

Creative State 2020+ strategy

We are pleased to contribute some thoughts towards the development of Victoria's next creative industries strategy, and hope that our comments are helpful for Creative Victoria.

If you would like to discuss this matter further, please communicate in the first instance with our Executive Officer (Margaret Birtley), as per the letterhead details.

(Dr) Liz Rushen
CHAIR

30 August 2019

Creative State 2020+ strategy – a submission from the History Council of Victoria

About us

The History Council of Victoria (HCV) is the peak body for history organisations in Victoria, with delegates from Heritage Council Victoria, State Library Victoria, Museums Victoria, Public Record Office Victoria, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, the Professional Historians Association (Victoria & Tasmania), the History Teachers Association of Victoria, the National Trust of Australia (Vic.), Old Treasury Building, Monash University and Victoria University, as well as a number of individual historians.

Our purpose is to promote the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of written literature, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts, oral history, film and other art forms that have historical content or significance.

Our vision statement is: 'Connecting Victorians with history and inspiring engagement with the past, their identity and the world today'.

Creative Victoria's guiding principles

We support Creative Victoria's four guiding principles for the development of the strategy, noting that they correspond to our own approach and values:

- ***First Peoples first***

The HCV recognises the long history and significant cultural heritage of the traditional owners and custodians of Victoria's regions. Two of our recent seminars were on 'The Past, Present and Future of Victorian Indigenous Languages' and 'Making Aboriginal histories'.

- ***Whole of state***

History offers a fundamental perspective that inspires cultural experiences, informs creative expression and underpins many creative and productive careers, no matter where people live.

Our main program – the History Roadshow for VCE history students and their teachers outside the greater Melbourne area – is delivered entirely in regional and rural Victoria. We also convene seminars, lectures and other events in metropolitan Melbourne.

- ***Whole of ecosystem***

History is one of the creative industries. Historians are its creative practitioners. Historians' outputs include writing, publication, illustration, design, animation, narration, display, exhibitions, performances, archiving and collection management.

We celebrate the work of historians and value historically significant places and objects. We recognise that history can be written about any place, any person, any period. We value the records that provide evidence for historians, and those who maintain living historical traditions and intangible heritage practices.

We acknowledge the historical narratives and interpretations shaped by writers, producers and artists and revealed through all forms of scholarly and creative media.

- ***All voices welcome***

We respect diversity and encourage excellence through all that we say and do.

Creative State 2016-2020

Victoria's first Creative Industries Strategy (April 2016) was, necessarily, a very broad document.

We were disappointed that it did not mention historians at all, despite them being so active in the creative industries. Historians initiate and contribute to creative projects. They collaborate with other creative practitioners. Collecting organisations with historical mandates (such as galleries, libraries, archives and museums – i.e. the GLAM sector) host creative projects that involve practitioners from a wide range of the creative industries.

We were pleased, however, that the inaugural (and still current) strategy included the following four elements. We encourage their continued recognition and advancement in the new strategy document.

- ***Recognition of the strength of Victoria's collecting organisations***

'Victoria is ... home to leading libraries, galleries and museums. ... Victoria's leadership and competitive advantage in the creative industries is reinforced by the history and quality of our creative institutions.'¹

1 *Creative State 2016-2020: Victoria's first Creative Industries Strategy* (2016), p. 11 ('Victoria's Strengths').

- ***Creation of co-working spaces & creative places***²

Many established cultural organisations already serve as successful co-working spaces and places that foster creative enterprise. Places such as Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Museums Victoria, State Library Victoria, National Gallery of Victoria and Arts Centre Victoria are not only repositories for collections but also provide working spaces and expertise for creative work, including collaboration. At times they also provide infrastructure (e.g. ACMI-X) and financial support (e.g. State Library's annual Creative Fellowships program).

White Night is an excellent example of how history and heritage can engage with artists – simply by offering a different canvas for creative expression (e.g. the light projections at SLV).

Culture Victoria and *Victorian Collections* offer other successful examples. Each is a website that features stories based on historians' interpretation of collections; these create greater awareness and access across Victoria (and internationally).

