

NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY

DISCUSSION PAPER SUBMISSION

The Australian Government is seeking views from a wide range of people organisations and sectors on the National Cultural Policy especially on the proposed goals and strategies. You can contribute to the development of a new National Cultural Policy by making a submission.

HOW SUBMISSIONS WILL BE USED

Submissions will be used to help develop the new National Cultural Policy. If you agree, your submission may be displayed on this website. The Office for the Arts may make contact with you for further information or for permission to quote from your submission.

HOW TO MAKE A SUBMISSION

1. Use the template as a guide to completing your submission.
2. Complete your submission and send
by email to culturalpolicy@pmc.gov.au
Your emailed submission must be sent in one attachment,
as a word document or pdf which is no bigger than 10megabytes

OR

By post to National Cultural Policy
Office for the Arts
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
PO Box 6500
Canberra ACT 2600

3. We will acknowledge the receipt of your submission by email.

If you have questions, please email culturalpolicy@pmc.gov.au or call 02 6210 2794

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SUBMISSION TEMPLATE

Please use this as a guide for your submission.

Name* **Aaron Corn**

Organisation **The National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia**

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Do you agree to your submission being made publicly available on the www.culture.arts.gov.au website?*

☒ Yes

☐ No

1. About you or your organisation

The National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia <<http://www.aboriginalartists.com.au/NRP.htm>> is an expert coalition of concerned individuals and organisations with interests in protecting and sustaining Australia's highly endangered traditions of Indigenous of creative expression through music, dance and ceremonial performance. The National Recording Project was established in response to the first Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance at the Garma Festival of Traditional Culture in 2002, and over the past decade, has been active in:

- recording traditional music, dance and ceremony in cooperation with local Indigenous communities,
- repatriating archival records of music, dance and ceremony to Indigenous communities following world's best practice,
- assisting communities to integrate these materials into broader education, languages, health, governance and business programs,
- promoting and assisting in the creation of local digital archives of traditional music, dance and ceremony within Indigenous communities,
- encouraging safe archival storage under agreed protocols at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in partnership with local digital archives,
- publishing books and CDs of traditional music and dance under the Indigenous Music of Australia label, published by Sydney University Press, to promote them as an integral part of Australia's cultural life,
- raising awareness via publications, education and the media about the crisis afflicting Australia's traditions of Indigenous music, dance and ceremony,
- promoting traditional performance and cultural sustainability as major beneficial factors in Closing the Gap on Indigenous health, education and employment,
- stimulating local community development through Indigenous arts programs to support infrastructure needs and economic growth within Australia's regions,
- organising the annual Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance, which draws together leading Indigenous artists from throughout Australia with key experts from universities, collecting institutions and industry partners.

The National Recording Project coalition encompasses both regional and professional breadth, as well as high levels of experience and expertise in recording and documenting traditional Indigenous music, dance and ceremony. As the only network that encourages and fosters direct collaboration among Australia's most prolific Indigenous traditional performing artists with allied curators, technical experts and academics, it is unique internationally.

Since 2002, the objectives and approaches of the National Recording Project have been guided by the **Garma Statement on Indigenous Music and Dance** <http://www.aboriginalartists.com.au/NRP_statement.htm>, which resulted from detailed consultations between key Indigenous stakeholders, key academics involved in research into Indigenous performance traditions, and representatives of key national

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and state institutions. With some of our affiliates having made vital contributions to this field for more than three decades, the National Recording Project is well placed to provide Government with the best possible expertise and advice on developing policy and programs for the preservation and maintenance of endangered Indigenous performance traditions.

All official positions within the National Recording Project are voluntary, and affiliates meet for an Annual General Meeting prior to each year's Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance. The National Recording Project is currently led by two Co-Directors:

- **Dr Aaron Corn** (The Australian National University)
ARC Future Fellow and Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology; Author of *Reflections and Voices: Exploring the Music of Yothu Yindi with Mandawuy Yunupingu*
- **Dr Payi-Linda Ford** (The University of Queensland)
Senior Lecturer in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies; Marranunggu elder

It is governed by a broadly representative Steering Committee of Indigenous artists, and their academic and curatorial partners that meets with the Co-Directors at least once annually and currently comprises:

