The Coalition's and Government's Cultural Policy Statements - background and analysis
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The Coalition's and Government's Cultural policy statements - background and analysis

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Summary

On 6 October the Federal Coalition launched a document entitled *The Cultural Frontier, Coalition Priorities for the Arts* and on 18 October the Government presented its four-times postponed Cultural policy statement, *Creative Nation*. These are the first attempts at comprehensive cultural statements and further the trend of recent years to link arts with communication, to put them both into the wider context of cultural policy and then to link cultural policy with Australia's economic interest and international identity.

Over the last 20 years there has been a dramatic rise in arts consumption, the number of arts organisations and the number of people employed in the arts sector. The value of the goods and services produced by the cultural industries is estimated at more than $13 billion a year (more than either residential building construction or motor vehicles and parts industries). Over the last few years, however, corporate sponsorship of the arts has fallen.

The statements display a remarkable similarity of interests.

Both documents reverse the tendency of the last few years to marginalise the Australia Council. The Coalition supported arm's-length funding and recognised the Council as the primary administrator of Commonwealth arts funding. The Government promised to improve the peer assessment process, to introduce triennial funding for the Council, to establish a Major Organisations Board within the Council, to bring the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (and some other major organisations) within the Council's orbit, to increase the funds available to assist individual artists and to introduce junior creative fellowships.

Both statements are filled with intentions to cultivate a new culture of private arts benefaction and to help the Australia Council to develop alternative funding mechanisms. Both express a commitment to assisting artists in their push into overseas markets, to encouraging more corporate involvement in the arts, to helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture achieve greater recognition and to ensuring access to advanced artistic training.

Both the Coalition and the Government often seem at pains in their statements to demonstrate their technological literacy. Both statements are keen to describe the implications of the new technology for artistic expression, access to heritage, copyright and culture in general. Both are keen to exploit more fully developments in information technologies.
Neither document promotes community or participatory arts. Both seem to see Australians as either arts producers or arts consumers. The documents address the problem of how to support the elite 'producers' in the 'cultural industry' and how to make the resulting 'Australian culture' accessible to more Australians. They do not address the more challenging problem of how to support the struggling artist, help bring out the artist in every Australian, and bring communities together through art. Both statements seem more concerned with developing a culture for export.

Both documents recognise the need for better regional access to arts and propose more touring from the major cities, but neither offers a plan to encourage regional art in-situ or better Commonwealth-Local Government co-operation.

The main difference between the two statements is that where the Coalition statement offers broad principles, the Government statement includes many detailed and costed initiatives (including a new National Academy of Music Performance and a National Institute for Indigenous Performing Arts Training). The Coalition statement, however, has the advantage of surprise and the Government's statement suffers somewhat from the great expectations engendered by its repeated delay. Many of the Government's initiatives (e.g. clarification of the role of the Foundation for Australian Cultural Development and a funding boost for the Australia Council), are overdue while other hoped for announcements (e.g. on moral rights, performers right, and urban design) are missing.

Considering that a National Museum has been envisaged since Federation, that its concept has been endorsed by numerous reports, that the Bill to establish it was passed by a Coalition Government in 1980 and that its construction was a central, if conditional, promise of the Labor Government's 1993 election policy, it is surprising that the Coalition made no mention of the Museum in its recent statement and that the Government only obliquely indicates that the original vision is to be abandoned. These are not simply glaring omissions from both statements, they may be seen to reflect poorly on the courage or consistency of those who released them.
Introduction

On 6 October the Federal Coalition launched a document entitled *The Cultural Frontier, Coalition Priorities for the Arts* and on 18 October the Government presented its long-awaited Cultural policy statement, *Creative Nation*.

Although the statements were clearly intended to help distinguish the Coalition from the Government (and vice-versa), to help swing the electoral support of the 'arts community' one way and to help project the presenting party as more visionary than the other, the statements display a remarkable similarity of interests.

This paper will offer firstly a general comparative analysis, then background to and analysis of some of the main arts and heritage proposals in both statements. It will not deal with the proposals related to film, media, communications and intellectual property. These subjects will be dealt with in forthcoming Parliamentary Research Service papers.


Appendix 2 gives a brief account of events leading up to the cultural statements.

General comparison

Both documents promise a commitment to arm's-length funding, to reforming but maintaining the Australian Council, to assisting artists in their push into overseas markets, to encouraging more corporate involvement in the arts, to helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture achieve greater recognition, to exploiting more fully developments in information technologies and to ensuring access to artistic training. Both sides are clearly happy to follow the trend of recent years and to link arts policy and communication, to put both into the wider context of cultural policy, and then to link cultural policy with Australia’s economic interest and international identity.

