

MUSEUM  
AND ART  
GALLERY  
NORTHERN  
TERRITORY

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2030



# Vision



We are the museum and gallery known for our collections and expertise in Aboriginal cultures, natural sciences, histories and arts across Northern and Central Australia and our neighbours to the north.

***We connect people to the stories of the Northern Territory.***

Our collection drives curiosity, exploration and partnerships. Our physical spaces are destinations loved by locals and a must-see for Territory visitors. Our digital connectivity expands the reach of our collection. Our guests tell their friends about their distinctive Territorian experience.

# Values

We are brave and passionate.

We acknowledge Aboriginal agency and embrace the uniqueness and diversity of the Northern Territory.

We take risks and work with integrity to build momentum and be sustainable.

We are driven to connect with each other, the public and our stakeholders.



# Focus areas

We will achieve our vision through dedication to four focus areas.

1. **Doors wide open** – We are throwing open our doors and inviting locals and visitors to explore the cultures, natural sciences, histories and arts of the Northern Territory like never before - transformational experiences in exceptional destinations.
2. **Collections for tomorrow** – We are focusing development of our collections on objects, materials, specimens and artworks that talk to the cultures, natural sciences, histories, and arts of the Territory.
3. **Aboriginal cultural rights and agency** – We are deepening relationships with Aboriginal peoples and acknowledging the importance of Aboriginal control.
4. **Commercial acumen** – We are strengthening our financial sustainability through commercial thinking and action, and growing a healthy organisational culture that underpins our aspirations for strategic growth.

# Strategy

## 1 Doors wide open

*We are throwing open our doors and inviting locals and visitors to explore the cultures, environments, histories and arts of the Northern Territory like never before – transformational experiences in exceptional destinations.*

### Strategies

1. Activate our facilities through engaging events, inspirational public programs and interactive exhibitions supported by regenerated physical and virtual spaces
2. Partner with the education sector in providing hands-on experiences for children and young people
3. Partner with tourism operators to deliver must-visit experiences across all our sites
4. Share our expertise with regional museums and galleries

### Significant activities in the first three years

- New approaches and foyer at MAGNT Darwin
- Plan for the Museum of Central Australia to become a building for Aboriginal culture, incorporating the Strehlow Research Centre
- Collaborations with the Education Department, Charles Darwin University, and Library & Archives NT
- Develop a strategy for supporting regional museums and galleries
- Launch of the 'Loved by Locals' program



# 2 Collections for tomorrow

*We are focusing the development of our collections on objects, materials, specimens and artworks that talk to the cultures, sciences, histories and arts of the Territory.*

## Strategies

1. Build collection stores that are fit for purpose and accessible to the public
2. Prioritise acquisition, documentation and care of materials that talk to the Territory experience
3. Partner with specialists and the public in discovery and research in innovative ways

## Significant activities in the first three years

- Formalise research partnerships with community groups and Aboriginal, environmental and scientific organisations
- Finalise and implement a Collection Development Strategy
- Develop and implement a Collection Management Strategy



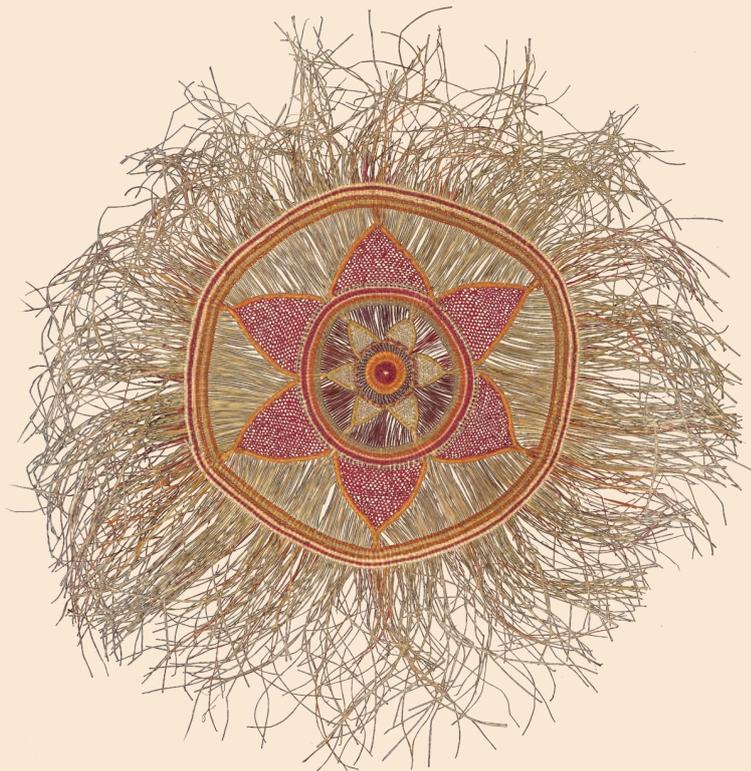
Image: Kaylene Whiskey, *Seven Sistas*, 2018, water-based enamel on SA Tourist Attraction Road Sign. Purchased 2019. Telstra Collection, MAGNT.

