

Acknowledgment

Gertrude acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the traditional owners and custodians of the lands and waters on which the organisation operates, and recognises the continuing connection to land, sea, culture and community. Our acknowledgment of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people reflects a commitment to a culture of inclusion and respect that begins with those who were here first, and whose continued strength and presence is fundamental to our future. We extend our respect to ancestors and Elders past and present, and to all First Nations people.

Demonstrating a commitment to First Peoples cultural competency at Gertrude

Gertrude acknowledges the significant role that cultural competency across the organisation plays in the social, emotional, physical, and mental health and wellbeing of First Peoples and communities. Gertrude is committed to embedding culturally safe practices and the ongoing improvement of organisational, operational, and artistic initiatives to reflect this commitment.

The intention of the strategy is to align with First Peoples First and co-design principles. Gertrude intends to develop a detailed four-year plan and approach that supports cultural safety, ethics, self-determination, and sustained trust across all engagement stages. Importantly, this approach should be sustainable, with mechanisms in place for accountability, improvement, and support to foster enduring relationships.

Supported by duty of care protocols that inform, guide, and govern the organisation's engagement with all people, regardless of cultural background, gender identity, sexuality, income, or disability; Gertrude outlines in this commitment the steps to embed First Peoples in leadership, employment, or engagement with Gertrude.

By holding cultural safety at the forefront of the organisation's interactions and operations, Gertrude can enhance and centre cultural awareness, respect, sensitivity, and self-determination – through consultation, decision-making and governance – to support meaningful and genuine relationships and partnerships at all levels of the organisation.

Commitment to Cultural Competency and Cultural Safety

Gertrude is committed to reflecting our diverse communities within its internal operations, development opportunities and artistic program, and encourages exchange and participation to enrich our cultural life. This involves creating and embodying a culturally safe working environment for staff, artists and volunteers with lived experience at the intersections of all cultural backgrounds, gender identities, sexualities, incomes and disabilities.

Gertrude recognises that cultural safety is not a fixed experience defined by a singular set of behaviours or actions. Noting that this safety looks different for everybody, and for each project, we work to support and develop protocols to protect the cultural safety needs of staff, artists and communities. Gertrude sets the expectation that all parties will promote a respectful and reciprocal environment of listening, learning and dialogue.

We encourage individuals to explore and make a personal commitment to embodying and enacting cultural safety guided by the following principles:

- Self-reflection on behaviours and practices
- Reducing power differentials through working collectively and with respect
- Initiate and sustain open reciprocal dialogue about cultural experience
- Recognise, comprehend and advance processes of productive decolonisation through acknowledging the role and history of global colonial practices, their impacts and their potential for change
- Ensure awareness of cultural diversities and individual differences.

Gertrude Strategic Plan 2024 to 2027

The Gertrude Strategic Plan 2024 to 2027 outlines the organisation's vision to be the leading contemporary art organisation in Australia, supporting the creation and presentation of new work across its exhibition and studio programs. Ensuring that all artists remain at the very centre of our work, with Gertrude supporting creative career development and contemporary visual art practice as an important contributor in a global network of contemporary arts organisations. A key tenet of this plan is to cultivate avenues for First Peoples leadership and intersectional perspectives within every aspect of the organisation, including its artistic programs and leadership. Gertrude's core values and mission reflect this approach and continue to be informed by the voices and guidance of First Peoples, peers, and the broader arts sector.

Artistic Commitment

Implementing the following initiatives supports improved opportunities for First Peoples artists to the programming and artistic development opportunities Gertrude enables and facilitates:

- Continue a standing commitment to including First Peoples artists in at least 20% of exhibition programming.
- Continue to support and strengthen the Dedicated First Nations Studio, a fully subsidised two-year stream within the Gertrude Studio Program, committed to First Peoples artists and self-determined in the selection of participants by the First Nations Advisory Group.
- Continue to advocate for the Dedicated First Nations Studio, ensuring the experience of the program is enriching for the artists who participate, and improve avenues for accessing the opportunity each year.
- Ensure there is more than one First Peoples artist in the Gertrude Studio Program each year. By opening only eight of the 16 studios at Gertrude for application in each call-out, the mechanism to ensure there is a minimum of two First Peoples artists in the program at any given time is both galvanising for the First Peoples artists who choose to apply, and can attract First Peoples applicants to the general call-out round in addition to the dedicated studio.
- Engage and seek cultural community advisement in the development and presentation of specific projects or works, with approaches and connections to the community recommended and, at times, facilitated by the First Nations Advisory Group.

The cultural safety of audience members onsite and online is prioritised in the following ways:

- Signage and verbal advisement to indicate the presence and context of culturally sensitive material.
- Signage and acknowledgment of the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands upon which Gertrude Contemporary and Gertrude Glasshouse stand.
- Acknowledgment or Welcome to Country proceedings at the beginning of formal programming.
- Ongoing training and development of staff to ensure a welcoming and comfortable experience for audiences.
- Respecting and being led by the artworks, artistic practices, and the contexts and interpretations provided by First Peoples artists for their own artistic and cultural representations and practices.

