and organisations.

Political scientist Joseph Nye's seminal 2008 work on soft power defines it as 'the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes you want'³ through demonstrating the attractiveness of a nation and inspiring others. Nye's concept of soft power has become increasingly popular internationally. The power of attraction and ideas in influencing the behaviour and thinking of others is similarly referenced in the Australian Government's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper which notes soft power as 'vital to our foreign policy'.⁴

Issues with clarity and understanding can arise through the often interchangeable use of the terms soft power and cultural diplomacy. A useful distinction is offered in a [study](#) by King's College London in which cultural diplomacy is described as 'reaching out' and soft power as 'standing out'.⁵ This distinction reinforces that standing out through soft power cannot be achieved without effective cultural diplomacy. In turn, cultural diplomacy must be based on strong understanding of culture and how a country wishes to be perceived by the rest of the world.

ARTS AND CULTURE ARE POTENT SOFT POWER ASSETS

Soft power is strongly enacted through the arts. Arts and culture have a powerful and broad reaching capacity to influence how Australia is understood and appreciated. Arts and culture are **central to the soft power toolkit** as it is through them that Australian stories and perceptions are shared: the arts demonstrate the values, practices, issues and audiences of the societies they represent.

The arts are a powerful driver in creating and transmitting cultural identity, and exerting both attraction and influence. [Connecting Australians](#), the Australia Council's most recent tranches of its longitudinal study on arts engagement and participation, reveals that in 2016, 57% of Australians felt the arts have a big or very big impact on 'shaping and expressing Australian Identity', up from 45% in 2013. Arts and culture can also change the way people think, feel and behave including their ability to think creatively and express themselves.⁶ The

² Grincheva, Natasha, 2018. [Demystifying Museum Soft power: Geovisualising Museums' Influence](#).

³ Nye, Joseph 2008, [Public Diplomacy and Soft Power](#), *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*.

⁴ Department of Foreign Affairs 2017, [Foreign Policy White Paper](#).

⁵ Doerer, J and Nisbett, M [The Art of Soft Power: A study of Cultural Diplomacy at the UN office in Geneva](#), King's College of London.

⁶ Australia Council 2017, [Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey](#).

arts demonstrate our unique diversity as both home to the world's oldest living culture and one of the world's most diverse migrant populations. The arts strongly contribute to Australia's international reputation and perception and Australians take pride in our artists on the international stage.⁷

Artists are among Australia's greatest assets for 'standing out' in an international context. They play an invaluable role in defining our country's culture, identity, workforce and international reputation through communicating our history, values and ideas, and sharing the rich mosaic of experiences that have shaped our identity and way of life. Artists interpret our past, imagine our futures and reflect Australian perspectives and stories internationally, playing an integral role in how Australia is perceived globally.

Australian arts are central to long term soft power strategies as they reflect our political plurality and cultural diversity, transcending the vagaries of short term political change. The vibrancy of Australian arts also demonstrates our prosperity. At the global level, Australian arts contribute to conversations about transnational social and political issues, as well as enhancing our reputation for creativity. Further, the arts frequently exemplify the freedom of expression, creativity and innovation associated with open, democratic societies – of the nation itself rather than of any government specifically. It is this credibility and legitimacy that makes arts and culture so potent as a transmitter of ideas.⁸

In 2013, former Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Varghese made the observation that within our region, Australia suffers from a soft power deficit due to the persistence of outdated perceptions of Australia: 'forty years on, we still have to explain that Australia is a multicultural, multiracial society'.⁹ With Australian arts increasingly an expression of our diverse and First Nations cultures, focusing on and investing in arts and cultural investment within our region is a clear pathway to updating perceptions of Australia.

Our position of influence is increasingly impacted by the attractiveness of our culture and the appetite for our arts from both audiences and creative partners. Arts practice by its nature is already highly collaborative and increasingly interdisciplinary. Meaningful partnerships and collaborations across borders are already a hallmark of Australia's creative endeavours and thus a major soft power asset. The partnerships created through arts and culture strengthen bilateral relationships with existing allies and offer an accessible connection point for emerging relationships, shared knowledge and exchange. The resulting shared stories enable reciprocal understanding and appreciation. Connections built through artistic and cultural exchange are vital to establishing trust and build credibility through authenticity and collaboration.

