

**Discussion Paper: *Framing the Future: Developing an Arts and Cultural Policy for NSW*
Submission by the Professional Historians Association (NSW)**

Introduction

The Professional Historians Association of New South Wales, or PHA (NSW), was established in 1985. It represents historians with academic credentials and professional expertise who work outside the academy. Our members may be freelance consultants and contractors, or serving in public cultural institutions, or engaged in private architectural and planning practices, or in myriad other fields primarily outside the education sector and earning a living in the practice of history in the public domain. The term public history, as used in this submission, means these types of professional historians and the histories they practice.

Public historians are engaged and consulted in a wide variety of arts and culture projects, ranging from performances to sculpture, museums and curating exhibitions, working on film and television scripts and in literary endeavours, as well as researching archives, and reading landscapes and built forms. We are deeply involved in arts and culture, heritage and patrimonies. The field of history is an integral component of cultural life. The exclusion of history and historians from the discussion paper represents a fundamental flaw in the paper and its role in developing public policy on arts and culture in New South Wales. The flaw must be overcome if the proposed policy is to be successful.

PHA (NSW) is one in a network of professional historians' associations in each state and territory and New Zealand. We are affiliated with our peak federal body, the Australian Council of Professional Historians Associations (ACPHA), established in 1995, that maintains nationwide professional standards and fee scales among public historians.

PHA (NSW) does not receive any government funding or other support. It is an independent voluntary professional association, funded by its members and Association activities. Principal services provided by the PHA (NSW) for its members included continuing professional development activities, maintaining professional standards, advocating member's collegiate interests, and participating in community debates about public history.

Comments

Comments are arranged in the format, colour coding and sequence of the discussion paper.

Section	Part	Comments	Reflections
Celebrating and supporting NSW Artists, Arts and Culture	Introduction	The introduction contains no references to history or historians. It must if the proposed policy is to include historians and public history.	<i>Historians write the histories, and are critical to understanding the historical significance of cultural activities, in NSW.</i>
NSW's thriving cultural life	Government recognizes that culture and arts are intrinsic to our identity.	The cultural life described in this section fails to recognize that historians are participants in the State's cultural life, or that public history activities such as research, writing and publication contribute any cultural value to NSW identity. This section needs to be revised to include history and historians. If it is intended to specifically exclude history and historians, then this should be clearly stated and a rationale for exclusion provided.	<i>History is not about the past, it is about understanding the present and the future possibilities. It is about causation. Nothing just happens. Everything is socially and culturally constructed. Nothing is inevitable. Things change because women and men act. History is about developing and maintaining a critical capacity to analyse and therefore to act.</i> <i>Former PHA president, Dr Shirley Fitzgerald, quoted in a Sydney Morning Herald editorial in 2000.</i>
		The list of five State Cultural Institutions is restrictive, and could include State Records that is, for historians, a key institutional custodian of public cultural resources. Some explanation is needed here about the basis on which these five have been chosen and others excluded.	
	NSW 2021 and arts and cultural policy	A definition of arts and culture, for the purposes of the proposed policy, is needed in this section. The definition should be clear whether it includes historians and public history. Without a good definition it is unclear how the four targets will be measured, and it will be unclear to public historians whether the State recognises their work as part of NSW's cultural realm.	

