

# National Art School 2019–2025 Strategic Plan

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NATIONAL  
ART  
SCHOOL



## Executive Summary

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The National Art School (NAS) sits on one of the most significant sites in Australia – a meeting place for the Gadigal people, the site of the oldest gaol in Australia – and since 1922 the National Art School has called this site home. Over 185 years since our founding, and 96 years on this site, we have had a dynamic history, with many of Australia’s leading artists studying and teaching here.

National Art School alumni have framed late 19th Century and 20th Century Australian art practice. They have formed a significant part of the Art Gallery of NSW’s exhibitions and collection acquisitions. One in five Archibald Prize winners has come from the National Art School. But our future is in preparing contemporary artists to be well equipped for the 21st Century. At the leading art fair in the Asia Pacific – the 2018 Sydney Contemporary Art Fair, 56 out of 337 artists were NAS alumni – that is one in 6, more than any other art institution.

The National Art School is Australia’s leading independent fine art school; a producer of new art; a place to experience and participate in the arts; and a presentation venue. Our future vision is for a vital and energetic arts and education precinct. A place where art is made, rehearsals take place, art is seen and most importantly people can experience and participate in art. We will partner with other NSW arts organisations to deliver valuable ACDP objectives for the engagement and participation with people living and/or working in regional NSW, people living and/or working in Western Sydney, Aboriginal people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, people with disability, and young people.

The key objective of the Strategic Plan 2019–2025 is to build on our history and site to become a leading 21st-century art school. We will strengthen and consolidate our education delivery, develop innovative programs, establish an arts and education precinct by broadening access to our site, strengthen our financial stability, and ensure we are operationally agile and commercially savvy.

This Strategic Plan presents a robust business model built on the strong value proposition NAS delivers for the NSW Government as a crucial part of the arts and cultural ecology of NSW. The Strategic Plan maps a pathway to achieving excellence in arts education and growing a vibrant arts and education precinct to contribute to NSW becoming a leading centre for arts, culture, creativity and innovation in the Asia-Pacific. NAS continues to maintain the integrity of the art school whilst being entrepreneurial and progressive in creating new markets and opportunities.

Our Vision is to become the leading fine art school in the Asia Pacific. We are about developing artists, unlocking creativity. Our Mission is to provide outstanding visual arts education centred on learning through practice and critical enquiry under the guidance of experienced artists and educators. NAS builds on the success as Australia's leading independent fine art school to develop our international reputation at the forefront of 21st century studio-based education. Through our art school and site, we educate and inspire students and audiences by creating innovative, accessible arts programs to make lively contributions to a global society. We attract Australia's best art students to study in Sydney and train them to become some of Australia's leading artists with international capabilities.

Our values are to honour the significant artistic and educational heritage of our institution and seek to continue that important tradition through contemporary scholarship, critical thinking and practice. We value the diversity of our students and staff and the individual experiences they bring to their learning, teaching and their professional aspirations; we prioritise their individual development. We value authenticity, talent and dedication. We represent many different perspectives, but share a deep commitment to art and the important role artists contribute to the world.

Our academic plan emphasises intensive studio-based learning under the guidance of experienced artists and educators. Our immersive teaching model recognises the importance of high course contact hours and high staff-to-student ratios to the individual development of artists, and ensures we continue to attract and support diverse and exceptional students.

Finally, we will ensure ongoing financial sustainability and operational excellence and ensure the highest quality corporate and academic outcomes by developing and strengthening the skills, abilities, processes and resources NAS needs to thrive in a fast-changing world. We will strengthen financial capacity by developing new and existing funding and income streams, reinvest in the development of NAS, and endeavour to reach a long-term, secure, stable and affordable tenure for the site with the NSW Government.





# Value Proposition



NAS trains artists and creative professionals. Artists are fundamental to presenting our visual language, national identity, who we are as a society and the positioning of Sydney as a creative global city.



As Australia's leading independent fine art school. NAS is key in NSW's artist ecology in preparing artists that become vital contributors to the arts industry – with commercial galleries, auction houses, framers, conservation labs, printers, publishing houses, markets, schools, State Galleries and others building commerce around them.