Further, with artistic engagement with Asia rapidly increasing, practices of reciprocity and collaboration are even now influencing our own arts creation and distribution, leading to a growing diversity of art on our stages, in our galleries, in our literature and in our communities as well as intercultural approaches to touring. This in turn is influencing how Australians see their own place in the region.

Investing in the strength of Australia's artistic and cultural assets enhances our position as a preferred destination for foreign investment, tourism and education, delivering economic, political and cultural benefits. The creative and political freedom enjoyed by Australian artists contributes to perceptions about our intellectual capital and attraction as a partner, signalling to the world that we are a diverse, open and innovative nation.

⁷ Australia Council 2017, [*Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*](#).

⁸ Singh, JP and MacDonald S 2017, [*Soft power Today: measuring the influences and effects*](#).

⁹ Varghese, Peter 2013, [*Bruce Allen Memorial Lecture: Building Australia's Soft Power*](#).

Case study: Literature as soft power

A nation's literature can be a powerful instrument of soft power. For example, outside of Japan, anime, manga and Haruki Murakami are responsible for fuelling Japanese Studies departments as well as filling theatres and convention halls with generations of the devoted fans. Collectively, they have brought Japanese culture to a global audience and enabled friendly knowledge and understanding.

Sharing Australian stories builds our national identity and enhances our attraction and influence. Shaun Prescott's 2017 debut novel *The Town*, which tells the story of a small regional town in Australia, is an excellent example of how the Australia Council's grant and strategic programs provide interconnected support for the dissemination of Australian stories which influence the global perception of our people and culture.

There are great opportunities for small publishers in the international market. International publishers are yearning for fresh, new, diverse voices – the kind of work published by small presses like Brow Books.

Shaun Prescott's debut novel *The Town*, published in August 2017, was the second book published by Brow Books, the publishing imprint of Australian literary journal *The Lifted Brow* which has been supported by grants from the Council since 2014. *The Lifted Brow's* editor and publisher Sam Cooney received an Australia Council residency in 2014 to work with a US publisher to transition from journal publishing to book publishing, with a focus on books by emerging Australian writers.

The Australia Council's International Publishers (VIPs) program showcases the quality and diversity of Australian writing and publishing, drives international rights sales of Australian writing, and strengthens long-term relationships between Australian and international publishing professionals. Since its inception in 1998, the rights to more than 300 Australian titles have been sold into international markets directly as a result of the program. Australian authors are becoming well known overseas, with publishers and agents reporting greater recognition of Australian names when pitching books to international publishers. In the five years to 2016, the VIPs program generated more than \$4 million dollars in sales for Australian rights holders.

The VIPs program resulted in the first international rights deal for Brow Books, when world rights to publish *The Town* were acquired by renowned UK publisher Faber & Faber, who onsold US rights to celebrated publisher Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Further international rights sales resulted from the VIPs program. A UK literary scout who came to Australia as a delegate of the VIPs program in May 2017 was instrumental in selling rights to *The Town* to publishers in France, Germany and Spain at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October 2017. This book from a small Australian publisher telling a regional Australian story was the sensation of the world's largest book trade fair. Since then *The Town* has also been sold to a publisher in Japan.

THE INFLUENCE OF ARTISTS AND CREATIVES IS RAPIDLY GROWING

Much recent research and commentary has focused on the importance of creativity to future success and national interests. This is only increasing in the changing global context and technological and societal change. Artists and creatives are increasingly being positioned as major global influencers alongside the increasing recognition that global leadership in fostering creativity is needed to drive economic growth. In Australia, the Bureau of Communications and Arts Research has released new analysis showing cultural and creative activity contributed \$111.7 billion to Australia's economy in 2016-17, with a 30% growth in cultural and creative activity over the last nine years.¹⁰ The proliferation of information and entertainment choices, interconnected through digital pathways, is seamlessly integrated into our daily lives. The ties between arts, commerce and the economy are deepening, with arts and culture potentially playing a much greater role in benefiting the export of Australian cultural goods and services, as well as attracting inward investment.

Arts and culture are increasingly a driver of both direct and indirect investment in Australia. Beyond their intrinsic and instrumental economic value, arts and culture also play a critical role in the development of a national brand and in encouraging our international partners to engage and do business with Australia. In 2013, the British Council found that young people who had participated in cultural activities with the UK were significantly more likely to be interested in working with, and doing business with, the UK than those who had not.¹¹ Similarly, Australia's arts and culture increases international awareness, understanding, and trust in Australia, initiating a chain of impact which ultimately results in increased trade and business activity with Australia.

