Information resilience

The role of cultural and community institutions

A report prepared by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia for the **National Science and Technology Council**

chiefscientist.gov.au

Copyright

© Commonwealth of Australia 2026

Ownership of intellectual property rights

Unless otherwise noted, copyright (and any other intellectual property rights, if any) in this publication is owned by the Commonwealth of Australia.

Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence CC BY 4.0

All material in this publication is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence, with the exception of:

- the Commonwealth Coat of Arms
- content supplied by third parties
- logos
- any material protected by trademark or otherwise noted in this publication.

Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence is a standard form licence agreement that allows you to copy, distribute, transmit and adapt this publication provided you attribute the work. A summary of the licence terms is available from https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/. The full licence terms are available from https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode.

Content contained herein should be attributed as: Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (2026) *Information resilience: the role of cultural and community institutions*, report to the National Science and Technology Council, Australian Government Office of the Chief Scientist.

This notice excludes the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, any logos and any material protected by trademark or otherwise noted in the publication, from the application of the Creative Commons licence. These are all forms of property which the Commonwealth cannot or usually would not licence others to use.

Disclaimer

The purpose of this publication is to provide an evidence base on information resilience for policy makers.

The Commonwealth as represented by the Department of Industry, Science and Resources has exercised due care and skill in the preparation and compilation of the information in this publication.

The Commonwealth does not guarantee the accuracy, reliability or completeness of the information contained in this publication. Interested parties should make their own independent inquires and obtain their own independent professional advice prior to relying on, or making any decisions in relation to, the information provided in this publication.

The Commonwealth accepts no responsibility or liability for any damage, loss or expense incurred as a result of the reliance on information contained in this publication. This publication does not indicate commitment by the Commonwealth to a particular course of action.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past and present.

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country 2

Executive summary 4

Introduction 6

1 The role of cultural and community structures and institutions 9

1.1 The institutional state of play 9

1.2 The plurality of Australian identities 10

1.3 Trusted and valued institutions 12

1.4 Enabling and encouraging civic engagement and social connection 13

2 How cultural and community structures and institutions build information resilience 15

2.1 Participatory practices and the wellbeing of the public sphere 15

2.2 Leveraging trust and social capital to deliver mis- and disinformation interventions 17

2.3 Supporting community wellbeing and resilience in times of crises 19

References 22

Appendix A: Acknowledgements 33

Executive summary

This report summarises research on the role of cultural and community institutions and structures in building shared identities and realities, and how this can support resilience to mis- and disinformation. The weight of the evidence is on formal cultural institutions and, as such, this report primarily focuses on the galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAM) sector. Where available, this is complemented with evidence relating to more informal cultural and community institutions and participation in public life more broadly.

This report identifies and explores 2 domains where cultural and community institutions can support information resilience:

1. **As highly trusted institutions with the social capital, reach and expertise to educate the community and provide credible information.**

Cultural and community institutions – broadly encompassing GLAMs, political and civil society organisations, recreation and special interest groups, and democratic, educational and religious institutions – are key sites of civic engagement that collect, host, produce and share vast amounts of information for public audiences. They are, to varying degrees, invested in information resilience.

As independent and accessible public spaces where class, ideology and cultural background are generally irrelevant, they embrace the plurality of Australian identities, encompassing stories, histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, the British traditions that underpin our democratic and legal systems, and the varied cultures, faiths and traditions of our modern multicultural society. They also enjoy a high level of trust by members of the public and as such can facilitate and promote social and civic engagement.

Cultural and community institutions are generally aware of their standing in society, and many take active steps to deliver coordinated information and media literacy interventions to combat mis- and disinformation. These institutions are particularly well-placed to facilitate information sharing and reach groups who are traditionally disengaged or mistrustful.

2. **As critical social infrastructure and the sites of civic engagement, which support the conditions for cohesive, resilient communities.**

Research shows that participation in civic life helps building resilient, cohesive societies that are resilient to mis- and disinformation. Given their trusted status and positioning in all parts of metropolitan, regional and rural society, cultural and community institutions act as social infrastructure and can facilitate dialogue and provide locally situated interventions.

Cultural and community institutions are important sites of learning about critical thinking and civic values and social hubs around which various identities and connections are formed. These institutions provide a forum for expressing and reflecting on who we are collectively, and how we go about debating and arriving at this shared reality.

Through participatory models and outreach programs which embrace greater comfort with complexity, respectful dialogue and accommodating plurality, these institutions encourage connection across difference and help build and strengthen the diverse bridging ties that support the conditions for community wellbeing and resilience. These conditions can help communities to respond to, withstand and recover from the stresses of mis- and disinformation.

Further directions and considerations

Building a secure and resilient nation is one of the Australian Government's National Science and Research Priorities, presenting an opportunity for further research exploring how the programs led by cultural and community institutions can best encourage greater engagement with complexity and differences of opinions.

