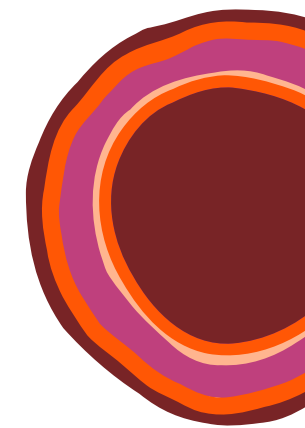
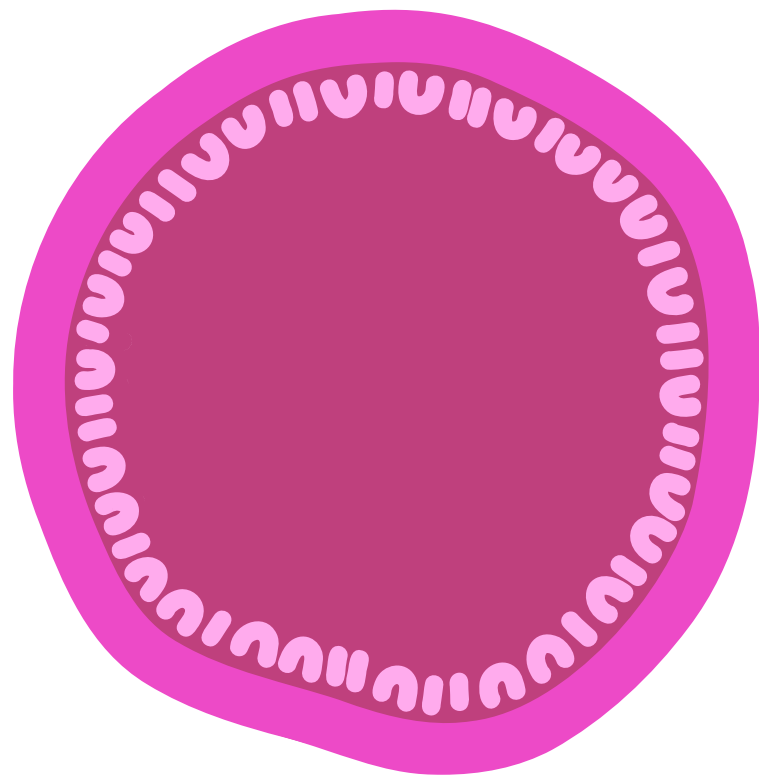
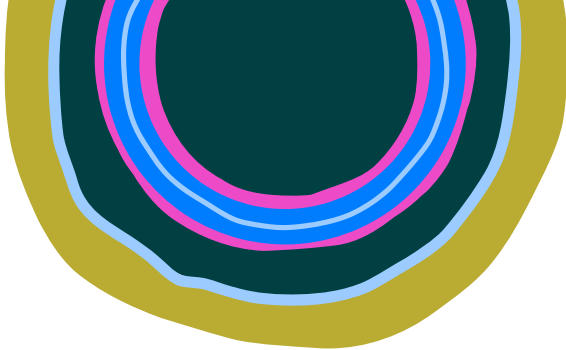




NATIONAL FILM
AND SOUND ARCHIVE
OF AUSTRALIA

2025–2028

First Nations Engagement Strategy



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land: the First Nations peoples who have practised, nurtured and developed the world's oldest continuous human culture for over 65,000 years. We feel privileged to live and work on this land, and to collaborate with its extraordinary people.

We at the NFSA pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present; and acknowledge and thank the First Nations partners, creators and staff whose knowledge, talents,

productions and generosity of spirit are essential to our work. As a national cultural organisation, it is an honour and a joy to assist in collecting, preserving and making accessible Australian First Nations stories.

This publication may contain images and references to First Nations peoples who are deceased. The NFSA does not wish to cause distress to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.

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First Nations First



curating the collection through a First Nations lens and co-designing digital repatriation/return with communities, we strive to ensure cultural protocols are embedded in all our activities. This in turn helps create a culturally safe workplace with professional development pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

This strategy outlines our intentions, and most importantly how we are going to take a cultural approach to collaboration - interweaving audiovisual archiving best practice with First Nations knowledge. There is a lot of work to do. In our First Nations Engagement Strategy 2025–28, we have highlighted the areas of focus for us and how these will inform our existing work as we continue to embed First Nations perspectives into our everyday archiving and business-as-usual activities. We've included a selection of case studies to highlight the type of successful outcomes we will be striving to deliver.

The development of our new First Nations Engagement Strategy was a truly collaborative process. I worked closely with our CEO, Deputy CEO and Chief Curator to ensure it accurately reflected the active listening we have done with our First Nations stakeholders. This strategy is also supported and endorsed by our First Nations Engagement Committee and the NFSA Board.

First Nations filmmakers continue to drive the powerful shift from having stories told about us to telling our own stories, and there is a saying in our arts and media First Nations communities - 'nothing about us without us'. I believe this right to cultural self-determination is also the cornerstone of the NFSA's new First Nations Engagement Strategy 2025–28.