As borders become increasingly permeable and new technologies enable new opportunities for distribution and experiencing arts from around the world, dialogue, collaboration and exchange between Australian artists and their international counterparts continues to rapidly increase. New international audiences are experiencing Australian arts and more diverse art will be experienced in Australia in keeping with our increasingly diverse community. More people will engage meaningfully through creative exchange, here and overseas.

Arts and culture have a significant role to play in driving innovation and growth and are becoming ever more economically valuable as creativity underpins the jobs of the future. International predictive data on work in 2030 released by NESTA tells us that creative jobs are likely to see a growth rate of 87% by 2030, contrasted with a sharp decline across more traditional industries.¹² Australia is currently the world's 13th largest economy and a member of the G20. However PwC's 2050 report predicts that by 2030 Australia will be only the 29th biggest economy, roughly swapping positions with Bangladesh.¹³ PwC's Chief Creative Officer Russel Howcroft has recently argued that global leadership in creativity is needed to arrest this slide:

'Creativity is our greatest potential area of growth but not enough of us have understood how vital new ideas, strong IP and creative-thinking skills will be in

¹⁰ Australian Government, Bureau of Communications and Arts Research, [*The Economic Value of Cultural and Creative Activity*](#).

¹¹ British Council, [*Culture Means Business*](#), 2013:4.

¹² Bakshi, H, Downing, J, Osborne, M & Scheider, P 2017, [*The Future of Skills: Employment in 2030. Pearson and Nesta, UK*](#), cited in [*Russel Howcroft's National Press Club Address*](#), 15 August 2018.

¹³ Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2017, [*The Long View: How will the global economic order change by 2050?*](#) cited in [*Russel Howcroft's National Press Club Address*](#), 15 August 2018.

the future... Creativity should be the driver of our future growth and competitiveness. We can no longer just rely on our natural attributes. We have to go up the value chain. We must use our human assets.¹⁴

Fostering Australian arts will foster an innovative and creative nation that is competitive, attractive and dynamic. Artists' skills and capabilities are considered to be among those least likely to be automated and increasingly sought in the workforces of the future. It is predicted that time spent engaging with people, solving strategic problems and thinking creatively will increase for all jobs. Accelerated change is likely to prioritise transferable skills, diverse perspectives, and lifelong learning for adapting skills and building new capabilities – all embodied in artists' working lives and professional practice. Artistic occupations are considered as having high growth potential,¹⁵ providing artists opportunities to explore less obvious or new industries in which to work as artists. There is also growing recognition among businesses of the value artists can add in interdisciplinary and diverse workplaces.¹⁶

Further, artists are well-placed to respond to changing social and workforce needs. Many of the predicted working conditions and required capabilities have long been the foundations of artists' challenging working lives and this is an increasing reality.¹⁷ Understanding opportunities for artists in a predicted future workforce requires consideration of the role of the arts alongside innovation more broadly. This is not a new space for the arts, but provides opportunity for a different or enhanced role in a digital and automated future.

CULTURAL TOURISM DELIVERS SOFT POWER

Tourism provides a means to meet different communities and experience different cultures and cultural expressions. It has the ability to influence the preferences of international actors and affect foreign policy outcomes through the attractiveness of a nation's culture and value. Tourism also presents opportunities for cultural exchange on a much larger scale than traditional diplomacy: in 2017 more than eight million international tourists visited Australia, with many visiting cultural institutions.¹⁸

Arts and culture have a growing role as a driver for tourism in Australia: they support economic activity and contribute to cultural exchange, cultural diplomacy and reputation building. The arts are increasingly part of the itinerary for international visitors to Australia. In 2017, 3.5 million tourists (43%) engaged with the arts while visiting Australia. Overall, international tourism numbers grew by 37% between 2013 and 2017, while there was a higher growth rate for the number of arts tourists which increased by 47%. The proportion of international tourists engaging with the arts while in Australia has ranged between 39% and 43% over the last decade. It has been on an upward trend since 2012.

Tourism data also reflects a move away from traditional markets and towards our own region. Almost 620,000 arts tourists came to Australia from China in 2017, the largest individual group. The five countries making up the largest numbers of international arts tourists in 2017 were China, the UK, the USA, New Zealand and Japan. In 2010, visitors from Asia replaced those from Europe as the largest proportion of international arts tourists.