<p>Why are arts and culture important?</p>	<p>What will the arts and cultural policy deal with?</p>	<p>The definition of ‘professional core arts’ does not include historians, but the definition of ‘cultural heritage’ does include museums, libraries and archives. The document positions these two definitions as a virtuous circle, but such a circle is not sustainable if it fails to include a significant sector of the arts professions who utilize these cultural heritage institutions in their work. They are all significant workplaces for public historians, whether as employees, contractors or patrons, and critical locations of historical source materials. The professions itemized in the definition of ‘professional core arts’ should be expanded to include public historians. If they are not to be included, then the exclusion must be explained.</p>	<p><i>Historians provide a measure of the value of the new. Excluding history and historians from the discussion paper implies the past will have no place in the proposed arts and culture policy, and that culture will be positioned as timeless and always ‘new’, focused on products and outcomes and devoid of any critical capacities.</i></p> <p><i>Is that really the intent of the proposed policy?</i></p>
	<p>Role of government in arts and culture</p>	<p>In the list of ‘tools’ that can be applied by the NSW government,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ ‘Infrastructure’ should include museums, libraries and archives; □ ‘Collections and Programming’ refers to the five state cultural institutions, but makes no mention of other cultural institutions – what will be their role?; □ ‘Funding’ is stated to be directly targeted at artists, but it should be clarified whether that means excluding arts and culture organizations and the devolved or self-managed programs they currently operate; □ ‘capacity development’ and ‘relationships, partnerships’ both sound positive with a potential to enhance the continuing professional development programs offered by the PHA and other professional associations; and □ ‘strategic programs’ seems to be based on targeting certain programs, in which case some discussion of how targets and priorities will be determined for such programs is needed. 	

		The statement that the proposed policy will include scope to better engage with agencies beyond the Arts portfolio is encouraging, and it would be useful to be more explicit at this point, especially whether such engagements might include significant state cultural institutions beyond the five previously identified, such as State Records and the Heritage Council.	
	Commonwealth Government	The National Arts and Culture Accord referred to here needs to be better publicized and made available so that one of the overarching frameworks for the proposed policy can be better understood by people in the sector. The discussion of the Accord contains no references to historians or history. Why not?	<p><i>PHA members are currently involved in creating major new art works that respond to industrial, maritime and war-time histories of old industrial sites that are being transformed nationally and globally in New South Wales, Scotland and Germany.</i></p> <p><i>PHA members have proposed sculptural responses to interpreting significant industrial relics such as the Giant Hammerhead Crane on the Commonwealth's Garden Island.</i></p> <p><i>PHA members write heritage interpretation panels and commemorative plaques and write local histories that inform local government, local school and local community art projects.</i></p>
	Local Government	The emphasis in this discussion on local libraries and library infrastructure, and opportunities for developing cultural infrastructure and place making, are devoid of any reference to the people who make use of these public facilities or engage with these public processes. Historians are a significant group of library and archive patrons, and contributors to place making processes, and including them (and other patrons) would make this discussion more inclusive and comprehensible.	
	What is changing?	These discussions of digital technologies, funding trends and competition are interesting. However, there seems to be little awareness that public historians are increasingly using digital technologies, and they are also affected by changing public and philanthropic funding priorities, while the idea of competition seems limited to a focus on visitor numbers to art galleries. Some reference to the opportunities that could arise from collaboration between the great cultural institutions of the Asia Pacific may be a more useful way to frame this discussion, rather than treating them as competitors is some sort of	

		‘cultural nationalism’ framework.	
Proposed Vision for NSW	Proposed Vision	<p>The proposed vision should refer to Aboriginal cultures (plural rather than singular) as a better reflection of the diversity of Aboriginal cultural experience in NSW.</p> <p>Generally, the vision links arts and culture to infrastructure and investment in a closed way, with little scope for intellectual and intangible aspects such as contemplation, reflection, inspiration and knowing, or of the value of art and culture for its own sake. As a statement of vision, this needs to be much more inspirational and inclusive.</p>	<p><i>Inspirational histories help communities think about and understand their shared histories. Obvious examples include Manning Clark’s six-volume A History of Australia (1962-1987) and Grace Karskens The Colony (2009).</i></p>
	How we will achieve this vision	<p>The five priority themes appear comprehensive, but the final paragraph asks for responses to ensure a focus on ‘the most crucial actions’. The lack of any clear reference to history or the practices of historians, in the context of a similar silence in the rest of the discussion paper clearly points to the need to include history in the proposed policy as a crucial action. This lack could be read as implying there is neither need for nor value in any historical understanding of the actions that have lead to the present public policy approaches to arts and culture or their future evolution. Without some measure of the past and of change, it is difficult to understand why these themes are valued over other potential themes. This avoidance of historical understanding in the paper must be addressed.</p>	<p><i>PHA members have been deeply involved in discussions and public debates concerning historic sites that have a potential for re-use as arts and cultural sites, such as the North Parramatta crown lands, the Barangaroo site and the Walsh Bay area. History and Historians must not be excluded from the vision for the proposed policy.</i></p>
<p><i>The rest of these comments on the Priority Themes And Future Directions (page 16 onwards in the discussion paper) are predicated on the above points being addressed in such a way as to include historians and public history within the scope of the proposed arts and culture policy.</i></p>			
Theme	Goals, Questions and Directions	Comments	Illustrations
Artists and cultural	Introduction	The five State Cultural Institutions previously identified have	Humble and Obedient