Gillian Moody-Ardler

Wodi Wodi and Dharawal

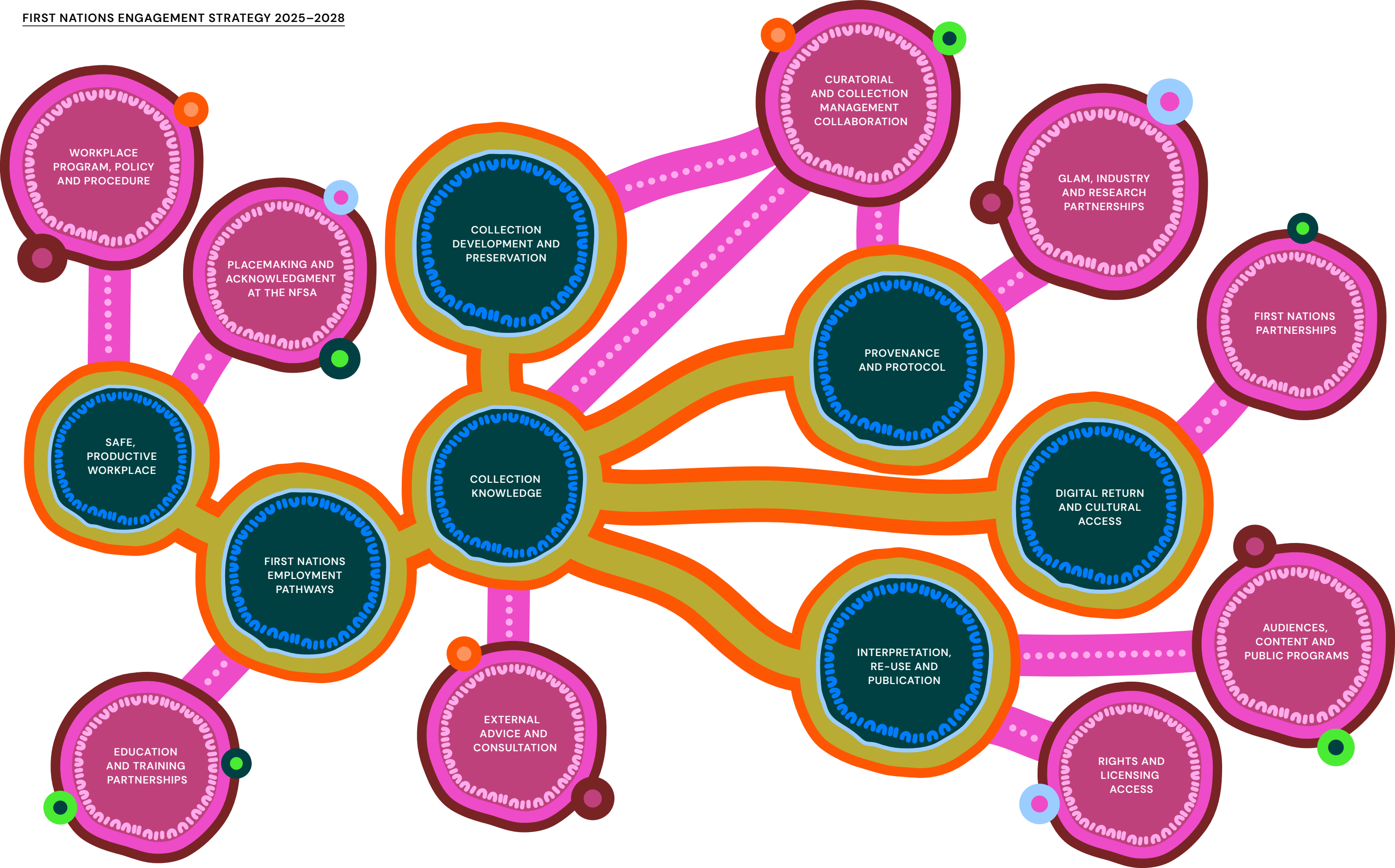
Award-winning filmmaker and
Head of First Nations Engagement

The National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA) is the custodian of the national audiovisual collection including significant First Nations film, video and audio recordings that are representative of culture, language, ceremony, story and song.

As a filmmaker I have long been aware of the value in preserving our audiovisual culture in telling the evolving arc of our First Nations stories – from stories told about us to telling our own. Captured in the beginning through an ethnographic and colonial lens but still a critical record of an often-confronting past. The power of the archive now lies in our ability to reframe and revoice these stories as part of our truth-telling journey.

Recently as the Senior Manager of First Nations Engagement at the NFSA, I have also seen firsthand the incredible impact digitally returning collection content can have on revitalising language and cultural practices, supporting intergenerational knowledge transfer and empowering communities.

It is a transformative time at the NFSA. We are committed to better ways of doing our business by collaborating with First Nations peoples to collect, preserve and share their powerful stories. From





Culturally safe workplace and First Nations employment

We will build our First Nations Engagement team with the creation of three new identified positions. This new team will work under the leadership of our Head of First Nations Engagement. The First Nations Engagement team will work collaboratively across the NFSA to amplify and embed First Nations perspectives and voices across all NFSA activities. They will work closely with the Curatorial and Accessioning teams to deliver the main areas of focus outlined in the strategy, specifically First Nations-led digital return and cultural access, collection development, preservation prioritisation, cataloguing, curation and interpretation.

We aim to be an employer of choice for First Nations peoples by enabling a culturally safe working environment, pathways for professional development and career progression, and recognition of their unique skills, knowledge and perspectives. We are also committed to creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees and graduates by partnering with educational and training organisations who support First Nations peoples such as ArtsReady, TAFE NSW Eora, Tranby and the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS).

We are committed to finalising delivery of our NFSA Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2022–24, and developing our new Stretch RAP. Included in the RAP are building relationships with First Nations peoples and communities, ensuring two-way caretaking of the collection

and embedding cultural protocols across all our activities, becoming the employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples and engaging First Nations-owned businesses as part of improving our procurement practices. We will continue to invest in growing our staff's cultural competency across all areas of our workplace. This includes developing specialised training specific to staff working with First Nations audiovisual cultural material to improve competency in Indigenous Intellectual and Cultural Property (ICIP) and cultural protocols.