¹⁴ Russel Howcroft's [National Press Club Address](#), 15 August 2018.

¹⁵ Bakshi, H, Downing, J, Osborne, M & Scheider, P 2017, [The Future of Skills: Employment in 2030](#). Pearson and Nesta, UK.

¹⁶ [Centre for Cultural Innovation 2016, Creativity Connects: Trends and Conditions Affecting U.S. Artists](#). National Endowment for the Arts, USA.

¹⁸ Based on Tourism Research Australia's International Visitor Survey.

By 2017, almost half (48%) of international arts tourists were visitors from Asia, up from 32% in 2008.

Arts experiences significantly impact tourists' perceptions of Australia. International tourists develop their sense of the Australian identity and our quality of life through their arts and cultural experiences. It is of particular importance that Asia is our largest market for tourism, making it a powerful soft power asset to support our most significant trade partner.

Case study: Lighting up the Opera House with world-renowned First Nations art

The Australia Council is delivering *Badu Gili* – meaning 'water light', as part of a three year partnership between the Council and the Sydney Opera House. It explores ancient First Nations stories in a spectacular seven-minute projection, illuminating the Opera House's eastern Bennelong sail daily at sunset year-round. In its first year, *Badu Gili* displayed artworks by five renowned First Nations artists: Jenuarrie, Alick Tipoti, Frances Belle Parker, and the late Lin Onus and Minnie Pwerle. *Badu Gili* was experienced by more than 160,000 visitors, and positive media and social media interest expanded its reach to a substantial global audience online. This is highly successful articulation of First Nations arts interacting with one of our most recognisable cultural icons and tourism assets is uniquely and distinctly Australian, and successfully positions us as a sophisticated and creative nation.

OUR CULTURAL DIVERSITY IS A SOFT POWER STRENGTH

Australia has one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse populations in the world. We are home to the world's oldest continuously living culture, and the waves of Australians who have arrived more recently identify with more than 270 ancestries.¹⁹ This places us in a unique and powerful position of having shared stories and histories with all countries of the world.

Our First Nations arts and cultures are a powerful and credible connection point with the Indigenous communities of other countries. With support from the Council, our Australian First Nations artists have established lasting connections with their counterparts across the world. This is resulting in rich artistic exchange and development, and enabling powerful and important works to be created and shown internationally, which in turn reflects our nation's journey towards reconciling our multiple narratives of indigenous history, British colonisation and multicultural migration. Additionally, with such a high migrant population we have an opportunity to leverage the extraordinarily diverse diaspora who have made Australia their home. The soft power value of these deep connections cannot be underestimated as they facilitate dialogue and influence through language and cultural understanding. The value of reciprocity comes to the fore here, where stories of other nations are finding growing audiences in the diasporas within Australia. There is great opportunity to build cultural connections across nations which enable stories to be shared both ways.

¹⁹ Australian Human Rights Commission 2014, *Face the facts: Cultural diversity*. Australian Human Rights Commission, Sydney.

Case study: Tara Books

For the last four years, the Australia Council has led a delegation of Australian publishers and literature programmers to India, with the aim of building connections, relationships and exchange between Indian and Australian publishers. This long term reciprocal strategy aims to have more Australian work read in India and more Indian work read in Australia, building reciprocal understanding alongside growing trade connections. It also builds capacity for Australian publishers to reach the rapidly growing audience of the India diaspora in Australia.

Tara Books is an independent publishing house based in Chennai, India. Founded by Gita Wolf in 1994, her aim was to introduce the rich diversity of Indian folk and tribal art into books for children. Tara Books is internationally renowned for their exquisite design values with 25 artisans working in their bookmaking workshop. They are especially well known for their screenprinted books made entirely by hand. In addition to many awards for their titles, Tara Books has also won prestigious awards including the London Book Fair International Publishing Industry Excellence Award in 2014 and the Bologna Prize for Best Children's Publisher (Asia Region) in 2013.

Tara Books has worked with a range of Indian indigenous art traditions for over 15 years, creating books that are unique in concept, form, design and production, and were interested in engaging with Australian First Nations artists and communities interested in their skills as bookmakers.