Key considerations include:

- how to define the 'we' of shared identities as inclusive, rather than exclusionary
- how institutions can reach those who feel excluded from cultural, creative and community experiences and who may be more at risk of low social identification and mis- and disinformation
- while institutions help maintain a vibrant democracy and public life, they too are subject to interpretation, changing values and political pressure
- participatory practices that are inclusive, accessible and mitigate division, particularly on polarising issues.

Introduction

This report examines the role for cultural and community institutions and structures in building resilience to mis- and disinformation and is intended to inform advice to the Australian Government.

The community and cultural landscape is vast – on a continuum from large, formal institutions at national and state level to thousands of small community-based organisations led by community members and volunteers. The weight of the evidence with respect to mis- and disinformation is on formal institutions and GLAMs in particular. There is, however, some evidence on more informal cultural and community institutions. This report summarises the evidence to provide broad understanding of the different ways in which people participate in civil society and the implications for resilience to mis- and disinformation. In doing so, this report adopts necessarily broad terms, and the authors acknowledge that implications will not apply equally to all institutions or sectors.

Importantly, while there is an evidence base for how cultural and community institutions can and might support information resilience, it is underdeveloped, and robust evidence on the various aspects of this review was not always available. This has necessitated a balancing of peer and grey literature, including utilising theoretical and indirect evidence and case studies to draw inferences about the relative benefits of different interventions.

Background

Cultural and community institutions are key sites of civic engagement in Australia. They collect, host, produce and share vast amounts of information and function as social infrastructure, building and maintaining social cohesion and enhancing the conditions for resilience to mis- and disinformation.

Our ability to share information quickly, widely and inexpensively is an extraordinary achievement in terms of democratising knowledge. However, an increasingly complex information landscape, with multiple platforms and global reach, has led to the rapid spread of mis- and disinformation and fuelled polarisation, eroded trust in reliable sources of information and distorted the shared reality upon which liberal democracies rely (International Panel on the Information Environment 2024). Misinformation and disinformation are generally distinguished by intent; disinformation actively intends to deceive, while misinformation is unintended, arising from ignorance and bias (Given et al. 2023). We may see the recent prevalence of mis- and disinformation and scepticism towards expertise as a particular challenge of our times, yet ‘fake news’ dates to ancient Greek society (De Brasi et al. 2024) and has featured during wartime propaganda campaigns (Argemi and Fine 2018; Posetti and Matthews 2018).

Within this context, information resilience refers to individual, institutional or community capacity to withstand and recover from the impacts of mis- and

disinformation. Information resilience is characterised as involving contextual components (e.g. trust in institutions, political polarisation), features of a society's information-distribution institutions and the individual critical thinking competencies needed to navigate complex information landscapes (Dragomir et al. 2024; Humprecht et al. 2021). Cross-national comparative analyses find that trust in institutions, other members of a group and in information sources supports information resilience. This suggests that information and media literacy alone is not enough to effectively combat mis- and disinformation, and that complementary, evidence-based social interventions are also needed (Dragomir et al. 2024; Humprecht et al. 2020; Humprecht et al. 2021).

The social psychology concept of social identification is relevant to mis- and disinformation and social cohesion more generally. Social identification relates to the conditions which contribute to an individual's sense of identity based on group membership. It informs and is shaped by shared norms and behaviours, and can encourage mindsets that prevent division, including how information is received and acted on (Fraser and Aldrich 2021; Fraser et al. 2021) and levels of social and institutional trust (Allen 2004; Platow et al. 2012; Wang et al. 2023).

Research links low levels of social identification to susceptibility to paranoia, conspiratorial worldviews and polarisation (Greenaway et al. 2019; Woodward 1997). Mis- and disinformation can amplify social identities that feature mistrust and experiences of isolation and inequality, reinforcing 'me/us versus them' narratives (Nera et al. 2022).

Particularly relevant to this report is the role of social capital – the networks that make up society and the mutual sense of reciprocity and trust they produce. The literature identifies 3 types of social ties that produce social capital for individuals, communities and institutions:

- bonding connects people who are similar and emotionally close (e.g. family, friends) and provide intimate personal support
- bridging describes loose connections that span social groups, such as class, race or locality
- linking connects the public with those in power or those representing institutions of power, authority and official information (Putnam 2016).

Bridging ties are particularly important for building diverse connections across society, helping individuals understand and trust those outside immediate family and friendship circles (Aldrich 2023a; Aldrich and Meyer 2015; Putnam 2016).

Civic engagement involves the mechanisms and processes through which people learn about and participate in public life, including volunteering, voting in elections, membership of political, sporting and cultural groups and participating in community events. Civic engagement provides opportunities to build linking and bridging ties (Aldrich 2023a), and it is consistently linked to high trust, social cohesion and democratic resilience (Leigh and Terrell 2020; Evans et al. 2024; O'Donnell et al. 2024; Strengthening Democracy Taskforce 2024).

