ATTACHMENT 1: Monash Gallery of Art Strategic Plan 2012–15 – Year 3

YEAR 3: Financial Year (FY) 15

The MGA Strategic Plan for 2012–15 is organised by three key strategic areas:

1. Developing and expanding awareness of the MGA Collection of Australian photography;
2. Developing and presenting an annual series of exhibitions and public and education programs that Grow and Strengthen MGA’S Audience; and
3. Manage MGA’s resource base to ensure the gallery’s Development and Sustainability

Outlined below are key qualitative and quantitative outcomes achieved for each of these strategic areas in FY15:

1. COLLECTION / RECOGNITION

‘Nurture positive relationships with key collectors’

- MGA secured donations of significant Australian photographs from a range of important private donors including: Virginia Coventry, Sean Davey, Ben Ford (Anne Ferran), Janine Burke (Sue Ford), Ponch Hawkes, Shayne Higson, Derek Kreckler, Robyn Stacey and Richard King (George Morris);
- MGA developed and presented an exhibition which acknowledged and celebrated the generosity of a recent donor: Shayne Higson 'Strange Land' (May-June 2015);
- MGA presented a public event which acknowledged and celebrated the generosity of a long-term donor (Bill Bowness Feb 2015); and
- MGA held a fundraising event, Silverlux, in May 2015 showcasing 27 works which were donated by prominent photographers and purchased by MGA supporters and collectors.

‘Promote the collection’

- MGA hosted the following exhibitions that made the MGA Collection accessible to the general public and provided an avenue to promote works from the collection: Bad Aboriginal photography (Sep-Nov 14) Photography meets Feminism (October-December 2014) Photography talks to painting, Dreams and imagination, Light Reading (all Dec-Mar 2015), Civic Centre display (MAR 15), Highlights from the MGA Collection, Shayne Higson (May-July 2015), MGA’s successful travelling exhibition and outreach program continued to build momentum with the following exhibitions toured to venues around the country: David Stephenson (Wodonga, Swan Hill, Hamilton, Whitehorse) Photographic abstractions (Grafton, Ararat) Rod McNicol (Tweed, NPG), Photography meets feminism (Newcastle), The Rennie Ellis Show (Shepparton, Horsham) Outreach activities: SZ Curator Talk at Shepparton (12 FEB 15), SLH Curator talk Ararat (Jun 15);
- MGA’s final exhibition for FY15, Highlights from the MGA Collection, was the largest hang achieved to date, with 145 works from the permanent collection as part of the show. An anniversary booklet, Our First 25 Years, was published by the Friends of the MGA to commemorate the Gallery’s 25th Anniversary and highlights the collection and the history of the Gallery;
- MGA sold books in the gift shop that related to the artists who were held in the permanent collection. These book sales contributed to approximately $30,000 (end of year estimate) the shop will achieve in sales this financial year; and
This year, the digitalisation project also made great progress with an additional 178 collection items being uploaded on to the website. This brings the total online resource to 376 items. This project is ahead of schedule (as the target is 100 per year) and will continue to enhance the experience for online users and increase awareness of the collection.

‘Add value to the collection’

- MGA has been successful in acquiring external funding from the Robert Salzer Foundation to acquire a series of rare photographs by the local Melbourne artist, Rod McNicol, who is also the subject of a MGA survey exhibition that was attended by over 18,000 visitors before it concluded in August 2014; and
- MGA improved its ability to care for the works in the collection with the purchase of a new hand-held lux meter and quote has been received for the installation of energy efficient LED lighting.

2. AUDIENCE / EXHIBITIONS

‘Large numbers of people who have a good time and invest in what we do [General Visitation]’ & ‘Strengthen local community visitation as a ‘cultural experience’.

- MGA staff worked closely with the Friends of MGA to promote and market Art in the Park;
- The Waverley Camera Club held an exhibition for 45 club members titled ”Painting with Pixels” and held workshops during the Art in the Park festival; and
- Clayton Community Banner Display: An initiative to promote the MGA Collection across Council owned facilities. Five works from the collection were printed as large banners and displayed on access ramp to Clayton Library. Wall texts and postcards were printed and displayed on site to encourage audience engagement with images and the MGA Collection. Information panel included a map and transport information on how to travel to MGA from Clayton.