- **Mr David Manmurulu** (Warruwi Community), **Co-Chair**
Mawng elder and ceremonial leader of the Injarlaku series
- **Emeritus Prof Allan Marett** (The University of Sydney), **Co-Chair**
Ethnomusicologist; Author of *Songs, Dreamings, and Ghosts: The Wangga of North Australia*
- **Dr Sally Treloyn** (The University of Melbourne), **Secretary**
John McKenzie Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Ethnomusicology
- **Mr Kevin Bradley** (National Library of Australia)
Director of Sound Preservation; Curator of Oral History and Folklore
- **Dr Joseph Neparrnga Gumbula** (The University of Sydney)
ARC Australian Research Fellow—Indigenous in Curatorial Studies; Gupapuyngu elder and ceremonial leader
- **Ms Cathy Hilder** (Northern Territory Library)
Manager of Public Library Services
- **Prof Marcia Langton**, AM, FASSA (The University of Melbourne)
Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies; Co-editor of *First Australians: An Illustrated History* with Rachel Perkins
- **Mr Steven Wanta Jampijinpa Patrick** (Lajamanu Community Education Centre)
Warlpiri elder and ceremonial leader; Creative Director of the Milpirri Festival
- **Mr Russell Taylor** (AIATSIS)
Principal of AIATSIS represented by sound archiving and native title expert, **Ms Grace Koch**
- **Mr Wukun Wanambi** (The Mulka Project, Yirrkala)
Director of the Mulka Project; Marrangu elder and ceremonial leader
- **Dr Stephen Wild**, FAHA (International Council For Traditional Music)
Vice-President of the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM), a non-governmental organisation in formal consultative relations with UNESCO

The National Recording Project's book and CD series, the Indigenous Music of Australia, is published by Sydney University Press and its current Editor is:

- **Assoc Prof Linda Barwick** (The University of Sydney)
Director of the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures (PARADISEC)

The National Recording Project's strengths lie in its long history of consultation and action around issues of how best to maintain, strengthen and enliven Australia's highly endangered traditions of Indigenous music and dance, and in implementing projects that support these aims. While this initiative receives no operational funding of any kind, our affiliates have nonetheless been highly successful in

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attracting a large number of research grants and industry consultancies to support Indigenous communities in maintaining their traditional performing arts <http://www.aboriginalartists.com.au/NRP_projects.htm>.

Our network of concerned Indigenous artists, scholars and institutional representatives of major public collections is united by our conviction that Australia's Indigenous music and dance traditions are highly endangered. We submit that, unless this present crisis is addressed as outlined here under item 4, what remains of this rich heritage will soon be lost, not only to the detriment of Indigenous Australians, but all Australians and indeed the world. We are also united by the view, as expressed in the Garma Statement on Indigenous Music and Dance, that music, dance and ceremony form the core of Indigenous cultures and artistic expression in Australia, and that it is through these intrinsically creative media that Indigenous Australians sustain their laws, cultures and sense of wellbeing. We therefore recognise that the preservation of performance traditions is among the highest priorities for Indigenous Australians, and believe that these rare and precious traditions, which carry the original music and dance forms of Australia, should be more fully recognised and supported as a deeply valued part of Australia's cultural heritage and indeed world heritage.

2. Do you support the development of a National Cultural Policy, and why?

The National Recording Project strongly supports the development of a National Cultural Policy, and would welcome opportunities to assist Government with the further development of policy and programs aimed at supporting Indigenous traditional performing arts and artists. We recognise that arts are intrinsic to the cultural life and economic foundations of the nation, but that they are especially significant to the lives of Indigenous Australians as drivers and stabilisers of social cohesion and personal wellbeing. As stated in the Garma Statement on Indigenous Music and Dance:

Songs, dances and ceremonial performances form the core of Indigenous cultures in Australia. It is through music, dance and associated ceremony that Indigenous people sustain their cultures and maintain the Law and a sense of self within the world. Performance traditions are the foundation of social and personal wellbeing, and with the ever-increasing loss of these traditions, the toll grows every year. The preservation of performance traditions is therefore one of the highest priorities for Indigenous peoples.

The National Recording Project also identifies and promotes the central role that Indigenous arts play in the cultural life of the Australian nation, and affirms that the traditional music and dance forms of Indigenous Australia should be a more deeply valued and supported part of Australia's cultural heritage. As the Garma Statement advocates:

Indigenous performances are one of our most rich and beautiful forms of artistic expression, and yet they remain unheard and invisible within the national cultural heritage. Without immediate action, many Indigenous music and dance traditions are in danger of extinction with potentially destructive consequences both for the fabric of Indigenous societies and cultures, and for the cultural richness of the nation as a whole. <http://www.aboriginalartists.com.au/NRP_statement.htm>

While Government supports the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records (MILR) Program, and the Indigenous Contemporary Music Action Plan, there is presently no program that specifically supports Indigenous artists to maintain the rare music, dance and ceremonial traditions that feed much of their most popular commercial creative outputs for general public audiences both in Australia and worldwide. Without this traditional source material, for example, Australia could have developed no Gurrumul Yunupingu, Laura Festival or Bangarra Dance Theatre. Even the lucrative Indigenous visual arts industry would be difficult to sustain without the continuation of these music and dance traditions, as much of the knowledge that Indigenous artists vest in their visual works is acquired through their own regular participation in ceremonial performance.