Both the Coalition and the Government often seem at pains in their statements to demonstrate their technological literacy. Both statements are keen to describe the cultural implications of the new technology. The coalition's statement (p.2) described 'the enormous opportunities for the arts arising out of the current rapid advances in
computer, communications and multimedia technology (p.2) while the Government's (p.55) describes 'the imperatives of the information age and some of its opportunities'. Both statements exhibit an appreciation of the effect new technologies will have on copyright (Cultural Frontiers p.21 and Creative Nation p.21).

Neither document promotes community or participatory arts. Both seem to divide Australians into either arts producers or arts consumers. The documents address the problem of how to support the elite 'producers' in the 'cultural industry' and how to make the resulting 'Australian culture' accessible to more Australians. They do not address the more challenging problem of how to support the struggling artist, to help release the artist in every Australian and to bring communities together through art. They are not interested in any of the really defining characteristics of a culture (the way in which and degree to which people bring home-made craft, poetry writing, play acting, social dancing, acapella singing, garden design etc into their everyday lives). There are no plans for subsidised music lessons, more art in schools, better community craft facilities, more public halls with wooden floors, more devolved grant schemes. The Government statement asserts culture might 'arise from the community' but 'the most highly developed and imaginative aspects of our culture are the arts and sciences which are fed back to the community by the most talented individuals' (p.1). The Government's Charter of Cultural Rights includes 'the right to an education that develops individual creativity and appreciation of the creativity of others' and 'the rights to community participation in cultural and intellectual life' but elsewhere in its statement's preamble 'egalitarianism and fair play' seem to come second to 'honouring the talented few at the expense of the many'. Both statements seem more concerned with developing a culture for export.

The Government has responded to the need for better regional access to arts with programs such as 'Playing Australia', 'Visions of Australia' and the proposed Festivals Australia and extended Opera and Musica Viva touring programs, but has not considered ways to encourage the development of regional art in-situ.

The Coalition's statement recognises 'the thousands of Australian men, women and children who voluntarily give of their time to develop, promote and support the arts in their local communities' (p.5), notes that people living in rural and remote areas are often the last to benefit from technologies heralded as reducing geographic isolation (p.2), and calls for clarification of the respective roles of States, Territories and Local Government' (p.5), but does not offer any mechanism for better Commonwealth-State-Local Government co-operation.
The main difference between the two statements is that where the Coalition statement offers broad principles, the Government statement includes many detailed and costed initiatives. The latter include $82.1m for an Australian Multi-media Enterprise, a Cooperative Multi-media Development Centre, a series of national multi-media forums, educational CDs for schools and assistance for film agencies' move into multi-media. They also include $60m for a Television production fund, $25.7m to help the Australia Council meet a broader charter, $14.45m to establish the Australian National Institute for Indigenous Performing Arts in Brisbane, $13m for an SBS production fund, $10m (indicative) to improve the National Film and Sound Archive accommodation, $8.8m over the same period for a National Academy of Music Performance in Melbourne, $7.5m (indicative) for the enhancement of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, $6.7m for a National Opera and Touring Consortium, $6.85m for the international projection of our culture, $4.3 million to refurbish Old Parliament House in Canberra, $3m for extensions to the National Gallery, $2m to extend the Musica Viva in Schools program, $0.8m to enhance the WA Maritime Museum.

The Coalition statement, however, has the advantage of surprise. The Coalition did not seem particularly interested in the arts 18 months ago, and was not expected to offer any advance on the art section in Things that Matter until it produced a revised arts policy nearer to the next election. The Government's statement, on the other hand, suffers somewhat from the great expectations engendered by its repeated delay. Many of the Government's initiatives (e.g. clarification of the role of the Foundation for Australian Cultural Development, a funding boost for the Australia Council), are overdue while other hoped for announcements (e.g. on the national museum, moral rights, performers right, and urban design) are missing.

The Australia Council

Background

In 1992 the perennial debate over the proper role of the Commonwealth and the Australia Council reached a crescendo. Justin Macdonnell recommended in his book Arts, Minister that the Commonwealth should 'get out of the small grant area altogether', that grants below $50,000 be administered by the States, local governments or private authorities, that the Australia Council be abolished and that a Federal Arts Ministry, comparable with the State ones, be created.¹

Although everyone agreed both that a clearer delineation of the roles of Federal, State and local governments and that arts representation in Federal cabinet were desirable, most reviewers of the book questioned the desirability of the Commonwealth moving away from the existing system. The Department of Arts, Sport, Environment and Territories undertook an evaluation of the Australia Council's efficiency and effectiveness while the Australia Council began identifying areas in which it had the most to offer and directions in which it might most productively move (the Australia Council has subsequently introduced many innovating programs to recycle grant money, to promote innovative companies, to facilitate cultural exports and to exploit arts' tourism potential). The Opposition reversed its call for the Australia Council's abolition but continue the call for a narrower definition of the Australia Council's role and for budget cuts.