WE WILL FOCUS ON:

- Building a dedicated First Nations Engagement team by recruiting three newly created identified positions.
- Partnering with educational and training organisations who support First Nations peoples such as ArtsReady, TAFE NSW Eora, Tranby and the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS).
- Finalising our Innovate RAP and developing a Stretch RAP as part of our ongoing reconciliation journey.

Collection knowledge, provenance and protocols

For over 100 years the stories of First Nations peoples have been captured in sound recordings, moving images and other audiovisual media. As the custodian of more than 41,000 audiovisual items that document these unique stories, we recognise that we have work to do to better understand what we hold.

We recognise the historic complexities of First Nations material in our collection that has been created through an ethnographic lens and has inherent systemic problems associated with past colonial practices of collecting and cataloguing material. It is critical that we challenge the assumptions on which our collection has been built, that we identify the impact they have had on our understanding of it, and recognise the rights of First Nations peoples to manage their cultural materials appropriately.

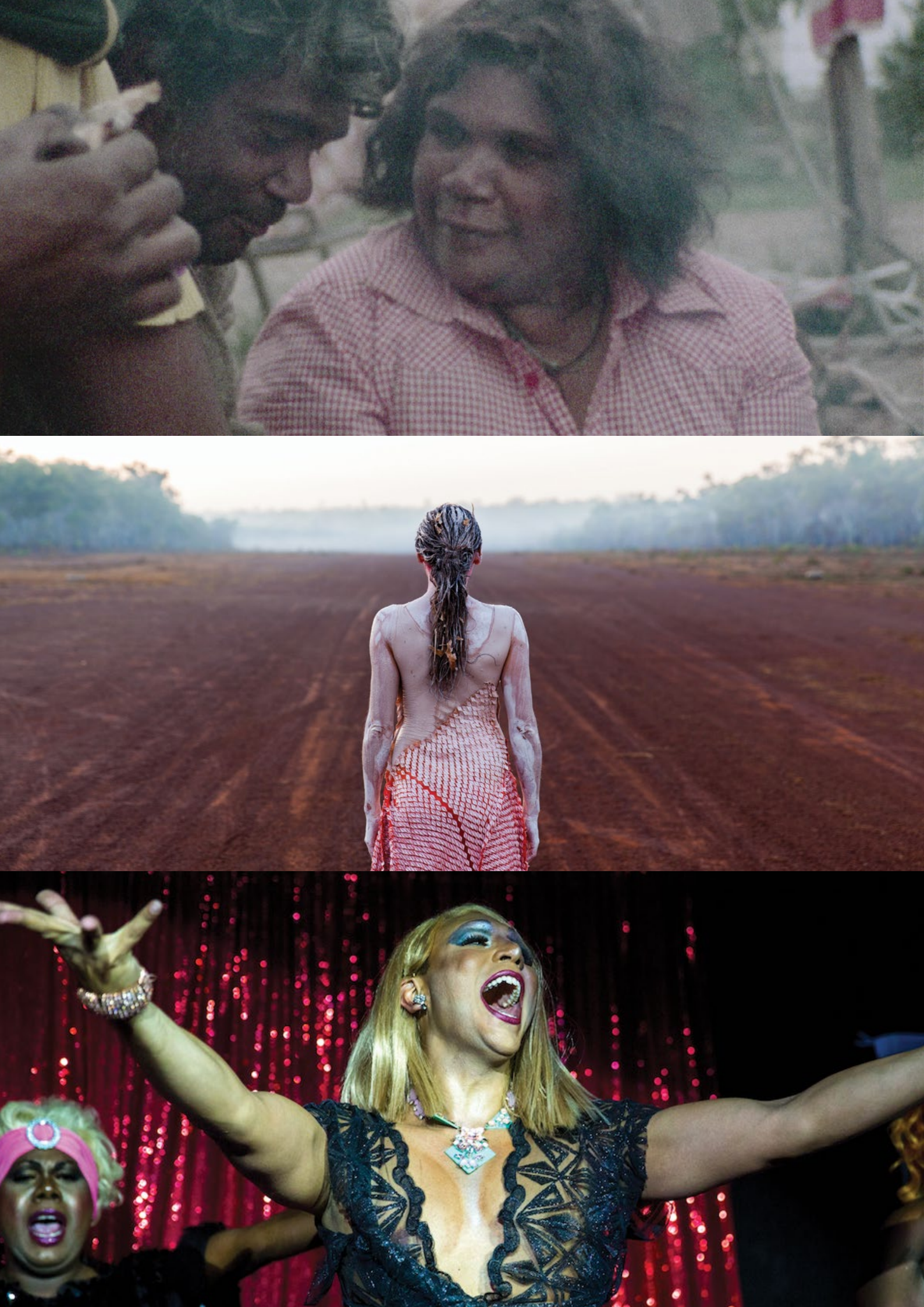
To do this we will build and foster relationships with First Nations peoples and organisations to better understand the collection material in our custodianship, the communities they belong to, and the cultural knowledge they contain. We will be guided by First Nations knowledge holders and embrace their methods of creating, sharing and preserving that knowledge to enrich the collection. We will work together to embed appropriate cultural protocols to ensure the safety of the material in our custodianship and to make it more discoverable and accessible to First Nations peoples.

We will continue to develop our ongoing partnerships with organisations such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), the Strehlow Research Centre and the University of Queensland to progress the vital work of embedding First Nations cultural knowledge and data sovereignty into the cataloguing practices of collecting institutions.

WE WILL FOCUS ON:

- Undertaking an audit of the collection to gain a more detailed understanding of our First Nations holdings.
- Partnering with First Nations peoples, communities and organisations to better identify and clarify the nature and provenance of collection material.
- Improving catalogue information for First Nations collection material specifically relating to communities of origin, languages, cultural protocols, ICIP and access permissions.