The development of a National Cultural Policy therefore provides a timely opportunity to establish a scheme like the MILR Program that aims to expand the Indigenous creative industries by supporting the maintenance of music, dance and ceremonial traditions within Indigenous communities. AIATSIS has expressed its full support for this proposal and has agreed to administer this program should it be established.

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3. What are your views about each of the four goals?

GOAL 1: To ensure that what the Government supports — and how this support is provided — reflects the diversity of a 21st century Australia, and protects and supports Indigenous culture

The National Recording Project strongly supports the goal of protecting and supporting Indigenous arts and culture, and sees this task as urgent. Australia's oldest traditions of Indigenous music and dance are in a state of deep crisis, and in danger of imminent extinction. In July 2011, the General Assembly of the ICTM, a worldwide non-governmental organisation dedicated to the protection of traditional musics in formal consultative relations with UNESCO, formally recognised this crisis across Australia's Indigenous music and dance traditions, and called for urgent action with its unanimous endorsement of the **ICTM Statement on Indigenous Australian Music and Dance** <<https://sites.google.com/site/ictmanz/documents/position-statements/StatementonIndigenousAustralianMusicandDance.pdf>>. This is the first time in ICTM's history that it has taken such action. As Australia has not yet signed the UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, this ICTM resolution points to the fact that Australia's Indigenous music and dance traditions 'are among the oldest and most endangered in the world,' yet are intrinsic to maintaining social and personal wellbeing, and sustaining culture, law and identity among Indigenous communities. It calls for urgent action to 'ensure the protection of those living practices that remain for the benefit of all Australians, and for cultural diversity worldwide'. Our National Cultural Policy should therefore provide for a scheme that supports the maintenance of Indigenous music, dance and ceremonial traditions in ways that recognise their importance to Australian and world heritage, to the cultural enrichment and engagement of Australians from all walks of life nationwide, and to growing creative industries that make our communities more vibrant and worthwhile places for residents and visitors alike.

GOAL 2: To encourage the use of emerging technologies and new ideas that support the development of new artworks and the creative industries, and that enable more people to access and participate in arts and culture

The National Recording Project strongly supports the use of emerging digital technologies to enable Indigenous peoples access to records of their traditional cultures. For decades, Indigenous musicians and dancers have made use of audiovisual media as aids to memory and to support transmission of the traditions across generations. Over the past decade, affiliates of the National Recording Project and its partner institutions have systematically recorded and documented traditional performance repertoires, and have introduced and tested the use of digital repositories as electronic keeping places that support traditional performance activities in numerous Indigenous communities and homeland centres. This includes the databases:

- **Community Stories** <http://www.ntl.nt.gov.au/our_story_version_2_project> recently developed by the Northern Territory Library in partnership with the Pitjantjatjara Council,
- **Wadeye Song Database** <http://sydney.edu.au/arts/indigenous_song/wadeye> developed through the Murriny Patha Song Project in collaboration with the Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre and the Wadeye Knowledge Centre in funding from the Australian Research Council (ARC).

As a co-convenor with AIATSIS of the **2010 Information Technologies and Indigenous Communities Symposium**, the National Recording Project stands at the forefront of understanding how to harness emerging technologies and the National Broadband Network to grow robust creative industries among Indigenous communities, and to improve quality of life, educational outcomes and economic futures for Indigenous Australians <<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/docs/ITIC%20Statement.pdf>>. The enthusiastic uptake of new technologies among young Indigenous Australians in particular now provides a fertile context for arts programs that link them into broader creative and professional networks internationally, and are simultaneously aimed at Closing the Gap on Indigenous health, education and employment. Such programs presently include:

- **Ngaanyatjarra Media** <<http://www.ngmedia.org.au>> using media and communications technologies to tell Indigenous stories of the Western Desert region,
- **The Mulka Project** <<http://www.yirrkala.com/mulka>> providing meaningful employment and empowerment to Yolngu communities through multimedia cultural heritage programs.

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- **Nganampa Health** <<http://www.nganampahealth.com.au/programs/upk.html>> which produces music CDs instead of written materials to educate people about environmental health in developing communities on Anangu lands.