# 3 Aboriginal cultural rights and agency

*We are deepening relationships with Aboriginal peoples and acknowledging the importance of Aboriginal control.*

## Strategies

1. Create and implement policies that guide Aboriginal engagement, employment, governance and cultural competency across MAGNT
2. Work with senior men and women, elders and family groups to clarify aspirations and procedures for repatriation, as well as storing, caring for and accessing secret sacred objects
3. Curate exhibitions from the Aboriginal heritage collections and the broader collection that tell publicly accessible Aboriginal stories



## Significant activities in the first three years

- Establish an Aboriginal advisory body
- Embed policies, practices and a resourcing plan that delivers on the national framework First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries
- Review the governance and operation of the Strehlow Research Centre, including the *Strehlow Research Centre Act 2005 (NT)*
- Develop a ten-year repatriation plan

***Lingkitu Ngalula (hold it strong).***

***Nintintjaku (show it to the people).***

***Nyakuntjaku (see).***

***Kulintjaku (listening).***

*Mr Douglas Multa, Senior Man of the Luritja People about the role of MAGNT.*

Image: Jill Nganmirra, *Mat with flower motif*, 2006, natural dyes and pandanus fibre. Purchased 2006. Telstra Collection, MAGNT.

# 4 Commercial acumen

*We are strengthening our financial sustainability through commercial thinking and action, and growing a healthy organisational culture that underpins our aspirations for strategic growth.*

## Strategies

1. Increase resources through relationships with governments, sponsors, trusts and foundations, donors and philanthropists
2. Activate a healthy culture strengthened by individual leadership at all levels
3. Invest in digital technology to facilitate innovation and relevance
4. Market and cross-promote MAGNT

## Significant activities in the first three years

- A contemporary ten-year funding agreement with the Northern Territory Government
- A redeveloped, highly capable website
- Develop and implement a workforce strategy



# About MAGNT

MAGNT manages seven sites across the Northern Territory:

- Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin
- Museum of Central Australia, Alice Springs
- Megafauna Central, Alice Springs
- Fannie Bay Gaol, Darwin
- Defence of Darwin Experience, Darwin
- Lyon's Cottage, Darwin
- Alcoota Scientific Reserve, Central Australia

Prior to March 2020 (pre COVID-19), approximately 50% of MAGNT visitors were domestic tourists and 20% were international tourists. Northern Territory residents comprised 30% of visitation.

In 2014 MAGNT became a Statutory Authority, managed by a Board of Directors responsible for the management and financial affairs of MAGNT. The Board is accountable to the Northern Territory Government through the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, as identified in the *Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory Act 2014 (NT)*.

The *Strehlow Research Centre Act 2005 (NT)* outlines the role of the Strehlow Board. The Strehlow Board is supported by MAGNT and MAGNT staff manage the Strehlow Collection.

Image: Baluka Maymuru, *Dhakandjali*, 2006, natural pigments on hollow log. Purchased 2006. Telstra Collection, MAGNT.



## About this plan

The MAGNT Strategic Plan 2030 is the culmination of workshops and interviews with 76 people, research into national and international best practice, review of reports into the future of MAGNT, and consideration of Northern Territory Government priorities.