In January 1993 a new debate blew up over the direction reform should take in the area of literature funding. Poet Les Murray's initial call for the abolition of the Australia Council's Literature Board and the creation of a 'royalty supplementation' scheme was soon followed by other writers (e.g. Mark O'Connor and Alan Gould) call for the process by which literature board grants are decided to be changed. By 1994 the Australia Council Reform Association had been formed and the criticism front had widened (e.g. to allege a 'politically correct' bias in Australia Council grant guidelines and favouritism and geographic bias in the Australian Artists Creative Fellowships).

In July 1994 the new Council chair, Hilary McPhee, gave a commitment to review and possibly change certain administrative arrangements. The Australia Council has, over the last twenty years, had to cope with an enormous growth in the number of practising artists, arts organisations and grant applications, a growth unmatched by funding increases.

Statement analysis

Both the Coalition and the Government statements would seem to reverse the tendency of the last few years to marginalise the Australia Council. The Coalition's statement includes a clear reaffirmation of 'a commitment to peer assessment and 'arm's length' funding' and a declaration of support for 'the Australia Council as the primary administrator of Commonwealth arts funding'. The Government's statement promises a better funded, restructured, reformed Council, with wider responsibilities and a full-time chairperson.

The Government proposed several changes to the Australia Council.

Changes to the peer assessment process (p.13) may address some of the concerns raised by such groups as the Australia Council Reform Association. The promise to introduce triennial funding for the Australia Council, to establish a Major Organisations Board within the Australia Council, and to increase the funds available for assistance to individual artists solves a problem: how to bring some recent defections from the organisations (e.g. The Australian Opera) back within the Australia Council's control, while satisfying the large organisations' desire for long term funding and satisfying the increasing number of smaller organisations that they will not have to compete directly against the larger organisations for funds.

Transferring responsibility for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra from the Australian Broadcasting Commission to the Australia Council is partially in line with the 1985 Tribe Report on the Future Development of Orchestras in Australia, but the statement offers no clear reason for this selective transfer. The expansion of the Council's charter to include domestic audience and international market development and the cultivation of private sector investment is in line with the trend to see arts grants as but one part of an arts policy. The Government's proposed system of junior creative fellowships might allay concern that the Australian Artists Creative Fellowships support only established artists; it is still, however, patronage for the few.

The Foundation for Australian Cultural Development

Background

After the March 1993 election the Governor-General, Mr Hayden, said that in addition to the cultural policy and National Museum:

The Government will also pursue other important initiatives, including establishing the Foundation for Australian Cultural Development, which are designed to help all Australians locate themselves within their country's rich, ancient and diverse cultural landscape.3

In August 1993 $5.5m was allocated over four years to help establish a Foundation for Australian Cultural Development in Melbourne. In late August 1993 Senator McMullan said he saw the Foundation for Australian Cultural Development as being 'important in defining "who we are"'.4 Some of the views expressed over the following months


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indicated a degree of scepticism in some parts of the arts community over the need for this new body. Was a Cultural Foundation in Melbourne going to duplicate some functions already performed by the Australia Council in Sydney? To clarify the role of the Foundation for Australian Cultural Development, the Department of the Arts and Administrative Services released a pamphlet with the following section under the title 'What will the Foundation do?':

The primary aim of the Foundation is to stimulate intellectual debate and community engagement in discussion about the nature and history of Australia, the diversity of Australia's heritage and the central issues of nationhood and Australian identity.

The Foundation will focus on projects that fully involve the community in reflecting upon issues of major national importance. The Foundation will also support projects that stimulate but do not confine intellectual debate to an academic elite, and which provide discussion that is accessible and responsive to the community.

The Foundation will work with national institutions, such as museums, galleries and libraries, organisations such as the Australian Heritage Commission, the Australian Film Commission and Film Australia, and also with community groups and local government bodies. These collaborative projects will be aimed at extending Australians' understanding of their own country and at increasing their active engagement in the cultural and intellectual life of the community.

The Foundation will support the writing, publication and production of other work which contributes to its objectives. It will not act as a grant-making body, but rather as a broker and project developer. It will use its funds to improve and extend single projects and to encourage relationships between a range of national and local organisations. It will work to enable funding and project partners to come together in activities that might, without the intervention of the Foundation, remain one-dimensional, one-off events.

The section 'How will the Foundation work?' included the following:

The Foundation will be fully operational in early 1994 and in the meantime it would be able to expand on projects already initiated by the Federal Government. This might include taking over some existing projects funded by Ideas for Australia. The Foundation could also pick up on some of the ideas to come out of two Commonwealth Government Committees, namely the Inquiry on Museums and National Collections and the Review of Australian Studies in Tertiary Education. The work of the Committee of Inquiry into Folklife in Australia would also be relevant to the Foundation.