Collection development and preservation

We will focus on building a relevant and representative collection with First Nations stories and perspectives at its heart. First Nations collection material remains a key focus of our NFSA Collection Policy and will continue to be highlighted and embedded within our new Collection Strategy and Plan.

We will continue to collaborate with First Nations creators, producers and industry practitioners to proactively acquire their output. Copies of new First Nations works that have been funded through Screen Australia and state and territory screen funding bodies will automatically become part of the collection under existing contractual arrangements with the NFSA.

As trusted custodians we will collaborate with First Nations communities and organisations to safeguard their cultural heritage, their way.

We will prioritise for preservation First Nations collection material that is culturally significant, requested by community and/or at risk of loss due to deterioration and obsolescence, ensuring that cultural protocols are followed throughout all our processes.

As Deadline 2025 approaches for the preservation of magnetic tape (the internationally recognised point at which the risk of permanent loss is dramatically increased without digitisation), we will focus on collaborating with First Nations media organisations to ensure their unique collections are preserved.

We will also digitise at-risk First Nations material from AIATSIS and six other National Collecting Institutions as part of the Audiovisual Australia (AVA) project.

As part of the NFSA's refreshed Oral Traditions and Histories program we will work with First Nations audiovisual professionals to ensure their unique stories are captured for future generations.

WE WILL FOCUS ON:

- Expanding First Nations representation and perspectives in the collection through targeted acquisition programs as part of our new Collection Strategy and Plan.
- Prioritising the preservation of First Nations material that is culturally significant, requested by community and/or at risk of loss, ensuring that cultural protocols are followed throughout all of our processes.
- Sharing our audiovisual expertise and providing training, advice and support to our First Nations partners including AIATSIS, First Nations Media Australia, Strehlow Research Centre and the Torres Strait Islanders Media Association.

Digital return and cultural access

A vital part of our work here at the NFSA is to return First Nations collection content to communities to assist in revitalising languages and cultural practices, and to support intergenerational knowledge transfer. Much of the collection is on obsolete formats and requires digitisation for preservation and to make it discoverable and accessible. Digital return is a complete cycle that involves First Nations collection material being digitised to ensure its long-term preservation and then ‘sending it home’ by returning digital copies and making them accessible to communities on Country.

To achieve this, we will continue to collaborate with First Nations communities and organisations to co-design the digital return of their collection content ensuring cultural protocols are strictly applied throughout all of our processes. We will share our best practice co-design model and learn from others working in this space by engaging and collaborating nationally and internationally through networks, projects, forums and conferences.

We recognise that contemporary archival practice, that has sought to protect the interests of Indigenous knowledge and rights owners, has in some instances also led to overly risk-averse practices about providing access to materials to First Nations peoples for research and cultural purposes. This can limit the realisation of the powerful value of the collection for use in language and culture revitalisation, as well as for more general research and learning purposes. Compounding this issue is the lack

of information around provenance, protocols and ownership of materials and the knowledge they contain. This lack of information can make identifying owners of cultural material, consultation with those owners and the negotiation of access permissions challenging.

We need to make balanced and well-informed decisions that respect cultural protocols, ICIP, and the communities, but that err on the side of making more material available to First Nations peoples rather than limiting access due to a lack of information. To do this we will undertake a First Nations-led review and revise our policies, procedures and processes, seeking advice from First Nations experts in relevant fields as required.

WE WILL FOCUS ON:

- Partnering with First Nations communities and organisations to co-design projects to digitally return collection material and make it accessible to communities on Country.
- Sharing our best practice co-design model by engaging and collaborating nationally and internationally through networks, projects, forums and conferences.
- Reviewing and revising policies, procedures and processes to make collection material more discoverable and accessible for First Nations peoples.





Interpretation, re-use and publication

The First Nations stories in the collection need to be told by First Nations voices. To ensure this we will focus on developing new ways of working with First Nations peoples and communities, opening up the collection to promote healing, truth-telling and celebration. The First Nations Engagement team will take the lead working across the NFSA to curate and produce a series of works that amplify First Nations voices and share the collection in innovative ways.

In addition to creating new works, we will also renew our existing Black Screen program. Black Screen connects culture, stories and language through screen with communities. Black Screen includes over 40 short films and documentaries created by renowned filmmakers. Each film is provided free of charge on a loan basis to First Nations individuals and communities for private screenings and community celebrations.

We will continue to respectfully and appropriately showcase and embed First Nations voices and stories from the collection in all our public engagement activities including exhibitions, screenings, events, learning programs, and online through our website, social media channels and NFSA Player.

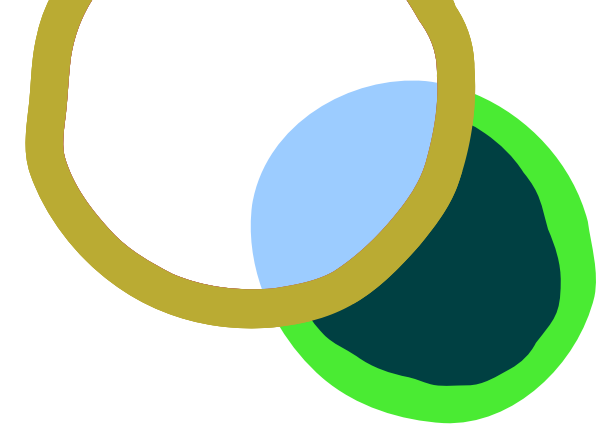
The NFSA's headquarters in Canberra is where we share the collection through our place-based experiences. We are delivering our Place Strategy Acton 3.0 with First Nations designers to ensure the headquarters'

landscape, culture and history is directly shaped by First Nations voices. A significant part of this development is acknowledging the history, and the need for healing, at our heritage building. It is the former Australian Institute of Anatomy where First Nations ancestral remains were studied and housed.