MGA as a place where people want to be [Social Visitation] & ‘Develop MGA as an accessible destination for all members of our community’

- MGA held five large exhibitions this year with the same number of shows in the additional gallery spaces (Bowness, Breezeway and Bookstore Galleries). These exhibitions encompassed different art mediums including photography, painting, sculpture, digital and installation works;
- In a relationship that will extend past the conclusion of this strategic plan MGA continues to have a strong partnership with Arts Access Victoria with weekly meetings of AAV’s "Satellite" group which will again work with professional photographer Sandra Davis; and
- These on-going activities build upon the pilot-program 'Light Links' which received City of Monash Community Grants funding (Oct-Nov 2014) to provide a six-week workshop program for high-school aged students with disability to learn the basics of photography at MGA (facilitated by Sandra Davis with assistance from MGA Education officer).

‘Build an audience with knowledge and skills of photography [Practical visitation]’

- Resource for our community: MGA continued to provide opportunities for the community through providing photo-based skills workshops including hand-colouring and artist-led workshops with Sandra Davis (primary-students) and David Tatnall (tertiary students & adults). Artist Janina Green led a demonstration and workshop on techniques to add colour
to images by hand including the use of inks and dry media which was strongly attended by both community artists and tertiary students;

- Collection access-based opportunities: 2014-15: MGA continued to produce video content including 2 video promotions of Bowness Photography Prize and MGA: home of Australian photography. We continue to improve functionality of the MGA website and thereby improving access to the MGA Collection; and

- MGA also continued to work towards the strategic aim ‘Enhance on-site access of the collection’ with the display of collection works that explored text and reading in the collection titled ‘Light Reading’. This exhibition appeared alongside an exhibition of international photo books on loan to MGA from Coventry, UK. The exhibition was part of the Photo book Melbourne festival in February. This international connection is an example of the implementation of the strategy ‘Initiate contacts with international institutions with a view to developing exhibition exchanges’.

3. RESOURCES / SUSTAINABILITY

‘Develop a sustainable stream of support through an engaged and dedicated community’

- The Director and Interim Director of the Gallery continued to manage three key stakeholder groups: the Committee of Management, MGA Foundation and Friends of the MGA. In FY15, these groups held meetings every 6 weeks, four months and month respectively which were well attended by their members. These groups were instrumental in supporting the Gallery’s events and activities, including the fundraising event, Silverlux, which raised in excess of $90,000 (gross).

‘Seek out new business and opportunities to attract new markets’

- October 2014 saw the appointment of a Development and Marketing Coordinator who is responsible for looking after fundraising, development, public relations, media and marketing activities. The Coordinator successfully secured in-kind support from DeBortoli Winery and oversaw through the Events Sub-committee the annual Fundraising Dinner & Auction on 16 May 2015. The Coordinator also put a marketing strategy in place to increase the awareness of the MGA and its activities which, in turn, brought new audiences to exhibitions.

4. SUMMARY

MGA performed well in: building the prestige around their collection by acquiring prominent pieces of artistic photography from key collectors; having a large number of travelling exhibitions; growing the online resources by progressing the digitalisation program; holding educational events for the community; and building and maintaining key relationships within the arts sector as well as with key stakeholder groups.

MGA in a challenging year and economic environment needs further focus in the areas of: developing strategies around donor stewardship and recognition (art and financial); building awareness internationally through exhibition exchange with institutions overseas and attendance at photographic events and conferences; achieving greater brand recognition and media exposure and diversifying the income portfolio through activities such as ticketed programs, event hire or new activities such as ticketed exhibitions and corporate and community partnerships and sponsorships.
At the start of FY16, MGA will undergo a strategic planning process which will include a review of the Strategic Plan for 2012 – 2015 and the development and completion of a new Strategic Plan for 2016 – 2020, a resource map and updated position descriptions for all staff members.