By April 1994 officers in the Department of the Arts were reported as saying the Foundation would work on ideas coming out of both earlier forums (such as the Ideas for Australia forum) and recent reviews and committees of inquiries, and seek to co-ordinate support for projects of national significance (e.g. on identity, heritage, folklife, historical events), some of which might be suggested by local communities.5

Statement analysis

The Coalition's statement omitted any reference to the Foundation, but the Government's statement made it clear that the Foundation would be going ahead in Melbourne. The twin problem of the Foundation being seen as duplicating the Australia Council and of the Australia Council having no major base in Melbourne, may be resolved with the transfer of the Foundation's operations from the Department of Communications and the Arts to the Australia Council. The Government's statement added to earlier ideas of the Foundation's role ('to initiate and support projects of national significance' and to 'provide a linking framework between key agencies') the notion, very much in keeping with the emphasis of the statement elsewhere, that the Foundation 'will also stimulate private sector sponsorship for projects and for individual scholars and artists' (p.18).

A National Museum of Australia

Background

Proponents of the National Museum claim such a museum was first proposed in 1901.

One of the main recommendations of the 1975 *Museums in Australia Report* (Pigott Report) was that an area of more than 90 hectares west of Black Mountain in Canberra be reserved for a National museum:

In putting forward this recommendation, we may well be criticised on the grounds of extravagance and over-ambition. Our defence against such charges is that we have taken a long-term view of the museum's development. Too many museum planners in other lands have encumbered their capital city with a museum site and building which now prevent innovative planning. The proposed museum must not be viewed as just another building which could equally be designed for a library or an art museum. We believe that, with the right approach, Australia could lead in museum planning. 6

It was recommended that the museum take the form of a series of exhibition pavilions:

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We have come down firmly against an inordinately expensive monumental, multi-storey building, with all the granite or marble facings of a prestige institution.\(^1\)

In 1977, in line with the Pigott Report's recommendation, an 88-hectare site was reserved at Yarramundi, on the western side of Lake Burley Griffin. In 1980 the Museum of Australia Act was passed with bipartisan support and by the mid-1980s a temporary Visitor Centre and headquarters were built.

Over the last ten years an invaluable collection of over 170,000 items has been developed. Links have been forged with Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and other communities. Travelling tours, open days, public programs and Old Parliament House exhibitions have been organised. Financial constraints, pressure to consider other sites (especially from the National Capital Planning Authority) and lack of political will have, however, meant the Museum itself has never been built and its vast collection is housed in a warehouse.

During the 1993 election campaign the Government's Distinctly Australian Statement declared:

> Labor will proceed with the development of the National Museum of Australia, with a Commonwealth contribution of $26 million over four years. Its completion will be a co-operative exercise between the Commonwealth, the Government of the Australian Capital Territory and the corporate sector.... Concurrently, over the next four years, there will be a staged development of the Museum's site at Yarramundi including exhibition, education and conservation facilities.

In its August 1993 Budget the Government committed $3.3m for site development and the process of choosing an architectural firm to design the National Museum complex got underway. In November 1993, however, the above process was put on hold pending a resolution of renewed uncertainty over the site. The National Capital Planning Authority rejected the Museum's proposal for a private-sector housing development on part of the museum's Yarramundi Reach site (intended to help raise the private-sector funding upon which the rest of the Commonwealth funding was contingent) but seemed to support a mixed use concept for Acton peninsula, the old Royal Canberra Hospital site.\(^8\)

In January 1994 the president of the Friends of the National Museum of Australia, Jack Thompson, urged the Prime Minister to give his official imprimatur to the museum, as without it, raising $26 million

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from private sources would be impossible. Supporters of the National Museum were disappointed that not only had the Prime Minister withheld his official imprimatur, he continued to express his doubts about the desirability of the museum. For example, at the opening of the new National Portrait Gallery in the Old Parliament House in March 1994 the Prime Minister said:

It can always be said, and often with irresistible logic and passion, that we need one more gallery or museum. One more place to put our heritage on show. It may have reached the ears of some of you that I have sometimes resisted this logic and this passion. It is true. I have not always been persuaded that another huge and hugely expensive building on the banks of Burley Griffin ranked high among the things we need for a better national life.

The Prime Minister suggested that one of the main reasons he supported the concept of a National Portrait Gallery was:

because it is not going to be left sitting in Canberra locked up in yet another massive mausoleum. The works on display here are all on loan from both public and private collections ... Even better, these exhibitions will not be confined to Canberra. ... It seems to me that in a country of our size and demography, all our collecting institutions - all our cultural institutions - should be exploiting modern transport and technology to take our heritage out to the people.

As many commentators have noted, however, the vision for the National Museum has never been a vision for 'yet another mausoleum'. All recent examinations of the original concept endorsed the Yarramundi plan and, as recently as August 1994, the Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee, chaired by Joan Kirner, called on the Council of Australian Governments to consider, among other national infrastructure projects with a possible 2001 completion date, the 'National Museum proposed by the Government of the ACT and many community organisations'.

The week before the Government's Cultural Statement, the Arts Minister, Michael Lee, reportedly proposed to the Federal Cabinet's Expenditure Review Committee that the museum be abandoned and its

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10 Speech by the Prime Minister, the Hon P.J. Keating, MP, Opening the National Portrait Gallery and Inaugural exhibition "About Face: Aspects of Australian Portraiture", Old Parliament House 30 March 1994: 2.