Through our Access Services we will continue to recognise ICIP and copyright when providing access to First Nations content to ensure safe and respectful use. We will also consult directly with communities where possible regarding cultural protocols, permissions and restrictions. We will ensure that First Nations individuals and communities using our Access Services are given guidance to facilitate timely access to collection material including onsite visits if required.

WE WILL FOCUS ON:

- Curating, producing or publishing one major First Nations project per year.
- Commissioning a First Nations creative to reuse the collection to produce a new audiovisual work.
- Renewing our Black Screen program to deliver more First Nations films to more communities on Country.



Case study: The Central Australian Aboriginal Digitisation Project

In collaboration with Traditional Owners and the Strehlow Research Centre (part of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory), we launched a digital access studio in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) in 2023. This studio provides unprecedented on Country access to the films and audio recordings from the Strehlow Collection, digitised by the NFSA over four years as part of the Central Australian Aboriginal Digitisation Project.

This Traditional Owner-led project saw the NFSA work in partnership with the Strehlow Research Centre to digitally preserve the film and audio recordings from the Strehlow Collection – one of the most important collections relating to Indigenous ceremonial life found anywhere in the world. The project represents a unique intersection between First Nations knowledge and 21st century technology. Professor Theodor George Henry Strehlow worked with Aboriginal Communities across Central Australia recording their ceremonies, languages and songs from 1932 to the mid-1970s. The films and audio recordings were deposited by the Strehlow Research Centre Board with the NFSA in 1990 for safekeeping in our environmentally controlled vaults.

A significant part of this collection relates to ‘men’s-only’ sacred and secret ceremonies. We established an NFSA Men’s Group and, under the guidance of Senior Men from Central Australian communities, developed and strictly applied cultural protocols throughout all areas of the preservation work undertaken

by the NFSA. We also provided training to the Aboriginal Heritage Officers from the Strehlow Research Centre in digitisation and digital access with a commitment to offering continued opportunities for professional skills expansion.

Much of the material was at risk due to deterioration and format obsolescence. We successfully digitised more than 400 reels of 16mm film and 1,000 audio recordings, representing 800 ceremonial acts and 150 hours of traditional language, stories and song. Digitisation and on Country access to the Strehlow Collection are vital for cultural maintenance, revitalisation of traditional language and intergenerational knowledge transfer within Central Australian Aboriginal Communities.

‘We have been working with Senior Men and the NFSA to give access to this living collection and bridge knowledge with future generations,’ said Winston Green, Pintupi Luritja man and Aboriginal Heritage Officer, Strehlow Research Centre.

This project was supported through the Australian Government’s Indigenous Language and Arts program.

Case study: The Buwindja Collection

In 2023 the NFSA launched its first streaming platform, NFSA Player, with the Buwindja Collection – a selection of 17 titles curated to reflect the NAIDOC Week theme ‘For Our Elders’. NFSA Player gives audiences across Australia the ability to stream select feature films, TV series, documentaries, performance, animation and more, in full and on demand across their devices.

Buwindja (‘remember’ in the Dharawal language) continued the traditions of First Nations storytelling, providing a snapshot of the history of Indigenous voice through screen.