Public artworks frequently respond to historical information about the place where they are located. Each artwork then enriches its location and provides inspiration for people who encounter it in that setting.

Historical places and heritage properties, as well as GLAM organisations, are part of the creative sector. Their managers encourage and support innovative creative outputs.

- ***Collections Storage Victoria – Ballarat***

The inaugural strategy made the point that the Collections Storage development in Ballarat was 'part of a collections management strategy to protect and develop the state's \$5 billion cultural collection'.³

Storage and preservation are essential processes that enable collections to be discovered and used. Without trained and experienced historians, collection experts, volunteers, managers, conservators and curators to care for and interpret collections, these collections would not be accessible to the public. History and creativity make a great partnership, helping to reveal and share the stories associated with objects of material culture, specimens of natural science, items of visual arts and design, and evidence of documentary heritage.

- ***Introduction of OIP capacity building funding***⁴

Creative Victoria's support for a wide range of organisations is invaluable. Continuation and expansion of the Organisations Investment Program will stimulate economic benefit for communities, will engage new creative practitioners and will help reach new audiences.

Towards Creative State 2020+

In collaboration with the History Councils in other Australian states, we recently finalised a statement about the 'Value of History'. **We recommend that this statement be adopted as part of the Creative State 2020+ strategy.** The statement is reproduced on the following page and can also be downloaded as a PDF from our website: https://www.historycouncilvic.org.au/value_of_history

2 Op. cit., p. 20.

3 Ibid.

4 Op. cit., p. 21.

*The Value of History*⁵

The study of the past and telling its stories are critical to our sense of belonging, to our communities and to our shared future.

History shapes our identities, engages us as citizens, creates inclusive communities, is part of our economic well-being, teaches us to think critically and creatively, inspires leaders and is the foundation of our future generations.

Identity: History nurtures identity in a world characterised by difference and change. History enables people to discover their own place in stories of families, communities, First Peoples, and nations—individuals and groups who have shaped the world in which they live. There are stories of freedom and oppression, justice and inequity, war and peace, endurance and achievement, courage and tenacity. Through these varied stories, the systems of personal and community values that guide approaches to life and relationships with others are shaped.

Engaged citizens: History helps people craft solutions that meet community needs. At the heart of democracy are individual citizens who come together to express views and take action. Understanding the history of contemporary issues that confront our communities, nation and world can clarify misperceptions, reveal complexities, temper volatile viewpoints, and open people to new possibilities, leading to more effective solutions.

Strong communities: History lays the groundwork for strong, diverse and inclusive communities that are vital places to live and work. Communities are wrapped in human memory: Indigenous knowledge, family stories, oral histories, social customs, cultural collections, heritage and civic commemorations. These all strengthen our connections and commitment to one another. History supports a sense of community identity and place; and that in turn promotes social cohesion, individual and collective wellbeing, and resilience.

Economic development: History is a catalyst for economic growth. People are drawn to communities with a strong sense of historical identity, material heritage and character. Cultural heritage is a demonstrated economic asset and an essential component of any vibrant local economy, providing an infrastructure that attracts talent and enhances business development, including cultural tourism.

Critical skills: History teaches independent thinking and vital skills for the twenty-first century. Historical thinking requires critical approaches to evidence and argument and develops contextual understanding and historical perspective, encouraging meaningful engagement with concepts like continuity, change and causation, and the ability to interpret and communicate complex ideas clearly and coherently.

Leadership: History inspires leaders. It provides them with role models to meet complex challenges. Personal stories of leadership reveal how women and men met the challenges of their day and can give new leaders the courage and wisdom to confront the challenges of our time.

Legacy: History is the foundation for future generations. It is crucial to our future because it explains our shared past. When we preserve authentic, meaningful and significant stories, places, documents, images and artefacts, we leave a foundation upon which future Australians can build.

5 This statement was adopted on 3 July 2019 by the History Councils of [New South Wales](#), [South Australia](#), [Victoria](#) and [Western Australia](#). It draws on the work of history organisations in the USA that promote the relevance and value of history through their History Relevance campaign. The four Australian History Councils have, with permission, adapted the USA 'Value of History' statement for all Australians to use.