11 Speech by the Prime Minister, the Hon P.J. Keating, MP, Opening the National Portrait Gallery and Inaugural exhibition "About Face: Aspects of Australian Portraiture", Old Parliament House 30 March 1994: 5.

Aboriginal collection transferred to the South Australian Museum. The proposal, which brought an outcry from many quarters (Aboriginal groups, institutes and individuals who had donated objects, and friends of the National Museum), was rejected.

**Statement analysis**

Considering the Bill for a National Museum was passed by a Coalition government in 1980 and that its construction was a central, if conditional, promise of the Labor Government's 1993 election policy, it is surprising that the Coalition made no mention of the Museum in its recent statement and that the Government only obliquely indicates that the original vision is to be abandoned. These are not simply glaring omissions from both statements, they may be seen to reflect poorly on the courage or consistency of those who released them.

In the Government's statement, substituting for that which has always been envisaged as a National Museum of Australia, is to be a Gallery of Aboriginal Australia on Acton Peninsula and a National Museum in little more than name only (p.75-76). The decision to separate out the Aboriginal collection from the rest of the National Museum's collection ignores an enormous opportunity to place Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australian history in a wider-joint context. As the prominent prehistorian John Mulvaney has suggested, 'The cultural diversity of modern Australia merited better than a version of cultural apartheid'. The National Museum, whose relationship with the new Gallery is still to be worked out, is left with managing warehouses, staging travelling exhibitions and packaging high-tech educational material. The Government's enthusiasm for the National Museum potential as an INTERNET provider, a CD-ROM producer and a developer of 'interactive multi-media resources, electronic exhibitions and pilot information databases', rather than showing the Government's technological literacy, perhaps demonstrates how dazzled the Government seems to be by the bright lights of the information superhighway.

The Government's promise of 'close consultation with peak bodies such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' on the development of the Acton site (p.75) would seem to anticipate the criticism that there has been little public consultation to date on this latest proposal. Indeed, the plan is clearly the result of very hasty last minute discussions between Mr Keating, some of his ministers and the ACT Chief Minister Rosemary Follett. There is no reference in the Government's statement to the work of any of the committees who gave birth to and sustained the vision of a National Museum of

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Australia at Yarramundi. The Statement even at one point put the new Gallery on the East Basin peninsula (a place that doesn't exist).

The Economic Importance of Cultural Industries

Background

Over the last few years many reports have shown the economic importance of Australia's cultural industries. In January 1991 a Cultural Ministers Council Statistical Advisory Group study found that cultural activity was one of Australia's largest industries, employing 200,000 people and contributing $7.6 billion annually to the gross domestic product. In February 1992 the fourth edition of the Australia Council publication *The Arts: Some Australian Data* estimated the value of the total supply of goods and services produced by the cultural industry in 1986/87 at $14573 m, slightly more than the comparable figure for either the Residential Building Construction industry or Motor Vehicles and Parts industry. In October 1992 Hans Hoegh Guldberg of Economic Strategies Pty Ltd reported in *Artburst, Growth in arts demand and supply over two decades*, that between 1971 and 1991 there was a dramatic rise in arts consumption, a quadrupling in the number of listed arts organisations, a quadrupling in the number of cultural centres and performing venues and an average annual growth in number of people employed in the arts sector of 5.7% compared with 2% for the total workforce. In December 1993 an Australian Bureau of Statistics publication revealed that 1.6 million people or 11.8 per cent of the Australian population aged 15 years or more were involved in selected culture and leisure activities and that 34.7 per cent of these people received some payment for their involvement.\(^\text{14}\)

Over the last few years there has also been an increasing tendency for the Government to treat culture as an 'industry'. One of the strongest manifestations of this tendency was the establishing in 1993 of a Cultural Industry Development Program within the Australian Cultural Development Office (ACDO). A second was Senator McMullan's submission to the Federal Government's task force on long-term unemployment, in which it was argued that cultural industries give regions a sense of identity and pride, are a major component in the tourism and leisure industries, and should be seen as essential to

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creating jobs over the next decade\textsuperscript{15}. A third manifestation has been ACD\textsuperscript{O}'s staging of the major conference in Canberra entitled 'Creating Culture: the new growth industries' (a conference which paid significant attention to export opportunities).

\textbf{Statement analysis}

Both the Government (p.7 and 81) and the Coalition (p.6) statements acknowledged the economic benefits and potential of the cultural industries. Indeed the fuller economic exploitation of the arts is central to both statements. The Coalition and Government are clearly moving in the same direction. The Coalition promised to assist 'the arts community in areas such as marketing, export facilitation, education, tourism and international promotion' (p.6), to 'address the need for a cultural exports body with the specific task of coordinating, focusing and maximising export opportunities for our cultural industries' (p. 7), to 'work with the cultural and tourist industries to achieve our goal of realising Australia's potential as a world-class cultural destination' and to 'require our overseas diplomatic posts and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to be more proactive in promoting Australian arts and culture internationally' (p.8). The Government could boast that it was already doing much for the arts by way of industry development (p.81-84) and promised to do more to promote Australian culture overseas (pp.93-94) and facilitate cultural tourism at home (pp.99-100).