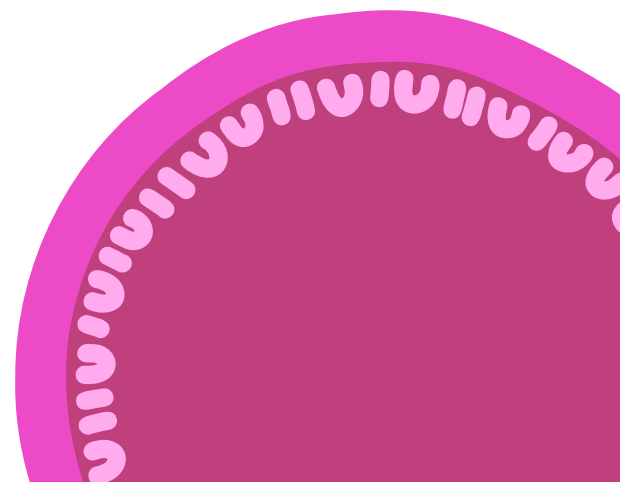
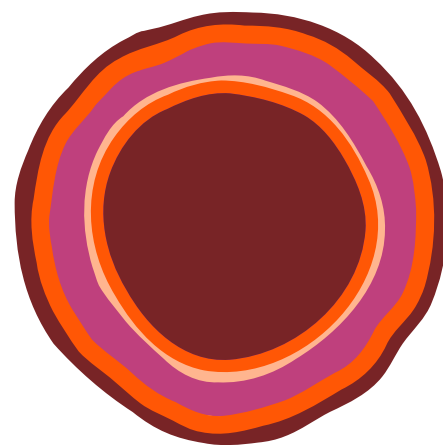
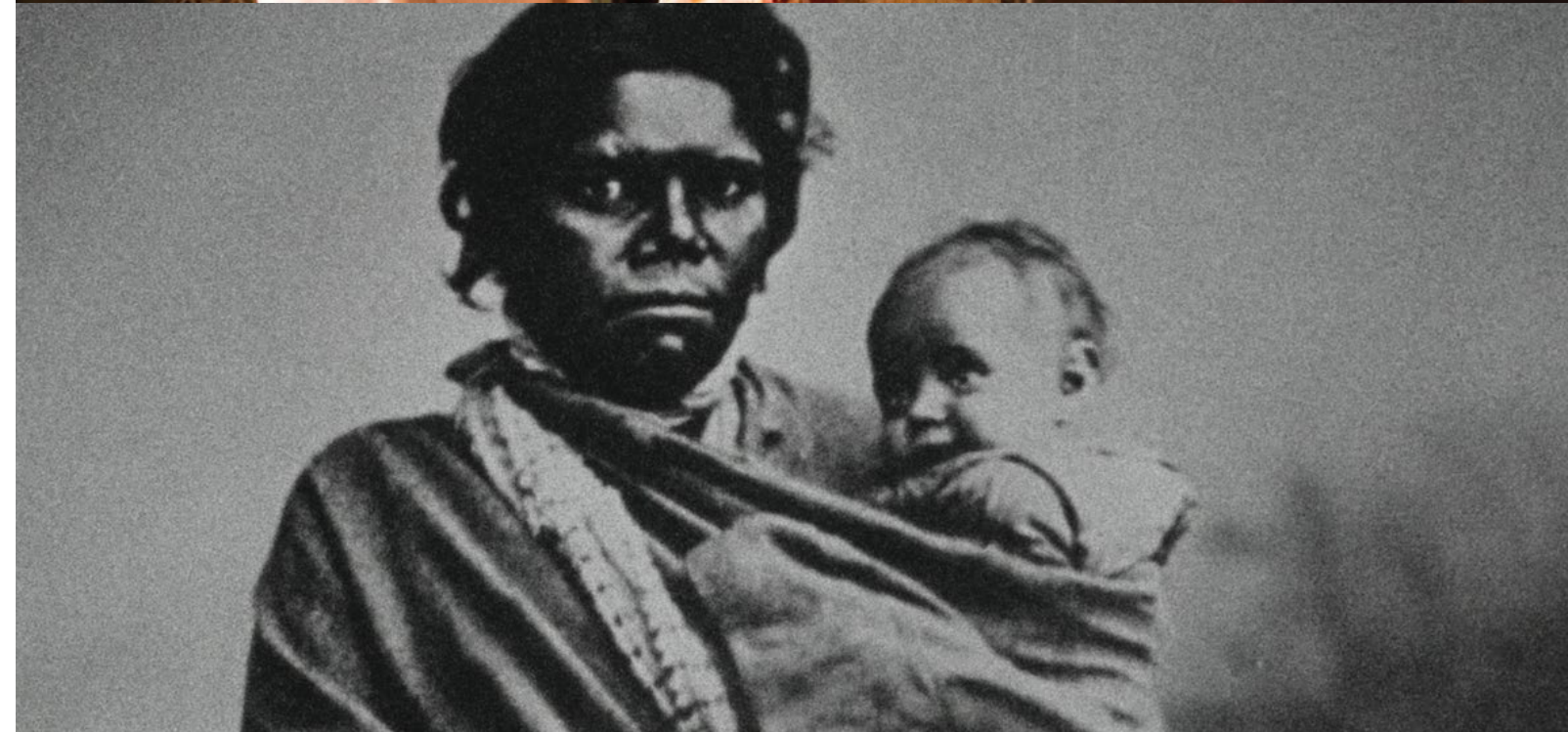
These compelling stories included Warwick Thornton’s award-winning *Samson and Delilah*, Rachel Perkins’ extraordinary film *Mabo*, Stephen Page’s dance film *Spear*, drama series *The Gods of Wheat Street*, Essie

Coffey’s landmark documentary *My Survival as an Aboriginal*, the rock’n’roll dramatised documentary *Wrong Side of the Road*, and more.

The Buwindja Collection was curated by Gillian Moody-Ardler, a Wodi Wodi/Dharawal woman, an award-winning filmmaker and the NFSA’s Head of First Nations Engagement.

‘Engaging with Buwindja offered an opportunity for Australians to reflect on the part they play in ensuring that the voice that our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders have fought for in the past and present continues to be heard’, says Gillian.

‘I curated it with the hope of inspiring audiences to reflect, imagine and act when they listen to and watch these stories.’





FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025–2028

Our people

The NFSA are proud custodians of many items that combine to create a living memory of who we are, who we have been and who we want to be in our futures. We welcome all First Nations peoples on a journey to keep safe and preserve

First Nations stories captured on film, video and audio recordings, and to return those stories to the communities they belong to for truth-telling and celebration. Remember that images, music and words can change lives.

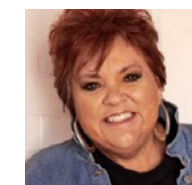
FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Kylie Bracknell

Nyungar

NFSA Board Member & Chair, NFSA First Nations Engagement Committee



Jodie Bell

Butchella and Jagera

CEO, Goolarri Media Enterprises & Producer, Ramu Productions



Aaron Fa'aoso

Torres Strait Islands (Zenadth Kes)

Director, Producer, Writer & Actor



Tasha James

Wiradjuri

Manager, Indigenous Collections & Community Access, ABC Archives



Professor Lyndon Ormond-Parker

Alyawarra

ARC Fellow, Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies, Australian National University