This plan sets out the vision for the next ten years with a focus on intentional delivery over the next three years as steps towards achieving that vision. However, MAGNT acknowledges the uncertainty around the impact of COVID-19 on Northern Territory communities, the nation and the world, and its possible effect on the achievement of expected outcomes.



Image: Luma Luma Il Yunupingu, *Dugong hunters in dugout canoe model*, 1981, natural pigments on wood. Purchased 1981. MAGNT Collection.

## Supporting government priorities

MAGNT embraces the strategies and aspirations for future economic growth as outlined in the Northern Territory's Economic Reconstruction Commission Report. Tourism has been identified as one of the key growth areas, building on the Territory's unique strengths in Aboriginal culture and the natural environment. This strategic plan recognises MAGNT's key role in attracting tourists who want to better understand Aboriginal cultures, natural sciences, histories and arts.

In addition, MAGNT's collections and expertise, particularly relating to northern Australia's natural environment and ecology, are important resources for informing sustainable development across a number of sectors.

# Strategic assumptions



The following assumptions have informed MAGNT's strategic thinking. Periodic review of these assumptions will provide a framework from which to assess the relevance of our strategy.

## **Visitation by locals**

Visitation by Territorians with interests in Aboriginal cultures, natural sciences, histories and arts is likely to continue. However, increasing numbers of local visitors are more likely when spaces are activated through complementary events and hospitality.

## **Visitation by tourists**

With Australia's domestic borders now open, drive tourism to the Territory is expected to increase. However, international tourism is projected to be limited over the next two to three years. After that time, Tourism NT expects international visitation to grow to between 2.5 and 3 million arrivals by 2030. The Northern Territory's current Tourism Industry Strategy identifies the showcasing of distinctive Aboriginal cultural experiences as one of six priorities. Currently that demand is not being met.

## **Collections**

Building, maintaining and accessing the Collection is critical to broadening knowledge of Aboriginal cultures, natural sciences, histories and arts. However, a significant proportion of the Collection is not readily accessible as there is inadequate storage, object documentation, digital infrastructure and resourcing. An inadequately stored and documented collection stifles research and exhibitions. It leads to undervaluing of the Collection among decision makers, potential investors and the community. In addition, the importance of involving Aboriginal people in collection management is being prioritised.

## **Contemporary narratives**

MAGNT appreciates that there is no single history of the Northern Territory – Aboriginal and multicultural histories tell different stories. A strength of MAGNT is our ability to tell multiple narratives in a cross disciplinary manner.

### Repatriation

The repatriation of Aboriginal ancestral remains, artefacts and secret sacred objects from national and international collecting institutions, and from private collectors, is important for healing for Aboriginal peoples. Australian and Territory legislation states that ownership of Indigenous remains rests with those peoples with traditional or familial links to them. MAGNT's role in repatriation will significantly increase.

### Partnerships and collaborations

MAGNT benefits from good informal working relationships between our staff and staff from other organisations. Most such relationships will be stronger if they were formalised at the organisational level.

### New galleries and museums

The Northern Territory Government is building a new art gallery in State Square to be completed in 2023. The new gallery will exhibit works from MAGNT's collection, loans from other institutions and individuals, and touring exhibitions. A National Gallery of Aboriginal Art in Alice Springs and the Larrakia Cultural Centre will also be built in coming years.

### Revenue

As a result of Northern Territory Government budget repair measures and the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, MAGNT will be in an increasingly tight fiscal environment and will need to promote its value more compellingly. While MAGNT is acknowledged as having an important role in the visitor economy, our collections, research capability, and capacity to apply our knowledge also offer economic and non-economic benefits that are currently under-realised. MAGNT will need to strongly articulate its relevance and value to funders and investors across all sectors, focus expenditure where it is needed most, and adopt a more entrepreneurial approach.

### Workforce

With a dispersed and small Territory population, attracting and retaining a strong and capable workforce is challenging. Further, the number of Aboriginal staff on the MAGNT team does not reflect the Territory's demography. Addressing this will require new thinking.



Image: David Malangi Daymirringu, *Gurrmirringu and his wife*, 1992 (detail), natural pigments on wood. Purchased 1992. Telstra Collection, MAGNT.



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NATURAL SCIENCES DIVISION  
*ENQUIRIES WELCOME*