organisations are celebrated and sustainable	Introduction	now become six (page 16), and a further group of major cultural institutions (still not including State Records, Heritage Council, etc) have been introduced to form a hierarchy without any discussion or explanation. The status of these bodies, and why some are included and others excluded, needs to be explained in terms of the proposed policy.	<i>Servants, a history of the NSW public service between 1901 and 1960, was written by former PHA president Peter Tyler in 2006.</i>
		The final paragraph on page 16 positions arts and culture as a function of trade, implying that for historians to be included in the proposed policy they need to be producers of tradable goods and services, in which their commercial value is the highest expression of their cultural value. While there may be an interesting philosophical discussion buried within this paragraph, the point here is that public historians already create a ‘product’ that involves a financial transaction in return for the application of their skills and expertise in, among other places, museums, libraries and archives. By the discussion paper’s own parameters, history and historians must be included.	
	Potential directions	Include emerging public historians in the proposed international exchange programs and specialized training support.	
State cultural institutions are leaders in their field	Major institutions	The sixth state cultural institution is finally named in this section as the Historic Houses Trust (currently badged as the SLM). The comment above about the rationale for which institutions are included or excluded from this group stands for this section as well.	<i>The forthcoming five years of centenaries for Great War events</i>
	Potential directions	The 4 th direction includes a reference to the state cultural institutions respecting and celebrating, among other things, NSW history. While this first mention of history is welcome, the institutions should be strengthening their role in promoting and facilitating historical inquiry and supporting the use of their	

	<p>Potential directions</p>	<p>collections by public and other historians. Celebration of history may be appropriate in some circumstances, but in others commemoration or contestation will be appropriate. This potential direction should not be locked into a narrow field of only ‘celebrating’ the past, with its implication of selecting some aspects of NSW history over others, based upon their potential for celebratory values.</p> <p>An additional direction should be to require that state cultural institutions maintain meaningful and effective stakeholder and community engagement mechanisms as part of the management of their operations, and avoid any perceptions that outcomes are predetermined and handed-down to the patrons of these institutions who are then expected to simply accept these decisions.</p>	<p><i>are already a significant focus of historical inquiry. Military historian Peter Stanley has called for historians to emphasize commemoration and reflection rather than celebration or jingoism.</i></p>
<p>People enrich and shape the arts</p>	<p>Introduction</p>	<p>The statement that the government supports the principle that all community groups should have the opportunity to be engaged and represented in creative arts and cultural life is supported, and the comment above applies to this section as well if this principle is to be taken seriously.</p>	
	<p>Potential directions</p>	<p>A strategy that could raise the profile and sustainability of Aboriginal arts and culture (as stated in the ‘questions for consideration’) could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access to the learning of Aboriginal languages by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, • Increased opportunities for bi-lingual English/Aboriginal language uses in publications, public signs, place names, and so on, • Provision of opportunities for Aboriginal historians to research and prepare histories written in Aboriginal languages, including topics that are not necessarily restricted to Aboriginal topics, through State scholarships, 	<p><i>Arts NSW has a valued history of funding fellowships for Aboriginal historians through the History Council of NSW. Notable Fellows have included Professor John Maynard, Dr Shino Konishi and Dr Heidi Norman.</i></p>

