



**Policy for the
promotion and support
of Indigenous arts
and cultural activity in
New South Wales**

March 2000

Preamble

An important objective of the New South Wales Government is the support and promotion of Indigenous cultural expression.

The goal was first outlined in the Government's *Cultural Development Policy* in March 1995 and has been reaffirmed in subsequent documents and statements, notably the *Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People* in November 1997.

In November 1996 the New South Wales Parliament unanimously approved a resolution reaffirming its commitment to reconciliation. In June 1997 the Premier became the first head of an Australian State to offer a formal apology to the Aboriginal people for the stolen generations. This, too, was endorsed by the Parliament.

In the same spirit, this policy acknowledges the importance of artistic and cultural expression in revitalising Indigenous communities and strengthening a sense of identity.

There have been important developments since the release of the Government's cultural policy in 1995.

- An *Indigenous Arts Fund* has been established by the Ministry for the Arts to provide prompt and readily accessible support for projects across a range of art forms. It was one of the outcomes of the *Review of Regional Arts Development in NSW* commissioned by the Ministry in 1996.
- Indigenous people have been appointed to the NSW Arts Advisory Council and its committees. These members also convene as the *Indigenous Arts Reference Group*, to advise on policies and strategies. Indigenous people are also being appointed to the boards and trusts of the State's cultural institutions.
- A regional Indigenous Cultural Officer's position has been created to assist Indigenous artists and communities with project planning and applications. The position is based at Regional Arts NSW.
- A paper entitled *Indigenous Arts Protocol: A Guide* was launched in 1998 to assist in nurturing Indigenous cultural expression and promoting dialogue and co-operation between Indigenous and other communities.

Principles

This policy statement is intended to build on the progress achieved so far. It is informed by seven general principles. These are -

- 1** An acknowledgement of the significance of Aboriginal Australia as the oldest living culture in the world.
- 2** An acknowledgement of the impact of colonisation on Indigenous people and their cultural heritage.
- 3** An acknowledgement that Indigenous culture is informed by the past, and the recognition that Indigenous cultural expression is a vital part of contemporary society.
- 4** A recognition of the respect due for the cultural diversity of Indigenous people.
- 5** Support for the principle of self-determination in setting cultural priorities and the adoption of appropriate cultural protocols in the public sector.
- 6** An acknowledgement of the role of the public sector - representing as it does the community as a whole - in supporting, maintaining and nurturing Indigenous cultural heritage and expression.
- 7** A recognition of the intellectual and moral rights of Indigenous people to their diverse cultural expressions

Strategies

The following strategies will be followed in implementing this policy.

- 1** Initiatives that promote arts and cultural development as a means of enriching regional Indigenous communities are to be supported as far as possible. (The Ministry for the Arts' cultural grants programs will target contemporary arts practice, which may include activities based on traditional forms of cultural expression.)
- 2** Assistance programs not generally accessed by Indigenous organisations or communities are to be identified and their use promoted to Indigenous people.
- 3** Copyright, intellectual property and moral rights of Indigenous artists and their cultural property are to be protected where they fall under State jurisdiction. Initiatives promoting awareness of these rights in the community will be supported.
- 4** Opportunities for interaction and cross-fertilisation between artforms and between artists and groups of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are to be identified and developed. (*Indigenous Arts Protocol: A Guide* will be strongly promoted in this context.)
- 5** Measures likely to enhance the training, professional development and employment of Indigenous arts practitioners are to be supported wherever possible.
- 6** Means will be sought within the State's legislative and constitutional jurisdiction to protect Indigenous cultural expression from exploitation.
- 7** Accommodation for Indigenous arts organisations is to be improved. This includes assistance with housing Indigenous groups and their arts and cultural activities, such as the development of Indigenous keeping places and cultural centres.

Procedures

Indigenous people, wherever possible, are to participate in implementing this policy. They will also be involved in the governance of arts and cultural institutions and peak organisations (including those with no specific responsibility for Indigenous matters).

The Ministry for the Arts and the Indigenous Arts Reference Group, will assist in identifying alliances that may optimise the opportunities and resources available to Indigenous artists and organisations.

Outcomes

This policy will introduce a more coordinated and strategic approach to Indigenous arts support and better address the needs, aspirations and priorities of Indigenous people in promoting their cultural heritage and expression. It will facilitate improved communication and collaboration between Indigenous and other Australian artists and cultural organisations.

The following are some of the measures to be adopted for achieving the outcomes:

- The principles and priorities outlined in this document will guide the Ministry's decisions on programs and policy.
- Performance indicators, relevant to this policy, will be developed and applied to the Ministry's programs and initiatives.
- The policy will provide a mechanism to address any discrepancies or gaps that are identified in the annual review of funding guidelines and programs.
- The Ministry will report on a regular basis to the Indigenous Arts Reference Group on the policy's implementation and to the Arts Advisory Council on policy outcomes. The Ministry will include an evaluation in its annual report.

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For the purposes of this policy an "Indigenous" person is one of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent or one who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person and is accepted as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person in the community which he or she comes from or lives in.