

Australian Public Galleries Snapshot

National Public
Galleries Alliance

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AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC GALLERIES SNAPSHOT PAINTS A REMARKABLE PICTURE

Australia's small-to-medium public galleries present around 3,000 exhibitions annually, employ more than 900 FTE staff and the value of the 5,100-strong volunteer workforce is \$15.9 million according to a new report launched today by the National Public Galleries Alliance (NPGA).

In this time of COVID-19, the *Australian Public Galleries Snapshot* is a positive, good-news story that paints a truly remarkable picture of our country's vibrant public gallery sector. The report draws on the best available, nationally consistent information collected over a twelve-month period in 2017 and 2018.

National Gallery of Australia Director, Nick Mitzevich said, *"This Snapshot demonstrates the potency and the extraordinary impact public galleries make into the cultural and economic fabric throughout Australia. The significance of our gallery sector in enlivening regional, state and national centres is reinforced by this report."*

The Snapshot defines a public gallery as a not-for-profit, non-commercial gallery, encompassing metropolitan, regional and remote public galleries, contemporary art spaces, contemporary craft and design spaces and art museums, including those operated by local government and universities. Unless specified, the report does not include information about national, state or territory public gallery institutions.

The Snapshot captures key data from 48% of small-to-medium public gallery sector in areas including — income sources, visitation, employment, volunteering, number of exhibitions presented annually and more.

In a joint statement, members of the NPGA said, *"This Snapshot collates the data of 197 of our country's estimated 408 small-to-medium public galleries. It is the most detailed overview of the sector to date and will help our local, state and federal stakeholders and wider communities to better understand the contribution of our public gallery sector to the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of our nation."*

Australia's extensive network of public galleries is pivotal to community enrichment by engaging audiences with art and ideas and diverse cultural practices. Through their exhibitions, and public and education programs, public galleries inspire participation in conversations about the world in which we live. They promote learning, foster critical thinking and encourage creative expression in ways that benefit local economies, change lives and impact positively on community health and wellbeing.

"Australia's network of public galleries play a vital role in the nation's arts ecology. From debuting the work of local artists and supporting their career pathways, to presenting the work of leading Australian and international artists to local audiences through touring exhibitions. Australia's public gallery sector is working collaboratively to ensure that metropolitan, regional and remote communities experience and engage with the very best visual art."

Australia's public galleries attract large audiences. The Snapshot reveals that more than 16.5 million people visit our country's public galleries including state, territory and national public gallery institutions, annually. With just under half of our sector captured in the Snapshot, we estimate this figure to be closer to 20 million visitors per annum.

"The National Public Galleries Alliance is proud of the sector it represents and is delighted to share the findings contained in this Snapshot report. Without the generous support and co-operation of our industry colleagues this important work would not have been possible."

Members of NPGA also said, *"The National Public Galleries Alliance is developing a standardised methodology to longitudinally capture and share with our communities and stakeholders the 'complete picture' of our country's dynamic public gallery sector. This Snapshot provides us with a solid foundation to build upon."*

"Collecting longitudinal data will assist us to observe trends, growth and investment in Australia's public gallery sector. It will also prove valuable in demonstrating how extreme events like natural disasters and COVID-19 severely impact our sector."

"Anecdotally, COVID-19 has shed light on our sector's reliance on volunteer labour. The Snapshot indicates that there are six times more volunteer staff than paid staff working in small-to-medium public galleries. Future reports will enable us to benchmark these impacts — from staffing levels (paid and voluntary), through to visitation, and the number of visual artists supported by public galleries."

NPGA comprises state peak bodies and public gallery membership organisations. Recognising the need for nationally consistent sector-specific data, members of the newly formed NPGA have worked strategically to collate and share the information that informs this report.

Australian Public Galleries at a glance

[Based on available data]:

- **Local Government is the largest investor** in small-to-medium public galleries (**51%** of the 197 public galleries captured in the Snapshot are **owned or operated by Local Government**).
- Small-to-medium public galleries **employ more than 900 FTE staff**.
- Annually, **over 16.5 million people visit** our country's public galleries including state, territory and national public gallery institutions.
- **44% of visitation** is to small-to-medium public galleries in **regional areas**, compared to **56%** to small-to-medium public galleries in **metropolitan areas**.
- Annually, **more than 5,100 volunteers** donate their time and expertise to small-to-medium public galleries. Quantified, the value of this volunteer labour is **\$15.9 million**.

The *Australian Public Galleries Snapshot* can be viewed at <http://www.magsq.com.au/cms/page.asp?ID=10613>.

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The *Australian Public Galleries Snapshot* is a research initiative prepared by Museums & Galleries Queensland and Public Galleries Association of Victoria on behalf of the National Public Galleries Alliance.