The annual Mapping Social Cohesion survey finds that participation in public life can help people better understand and feel a sense of agency in democratic processes,

thereby making them more likely to trust these institutions (O'Donnell et al. 2024). By encouraging bridging and linking ties and facilitating 'the formation of shared identities, alliances, solidarities, and connections across difference' (Evans 2021) civic engagement also provides a forum to foster social identities grounded in inclusion, respectful deliberation and collective decision-making (Barrett and Cocq 2019; Moore-Vissing and Mallory 2020; Rupar et al. 2021).

In Australia, there has been a long-term decline in volunteering and civic and political membership (Biddle and Gray 2023; Leigh and Terrell 2020; Nicholas 2023). Despite this, participation remains steady, with the proportion of Australians involved in a social, community, religious, civic or political groups (between 54–57% of Mapping Social Cohesion survey respondents since 2021) (O'Donnell et al. 2024). Australia's culture of civic engagement has been characterised as an asset – albeit one requiring further attention – with capacity to support more cohesive, resilient communities (Leigh and Terrell 2020; O'Donnell et al. 2024; Strengthening Democracy Taskforce 2024).

Cultural and community institutions – broadly encompassing GLAMs, political and civil society organisations, recreation and special interest groups, and democratic, educational and religious institutions – are key sites of civic engagement (Aldrich 2023a; Gattenhof et al. 2023). They collect, host, produce and share vast amounts of information for public audiences and are, to varying degrees, inherently invested in information resilience (Johnston 2023; De Paor and Heravi 2020). They are also social infrastructure – accessible, neutral spaces where cultural background, class and ideology is generally irrelevant, and people interact and form networks (Aldrich 2023a; Evans 2021; Fraser et al. 2022; Trinca 2024; Vivian et al. 2024). These spaces are increasingly important as polarisation and economic inequality becomes more pronounced, and as Australians' sense of national belonging and intergroup trust has declined (O'Donnell et al. 2024). Indeed, political scientist Daniel Aldrich notes that, 'in an era of ... misinformation these spaces may be the few places left where people from across the political spectrum can meet to build trust' (Aldrich 2023a).

1 The role of cultural and community structures and institutions

1.1 The institutional state of play

Australia's cultural and community institutions are varied and exist on a continuum from formal to informal. This variability is a strength in terms of reach and innovative ways of engaging the public, however, it may make it difficult to translate high-level social outcomes into actionable goals for individual institutions and sectors. Attempts to mobilise cultural and community institutions to address mis- and disinformation should engage the sector closely and consider identifying consistent criteria for intended social outcomes and indicators of success.

Australia's cultural and community landscape is vast and includes institutions and groups which operate at diverse scales and localities across the country – ranging from well-funded flagship national institutions which share stories of national identity (Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories 2019; Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee 2021) to small, community-based and volunteer-led institutions and groups which are intimately engaged in local concerns and outreach activities (Bennett et al. 2020; Fielding et al. 2023; Riboldi et al. 2022; Stevenson et al. 2019). Cultural and community institutions can, therefore, be viewed on a continuum from formal to informal, with differing goals, capabilities, networks and forms of engagement.

Cultural and community institutions are locally embedded and build partnerships with communities and other institutions to draw on local knowledge for services and information that reflect societal and local issues of importance (Pope 2009; Riboldi et al. 2022). Local embeddedness is critical to placemaking and accommodating communities of difference (Rosenburg 2011), including the experiences of groups previously excluded (Pope 2009; Prowse 2015). For instance, many institutions now embrace their responsibilities to work more actively and collaboratively with local First Nations communities (Commonwealth of Australia 2023; Janke 2018).

Different cultural and community institutions have different goals with respect to community engagement and social outcomes. Some institutions are expressly dedicated to effecting change in communities and highly focused on the long-term outcomes of their engagements, with dedicated funding for data collection, measurement and evaluation. Many more are one-off or informal projects which rely on anecdotal, approximations of success (Benjamin and Doan 2020; Bennett et al. 2020; Carman 2007; Stevenson et al. 2019). Additionally, some research has raised concerns with assessments of cultural and community institutions and the relative success of interventions for achieving social outcomes (MacDowell et al. 2015; Carman 2007).

1.2 The plurality of Australian identities

A single, homogenous national narrative cannot capture the plurality of Australian identities. It may be more likely to divide than unite, thereby contributing to the conditions in which mis- and disinformation takes hold. The evidence suggests that national stories with a foundation of enduring values and our rights and responsibilities and which promote a sense of togetherness that embraces plurality are valuable. This is particularly important with respect to the stories and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and multicultural communities. Cultural and community institutions provide forums to explore, debate and arrive at a shared sense of who we are, thereby supporting the conditions for inclusive, resilient communities.

