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4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art  
Artspace Visual Arts Centre  
Australian Centre for Photography (ACP)  
Institute of Modern Art (IMA)  
Canberra Contemporary Art Space (CCAS)  
Centre for Contemporary Photography (CCP)

Contemporary Art SA  
Contemporary Art Spaces Tasmania (CAST)  
Gertrude Contemporary  
Performance Space  
Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA)  
West Space

**CAOs**  
Contemporary  
Arts  
Organisations  
Australia

28 February 2017

Depart of Foreign Affairs & Trade  
R.G. Casey Building  
John McEwen Crescent  
Barton ACT 0221 Australia

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **Contemporary Arts Organisations Australia submission to Foreign Policy White Paper**

This submission has been prepared by Contemporary Arts Organisations Australia (CAOs) in response to the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade's call for contributions to key discussion points that will inform the Foreign Policy White Paper. This submission begins with an introduction to the CAOs network and the important roles that CAOs member organisations play in the Australian arts ecology. The submission concludes with six specific responses to the Foreign Policy White Paper's stated strategic goals and questions.

### **CAOs INTRODUCTION**

Contemporary Art Organisations Australia (CAOs) is a national network of 13 independent art spaces funded by state and federal governments. The organisations are located in every State and Territory and are as follows:

<b>ACT:</b>	Canberra Contemporary Art Space (CCAS), Canberra
<b>QLD:</b>	Institute for Modern Art (IMA), Brisbane
<b>NSW:</b>	4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art (4A), Sydney Artspace, Sydney Australian Centre for Photography (ACP), Sydney Performance Space, Sydney
<b>VIC:</b>	Centre for Contemporary Photography (CCP), Melbourne Gertrude Contemporary. Melbourne West Space, Melbourne
<b>TAS:</b>	Contemporary Art Tasmania, Hobart
<b>SA:</b>	Contemporary Art SA, Adelaide
<b>WA:</b>	Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA), Peth
<b>NT:</b>	Northern Centre for Contemporary Art (NCCA), Darwin

Dates of establishment for the CAOs organisations range from 100 years to 20 years with most having histories of between 30 to 40 years. Each was established with the objective to support living Australian artists to create and exhibit artwork outside the frame of collecting institutions or the commercial sector. These organisations collectively represent decades of expertise and commitment for upholding the most rigorous standards of artistic development alongside a generosity of spirit and passion for audience engagement.

In the 21st century the role of CAOs organisations is to produce, present and interpret artwork created by living artists with a long-term view to: inspire audiences with innovation, new ideas and excellence in contemporary art; support diversity, encourage ambition and invest in the development of Australian artists throughout their careers; and build national and international markets and opportunities for Australian culture.

CAOs member organisations play a fundamental role in the fabric of the visual arts sector in Australia. They act as a conduit between art industry networks including artist-run initiatives, regional and public galleries, the higher education sector, festivals and biennales, state and national galleries and museums, commercial galleries, private benefactors and collectors, international galleries, networks and cultural agencies.

## **CAOs KEY SUBMISSIONS TO FOREIGN POLICY WHITE PAPER**

### **1 Contemporary Australian art and artists are the most valuable cultural capital we have in projecting Australian culture and creative innovation upon a global stage.**

The contemporary visual art market – incorporating galleries, museums, festivals, fairs, auctions, major events, public projects and associated cultural programs and activities – has experienced an unprecedented boom in international activity, capacity and audiences since the late 1990s. This has been especially apparent in Asia, led in particular by China's extraordinary investment in art and cultural infrastructure backed up by support of new cultural production. More than any other creative activity, contemporary visual art has offered diverse stories and ideas while helping shape collective experiences of the world today. Australia is unique in what our culture has to offer to global audiences. Home to truly diverse Indigenous cultures and one of the most culturally diverse populations in the world, Australia must demonstrate greater commitment to supporting its art and culture in our region and beyond. With our national representative scope and curatorial visions committed to telling stories that reflect Australia's social and cultural diversity, CAOs organisations are ideally placed to project the best of Australian art and culture on the world stage.