Sachin Job

Film and television actor

FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT TEAM



Gillian Moody-Ardler

Wodi Wodi and Dharawal

Head of First Nations Engagement



Caitlyn Le Roy

Yukulta, Yangkaal, Lardil and Worimi

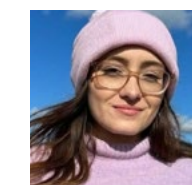
Manager, First Nations Engagement



Dean Cross

Worimi

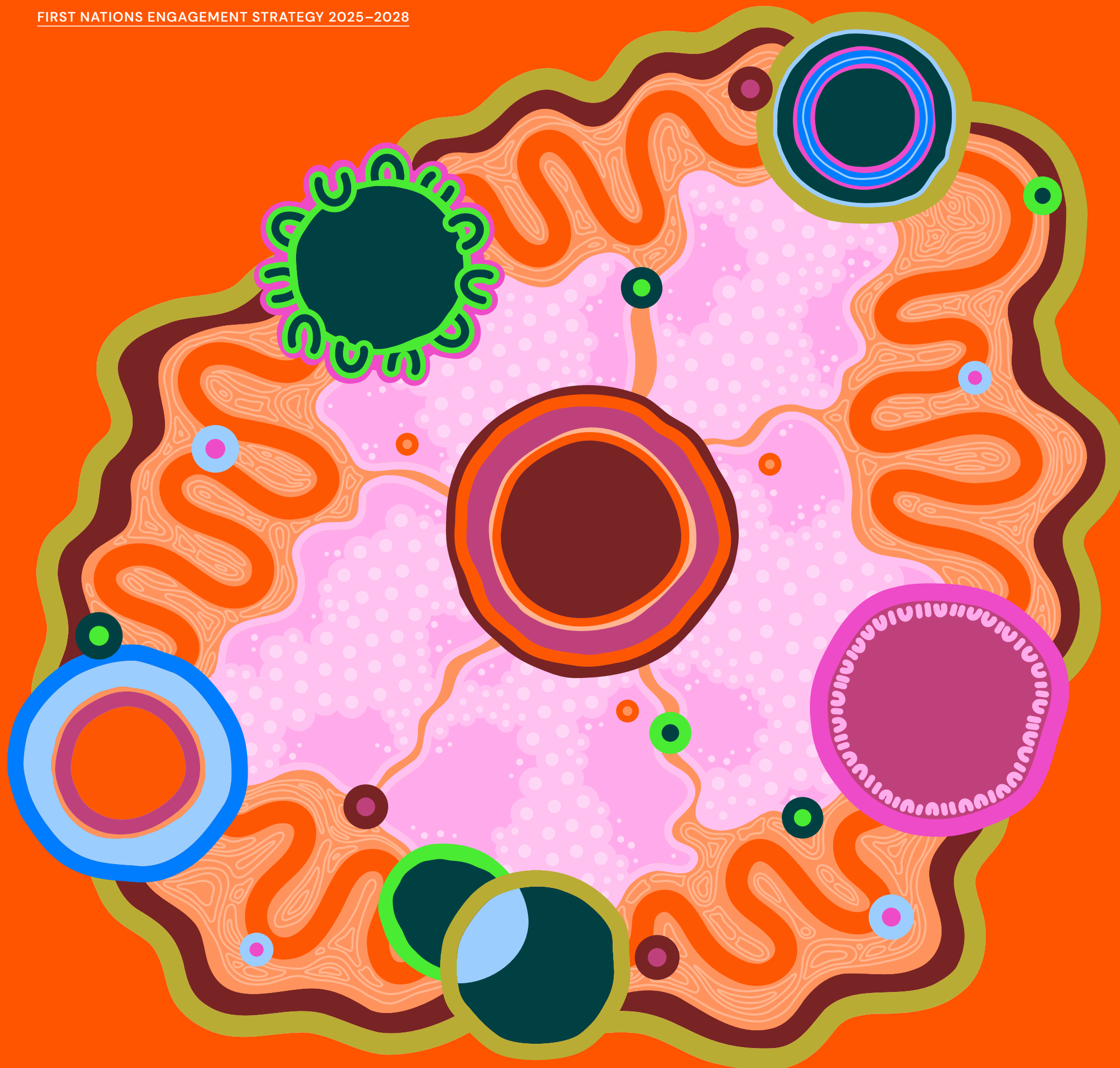
Curator, First Nations Engagement



George Coles

Wonnarua

Project Coordinator, First Nations Engagement



Artist statement



Created for the National Film and Sound Archive, this work invites viewers to shift their perspective. Like traditional storytelling, abstract waves of sound and light preserve memory and knowledge, forming powerful systems of connection. Layered organic forms flow and overlap, reflecting the relationships between community, culture, and Country.

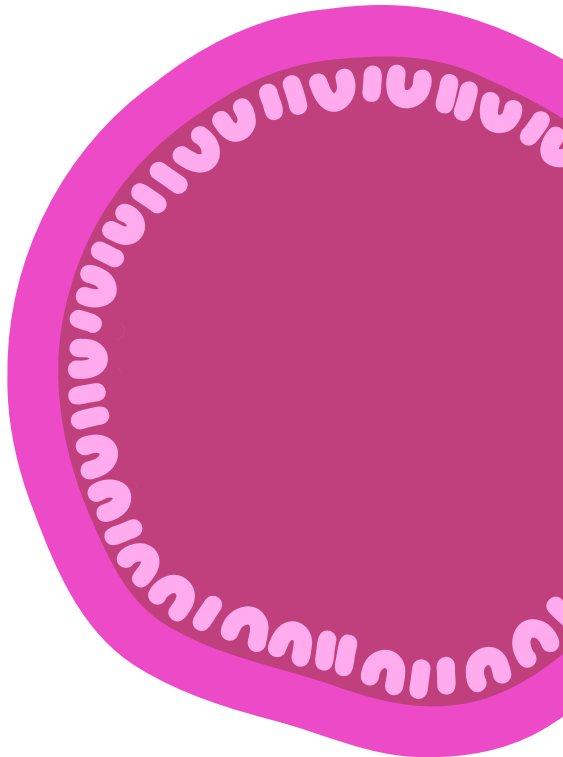
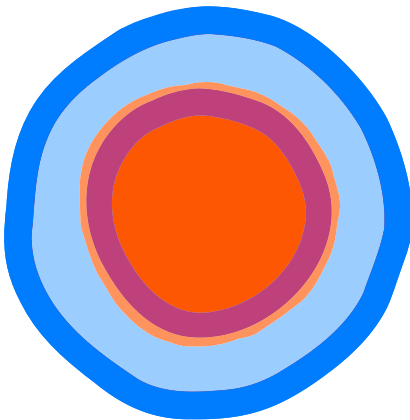
Much like the voices and images preserved by the National Film and Sound Archive, this work honours the resilience, strength, and identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Grounding us in who we are and where we come from.