\section*{Private Support for the Arts}

\textbf{Background}

Over the last few years there have been several attempts to increase the amount of private (both individual and corporate) money which can be directed towards supporting the arts. In March 1991 the Government set up the Register of Cultural Organisations to fill the gap left with the demise (albeit temporary) of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust and to facilitate tax-exempt donation to arts organisations. In 1992-3 it streamlined the procedures under their Taxation Incentives for the Arts Scheme, a program offering donors of significant cultural items to public collecting institutions a tax deduction under subsection 78(6) of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936. In 1994 it extended the above program with a Bequests program.

Private benefaction in Australia has, however, never reached the proportions found in countries such as in the United States.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Australian Financial Review}, 10 November 1993.
In February 1994 the Prime Minister, Mr Keating, was reported as calling private enterprise support for the arts 'lamentable':

With the enormous accretion of wealth in the stock market, many corporations should be doing much more. This is one reason the Government does as much as it does. Private endowment of the arts is not a tradition in this country. This is more the pity.16

Although the generous support of many large companies has been reported in 1994, an Australia Council report launched by the new Arts Minister Mr Lee in March 1994, confirmed a disturbing trend.17 The report revealed that between 1989 and 1993 the percentage of large companies (ones with more than 250 employees) supporting the arts fell from 43 to 34 per cent, the percentage of all companies supporting the arts fell from 11 to 9 per cent (continuing an earlier trend as the percentage in 1986 was 13 per cent), the percentage of corporate sponsorship which goes to the arts fell from 12 to 9 per cent (as opposed to sport which rose from 35 to 40 per cent) and the total amount of corporate support for the arts fell by 7 per cent (in 1993 dollars, from $64.8m to $60.3m. The report suggested that in a time of recession companies sought short-term gains and these were more readily found through sport sponsorship. Although the report noted an increase in the number of small companies supporting the arts (by approximately 30 per cent) and an overall strong (73 per cent) corporate belief in the vital role business has to play in supporting the arts, there was no indication of a resurgence in arts sponsorship as the economy recovered. Mr Lee was reported as suggesting arts administrators 'look at business sponsorship of sport as an example of how promotions can be made more attractive to the corporate sector.'18

Statement analysis

Both the Coalition (e.g. p.10) and the Government (e.g. p.12, 17) statements include intentions to cultivate a new culture of private arts benefaction. The Coalition plans to explore ways to recognise and reward members of the business community who demonstrate a strong commitment to the arts and ways to make existing tax concessions, allowances and exemptions more relevant to the philanthropic needs of the arts community. The Government pledged additional funding to the Council to develop alternative mechanisms of funding for the arts.


Both plans dovetail with the Australia Council's move in recent years towards more entrepreneurial and flexible funding arrangements.

**Building and Urban Design**

**Background**

The arts which arguably have the greatest and longest lasting cultural impact are architecture and town planning. Commonwealth interest in these arts has rarely gone beyond the commissioning of Commonwealth buildings or administering of the National Capital Planning Authorities (and its predecessor). In 1993, however, the Government appointed the Urban Design Taskforce chaired by John Mant. The Taskforce was asked to review the quality of urban design in Australia, to examine all influences on the way in which urban growth and change takes place, consider the impact of current trends and practices and make recommendations for improvements.

**Statement analysis**

Both Statements recognise the importance of building design with the Coalition (p.13) stating it will 'examine the feasibility of ensuring that the design of all major building construction projects initiated by the Commonwealth is subject to full architectural competition' and the Government foreshadowing a 'Building Better Cities' project (p.74). Detracting from the Government's statement on this subject was, however, the absence of the Government's response to its taskforce's recommendations. The Urban Design Taskforce is still to submit its report.
Appendix 1   Arts policy 1901 to 1993

Australian Commonwealth involvement in the arts began early this century with the establishment of the Commonwealth Literary Fund and a Commonwealth Art Advisory Board. It increased in the 1950s and 1960s with Commonwealth assistance to such non-government grant-giving bodies as the Arts Council of Australia and the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, the establishing of the National Library of Australia, the Assistance to Composers Advisory Board, and an Australian Council for the Arts and with the proposed establishment of the Australian National Gallery. Commonwealth involvement in the arts was greatly increased when the Whitlam Government formerly established the Australia Council and dramatically increased arts funding.