GOAL 3: To support excellence and world-class endeavour, and strengthen the role that the arts play in telling Australian stories both here and overseas

The Indigenous music and dance traditions of Australia are unique in the world. Traditionally, memory and history are underpinned, remembered, taught and realised by Indigenous communities through these traditions. These traditions carry our oldest continuous narratives of human existence in Australia, and indeed on Earth, and encapsulate immeasurable wisdom that is vital for the wellbeing of all Australians now and in the future. Indigenous music and dance traditions trace the ebb and flow of Australian history as told from Indigenous perspectives that are rare and unique in the contemporary world. To enable Indigenous artists to continue presenting their unique stories to interested audiences worldwide, the National Cultural Policy, as a matter of urgency, must provide for a scheme that supports the maintenance of endangered Indigenous music, dance and ceremonial traditions in ways that can nurture and develop future performing artists of Gurrumul Yunupingu and Bangarra Dance Theatre's international acclaim, and can sustain other artists in continuing opportunities for creative growth through active ceremonial participation.

GOAL 4: To increase and strengthen the capacity of the arts to contribute to our society and economy

As the original music, dance and related visual art forms of Australia, Indigenous arts should be deeply valued, not only as an intrinsic part of Australia's cultural heritage, but also so that their full cultural and economic potential within the broader economy can be realised. Presently, the costs of maintaining Australia's Indigenous performance tradition are largely born by regional and remote Indigenous communities, who are among the most economically disadvantaged groups in the nation. That these communities dedicate so much of their precious limited resources to maintaining these traditions attests to the extremely high value they hold for Indigenous Australians. If we as Australians truly value these traditions, more support must be given to sustain them at regional and local levels, and to aid Indigenous Australians to develop local tourism, arts and media enterprises that will allow them to reach wider audiences within the nation and the world. To support these aspirations, there is also urgent need for broader and better education about the traditional performing arts of Indigenous Australia through public awareness programs, the education system and the National Curriculum at all levels. Again, the enthusiastic uptake of new technologies among young Indigenous Australians provides a fertile new context for arts programs that can meaningfully connect youths from all walks of life nationwide, and simultaneously assist in Closing the Gap on Indigenous health, education and employment.

4. What strategies do you think we could use to achieve each of the four goals?

GOAL 1: If we are to support Indigenous cultures, there can surely be no greater task than arresting the tragic loss of Australia's great Indigenous traditions of music, dance and ceremony. The National Recording Project has strived for a decade now to draw attention to this crisis that is occurring within our nation. There can be little doubt that since settlement, the destruction of these traditional Indigenous arts has been massive. We estimate that more than 95% of the traditions that were present in 1788 have been lost, and all the traditions that survive today are highly endangered. The efforts that Indigenous peoples are still making to keep those traditions alive against incredible odds are truly heroic, and indicative of their continued high value to Indigenous communities. Even so, we are approaching the point of no return for their continuing survival.

In order to arrest the decline and future loss of the Australia's Indigenous music and dance traditions, the National Recording Project proposes the establishment of a fund, to be administrated through AIATSIS, that is similar to the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records (MILR) Program for the protection and revitalisation of Indigenous languages <<http://www.arts.gov.au/topics/indigenous-arts/maintenance-indigenous-languages-and-records>>. Grants from this fund would be made available to appropriate Indigenous organisations, not to individuals, with encouragement to apply for triennial funding. While individual grants will differ markedly in size, scope, geography and immediacy, given the immense magnitude of this national crisis, we consider that triennial funding of up to \$250,000 to be drawn from a total budget of \$5 million annually would be justified.

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If such resources can be provided now to arrest the decline of these highly endangered traditions, it will be possible to slow and reverse the decline of surviving traditions, and for lost traditions, to revive them from existing records now and in the future. Indigenous peoples in NSW and Victoria are even now slowly beginning to revive long lost traditions by consulting a variety of records both ancient and contemporary; and in northern Australia, musicians and dancers regularly consult audiovisual records as an aid to correct performance.

Our long experience shows that there are a variety of organisations that could host and implement projects aimed at supporting traditional music and dance, and that Indigenous communities themselves are best placed to nominate appropriate host organisations, which could include arts centres, language centre, libraries, rangers programs, schools, health clinics, aged care facilities, community councils and community centres. Though they will require assistance in key technical areas, these kinds of local organisations are in the best position to determine what is needed and what will work best at local and regional levels, and there are far greater chances of endangered music and dance traditions being sustained into the future if they are embedded in the daily business of local services and organisations. With the National Recording Project providing advice to communities on preparing applications and project implementation, this program should be tightly focussed on:

1. the recording and documentation of existing traditions at world's best practice standards,
2. the development of local communities through related Indigenous arts programs that support infrastructure needs and economic growth within Australia's regions,
3. the location and return to the community of relevant archival records,
4. the establishment of local digital archives to facilitate dissemination of material according to appropriate cultural protocols,
5. safe archival storage under agreed protocols at AIATSIS in partnership with local digital repositories,
6. the creation of books, recordings, websites and teaching materials in close partnership with Indigenous communities to assist in the education of the broader Australian public about Indigenous music and dance.