		<p>fellowships, grant programs and other existing structures, and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for Aboriginal historians to be paid for their work at rates not less than those paid for other historians working in public history. 	
Cultural and Linguistic Diversity	Potential directions	<p>Enhanced programming and engagement of CaLD audiences in NSW (as stated in the ‘questions for consideration’), could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial, logistical and mentoring support for historians from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds to research, prepare and publish histories in their first languages, including on topics that are not necessarily restricted to ‘CaLD topics’, • Provision of State scholarships, fellowships, grant programs and other existing structures for historians from CaLD backgrounds, and • Support for historians from CaLD backgrounds to be paid for their work at rates not less than those paid for other historians working in public history. 	<p><i>PHA member Michael Williams wrote a thematic history of Chinese settlement in NSW in 1999 that has been used as a base for identifying and heritage listing culturally and historically significant heritage sites in the State.</i></p>
Arts and disability	Potential directions	<p>One area that government could focus its efforts (as stated in the ‘questions for consideration’) could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial, logistical and mentoring support for historians with disability to research, prepare and publish their own histories, whether on histories of ability/disability or on any other topic to which a perspective through disability could be brought, • Provision of State scholarships, fellowships, grant programs and other existing structures for historians with disability, and • Support for historians with disability to be paid for their work at rates not less than those paid for other historians 	<p><i>Former PHA president Laila Ellmoos wrote Beneath the Pines, a history of ageing, disability and homecare in 2010.</i></p>

		working in public history.	
Creative ageing	Introduction	A historian does not, generally speaking, cease to be a historian because of their age. The discussion tends to treat people who are ageing as moving into a phase in their life when they are passive subjects for professional artists or are removed from their professional networks and downgraded to mere ‘volunteers’. This is an unfortunate impression, as volunteering is not restricted to the aged, and professionally qualified and experienced historians will continue to engage with their peers as fellow historians, as competitors for history work, and as mentors for emerging historians, among other roles. The public historian, as with many other freelance professionals working in the arts and culture, may never actually or formally ‘retire’ from their work. The discussion also contains a sense that the participation by older people in cultural, creative and recreational activities needs to be enforced for their own good. It would be useful to reconsider some of this discussion within a ‘life-long learning’ frame, without any patronizing tones.	<i>PHA members research and write family histories of migration and settlement, and personal histories of ordinary people, as well as those of leaders in government and the corporate sector.</i>
	Proposed directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote an understanding of activities such as reflection, contemplation, seclusion and quietness, for all ages, as creative activities valued in their own right, and • Remove any sense that older people (including historians and other arts and culture professionals), must be actively engaged in public cultural activities otherwise they are somehow socially disadvantaged. 	
Arts and culture for, by and across the whole of NSW	Regional NSW: Proposed directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 5th direction should include emerging public historians in the proposed regional skills development project, • The 7th direction should encourage regional capacity for supporting increased networks and joint programs between State and regional libraries and archives, • The 8th direction should include the delivery of digital 	<i>About one third of PHA (NSW)</i>

		<p>education programs to adult education and learning institutions as part of a life-long learning philosophy, and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An additional direction should be included to foster and support the continuing professional development of public historians resident in regional areas through both scholarships and fellowships for studies beyond their region, and increased accessibility to digital technologies and broadband networks within regional areas for both individual historians and their collegiate bodies. 	<p><i>members live and work in regional NSW beyond the Sydney metropolitan area.</i></p>
	<p>Sydney, Western Sydney and Greater Metro Sydney: Introduction</p>	<p>One of the ‘questions for consideration’ asks what is required to make Sydney <i>the</i> acknowledged cultural leader in the Asia Pacific? A more productive approach would be to replace this hierarchical approach in which there can only be one winner with a concept of networking in which Sydney works with selected Asia Pacific partner-cities to develop a regional cultural network. There are, for instance, numerous historical connections between Sydney and Singapore, India, Hong Kong and Indonesia. The inclusion of historians and public history within the proposed policy will facilitate the invigoration and future development of these links in a co-operative and regionalist rather than a competitive and inward looking spirit. It would be counter-productive to lock NSW arts and cultural policy into a static understanding of the region.</p> <p>The concept of the ‘arts and cultural ribbon’ (which is not explained in the discussion paper) is included with no awareness of the numerous and diverse historical connections between foreshores and hinterlands and their communities around the harbour in areas such as Millers Point. Public historians must be an integral part of such projects if they are to successfully engage with long-standing resident communities.</p>	<p><i>PHA member Katherine Knight recently published Passion Purpose Meaning - Arts Activism in Western Sydney (2013), a history with a focus on how passionate individuals generated critical change by creating opportunities for others in arts and cultural expression across Sydney's most dynamic region between the 1970s and 2013. This book makes a strong case that the cultural centre is moving west too.</i></p>
	<p>Proposed directions</p>	<p>Enhance the cultural identities of harbourside Sydneysiders,</p>	