And the NAS artist ecology will significantly contribute to NSW becoming the arts and cultural hub in the Asia Pacific.



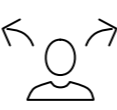
The best artists in the Asia Pacific are trained in Sydney, thus presenting and exporting their work to the world as well as presenting the best art in the Asia Pacific.



NAS trains artists and supports them once graduated, providing ongoing artist employment and activation.



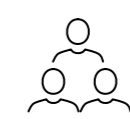
Investing in an Art School gets artists jobs. Students are taught how to become creative professionals and apply their skills in the arts, business and community.



Once artists are trained they significantly contribute to society in commerce, education, health, tourism and the arts.



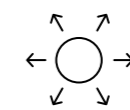
The arts are a viable career path, pivotal for enriching people's lives and NAS prepares Australia's leading artists.



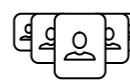
NAS has trained over 10,000 artists in NSW since 1843, including Australia's leading artists John Olsen, Margaret Olley, Reg Mombassa, Tim Storrier, and many more.



As Australia's oldest continuing publically funded art school, our alumni have shaped Australia's visual identity and made a significant cultural impact – it is hard to imagine our galleries without the works of John Olsen, Margaret Olley, and Tim Storrier.



Our Education Outreach team takes art and training everywhere from Blacktown to Broken Hill, Narooma to Mullumbimby. In the past 12 months, NAS has reached 4,279 people across metropolitan and regional NSW.



1 in 5 Archibald Prize winners are National Art School graduates.



Our unique studio-based teaching model is extremely successful. Students have consistently rated the teaching quality and overall satisfaction of NAS at above 90%, far higher than any other comparable institutions.

# Snapshot



96.9%

Ranked #1 for overall quality of educational experience in a degree course in all of Australia. NAS students ranked their learning experience at 96.9%, the highest of all Higher Education Institutions in Australia (2016 Quality Indicators in Teaching and Learning, Commonwealth Government).



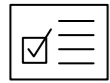
42%

Student intake has increased by 42.38% in the past 5 years.



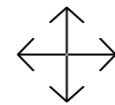
41%

Western Sydney and Regional NSW students account for 41% of students in 2017 academic year.



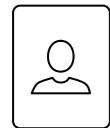
92%

Ranked #1 publically funded educational institution for overall quality of educational experience in Australia 92% (2015 and 2016 Quality Indicators in Teaching and Learning, Commonwealth Government).



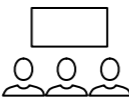
4279

Regional Outreach in the past 12 months reached 4,279 people across metropolitan and regional NSW from Narooma to Mullumbimby and Bankstown to Broken Hill.



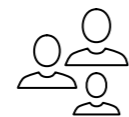
20%

Success across Archibald, Wynne and Sulman exhibitions as NAS alumni have made an immense contribution to the cultural landscape of NSW, including alumni John Olsen, Margaret Olley, Max Dupain, Tim Storrier, Ken Done and Fiona Hall. One in five of all Archibald winners since 1921, including 2017 winner Mitch Cairns, have been NAS alumni, as have Wynne Prize winners since 1897, and one in three of all Sulman Prize winners, including 2017 winner Joan Ross.



16%

Over 100 NSW high schools participated in the education outreach program in 2016, up by 16%.



85%

Community activation onsite increased by 85% since 2014. The site continues to be a vital hub for social connectivity as NAS constantly develops new ways to activate and welcome the broad community to the campus.





# Our Vision, Mission, Values and Context

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## Vision

Leading fine art school in the Asia Pacific

## Mission

Started in 1843, the National Art School (NAS) provides outstanding visual arts education centred on learning through practice and critical enquiry under the guidance of experienced artists and educators. NAS builds on the success as Australia's leading independent fine art school to develop our international reputation at the forefront of 21st century studio-based education. Through our art school and site, we educate and inspire students and audiences by creating innovative, accessible arts programs to make lively contributions to a global society.