A sense of belonging is an important psychological state with elements of inclusivity in particular spaces, places or communities (van Kooy 2022). The breadth of localities, groups and interests that cultural and community institutions span affords a unique role in facilitating bridging ties and opportunities to form shared identities (Ercan et al. 2022; Leigh and Terrell 2020; Strengthening Democracy Taskforce 2024; van Kooy 2022). For instance, local sporting clubs and community sponsorship and settlement program been recognised as effective tools for building social networks and developing self-identities among migrant and refugee communities in Australia (Leigh and Terrell 2020).

As formal institutions tasked with collecting, housing and sharing the artefacts and knowledge that underpin national and local stories and identities, GLAMs dominate the literature. Through exhibits, outreach programs and their own organisational values and practices, GLAMs translate complex information, share stories and create forums to reflect on and reinforce what it means to be part of the Australian community (Evans 2021; Rosenberg 2011; Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee 2021; Strengthening Democracy Taskforce 2024). History, culture and identity are dynamic concepts and how Australia's stories have been understood and told has changed overtime. GLAMs have traditionally been the sites of cultural nationalism, intended to craft a cohesive national narrative (Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories 2019; Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee 2021). However, it is increasingly understood that in a modern, multicultural country such as Australia, a homogenous national identity may no longer be the strong source of belonging it once was (O'Donnell et al. 2024; Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee 2021). Experiences of social exclusion (Hooper-Greenhill et al. 2000; Message 2013; O'Donnell et al. 2024), the history wars (Darian-Smith 2017; Jones 2023; McIntyre and Clark 2013), an increasingly diverse and fragmented public realm and the oppositional, argumentative character of public discourse (Turner 2023) demonstrate that such narratives often divide, rather than unite.

The plurality of Australian identities begins with the false doctrine of *terra nullius*, on which British possession of Australia was based. This, in turn, dominated how the Australian story has been told. The overturning of *terra nullius* fundamentally changed the understanding and timespan of Australian history, providing the impetus for new fields of research and opportunities to learn from Indigenous knowledge systems and inter-cultural conversations (McGrath et al. 2021). From this perspective, the resilience of

Australian society can be said to stem from our collective capacity to look at our past with honesty and maturity, and to embrace the deep histories of the First Peoples of Australia (Birch 2021; Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee 2021).

National, state and regional cultural institutions have an important role to play (Commonwealth of Australia 2023; De Brasi et al. 2024; Janke 2018). There is a growing practice of decolonising library and archive collections, where librarians and archivists work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to review materials, enhance findability and embrace plural knowledges (Jimenez et al. 2022; Mamtora et al. 2021; Barrowcliffe 2021). In some communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians have worked together to commemorate past acts of violence and account for the misuse of ancestral remains and cultural heritage material (Australian Academy of the Humanities 2023; Carlson and Farrelly 2023; Edmonds 2016). These actions are not an end in themselves, but provide an opportunity for truth telling and to debate and arrive at more expansive historical interpretations and shared realities that bridge social and cultural divides (Attwood 2009; Cameron and Neilson 2015; Edmonds 2016).

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories have been increasingly embraced, so too has space been made for other stories and identities. The '3 great steams' model of telling the national story was constructed by Noel Pearson and the Referendum Council. It incorporates 3 interrelated components:

- the lives and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which is the foundation
- the British traditions which give us our institutions and democratic processes
- the varied faiths, cultures and backgrounds comprising a diverse, multicultural Australia (Referendum Council 2017).

While no formal mandate exists, many GLAMs deploy this model to tell Australia's story in a way that invites reflection on a shared sense of who we are and prevents sectionalisation (Hutchison 2013; Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee 2021).

The evidence highlights that informal, community-led cultural institutions and structures play a role in capturing and sharing Australia's diverse identities. First Nations and regional and remote communities feature prominently, where research finds that engaging with local creative and cultural events and activities provides inclusive processes for placemaking and solidarity among disparate groups (Gattenhof et al. 2023; Rentschler et al. 2015). For example, *Mataya* in Barcaldine in rural Queensland was a collaboration between regional arts organisations and First Nations communities to produce a theatrical retelling of a local Dreamtime story. Following *Mataya*, Barcaldine ran its first public, community-wide Reconciliation Week and local media reported that 'the community's positive response to the *Mataya* performance … showed that this was the time to get people involved in reconciliation' (Williams 2021). Qualitative evidence found that shared storytelling supported 'greater social cohesion through strengthened relationships between First Nations peoples and the wider community' (Gattenhof et al. 2023).

Despite evidence that greater inclusivity promotes comfort with complexity and difference, there is some evidence indicating that institutional engagements can

exacerbate feelings of exclusion among certain groups (O'Donnell et al. 2024; van Kooy 2022). This is most prominent among GLAMs, where representation across class, ethnicity and gender can be limited in terms of hiring practices (Brook et al. 2020; Brownett 2018), the stories and perspectives shared and the audiences reached (Glow et al. 2021; Message 2013). One survey found that 3 in 10 Australians believe that cultural and creative experiences are not for people like them, with First Nations and CALD respondents more likely to agree with the statement (Creative Australia 2023).