GOAL 2: As identified through the **2010 Information Technologies and Indigenous Communities Symposium**, the widespread uptake of new technologies by young Indigenous Australians now provides a fertile context for arts programs aimed at maintaining Australia's rare and endangered Indigenous music, dance and ceremonial traditions. The model proposed here by the National Recording Project will build on this capacity through its intrinsically innovative utilisation of emerging technologies. We envisage that:

1. recording and documentation, including the collection of metadata according to established world's best practice, would be carried out either by local Indigenous people with training provided within the framework of their grants, or by consultants accredited by the National Recording Project,
2. community elders will be encouraged to work with consultants accredited by the National Recording Project to locate relevant archival records and to repatriate these to their communities,
3. where they exist, local digital archives, such as the Local Knowledge Centres of the Northern Territory Library, could be managed by an appropriate agency working in consultation with the community. Otherwise, consultants accredited by the National Recording Project could work with local communities to establish a culturally appropriate database on local computers and data clouds using a program such as Community Story.
4. recording engineers, both young and old, will be trained to format recordings and capture associated metadata in ways that facilitate their archival deposit with AIATSIS and into local digital repositories.

GOAL 3: The National Recording Project has already established a book and CD series published by Sydney University Press that disseminates materials about music and dance both domestically and overseas. Affiliates of the National Recording Project have also been involved in the creation of numerous websites about Indigenous music and dance, such as the Wadeye Song Database, and members of this particular initiative are specifically involved in the creation of teaching materials and curricula. Funding towards publication and the creation of websites could form part of our proposed grants program.

GOAL 4: There is an urgent need for a study of the economic and educational mechanisms that support traditional ceremonial cultures in Indigenous communities. Anecdotal evidence suggests that such activities are supported from a variety of sources including land council

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funds, community organisations such as community stores, rangers programs, and the resources of individual families to name but a few. Consideration should be given to funding such a study, and also a scheme to support traditional ceremonial performances both within their home regions, and within the context of national and international tours. In addressing the urgent need for broader and better education about the traditional performing arts of Indigenous Australia, we propose the incorporation of the National Recording Project's book and CD series, the Indigenous Music of Australia, into the National Curriculum for Music, Indigenous Studies and cognate subjects at all levels as is stage appropriate.

5. How can you, your organisation or sector contribute to the goals and strategies of the National Cultural Policy?

As stated earlier, the National Recording Project is a broad network with a high level of experience and expertise in recording and documenting traditional Indigenous music and dance. We are an expert group of artists, scholars, curators and technicians, and are the only such group in this field in the world. We have been working on these matters for a long time and are the best group to provide expertise and advice to Government on developing policy and programs for the preservation and maintenance of endangered Indigenous performance traditions.

We see that the National Recording Project can hold an important role in facilitating the grant program proposed here, and would welcome this opportunity, provided that it were properly resourced to do so. We possess the proven expertise and contacts to offer advice to communities on:

- the development of projects aimed at sustaining local traditions,
- the recording and documentation of traditional Indigenous music and dance, and the training of local Indigenous people to undertake this work,
- the development of local communities through related Indigenous arts programs that support infrastructure needs and economic growth within Australia's regions,
- the location and repatriation of relevant archival materials,
- the creation and management of local digital archives,
- safe archival storage under agreed protocols at AIATSIS in partnership with local digital repositories,
- the creation of publications and websites including teaching materials for use within the National Curriculum and all other levels of education.

Our advice to communities would be provided in the form of consultancies. The National Recording Project would accredit all consultants according to agreed protocols.

6. Are there any other goals you would like to see included in the National Cultural Policy?

We wholly support Government in making a firm commitment to a National Cultural Policy through the allocation of targeted funds to assist in realising the four goals already identified. We have stated the importance of Indigenous performance traditions, both to Indigenous communities and Australia's wider society, and believe that the expertise of the National Recording Project can provide Government with valuable and considered guidance on policy and implementation to ensure the maintenance and preservation of these endangered traditions for future generations.

* Essential.