## Values

We honour the significant artistic and educational heritage of our institution and seek to continue that important tradition through contemporary scholarship, critical thinking and practice. We value the diversity of our students and staff and the individual experiences they bring to their learning, teaching and their professional aspirations; we prioritise their individual development. We value authenticity, talent and dedication. We represent many different perspectives, but share a deep commitment to art and the important role artists contribute to the world.

## Context

The National Art School is Australia's leading independent fine art school; a producer of new art; a place to experience and participate in the arts; and a presentation venue. Our value proposition charts a pathway to achieving excellence in arts education and growing a vibrant arts and education precinct to contribute to NSW becoming a leading centre for arts, culture, creativity and innovation in the Asia-Pacific.

# Our Five Pillars

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To deliver the objectives described in Part 3 (below), we have designed a strategic plan around our five 'pillars' focusing on our key assets: our academic offering, our people, the former Darlinghurst Gaol site, our community, and financial sustainability. We will reach our objectives by defining and implementing a series of operational plans over the coming six years, as set out below.

## Academic Offering

Our academic plan emphasises intensive studio-based learning under the guidance of experienced artists and educators. Our immersive teaching model recognises the importance of high course contact hours and high staff- to-student ratios to the individual development of artists, and ensures we continue to attract and support diverse and exceptional students.

## Our People

Our people are our most valued and important resource. We aim to attract and retain the best people to guide the development of talented and committed students and the success of the National Art School. We continually seek to improve the professional capacities of our people and we value their individual development and wellbeing.

## The Site

The National Art School respects the Aboriginal history of this place and acknowledges the Gadigal people in developing our programs. We acknowledge the site's former history as the Darlinghurst Gaol, and since 1922 its continuing history as the home of the National Art School. We aim to provide state-of-the-art facilities and services for students and provide arts engagement to ensure the site is a hub for arts and culture in NSW, with vibrant and engaging programs that make art and culture accessible to the whole community.

## Community

The National Art School enables community to connect with art, education, creativity and ideas. The National Art School makes a significant contribution to the NSW arts and cultural sector through a range of programs and activities that deepen our relationship with the broad community and extend our partnerships across NSW and the Asia-Pacific. We present vibrant, challenging and important forums, events and courses.

## Financial Sustainability

We will continue to build our financial sustainability, diversifying revenue sources and affirming relationships with strategic partners to ensure sufficient institutional resources in place to support our mission, vision and values.



Sculpture Class. Photo: Peter Morgan.



## Engagement and enrichment

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The National Art School has always been far more than an education institution; reaching out across Sydney, NSW and around Australia to engage with a diverse range of community, arts industry, government and business sectors for the benefit of NAS students and community alike.

The NAS site has an important history as part of Sydney's convict-built heritage, and for nearly a century has been a strong cultural presence in the heart of the city. As well as nurturing its students, the school has promoted art, creativity, innovation and inclusion beyond the campus, forming strong links with the local inner-city community and expanding out to global connections.

This extensive external engagement is a key element of NAS's success, generating a deep and vibrant connection to the arts industry and creative sector that feeds back into the school community, giving students and staff a wider perspective outside the curriculum, a strong sense of purpose, and more diverse understanding of the role of an artist. NAS graduates have gone on to have enormously varied careers within and outside the art sector, from practising artists to developing health programs, establishing successful retail businesses to public broadcasting and much more.

Another key driver for the school is to make art and creativity accessible to all people. The school runs a highly proactive and effective outreach program, taking the school's outstanding teaching and learning environment out to art students and teachers across NSW and interstate, and engaging with indigenous students and communities. NAS also has a longstanding and popular public program, welcoming artists of all abilities, ages and backgrounds into the school with a year-round offering of short courses across diverse artistic disciplines.

This dynamic culture of engagement creates an inclusive, interconnected school community, allowing its students to thrive and promoting lifelong learning and innovative thinking. These are crucial elements for all graduates, enabling them to engage with a rapidly and constantly changing social and economic environment, in Australia and around the world.