1.3 Trusted and valued institutions

Research finds that Australia's cultural and community institutions are trusted and valued as credible and independent sources of information operating for the public good. There are opportunities to leverage this standing to deliver interventions which target mis- and disinformation, including through a decentralised approach involving state/territory and local institutions and authorities that focuses on local communities and concerns.

Cultural and community institutions consistently rank among the most trusted and valued (Edelman Trust Institute 2025; Evans 2021). 90 per cent of Australians surveyed trust the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) (APSC 2023), while 82% and 78% of Australians trust libraries and museums respectively (Evans 2021). Overseas, a survey in Germany found that museums have the highest level of trust in an institutional environment, ahead of scientists and the media (Grotz and Rahemipour 2024). While the weight of evidence is on formal institutions, survey and anecdotal evidence indicates that Australians generally have a high level of trust in civil society and community institutions, which are seen as acting in the interest of public good (Fielding and Trembath 2020; Riboldi et al. 2022).

The trusted status of cultural and community institutions is linked to their independence from government and business and the collection, preservation and dissemination of various kinds of information (Bradshaw and Neudert 2021; Jackson 2025). GLAMs, for instance, manage and make publicly available cultural collections, and formal collection management practices strive to build impartial, credible collections (De Paor and Heravi 2020; Johnston 2023). Surveys find that the public view cultural collections as genuine artefacts and trusted sources of information (American Alliance of Museums 2021; Evans 2021). Institutions are aware of and treat seriously this expectation. The National Library of Australia's (NLA) Strategic Vision, for instance, notes that the library aims 'to maintain our position of trust by building our collections as impartially as we can' and does 'not promote, censor or privilege views expressed in Australian publications' (NLA 2025).

Institutional trust and access to credible, accurate information is important in the face of polarisation in the public realm and an increasing distrust of expertise (Turner 2023). In the absence of trusted information and/or inadequate information, individuals may simply look elsewhere (Cooke 2022; Given et al. 2023; Wall et al. 2017), and, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is here that echo chambers and mis- and disinformation can take hold (Lachlan et al. 2021). High trust affords institutions with the social capital to deliver interventions with targeted social outcomes (Aldrich 2012;

Grotz and Rahemipour 2024; Leigh and Terrell 2020; Trinca 2024; Vivian et al. 2024), including greater inclusivity and civic engagement and the critical thinking skills needed for information resilience (Aldrich 2023a; Bradshaw and Neudert 2021).

Trust in cultural and community institutions is particularly significant in regional and remote communities. These institutions are generally staffed by people who live locally and understand community concerns, making them well-placed to facilitate dialogue and provide locally situated interventions (Cameron and Neilson 2015; Newell 2021; Riboldi et al. 2022). Questacon has travelling pop-up exhibitions in cultural and community spaces outside major metropolitan areas, allowing it to engage new audiences and spark curiosity in STEM within community spaces (Questacon 2021, 2022), conceivably neutralising potentially polarising issues like climate change through proximity to trusted institutions and community members.

1.4 Enabling and encouraging civic engagement and social connection

Cultural and community institutions are critical social infrastructure and key sites of civic engagement. They enable and promote learning about and participating in public life, act as critical sources of information and support during emergencies and build the bridging and linking ties that support the conditions for resilient communities. There is a considerable opportunity to learn from case studies in Australia and overseas and translate lessons to interventions targeting information resilience and community cohesion more broadly.

The trusted and valued status of community and cultural institutions is reinforced by their role as critical social infrastructure. Social infrastructure encourages and enables civic participation, which helps build and strengthen the diverse bridging ties that support the conditions for trust, connection and community resilience (Aldrich 2012; Fraser et al. 2022).

Extensive academic (Brownett 2018; Perkins et al. 2021; Gattenhof et al. 2023) and grey literature (Blatt et al. 2024; Creative Australia 2023; Davis and Pescud 2020; Rentschler et al. 2015; Vivian et al. 2024), a recent parliamentary inquiry (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts 2021) and the *Measuring What Matters* framework (Treasury 2023) recognise that the services, programs and activities provided by cultural and community institutions can reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness. Qualitative research finds that these engagements create neutral, inclusive spaces and places for self-expression and connection (Brownett 2018; Perkins et al. 2021). Importantly, they enable interactions between different individuals, groups and perspectives, with research suggesting these interactions can help overcome barriers across generations, class and ethnic backgrounds (Fielding et al. 2023), and encourage bridging ties founded on inclusivity (Barrett and Zani 2014; Ercan et al. 2022).