The Australian delegation first briefly met with Gita Wolf in January 2016, where early connections were built and ideas floated. The January 2017 delegation added Chennai to the itinerary which enabled deeper engagement with Tara Books and identified their strong interest in Australian First Nations culture. In May 2017, the Australia Council brought Gita Wolf to Australia as a delegate of the Visiting International Publishers program, where existing connections were consolidated and further connections made. In January 2018, the Australian delegation was hosted at Tara Books in Chennai which further consolidated the ideas in development. Additional reconnaissance trips to remote communities in Australia were undertaken by Tara Books before a publishing collaboration was set up with leading Australian independent publisher Allen & Unwin. Three picture books authored and illustrated by Australian First Nations artists are now in production and will be published in 2019 in India and Australia.

Our growing connections to our neighbours in Asia and the Indo-Pacific positions Australia to important North American influencers as a key access point to Asia. As Australian expression increases in its diversity, we also have an increasingly unique and fresh offer which is sought after by international tastemakers and influencers. Platforms such as [AsiaTOPA](#) and the [OzAsia Festival](#) are generating significant opportunities for collaboration and exchange with artists from across our region, positioning Australia as a diverse and open society.

Best practice soft power principles are based on reciprocal engagement as opposed to nationalistic export and projection approaches. The Australian arts sector's increased engagement with Asia has already begun to shift our artists' international engagement patterns and behaviours. The transactional and outbound touring approaches of the past are quickly giving way to intercultural collaborative approaches rooted in connection and exchange enabling the works to be presented in both countries of origin as well as having great success internationally. This in turn positions Australia very positively in the international market: our increasingly diverse arts and culture convey Australia as a modern,

sophisticated, inclusive and innovative society. This builds national identity, as well as international recognition for being a pluralistic and tolerant society.

Case study: *Attractor*

Many of the Australia Council's grant and strategic programs promote and facilitate cultural exchange and communication. *Attractor*, supported by the Major Festivals Initiative, brings together acclaimed Indonesian music duo, Senyawa, and two of Australia's leading small to medium dance companies, Townsville's Dancenorth and Melbourne's Lucy Guerin Inc, supported through Four Year Funding, to create a unique cross-cultural music and dance performance.

Attractor premiered in February 2017 in Melbourne as part of the first AsiaTOPA (Asia-Pacific Triennial of Performing Arts), and went on to be presented nationally at Brisbane Festival, Perth Festival and WOMADelaide. The work also toured internationally to the USA in 2017, with presentations at Portland's White Bird and the Center for the Art of Performance at UCLA, and was featured at the UK's Brighton Festival 2018. These international performances have resulted in invitations for further international touring across 2018–2020.

Attractor is an example of the arts and cultural collaborations that are possible across the Indo-Pacific region, a key region for both the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Australia Council. With *Attractor*, both companies expanded into new international markets, enhancing both Australia's and the broader region's reputation through the dissemination of culture.

FIRST NATIONS ARTS EXCEL GLOBALLY AND STAND OUT AS UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN

With a history tracing back more than 65,000 years, the knowledge and cultural practice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities provide us with the oldest heritage in the world. From bark paintings to contemporary performance, Australia's rich First Nations arts are a significant soft power asset which has yet to be fully recognised. First Nations arts excel globally and stand out as uniquely Australian, playing a central role in developing perceptions of our national identity.

Domestic capacity building and building international development skills for our First Nations artists is already paying enormous dividends in a rapidly growing offer of excellent First Nations artistic work that is eagerly being taken up by international markets and audiences. Market and audience trends demonstrate the significant and growing levels of interest in Australia's First Nations arts and culture. The achievements of First Nations artists are well represented in Australian arts awards and First Nations artists also have a proportionally higher presence at international arts events than other Australian artists.²⁰

Our First Nations cultures are driving tourism; they are part of what makes Australia such an attractive place to visit. There is already strong and rapidly growing interest: over 820,000 international tourists engaged with First Nations arts while in Australia in 2017, marking an increase of 41% since 2013.²¹ International tourists are more likely to engage with First

²⁰ Australia Council for the Arts 2015, [Arts Nation: An overview of Australian arts](#).

²¹ Based on Tourism Research Australia's International Visitor Survey.

Nations arts than attend sporting events,²² highlighting their power to influence perceptions of Australia. There has been increased attendance at First Nations performances as well as art, craft or cultural displays. More than one in four international tourists who engaged with the arts in Australia in 2017 engaged with First Nations arts, and more than one of three of those who travelled outside of capital cities. Arts tourists who visited regional areas of the Northern Territory had particularly high levels of engagement – eight in ten attended a First Nations arts activity in 2017 (79%).²³

Case study: Australian Performing Arts Market

Long-term engagement with other nations and cultural exchanges are key elements to achieving Australia's soft power goals. The people-to-people links that are established through platforms such as the Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM) enable Australian stories to be picked up by international presenters.