## Our Strategic Goals and Objectives

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Our people and our stakeholders are at the core of everything we do. In looking towards 2025, we have sought to define how we can best create value for each of our stakeholders: students, staff, alumni, Company Members, NSW Government, industry, artists, partners and the community.

To do so, we have looked to capitalise on our strengths, to identify what we do well, to do it better, and to expand our influence throughout Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. We have also looked to respect best practice in every aspect of our activities. We will create, present and curate work by emerging artists and new work by established artists/ companies to ensure our program is vital and relevant to contemporary ideas.

We will focus on three strategic goals with nine accompanying objectives, which will collectively afford the National Art School to expand our role as Australia's leading independent fine art school and to develop our international reputation at the forefront of 21<sup>st</sup> century studio-based education.



# Strategic Goal 1:

**Build on our success as the leading independent fine art school in Australia and develop our international reputation**

## **Strategic Objective 1A:**

**Utilise our distinctive teaching model and reputation to extend our reach and attract the most talented and committed students**

- Central to our identity and our success is our unique studio-based teaching model, which prioritises high course contact hours and high staff-to-student ratios to accommodate the individual development of artists.
- The preservation of this model allows us to establish a clear differentiation from other providers within the higher education sector and to build our recognition within the professional arts sector.

## **Strategic Objective 1B:**

**Increase access to our programs for a greater diversity of students**

- We will broaden access to our educational programs for students from a wider range of cultural, geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds by building new networks and programs that connect us to a broad range of communities at a local, national and international level.
- We will strengthen our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and artists, including the development of an Indigenous scholarship and a mentorship program, alongside our partnership with the APY Art Centre Collective.
- We will seek to improve our support and graduate outcomes for students with a disability.
- Through our education outreach activities, we will leverage our strong track record in regional engagement to connect with an increasingly wider audience and broader range of communities.
- We will build an academic staffing profile that maintains our commitment to engaging outstanding professional artists as mentors, and both celebrates and reflects the cultural diversity of the communities we work with.
- We will seek to increase our international student enrolment mix and international mobility for our domestic students.

## **Strategic Objective 1C:**

**Provide opportunities that assist our graduates and artists to achieve professional success**

- The transition from student to professional artist can be a challenging experience. We will ensure that our courses provide students with an understanding of the contemporary professional arts industry, creative industries and cultural sectors in which they will work. We will build upon our 2017 Launch Pad professional development program, which assisted graduating students to improve their written and oral communications, artist statements and biographies and websites.
- We will work to build strategic partnerships that assist our students as they transition to becoming professional creative practitioners through a range of professional development avenues, including exhibition opportunities and professional networking through introductions to artists, curators, galleries and arts agencies.
- We will seek to create employment opportunities for students within the professional arts sector by facilitating internships, paid work and volunteer work experience. We will create a network of support structures that act as an international landing pad, facilitating networks, studios and supporting incoming NAS alumni to new cities.



## Strategic Goal 2:

### Develop a vibrant arts and education precinct with the National Art School at its heart

#### Strategic Objective 2A:

##### Create dynamic and engaging programs centred on the National Art School and the former Darlinghurst Gaol site that contribute to a vibrant arts and cultural sector in New South Wales

- We will increase opportunities for people to participate in arts and culture by expanding our community education offerings both on and off campus and both locally and regionally.
- We will develop and strengthen cultural and institutional partnerships that help us to engage with new audiences.
- We will seek to create educational opportunities that allow for increased understanding and utilisation of this unique site and its remarkable history.

#### Strategic Objective 2B:

##### Develop and strengthen key partnerships with arts and cultural organisations

- We will work with a broad range of small-to-medium organisations to host internationally significant festivals, live performance, exhibitions, music, performance poetry, writer talks, artist lectures, artmaking workshops and arts markets involving NSW and international artists.
- We will look to work with suitable partners in Western Sydney and regional NSW to present engaging participatory programs for the local community.

The key assumptions and drivers for the historical and cultural programs are:

- Maintaining high quality and standards
- Continuing to supplement education offerings
- Bringing art and artists to the site
- Increased public visitation and engagement
- Sponsorship and donor benefits and opportunities
- Professional recognition
- Creating a local arts hub
- Commercialisation of the Collection and Archive, and
- Interfacing with the tourism aspects of the site development.