The Fraser Government supported the continued existence of the Australia Council, but made several changes to the structure of Government support following reports by the Administrative Review Committee in 1975 and Industries Assistance Commission in 1976. Fraser Government initiatives included the decision in 1979 to build a National Museum of Australia and setting-up of the Taxation Incentives for the Arts Scheme in 1981 and Touring and Access Fund in 1983.

The Hawke Government's attempt to redirect funding to smaller companies and groups and to restructure the Australia Council in line with the controversial recommendations of the 1986 McLeay Report brought many issues to a head. There were debates over funding being biased toward large flagship companies and companies in the major cities, over the proper roles of the minister and the Australia Council, over the Australia Council's structure and level of funding, over establishing the Creative Fellowship Scheme and over the perennial question of whether the Federal Government should be involved in arts support at all.

In the lead up to the March 1993 election the Coalition released an Arts policy document entitled A Vision for the Arts in Australia. Under the new policy, the Commonwealth would pay more attention to providing tax incentives for private sector involvement in the arts and to supporting overseas tours and exhibitions by Australian artists and cultural tourism to Australia. The Federal Department would fund the large 'national' arts bodies such as the Australian Ballet, the Australian Opera, the John Bell Shakespeare Company and the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and the Sydney and Melbourne-based Opera and Ballet Orchestras. The Australia Council would not be abolished, as it would have under earlier Coalition policy, and it would retain its peer review mechanism, but it would be restructured to concentrate on national arts matters and to provide 'incentive-payments' for performances of Australian work, for touring and for innovation. Non-
national organisations' performance grants would be handled by the States acting as agents for the Australia Council. *Fightback!* estimated the saving to the Commonwealth at $60 million.\(^{19}\) The Coalition also promised to change some of the Film Finance Corporation's prospectus requirements and financing arrangements to make private sector investment in Australian films more attractive. The Coalition was keen to support youth involvement in the arts and the exploration and preservation of our folk heritage (in line with the recommendations of the 1987 Folklife Inquiry), but decided not to fund the Museum of Australia 'during this period of financial constraint'.\(^{20}\)

In this same period the Government launched a 'Cultural Policy' entitled *Distinctly Australian, The Future of Australia's Cultural Development*. Initiatives included increased support for national touring programs, the Australian Youth Orchestra and the Australian Children's Television Foundation, and a pledge of $26 million towards the first stage of the National Museum at Yarramundi Reach in the ACT.

In the fight for the support of 'the arts community', the Government appeared to win the day. Many in the arts community publicly criticised the coalition's proposed GST and Australia Council budget cuts.\(^{21}\)

After the election, both main political parties appear to have recognised the importance of the arts vote. The leader of the Opposition, Dr Hewson, formerly took on the role of shadow minister for the arts (assisted by Senator Kay Patterson) while the Prime Minister, Mr Keating, elevated the Arts portfolio to Cabinet level. The new Minister for the Arts and Administrative Services, Senator Bob McMullan, was reported as saying he would push along the National Museum project\(^{22}\) and would be looking at the efficiency of the Australia Council.\(^{23}\)

In the August 1993 Budget, Government funding of existing arts programs and organisations remained virtually unchanged. While the Government claimed a 12% increase, the Opposition claimed a decline in all areas but the so-called 'Keating fellowships' (Australian Creative

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19 For an analysis of the figures see Macklin, Robert. 'Hewson's art proposal has crafty mathematics'. *The Canberra Times*, 30 November 1991.


Fellowships), the allocation for which rose by 20 per cent.\textsuperscript{24} New allocations announced by the then Minister for Arts and Administrative Services, Senator McMullan, in his Budget package entitled \textit{Delivering Distinctly Australian}, included the following:

- $5.5m over four years to help establish a Foundation for Australian Cultural Development in Melbourne.

- $6m over four years to sponsor the national travelling exhibitions program.

- $4.9m allocated over four years for the development of a national portrait gallery at the Old Parliament House.

- $3.3m in 1993-94 for preliminary design and documentation work associated with the proposed construction of the National Museum of Australia and for the pursuit of private sector support for the project (release of the rest of the $26m pledged over four years was to be conditional upon the ACT Government and private sources being able to meet the rest of the anticipated $60m bill).

\textsuperscript{24} Bob McMullan, Minister for the Arts and Administrative Services, \textit{Media Release}, 17 August 1993; \textit{Age}, 18 August 1993; \textit{Address by the Prime Minister, the Hon P J Keating, MP, Opening of Colin Lanceley Exhibition, Sherman Galleries, Sydney, Friday, 27 August 1993; Australia. Senate. Hansard, Monday 6 September 1993: 235.
Appendix 2  Towards a Cultural Statement

The Government's Cultural Statement, which the Coalition matched 9 days earlier with a quick statement of its own, had a long gestation.