### **2 Australian art and culture is underappreciated internationally and investment in the sector via development and presentation support must be increased in order to increase our presence and opportunities for cultural impact.**

With a small population of 24 million, the breadth and depth of Australian cultural production is outstanding. However, the scope of reach, understanding, influence and ultimate appreciation of Australian art and creativity is generally underappreciated relative to leading global peers. While Government has a key role to play in advocacy and investment in Australian art and cultural innovation abroad, the strength of the CAOs network and small to medium arts organisations operating both locally and globally is in our collective expertise in actual development of new works in collaboration with Australian artists and cultural producers. All nations' global standing is intrinsically linked to the attractiveness and influence of its cultural production and by this measure increased investment in artists and organisations whose core business is commissioning and developing new cultural works is paramount.

### **3 Independent arts organisations have the vision, versatility and long-standing international relationships to grow Australia's arts and cultural profile internationally.**

The CAOs network of organisations represents a wealth of expertise in arts and cultural vision, development, management and promotion. Many of today's Australian artists who enjoy widespread recognition and highly regarded accolades from internationally respected art capitals and organisations were not only supported early in their careers by CAOs with commissions and exhibitions, but continue to develop their practice as established artists with CAOs projects staged nationally and internationally, for instance Tracey Moffatt who will be representing Australia at the Venice Biennale in 2017. In the past decade alone, CAOs organisations have showcased the work of Australian artists in international biennales, major exhibitions, festivals and within myriad other platforms. We have built strong relationships, durable reputations as cultural leaders and innovators in our field, and demonstrated an enviable capacity to leverage modest opportunities into major outcomes that increase Australia's profile in the arts. These achievements could be greatly amplified with greater

financial investment from Government to support what we already do at a sustainable level, as opposed to one-off funding interventions which focus on diplomatic anniversaries or events that do not necessarily coincide or work to the best advantage of bilateral cultural partnerships with our international peers.

#### **4 Reciprocal cultural exchange, dialogue and audience development must be at the heart of Australia's engagement with international partners and global audiences.**

The place and appreciation of Australian art and culture abroad can only be as strong as the place and appreciation of diverse global cultures at home. This is especially paramount to recognise at all levels of the creative economy given Australia's extraordinarily diverse multicultural society. In addition to taking Australian art and artists to the world over many decades, CAOs organisations have a superlative record of bringing international artists, museum and gallery directors, curators, writers, thinkers and cultural producers to Australia, often pioneering new audiences and platforms for showcasing such talent. As Australia seeks to reinvigorate its diplomatic approach to cultural engagement within the international community, it is essential that Government invests and advocates for increased reciprocity via creative platforms and contexts that are genuinely connected to foreign audiences and local migrant and diasporic communities.

#### **5 The rise of Asia requires that Australia becomes more deeply engaged with the region via mutually rewarding cultural exchange.**

The continuing national focus on Australian and Asian relations and the growing global interest in contemporary Asian art and culture reinforces CAOs' achievements and ongoing work in our region. All CAOs organisations' work in the contemporary visual arts sits within a growing awareness of the Asian context – what is often referred to by curators, economists and politicians as the 'Asian Century'. This acknowledges the diverse cultural, social and economic influence that Asia will make as well as the long history of Asian migration that Australian society has enjoyed. Indeed, contemporary Asian culture continues to impact many sectors of Australian society. Another continuing key challenge is the Australian community's lack of 'Asian Cultural Literacy' and that Asia literacy is necessary in order to remain business competitive, receptive to innovation and ultimately capable of accessing and participating in emerging markets. What is clear is that there is a much broader context in which Australian artists and culture can operate, but a renewed critical engagement is necessary which reflects current artistic practice, curatorial methodology, international networking and strategic focus.

#### **6 The Government can work more effectively with small to medium independent art organisations by supporting capacity growth that specifically seeks to expand and diversify international opportunities for Australian art and ideas.**

In varying ways and to varying degrees, CAOs organisations are supported by all three tiers of Government. However, the majority of secured multiyear program funding, one-off project funding or strategic funding initiatives do not place international engagement as the paramount strategic objective, and this is especially true of State and Local Government funding which proportionally accounts for a greater investment for CAOs organisations than the Commonwealth through the Australia Council for the Arts. The Commonwealth Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is best placed to advocate for the central importance of the small to medium arts sector in advancing international recognition of Australian art and culture. It can do this by consulting with industry organisations such as CAOs and making use of our expertise in the global cultural sphere, especially valuable for institutions and business seeking to work at the cutting edge of creative innovation.

We trust that our submission is received favourably and look forward to Foreign Affairs White Paper developments.

Yours sincerely



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4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art

**On behalf of Contemporary Arts Organisations Australia association:**

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**Michael Edwards**

Director, Contemporary Art Tasmania

**Mark Feary**

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