There is evidence for the positive role of social networks and infrastructure in individual and community survival, resilience and recovery during health and environmental emergencies. Studies find that those with more diverse social networks (and therefore more trusted connections) are more likely to respond to official sources of information

and ignore false and misleading information during periods of crisis. Specifically, when information was received from trusted social networks *and* official sources, it reinforced messaging and helped individuals better understand and act on advice. However, in communities characterised as having low levels of institutional and in- and intergroup trust, advice was less likely to be shared and, therefore, acted on (Aldrich 2012, 2023b; Fraser and Aldrich 2021). Another study surveying Japanese residents following the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami found that individuals who engaged with community-led disaster recovery – in the form of a community cafe where residents connected to share information – self-reported higher levels of neighbourhood recovery than a control group who did not participate (Aldrich 2023b; Lee et al. 2022). It may be that the community-led nature of these and other similar initiatives lends itself to a sense of empowerment and collective responsibility, which encourages engagement and draws individuals out of isolation (Aldrich 2023b; Aldrich and Meyer 2015; Lee et al. 2022; Pronyk et al. 2008; Pronyk et al. 2006).

Public libraries provide diverse services and community outreach programs and are prominent in the social infrastructure literature. A 2023 survey of New York Public Library patrons found that libraries provide a foundation for, and foster the core elements of, wellbeing, stability and safety, while also providing 'information, inspiration, and connection for staying resilient in adversity and for … creating more fulfilling lives and thriving communities' (Blatt et al. 2024). These findings mirror the leading role that Australia's public libraries play in fostering community resilience. For example, Mossman Library, QLD, was used as an evacuation centre following Cyclone Jasper in 2023. Public libraries also provide critical social support to marginalised and disadvantaged people. For example, Fremantle Library, WA offers the Library Connect Service, providing advice and referrals for people facing homelessness or fleeing domestic violence (ALIA 2024).

2 How cultural and community structures and institutions build information resilience

2.1 Participatory practices and the wellbeing of the public sphere

Research findings consistently emphasise the importance of participation in civic life for building resilient, cohesive societies. The outreach and educational activities and programs led by cultural and community institutions can enhance the competencies needed for meaningful participation. Innovations in participatory practices, including consensus-based decision making and crowdsourcing contributions to collection and information management, may be leveraged to strengthen the wellbeing of the public sphere.

Perceptions of trust and connectedness are important markers of how people feel about the wellbeing of society (O'Donnell et al. 2024). Participation in public life is an important way to make positive contributions to one's community and translate into action feelings of trust and inclusion (Ercan et al. 2022; Hendriks et al. 2020; Leigh and Terrell 2020; O'Donnell et al. 2024; OECD 2024). Cultural and community institutions are sites of learning about civic values and they are unique in their reach (Fielding et al. 2023; Leigh and Terrell 2020; Vivian et al. 2024). There is evidence – largely qualitative – that participation in cultural and community activities enhances civic literacy, positive attitudes towards democratic processes and perceptions of belonging, tolerance and trust (Hammonds 2023). Research also identifies a positive relationship between higher levels of civic, information and media literacy and involvement in civic engagement activities (Martens and Hobbs 2015; McDougall 2019; Park et al. 2023a; Yang and Sukhmani 2024). The competencies developed are theorised to support meaningful participation (Ghazarian and Laughland-Booÿ 2021; McDougall 2019; Mihailidis 2018; Yang and Sukhmani 2024), conceivably promoting a 'stakeholder society' in which all citizens have a direct stake and sense of collective responsibility (Ackermann and Alstott 1999).

Programs and partnerships between cultural institutions and schools are important channels for exposing young people to their civic responsibilities and the diverse Australian public (Ghazarian and Laughland-Booÿ 2021; Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee 2021; Strengthening Democracy Taskforce 2024). The triennial National Assessment Program–Civics and Citizenship (NAP–CC) tests the civics and citizenship knowledge of a national sample of year 6 and 10 students. The 2020 NAP–CC found that participation in excursions to cultural and democratic institutions were associated with higher scores (41 and 47 scale points

higher for Year 6 and 10 students respectively who had participated) (ACARA 2020).[1] Participation in community activities such as volunteering and membership of social cause groups were associated with higher scores (46 scale points lower for students had not participated) (ACARA 2024), as were positive attitudes towards diversity (ACARA 2020, 2024).

The literature characterises collection management practices as a way that GLAMs enable participation, with flow-on effects for the wellbeing of the public sphere. Collection management practices advocate for maintaining collections that are accessible and ensure there is 'a space and place for the broadest possible array of community views' (NLA 2025). This provides the public with the knowledge and materials needed to understand the value of cultural heritage, civic responsibilities and to make informed decisions (De Paor and Heravi 2020; Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee 2021; Strengthening Democracy Taskforce 2024).