#### Strategic Objective 2C:

##### Develop and implement a masterplan for the former Darlinghurst Gaol Site

- Development of the former Darlinghurst Gaol site provides a new opportunity to recognise the significance and 'hidden jewel' ingredient of this site and bring its stories to life. The challenge will be to exploit the site while addressing refurbishment and compliance issues.
- We will seek to enhance the site to bring the facilities in line with premium offerings, contemporary standards and premium tuition fees, and also to ensure the site can be successfully developed commercially.
- Accordingly, a site masterplan will be developed to determine best use, make the site fit for purpose, and address compliance issues. On acceptance of the masterplan, business case, amended development application (DA) and zoning by government authorities, we plan to undertake major fundraising campaigns (government and non-government) to fund the implementation of the major works with the NSW Government. We will also submit a liquor licence application to afford greater flexibility for functions and venue usage.
- Our history carries multi-layered, rich stories. They will form the basis of our increased visitation plans, be part of our cultural and public programs, and bring a new and important voice to the understanding of Australian history.



## Strategic Goal 3:

### Ensure ongoing financial sustainability and operational excellence

#### **Strategic Objective 3A: Ensure the highest quality corporate and academic performance outcomes by developing and strengthening the skills, abilities, processes and resources the National Art School needs to thrive in a fast-changing world**

To deliver on the statement that “our people are our most valued and important asset”, we need to manage and develop our people well and allow them time to work on innovation and self-development. To achieve this important strategic objective NAS will:

- Engage with staff by ensuring our internal communications are effective, regular, clear and consistent, and ensure our communications provide clarity of our strategy, goals, objectives and results
- Value the time that our staff spend on self-development
- Value and recognise innovation and goal achievement, and celebrate success
- Recruit, develop and strengthen our workforce through recruitment, induction, feedback and employee wellbeing programs
- Include demonstrated behaviours and values alongside the NAS brand and business deliverables in our professional development process
- Coordinate staff professional development programs – NAS encourages and supports the continuing professional development of all staff by assisting them to meet their personal, academic or professional needs to optimise the quality of their working life and by enhancing and supporting the existing strengths and potential contributions to the work of NAS
- Undertake human resource organisational planning to identify and take action on current and future staffing needs to reach our vision and fulfil our mission
- Promote affordable and appropriate innovation and continuous improvement of our processes and resources to deliver value and contemporary relevance to our staff and students.

#### **Strategic Objective 3B: Strengthen financial capacity by developing new and existing funding and income streams, and by reinvesting in the National Art School**

- With secure tenure, NAS can develop a sustainable business model that delivers excellence, innovation and arts engagement to the people of NSW.
- The core business of tertiary education is strong. Growth is focused on additional areas that create income streams from additional short courses, events, philanthropy and sponsorship. A priority of this Strategic Plan is the development and implementation of a commercial, philanthropy and sponsorship capacity. We will increase staffing and implement a development strategy to attract and engage with potential supporters.
- We will add capabilities to our many facilities to enable greater usage of this asset.

#### **Strategic Objective 3C: Ensure ongoing good governance, corporate practice and control measures are achieved**

The NAS Board of Director's is responsible for the overall corporate governance of the School, including the establishment and monitoring of key strategic goals. It is committed to attaining standards of good corporate governance that are commensurate with the School's needs. In this regard, the Board has created a Governance Framework for managing the School, including internal controls and business risk management processes. This framework includes the Board, the Finance and Audit Committee, the Property and Assets Committee, the Academic Board and the Executive.

# Appendix I – Art education is at the heart of what we do

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The National Art School is a forward-thinking, progressive art school with a continually evolving curriculum that is in step with new art developments. NAS teaches students to think creatively across disciplines and provides them with the instruction and resources to fulfil their artistic potential. We aim to ensure that our students are at the forefront of art-making by providing a comprehensive range of programs from degree courses and short courses to school programs and regional outreach.