APAM is an internationally focused biennale market of contemporary Australian performing arts. Established by the Australia Council in 1994, the platform has evolved from being solely focused stimulating national and international touring opportunities for Australian contemporary performing arts to facilitate the exchange of ideas; generation of dialogue; building of skills, partnerships, collaborations and co-productions; and network development local and international peers.

The most recent APAM was delivered in February 2018 in Brisbane with 680 national and international delegates and over 275 Australian artists participating. It included large delegations from China, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Malaysia.

This APAM marked six years of significant expansion of First Nations programming and capacity building. The Blackfella Boot Camp, first delivered in 2014 to support First Nations artists and producers through peer-to-peer learning evolved into the 2018 Global First Nations Exchange with 42 First Nations artists and producers from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, Taiwan and the United States. The First Nations program included market readiness workshops, the Exchange discussions, an Original People's party showcasing the work of 19 First Nations artists, and the Dhumba Wiiny critics' series and BlakDance Presenter Series with 40 national and international presenters participating. The First Nations Exchange provides the participants with the opportunity to expand their networks and create exposure. It also presents Australia as a global leader in supporting First Nations arts, greatly enhancing our global reputation.

²² This includes experiencing Aboriginal art/craft or cultural displays and/or attending Aboriginal performance. Based on Tourism Research Australia International Visitor Survey data.

²³ Australia Council for the Arts 2015, [*Arts Nation: An overview of Australian arts*](#).

THE ARTS POWERFULLY CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL COHESION, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND SECURITY

Digital platforms and new technologies are making the world more connected than ever, yet in many ways social divisions appear to be growing. Geopolitical shifts and conflicts coupled with changing economic and social structures are contributing to developing social threats and global instability. In an environment of global disruption and a rise in nationalism, arts and culture can be a major soft power asset by facilitating points of connection and trusted partnerships which promote social cohesion and security.

The arts contribute to mutual understanding, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. Commonality and difference are found through arts and culture and this helps us understand each other. We engage with other cultures through exhibitions, performances and other artistic practices. Arts and culture have the ability to demonstrate diversity of views, breakdown stereotypes and challenge persistent perceptions of a country and its people, as well as prompt discussion and debate.²⁴ This can also help to develop mutual relationships and trust.

Through the arts, people have the opportunity to see themselves and their worlds authentically represented in all their complexity, and to gain insights into the lives and worlds of their neighbours near and far. The many and varied stories and perspectives brought to life through literature, music, performance and visual arts can provide a way for people to feel they are recognised – and can recognise each other – as members of diverse and evolving societies. Art can provide points of connection about shared experiences, from the joyful to the traumatic.²⁵ By providing engaging ways to interact with the tensions and extremes of other peoples' worlds from a safe place, the arts can strengthen communities by replacing fear, misunderstanding and stereotyping with insight and empathy.

Australians increasingly believe that the arts reflect Australia's diversity, shape and express Australian identity, and create empathy, understanding and connection. Three in four Australians believe the arts are an important way to get a different perspective, and two in three believe the arts help them understand other people and cultures.²⁶ Experiencing the arts enables connection, empathy and social cohesion. Through their socially cohesive capacity, the arts strongly contribute to mutual understanding, tolerance, peaceful coexistence and international cooperation and security. By promoting understanding between countries and peoples, the arts help bridge divides and create respect among cultures, creating the space for positive dialogue.

Australian artists are increasingly responding to global issues such as the environment and the global movement of displaced people through socially charged work. Within community arts and cultural development, rights-based conversations are a focus. More broadly, there are also important conversations taking place, both in the arts sector and across society, about self-determination, and the need to increase diversity and address sexual harassment, discrimination and bullying. Art as social commentary, as a political tool for change and a way to help us think differently are all the reasons why the arts matter. As the sector comes together to tackle some of these bigger issues, we can see how artists can shape the future of our national and global story for long-term cultural change.

²⁴ DEMOS 2007, [Cultural Diplomacy](#).

²⁵ Mackay, H. 2017, [Hugh Mackay: the state of the nation starts in your street](#). The Conversation, Victoria. Mackay, H. 2017, [The state of the nation starts in your street – Gandhi Oration 2017](#).