Teagan is a Kamilaroi woman and digital illustrator based on Wadawurrung Country. Her practice is grounded in contemporary Aboriginal art and conceptual storytelling. She uses bold vector forms and vibrant colour to explore the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples. Through her work, she builds connections across communities, invites new ways of seeing, and honours the strength of culture.

Teagan Malcolm

Kamilaroi

Digital Illustrator & Graphic Designer
Founder of Studio Tea



Document context

The NFSA First Nations Engagement Strategy aligns with the National Cultural Policy – *Revive*: a place for every story, a story for every place, and the NFSA Strategic Direction, Collection Policy, Corporate Plan and Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). It recognises the International Council of Archives *Tandanya Adelaide Declaration* and

is informed by the Australian Museums and Galleries Association’s *The First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries*. We follow Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) protocols which are embedded into our policies and work practices.

First Nations terminology

The shift from using “Indigenous” to “First Nations” in government language reflects a growing emphasis on respect, identity, and self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. The term “First Nations” acknowledges the distinct and diverse cultures, histories, and identities of these communities rather than grouping them under a single, broad label.

Government agencies and officials have increasingly adopted “First Nations” following advice from Indigenous leaders and communities, who prefer terminology that recognises sovereignty and cultural heritage. The change aligns with broader reconciliation efforts and the push for more culturally appropriate language in policies, reports, and public discourse.

The NFSA is aligning to the language used by the Australian Public Service Commission and the National Cultural Policy — *Revive*: a place for every story, a story for every place.

The NFSA has begun this alignment of language by updating the name of the Indigenous Connections section to **First Nations Engagement** and likewise has updated the name of the Indigenous Connections Committee to the **First Nations Engagement Committee**.

While “Indigenous” is still used in some contexts, the preference for “First Nations” reflects a commitment to honouring the unique identities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and ensuring language is inclusive and respectful.

IMAGES

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The Gods of Wheat Street, Episode 6: She Who Supplanted Her Sister (2014), directed by Wayne Blair. Image courtesy of Every Cloud Productions

Dan Sultan (2023). Image by Clint Peloso

Elma Kris in *Katele (Mudskipper)*, 2022, directed by John Harvey. Image courtesy of Brown Cab Productions and Kalori Productions
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Dean Cross, NFSA Curator and Caitlyn Le Roy, Manager, First Nations Engagement unpack items from the Torres Strait Islander Media Association collection at the NFSA in 2024
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Vic Simms in *Buried Country* (2000), directed by Andy Nehl
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Essie Coffey in *NFSA Restores: My Survival as an Aboriginal* (1978), directed by Essie Coffey. Image courtesy of Goodgaban Productions

Spear (2015), directed by Stephen Page. Image courtesy of Arenamedia and Bangarra

Josie Baker in *Black Divaz* (2018), directed by Adrian Russell Wills. Image courtesy of Pursekey Production and Divaz Productions
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Marissa Gibson in *Samson and Delilah* (2009), directed by Warwick Thornton. Image courtesy of Scarlett Pictures
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NFSA Black Screen film screening at Newman, WA in 2015

Torres Strait Islanders Media Association CEO Diat Alferink and staff member Florria Warria preparing the collection for transport to the NFSA for safekeeping and preservation

First Nations Media Australia staff undertake training at the NFSA in 2025
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Aboriginal Heritage Officer Franky Gorey in the NFSA-built digital access studio at the Strehlow Research Centre

Southern Arrernte Country, captured in a 1955 film from the Strehlow Collection. Image courtesy of the Strehlow Research Centre

MAGNT Director Adam Worrall, NFSA CEO Patrick McIntyre, SRC Chair Michael Liddle, NFSA Head of First Nations Engagement, Gillian Moody-Ardler and MAGNT Central Australia Manager Joe de Beer at the launch of the digital access studio at the Strehlow Research Centre in 2023. Image by Lisa Hatz
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Deborah Mailman and Jimi Bani in *Mabo* (2012), directed by Rachel Perkins. Image courtesy of Blackfella Films

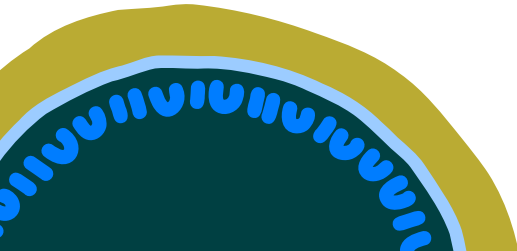
NFSA Restores: Lousy Little Sixpence (1983), directed by Alec Morgan and Gerald Bostock. Image courtesy of Alec Morgan

Kiddo Taylor in *Everyday Brave, Saltwater Bluesman – Uncle Kiddo Taylor* (2001), directed by Mitch Torres
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Gillian Moody-Ardler, NFSA Head of First Nations Engagement and Elena Guest, NFSA Senior Curator, Cultural Connections present a screening of *WINHANGANHA* at the AIATSIS Summit in 2024

First Nations Media Australia staff attend Archive Project training at the NFSA in April 2025

NFSA CEO Patrick McIntyre at the launch of the digital access studio at the Strehlow Research Centre in April 2023. Image by Lisa Hatz



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The NFSA has offices in Sydney and Melbourne and Access Centres available in state libraries in Hobart, Brisbane, Adelaide, Darwin and Perth.

NFSA.GOV.AU