## National Art School Teaching Model

- Central to the reputation and success of NAS is our teaching model, which emphasises intensive studio-based learning under the guidance of experienced artists and educators. This immersive model utilises high course contact hours and high staff-to-student ratios to support the individual development of artists, and ensures we continue to attract and support exceptional students.
- Our teaching staff are recognised as leading practitioners in their fields. With the benefit of their professional experience and insight, they facilitate an immersive learning environment designed to foster the talents of each student. NAS draws on a diverse staffing base of over 100 arts professionals, augmented by a range of visiting artists and scholars, to create a dynamic learning environment.
- Characteristic of the NAS teaching model is a cohesive course structure involving the integrated and comprehensive study of the essential skills of studio disciplines and the history and the theories of art and culture that inform arts practice today.

The essential features of the NAS teaching model are:

- High course contact hours, allowing comprehensive subject content and individual student development
- Appropriate class sizes for studio subjects and tutorial groups, ensuring high-quality student/staff contact
- A strong staffing base representing a broad range of creative perspectives and skill specialisations.

## Degree Programs

### Degree Courses

NAS delivers accredited degree courses in fine arts, focusing on practice-based learning in key areas of studio study: Ceramics, Drawing, Painting, Photomedia, Printmaking and Sculpture. Study in these studio areas is supported by core study in Art History and Theory and in Drawing, which is offered in all years of the undergraduate degree and as a specialised area of study at postgraduate level.

### ***Bachelor of Fine Art (BFA)***

Our longest-running degree, the three-year BFA is designed to impart the skills, knowledge and creative independence required to sustain successful careers as artists and arts professionals. The BFA integrates three essential areas of study: Drawing, Art History and Theory, and studio practice.

### ***Master of Fine Art (MFA)***

The MFA is a two-year full-time degree designed for graduates who seek to develop a higher level of specialised knowledge and further their professional expertise within their area of studio practice. The course involves a blend of coursework with individual research and studio practice under the direct supervision of experienced professional artists.

### ***Doctor of Fine Art (DFA)***

The three-year DFA program – our highest-level degree – is a *practice-based* professional doctorate that provides a platform for integrating professional expertise and scholarly enquiry within the visual arts. This unique offering provides an important alternative to conventional PhD research for professionals who are committed to the highest standards of practice and critical enquiry through visual art.

## Appendix II – Programs, NAS Open

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The National Art School is a place of art-making, participation, new ideas, imagination and creativity. NAS OPEN, which consists of publically available programs, including our short courses, NAS delivers programs for engagement and participation with people living and/or working in regional NSW, people living and/or working in Western Sydney, Aboriginal people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, people with disability, and young people. The following programs identify key metrics and targets for meeting the expectations of these groups.