²⁶ Australia Council 2017, [Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey](#).

SUPPORTING THE ARTS BUILDS SOFT POWER

Globally, many countries have already recognised the importance of arts and culture to their cultural, social and economic success and international competitiveness, and are investing in arts and culture accordingly. This is being done both directly through top-down whole of government approaches to arts and culture as well as more organic approaches that are being spurred by the new channels available to disseminate popular cultural forms.

Conventional soft power tools and channels are changing. With advances in new technologies, connectivity, easy access to information, media coverage and social media platforms that facilitate communication, participation and engagement with different audiences, cultural diplomacy has become an important element in achieving foreign policy goals. As a result, non-state actors increasingly have become stakeholders of and partners with government in achieving foreign policy objectives. As Nye argues, 'cooperative public diplomacy can ... help take the edge off suspicious of narrow national motives'²⁷.

The United Kingdom tops the Soft Power 30. In 2016, the [Culture White Paper](#) sets the UK Government's priority and agenda around culture and soft power: 'Culture continues to expand the UK's influence, promotes trade and investment and attracts visitors to experience the beauty of our landscapes, the treasures of our national heritage and the life of our towns and cities. This respect and influence gives us status in global networks and international organisations. In turn, those networks give us the opportunity to promote our cultural and creative talent.'²⁸ The UK's GREAT Britain campaign showcases its arts and culture, encourages tourism, business, investment, and study in the UK. It operates in 144 countries and encourages people around the world to think and feel differently about the UK. It seeks to attract inward investment and tourism, boost exports and generally foster a positive attitude towards UK citizens, institutions, goods and services. The campaign has united the efforts of the public and private sector to generate jobs and growth for Britain and has already secured confirmed economic returns of £3.4bn for the UK.

Canada has recognised that investing in arts and culture is an economic imperative. The 2017 Canadian federal budget included CAD\$1.6 billion investment for cultural and recreational infrastructure which bears the potential to yield significant immediate and long term societal benefits and economic impact.

There are multiple approaches that do not have to be a top-down government approach. Japan's position as a soft power influencer in Southeast Asia is partly due to the success of Japanese popular culture in the region.

New Zealand and Australia share some of the same challenges to reaching their foreign policy goals, notably geography and demographics. While Australia's ranking in the Soft Power 30 dropped this year, New Zealand maintained its ranking. New Zealand is well-placed for soft power initiatives in the region as a significant proportion of the population has Pacific ancestry and it has substantial links to the region. New Zealand has also invested significantly in their national brand and the New Zealand government's renewed focus on arts, culture and wellbeing is resulting in highly positive and high profile media coverage internationally.

²⁷ Nye, J. 2008 *op cit.* p.107.

²⁸ Thomas, I 2018, [The soft power of the arts](#), *Arts Professional* 15/3/18.

Case study: International Leadership Program

Capacity building initiatives develop people, foster connections, grow networks and broker opportunities for Australian arts and artists at home and overseas. They strengthen Australia's position as a preferred global partner by building the capacity of our arts professionals to engage and participate within international markets. Skill and network development supports the artistic ambitions of the sector and participation in a stronger global arts community.

In our region, the rapid growth of developing and newly industrialised nations means there are more artists influencing global narratives impacting our daily lives. This presents an economic and cultural opportunity for Australia's artists and arts organisations to build creative and cultural connections throughout our neighbouring regions.

The Australia Council for the Arts partnered with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to deliver an International Leadership Program in 2017 and 2018. This program enables international arts professionals from the Indo Pacific region to participate in the Council's existing flagship leadership programs, Arts Leaders and Future Leaders.

Both programs adopt a blended learning approach combining digital engagement, intensive face-to-face residencies and support to undertake a mentorship (Arts Leaders), or secondment (Future Leaders) upon completion of the program. Ten participants were selected from China, India, the Philippines, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea to join their Australian counterparts. In addition, the National Arts Council of Singapore supported a Singaporean participant in the Arts Leaders program.

Investment in capacity building has both immediate and long term outcomes. An interim evaluation identified preliminary outcomes reported by the international participants, and areas of future potential impact. Participants reported that the program to date has been both informative and enlightening, and it has encouraged them to consider their own professional practice within a global context.