Digitisation is an important aspect of maintaining accessible collections (Cole and Lott 2019). An example of digitally-enabled access to cultural collections is the NLA's Trove, which draws together material from different collections and provides free, full-text digitised content. Trove and other such programs are used by researchers, students and the broader community (Cole and Lott 2019; Sherratt 2021) and have been particularly beneficial in enabling access for regional and remote Australians and people with disability (Piko and Brett 2021). Digitisation is inconsistent across the sector, with libraries and archives comparatively well-funded to digitise collections, but smaller institutions and community organisations often unable to do so. It has been suggested that a coordinated national effort to build digital collections infrastructure is needed to ensure usability and equitable access (Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee 2021).

Digitally-enabled crowdsourcing is a popular participatory practice, with public involvement in the management and analysis of cultural collections by volunteers who undertake tasks such as transcription, text validation and classification. Trove utilises crowdsourcing for text corrections, with some 3000 volunteers contributing to 3.5 million lines of text corrections every month (NLA 2022), and this community is celebrated in a Trove 'Hall of Fame' (NLA 2024). International evidence shows crowdsourcing in such contexts allows the public to connect with a collection and be part of a community and shared project (BrodeFrank 2022; Ridge et al. 2021), conceivably building bridging ties in the process. Participatory practices empower individuals to critically engage with primary materials; this may impart the critical thinking skills to identify bias and limitations when citizens in contact with mis- and disinformation (BrodeFrank 2022; Putnam 2016; Swain et al. 2021).

Participatory practices also disrupt the usual relationship between institutions and communities by centring value co-creation and linking ties, which may have reinforcing effects for trust by making a previously 'opaque back-end process more transparent' (BrodeFrank 2022). Participatory practices, it must be noted, involve consensus-based

---

[1] These results were not reported on in the most recent NAP-CC assessment report.

decision-making, and this can promote division and may be challenging for an institution to navigate (Ridge et al. 2021), particularly if topics are polarising.

2.2 Leveraging trust and social capital to deliver mis- and disinformation interventions

There is an opportunity to leverage the social capital, reach and existing public literacy function of cultural and community institutions to deliver mis- and disinformation interventions at scale.

Further work is needed to verify the effectiveness of different interventions and test who is best placed to deliver interventions. Key considerations include:

- complementing skills development with awareness raising in ways that are accessible and appropriate for different cohorts
- interventions that target mis- and disinformation while ensuring cultural and community institutions maintain a balanced and neutral presentation of polarising issues
- motivated reasoning and the risks of increasing scepticism among individuals and groups with low levels of trust and social identification.

Sociology and psychology research identifies a range of factors which influence an individual or group's susceptibility to conspiratorial worldviews and mis- and disinformation. These include societal factors such as culture (Jasinskaja-Lahti and Jetten 2019) and socioeconomic status (Casara et al. 2022; Hornsey and Fielding 2017; Hornsey et al. 2022), real or perceived discrimination, trust-sensitive political realities (e.g. corruption, freedom of the press) (Nera et al. 2022) and an adaptive evolved tendency to be alert to – and protect against – outgroups (van Prooijen and van Vugt 2018). Some research finds that denial and corrective information alone can actually reinforce the original falsehood (Lewandowsky et al. 2015; Nera et al. 2022).

The evidence on how knowledge is perceived identifies 4 influencing factors:

- the nature of the knowledge claim
- how it is framed
- an individual's social networks
- who makes the claim (e.g. their expertise, trust, influence and authority) (Klimtman 2019).

These factors provide helpful starting points to conceive of possible interventions to increase resilience to mis- and disinformation. Of relevance to cultural and community institutions is the relationship between trust, the credibility of information sources and the considerable social capital that these institutions possess to educate communities in information and media literacy (Bradshaw and Neudert 2021; Jackson 2025).

Increasing the public's information and media literacy and the provision of trusted, reliable sources of information is an essential component of any comprehensive national strategy for information resilience (Park et al. 2024). Survey research finds that Australians have poor actual and perceived abilities to identify mis- and disinformation. Only 42% of respondents were confident that they could verify if information online is true and only 39% were confident that they could verify the reliability of a website (Park et al. 2024). It is notable that surveys conducted by the Australian Media Literacy Alliance provide reliable data demonstrating a high demand for quality, accessible adult (82% in favour) and school-based (84% in favour) information and media literacy education (Notley et al. 2021, 2024).

For media and information literacy interventions to be effective, accessibility and appropriateness for different audiences is key. This includes prioritising groups who may be more susceptible to mis- and disinformation, low social identification and polarisation (e.g. those who are less educated, from lower income households or are from CALD backgrounds), acknowledging the diversity of the Australia public and tailoring interventions accordingly (e.g. multilingual resources, addressing mis- and disinformation in culturally resonant ways) (Notley et al. 2024; Yang and Sukhmani 2024).