		who will host sites such as the cultural ribbon, by actively engaging with local resident communities so they understand the potential impacts and benefits on their localities and can support such projects.	<i>Three PHA members have contributed to public debates over toponymic proposals to carve Walsh Bay out of Millers Point.</i>
Venues and spaces to create and experience art are built and maintained	Physical cultural infrastructure	The discussion refers to World Heritage listed iconic performance venues, a reference that from its context is restricted to the Sydney Opera House. It may be useful to be a little more generous by acknowledging that Cockatoo Island, Hyde Park Barracks and Parramatta Park are also World Heritage listed sites in Sydney and also host performance venues and other arts and cultural activities, and share world-level historical values.	<i>Understanding and arguments about history have been central to the successful world heritage listings of all these sites, and historians around New South Wales, Australia and overseas worked together and with local communities and descendant communities to provide histories that would successfully meet world heritage criteria.</i>
	Challenges and future directions	The discussion of a proposed Cultural Venues Plan and its focus on the Walsh Bay littoral lacks awareness of any need to engage with the historic local residential communities in and around the bay in Millers Point and Dawes Point. This reflects the absence of any public historians in the preparation of the proposed plan, and raises concerns that the plan will provide a template for placing arts and culture precincts in other local areas regardless of any feeling within local communities. It would be counter-productive to the whole proposed arts and culture policy if the sector became tainted with perceptions of exclusiveness and elitism because of a failure to engage local communities. This discussion need to be clearer on the processes that have shaped this proposal.	
			The discussion also refers to an expansion of the State Library, without providing any further detail. Detail needs to be provided on what this expansion entails, especially with regard to the proposals for the future of the Mitchell Library.

	Proposed directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 1st direction should be revised to state that the development of the Cultural Venues Plan will include consultation with residential communities in the vicinity of the venues, The 2nd direction should be revised to provide for consultation with the Millers Point and Dawes Point residential communities in developing the Walsh Bay arts and cultural area, and Include a new direction that a public historian should always be engaged as part of the planning for new arts and cultural facilities and precincts. 	<i>PHA members have undertaken a significant volume of research over the years that has informed the interpretation and presentation of sites around The Rocks, Dawes Point, Walsh Bay and Millers Point localities, including the preparation of oral histories and the design of interpretive art works.</i>
Stories on screen reflect and shape our identity	Proposed directions	Add a new direction: Encourage local content creators in the screen sector to engage with public historians in developing historical stories that are accurate and historically authentic.	<i>PHA member Dr Stephen Gapps has been involved with colonial themed television and film projects over the last decade, including The Floating Brothel (2006) and Rogue Nation (2009).</i>
Digital technologies enhance our arts, culture and heritage	Introduction	This discussion is applicable to public historians as much as any other professionals in the arts and culture sector, and this needs to be acknowledged in the discussion.	<i>The Australian Dictionary of Biography, researched and written by multiple historians since 1959, became the first major Australian history to be published in CD ROM (1997) and then in an online format (2006), embracing a philosophy of ‘continual publishing’.</i>
Government funding programs are	Proposed directions	Add a new direction: Ensure that the renewed fellowships program includes	<i>Arts NSW has a history of offering fellowships to assist</i>

<p>effective and targeted</p>		<p>supporting emerging, outstanding and senior public historians in the development of their practices.</p>	<p><i>professional historians and researchers undertaken historical research through the History Council of NSW.</i></p>