Overwhelmingly, the participants have valued being embedded within a respected peer group that supports diverse ideas and contributions, with reciprocal benefits for both the international and Australian-based participants. The program has provided unique insight into arts in Australia, particularly the work of the small to medium sector. This improved awareness has helped participants identify opportunities to work more closely with the Australian arts sector in the future.

CONCLUSION

Australian arts and artists are crucial, highly strategic latent soft power assets that can be better leveraged to advance Australia's interests to achieve diplomatic outcomes in the national interest.

Like many other nations, Australia is yet to fully recognise the value of arts and culture to soft power. The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper argues that Australia's soft power strengths include our democracy, rule of law, strong economy, quality education, cutting-edge science, multiculturalism and environmental protections. It does not adequately address the strength and importance of Australian arts and culture in achieving our foreign policy goals. Australia is yet to fully recognise the value of arts and culture to soft power and our foreign policy goals. Greater investment in arts and culture could increase our soft power capabilities and support the goals of the Foreign Policy White Paper.

To become the creative, innovative and imaginative citizens that our companies and governments want us to be, Australians need to willingly expose themselves to new ideas. A vibrant arts and culture community is the easiest way to make this possible.

POLICY OPPORTUNITIES

1. Integrate investment in Australian arts and culture within a whole of government approach to amplify our soft power and support Australia's interests internationally, and particularly in our region.

The cultural and creative sectors are considered to be the engine of international image and soft power by the world's most well-regarded countries including the United Kingdom and Canada. The cross portfolio impact of a thriving creative sector is significant.

The 2013 UN Report on Creative Economy notes 'the creative economy is one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the world economy, but also a highly transformative one in terms of income generation, job creation and export earnings ... when the creative sector becomes part of an overall development and growth strategy, it can contribute to the revitalisation of the national economy where hybrid and dynamic economic and cultural exchanges occur and innovation is nurtured.'

2. Australia's soft power capabilities could be significantly increased through scaling up existing programs and strategies.

The soft power benefits delivered by world class cultural and creative industries highlight the need for an appropriately resourced arts sector. To better leverage Australia's arts and cultural assets we need greater investment in strategic support for our arts and culture to increase the global visibility and accessibility of our artists and Australian stories; leverage international platforms, distribution channels and digital markets; and to integrate arts and culture strategically with other soft power assets and structures. This will also ensure our creative expressions are more representative of Australian society, and increasingly attractive and accessible to a diverse range of people.

With decades of experience, the Australia Council enjoys significant international recognition for its arts development work. The agency is well placed to deliver an expanded targeted suite of arts development activities that with increased investment would deliver high impact outcomes in support of Australia's diplomatic influence, security and prosperity. Our commitment to partnerships and exchange has already paved the foundation for future success, with programs and strategies immediately ready to be scaled up. These opportunities could be realised through:

- Increased investment in international arts development in Asia and the Indo-pacific, expanding and building on existing early development. Key to success is establishment of region-wide, cultural networks and institutions, driven by independent bottom-up initiatives from cultural professionals.
- Increased support for First Nations arts building on existing sector development strategic initiatives.
- Leveraging Australia's leading sector development programs through international deployment and international participation.

3. Prioritise investment in First Nations arts and culture, including cultural tourism.

Being home to the world's oldest living culture is part of what makes Australia such a unique place to visit. Greater visibility of First Nations cultures through more dedicated cultural platforms and institutions would enhance our attractiveness to international audiences and support our international reputation.

More than half (56%) of the international tourist audiences for First Nations arts come from Asia. Fairs such as Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair are a platform for First Nations arts, showcasing works from some of the most remote First Nations communities in Australia. Income from art sales are returned to the community, where artists directly benefit.

The New York Times recently recognised the Top End of Australia as a place to visit in 2018, partly due to the international interest surrounding the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair.²⁹ Major art fairs like these continue to grow in attendance. Increasing significant platforms within Australia for First Nations arts will have a positive influence on our international perception whilst also significantly benefiting our First Nations communities.

4. Develop an overarching partnership between government and industry that is focused on long term soft power development through arts and culture.

This partnership would enable the cultural and creative industries to work effectively with government to develop a joint plan that could alleviate many of the current challenges, such as the need for stability and certainty, as well as medium to long term planning which will enable the creative sector to develop complementary strategic plans for engagement.

²⁹ New York Times 2018, *52 Places to Go in 2018*, New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/travel/places-to-visit.html>