Operational Commitment

Gertrude is committed to increasing opportunity for leadership and participation at all levels of the organisation and to taking steps to ensure that the organisation better reflects and represents the diversity of communities that Gertrude works with and in service of. The Directors and Board actively work to embed opportunities for First Peoples artists to centralise these voices and practices within the organisation. This commitment acknowledges that systemic change necessitates ongoing attention, time, and perseverance, as well as the structural capacity for self-reflection, truth-telling, and the long-term maturation of relationships with communities.

Gertrude is committed to increasing and embedding opportunities for First Peoples in its organisational structure, including leadership and employment pathways:

- Embed First Peoples leadership of the organisation through representation on the Board of Directors and Executive Leadership of Gertrude.
- Promote First Peoples self-determination and cultural safety through the First Nations Advisory Group, consisting of First Peoples Board member(s), First Peoples Studio Artist(s) and external First Peoples representatives.
- Support First Peoples-led activities in consultation with the First Nations Advisory Group.
- Establish pathways and protocols for First Peoples employment in the organisation.
- Undertake ongoing Cultural Safety Training for staff, board and studio artists, and provide dedicated time for cultural self-assessment and identifying key areas for improvement year-on-year.
- Introduce methods and structures for embedding cultural equity principles in decision-making, which in turn will support programming and audience engagement activities.
- Building capacity in Gertrude staff to offer and strengthen cultural competency initiatives.

Protocols for using and safeguarding First Nations cultural and intellectual property (ICIP) in the arts

Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) refers to all aspects of First Nations peoples' cultural heritage, including the tangible and intangible. First Peoples have rights to maintain, control, protect and develop ICIP.

The protocols encourage self-determination and the responsible and ethical use of ICIP, as well as moral rights of attribution, to works. The structure, intent and framework of Gertrude is to support artists to both produce and present new work. The organisation is not a collecting institution, does not commercially represent artists and is not engaged in the sales of artworks for commercial profit. Gertrude does not claim to hold copyright of artwork or images of artworks by artists produced or presented onsite. Gertrude works directly with living artists on the development and presentation of predominantly new work.

In the presentation, production, promotion, discussion and programming of First Peoples artists, Gertrude applies the Protocols for using First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property in the Arts, including key tenets:

- First Peoples own and control Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP).
- Based on the principle of self-determination, First Peoples are recognised as the primary guardians and interpreters of their cultures and any refusal to authorise the public exhibition of ICIP will be respected, especially where the privacy of Indigenous knowledge and other cultural practices must be respected.
- Ensure full and proper attribution of nations, peoples, lands and languages.
- Guarantee control and authorship over the recording of cultural customs, expressions, and language intrinsic to cultural identity, knowledge, skill and teaching of culture.
- Ensure the protected nature of verbally shared stories, lived experience or knowledges, in the understanding that these are not for any individual to share.
- Where a First Peoples artist workshop, education workshop or shared studio practice involves participation from audience, arts workers or other members of the public, consider in-depth the approaches that can be ethically applied by students, artists, learners and audiences, and the relevant permissions, as well as identifying cultural knowledges which must not be emulated without First Nations-led authorship and invitational frameworks.

Guiding protocols, policies and regulations

In the continuous review and improvement of Gertrude’s approach to maturing cultural competency with First Peoples engagement, resources, guiding principles and frameworks, especially those with First Peoples authorship and input, are referenced as best practice standards and benchmarks for Gertrude’s organisational capacity building. These references include but are not limited to:

Title	Source
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Core Cultural Learning	Developed by AIATSIS in partnership with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Department of Social Services
Cultural Safety in the Workplace	Koorie Heritage Trust, Cultural Safety Workshop 2024
Protocols for using First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property in the Arts	True Tracks ICIP Principles, Dr Terri Janke and Company and Australia Council for the Arts First Nations staff, Third Edition to the protocol
Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property	Arts Law Centre of Australia 2011, last reviewed 2024
National Cultural Policy— <i>Revive</i> : a place for every story, a story for every place	Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts – Office for the Arts
<i>Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan</i> , an initiative under Australia’s Cultural Policy, <i>Revive</i>	National Cultural Policy
Creative Australia and Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) 2025, <i>Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report: Addressing the challenges with critical skills and sustainable careers</i> .	Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) and Creative Australia, March 2025
Commitment: First Nations Creative Workforce Development Strategy under the First Nations Board at Creative Australia	Full development strategy forthcoming from Creative Australia

Commitment from Leadership

Gertrude wishes to acknowledge that this is a living document. As protocols evolve and the organisation’s competency matures, this document will evolve to recognise these shifts, and is an approach supported and led by the Board of Directors and Executive Leadership of the organisation.

Framework Update Period	Within 12 months and additional reviews as required
Next review due:	August 2026