In September 1991 David Simmons announced that the Government would be producing a National Arts Strategy and a National Tourism Strategy. The latter appeared but the former did not. In May 1992 the then Minister for the Arts, Wendy Fatin, produced a discussion paper billed as 'the first step in the preparation of a statement of Commonwealth policy in the field of cultural development'. The paper attempted to define guiding principles, issues and options but the arts commentator Robert Macklin suggested the report:

is a total waste of forests: it lacks imagination; it lacks thought; it is a make-work document for under-employed arts bureaucrats; it is filled with weasel words, which state the blindingly obvious as though it were newly minted; it's just the sort of nonsense that gives the arts a bad name.25

In August 1992, 'as the next step in the development of a comprehensive statement on the Commonwealth's role in Australia's cultural development', Ms Fatin announced the membership of an expert panel to advise the Minister on issues relevant to the development of a Commonwealth statement of cultural policy.26 A report was to be prepared by late 1993.

In the March 1993 speech which launched the Government's arts election policy, the Prime Minister, Mr Keating, claimed:

... the time has come to develop a broad cultural policy which takes account of the reality of contemporary life in Australia...

From a purely economic point of view it makes undeniable sense. Australia's cultural industries, broadly defined, earn 14 billion dollars a year - more than wheat, wool and beef put together, and employing more people. The cultural industries are sunrise industries, because they are in the business of information and ideas and design and innovation. They are also export earners with, in some cases, vast potential for growth in Asia and elsewhere. That is why we propose an industry policy for the arts.27

He further suggested that a good cultural policy will 'help us imagine ourselves as one people', will 'put the emphasis on taking our arts and


27 Statement by the Prime Minister the Hon Paul Keating MP released with the Australian Labor Party, Cultural Policy, 1993 Election.
heritage out to the people', will 'greatly help the process of reconciliation' and would have a broad base without prejudicing the longstanding commitment to excellence.

Following the March 1993 election, Mr Keating took Arts out of the Department of Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories and put it firstly with Administrative Services and then later with Communications. Arts had secured a voice in Cabinet.

Upon the opening of the new parliament, the Governor-General, Mr Hayden, made it clear that cultural policy was going to become part of the Government's drive to create a new Australian identity:

The Government's commitment to bringing cultural concerns into the mainstream of decision making is reflected in the appointment of the minister with responsibility for arts and cultural development to a Cabinet position.

It will continue to give a high priority to the review of its role in Australia's cultural life, developing a cultural policy to be released by the end of 1993.

The Government recognises its responsibility to maintain and develop Australian culture. It will encourage and assist what is distinctly Australian in our cultural life and it will do this in combination with two other goals. It will aim to conserve our heritage in all its diversity, recognising the heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and that of the many ethnic, regional and social groups which make up our society. It will also aim to give all Australians, whatever their background, age, or wherever they live, access to varied cultural experiences and understandings.

In the arts, the Government will pursue these goals through continued strong support for its existing programs and through a series of new initiatives, some directed specifically at children and youth, which aim to promote excellence and innovation.

The Government will also pursue its cultural goals through a continuing commitment to the development of a distinctly Australian film and television industry. As a further stimulus to the creative endeavours of Australian film and television program-makers, the Government will give increased support in the key areas of script development, producer and marketing support and, importantly, Australian children's television.28

In late August 1993 Senator McMullan said he envisaged the Cultural policy statement as providing a ten-year planning framework:

which identifies fundamental principles for the development of Australian culture and which clarifies the Commonwealth's role and responsibilities vis-a-vis those of other levels of government, cultural organisations, the business

Coalition's and Government's Cultural policy statements

community and, of course, individual practitioners, performers and consumers. Some commentators wondered how you have a Cultural Policy without the State dictating taste.

To clarify Government policy Senator McMullan explained in an interview on 10 December 1993:

The Government doesn't perform works of art and we don't want to choose what is performed. What we do is make it possible for Australians with talent to develop their talent, to perform and make it available to other Australians and, if they're good enough, to turn that talent into a career.

The Minister gave the objectives of the awaited Cultural policy as to:

- co-ordinate the cultural activities of different federal departments
- encourage co-operation between organisations working in the same field
- maximise the industry and economic benefits to be gained from cultural activity
- retain the Australia Council as the principal funding body
- make best use of the revolutions in communications and technology
- acknowledge the pluralist nature of Australian society
- improve access to cultural activity for participants and consumers

After the ministerial reshuffle at the end of January 1994, release of the Government's cultural policy, promised for March 1994, was to be postponed till the second half of 1994. Expressions of scepticism over its necessity continued to be heard. Will it help link arts policy with developments in the areas of national identity (e.g. as a multicultural country) and economic orientation (e.g. increasing links with Asia) or will it simply project the self-serving cultural ideals of a few? Theatre and festival director, Barry Kosky, said he would be critical of any cultural policy which went beyond a few points and felt the money allocated to the proposed Foundation could be better spent on music and drama in secondary schools.

At the August 1994 'Creating Culture' Conference Minister Lee announced that the Cultural Policy would be released in mid-September. Soon thereafter the release was postponed to mid-October.


30 The Age 10 December 1993.