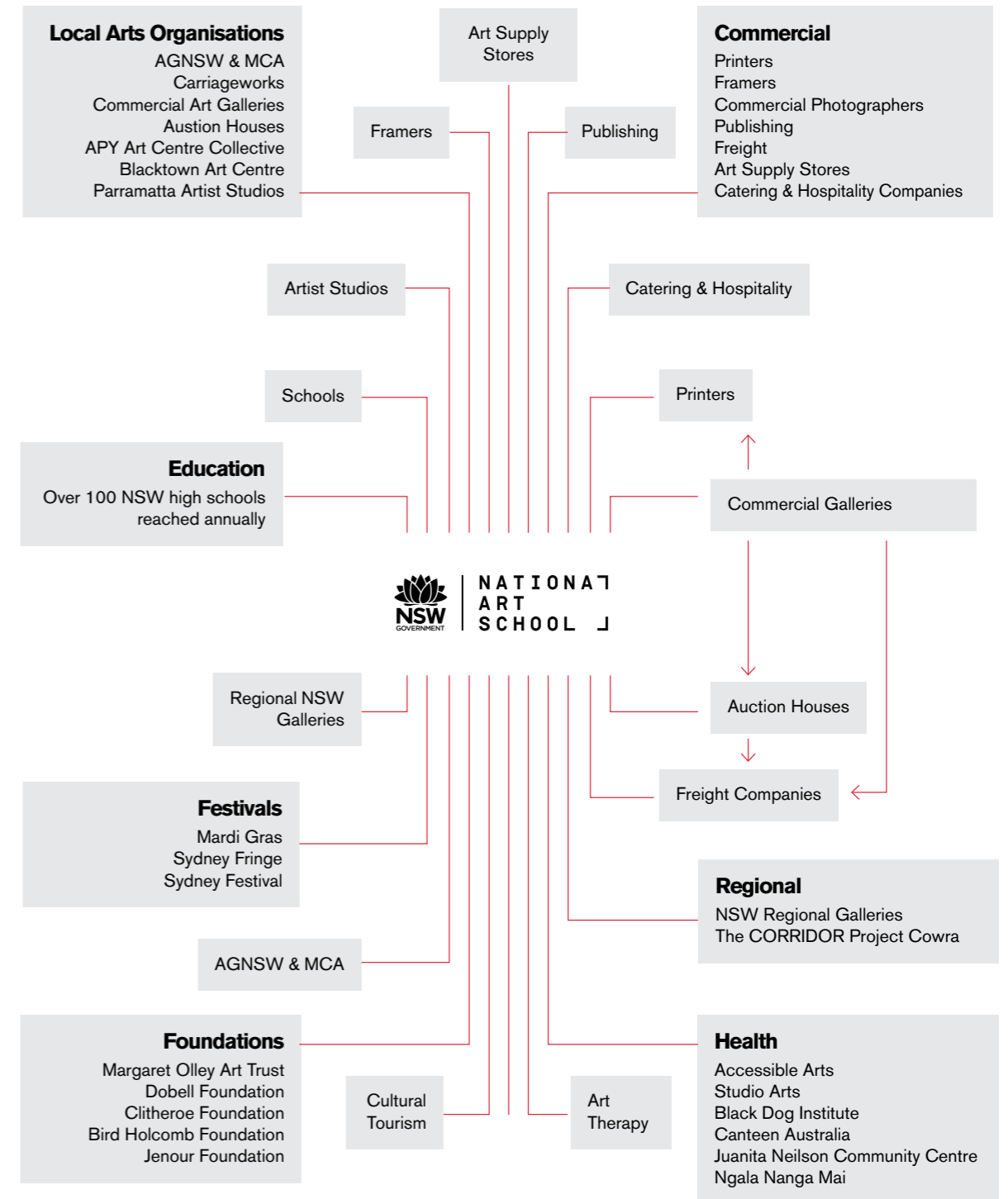
- Short Courses
- High School Courses
- School Holiday Workshops
- Outreach Programs



# Appendix III – NAS and the Artist Ecology

The National Art School delivers excellence in arts education and is developing a vibrant arts and education precinct to contribute to NSW becoming a leading centre for arts, culture, creativity and innovation in the Asia-Pacific. NAS is central to a vibrant arts ecology in NSW, supporting many small businesses and business operations, from framers to freight companies, conservators, art supply stores, commercial galleries and auction houses. NAS also supports the resilience of the regional NSW arts sector by preparing artists, programs and exhibitions for regional galleries, regional schools and deep cultural engagement. NAS continues to maintain the integrity of the art school whilst being entrepreneurial and progressive in creating new markets and opportunities.

The National Art School attracts Australia's best art students to study in Sydney and train them to become some of Australia's leading artists with international capabilities. A dynamic artist pool practising in NSW ensures this State will become the hub of art and culture in Australia and the Asia-Pacific. NAS attracts outstanding artists, ensuring the centre of the arts is in Sydney and NSW.








NATIONAL  
ART  
SCHOOL



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## Look at Us

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## Join Us

To find out about events and what's on sign up for our mailing list at [nas.edu.au](http://nas.edu.au)

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All contributions are gratefully received, and any amount you are able to give makes a real difference.  
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Contact our Development Team on (02) 9339 8645 or [philanthropy@nas.edu.au](mailto:philanthropy@nas.edu.au)

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