Many cultural and community institutions have existing public literacy functions and are already engaged in mis- and disinformation interventions (De Paor and Heravi 2020; Johnston 2023). The literature finds that libraries as particularly well-placed to deliver information and media literacy interventions. Libraries are embedded in communities and have unparalleled reach, with one-third of Australians holding public library memberships and services provided at more than 1700 branches and mobile sites nationally (ALIA 2024). Libraries are also trusted sources of information and offer a range of formal information and media literacy services via their programming and activities, including guides and workshops on online safety and common mis- and disinformation techniques (Dragomir et al. 2024). While survey data shows that Australians prefer to learn information and media literacy in online tutorials, one in 5 want access to support in libraries (Notley et al. 2024).

Libraries also provide incidental media literacy education; a patron may seek technical assistance when accessing internet services, providing staff with teachable moments to share guidance on information credibility and mis- and disinformation (Johnston 2023; Park et al. 2023a; Park et al. 2023b). In one study, library staff interviewed noted the effectiveness of incidental interactions – described as 'piggybacking' content – for reaching communities who are traditionally disengaged or mistrustful, including patrons who are older or from CALD backgrounds (Park et al. 2023a).

There are international examples of targeted information and media literacy programs addressing mis- and disinformation that have been effectively delivered by or in collaboration with cultural and community institutions (McBrien 2020; van der Staak and Wolf 2019). Launched in 2013, the National Library Board Singapore's (NLB) S.U.R.E. program (Source, Understand, Research, Evaluate) operates on the understanding that media and information literacy interventions tailored to specific groups and contexts are generally more effective in promoting awareness and skills adoption than a broad-based approach (Pek and Wang 2018; Revez and Corujo 2021). Initially designed for students and teachers, the program has been expanded and adapted for workplaces and the public. The resources and activities are diverse and

innovative, including curriculum-aligned materials delivered in schools, professional development courses, and travelling workshops and displays in public libraries. Resources are multilingual, age appropriate (e.g. plain language guides for seniors) and available in a range of formats, including videos and infographics (NLB 2025a, 2025b; Pek and Wang 2018; Revez and Corujo 2021).

In Australia, the AEC's trusted status helps it educate the public and vouch for credible, accurate electoral information in a changing information environment. The AEC's *Stop and Consider* campaign encourages voters to check the sources of electoral information. The campaign includes probing questions about the reliability, currency and safety of information and a disinformation register which publicly lists and corrects electoral mis- and disinformation identified during federal elections and referenda (AEC 2024b, 2024c, 2020). The 2023 Voice to Parliament referendum tested the suitability of AEC measures to mitigate mis- and disinformation and buttress trust in the electoral system. As the first Australian referendum to occur in the complex digital media landscape, and with concerted efforts to spread polarising and misleading information, including about the AEC, mis- and disinformation was a challenge for electoral integrity and trust throughout the referendum (Carson et al. 2024; McAllister and Biddle 2024). Exit poll data found that 7 in 10 Australians were concerned about mis- and disinformation during the referendum period (Browne 2023), arguably reaffirming previously noted evidence of public demand for mis- and disinformation education. In addition to *Stop and Consider*, the AEC oversaw an advertising and social media campaign and a dedicated education program, running more than 300 community education sessions (AEC 2024a; Strengthening Democracy Taskforce 2024).

While evidence supports the merit of mis- and disinformation interventions, particularly those targeting information and media literacy, some interventions have been observed to prime individuals for heightened scepticism with the unintended consequence of negatively impacting the credibility of the source of information (Hoes et al. 2024; van der Meer et al. 2023). Peer reviewed and grey literature agrees that the referendum and AEC activities throughout demonstrated Australia's robust electoral system, enhanced by high public trust in the AEC (AEC 2024a; Carson et al. 2024; Strengthening Democracy Taskforce 2024). However, a nationally representative survey found that exposure to information simply refuting dis/misinformation about the AEC had limited impact on countering mistrust. Among certain groups, including those with existing low levels of trust and proponents of the No vote, refutation increased mistrust in the AEC (Carson et al. 2024).

2.3 Supporting community wellbeing and resilience in times of crises

Cultural and community institutions are critical social infrastructure; they support community wellbeing and help communities respond to, withstand and recover from periods of crisis. The enduring resistance of First Nations communities offers valuable insights about the

importance of shared spaces, stories and community-led initiatives for creating the conditions for resilience.

These research findings are significant as communities face increasing polarisation around issues of climate, reconciling colonial history and trust in expertise. A key consideration for the government and institutions alike is how to situate scientific and other forms of knowledge while also ensuring institutions maintain a balanced and neutral presentation of polarising issues.

Cultural and community institutions are often central and enduring features of a local community, with the standing and networks to bridge divides and foster the connections that make communities more resilient to the drivers and effects of mis- and disinformation (Aldrich 2023a). This is particularly significant when engaging isolated and marginalised communities and during periods of crisis (Aldrich 2012; Aldrich and Meyer 2015; Fraser et al. 2022).

Evidence from natural and health crises finds that coordination between public officials, emergency management and civil society groups support more effective engagement with communities (Aldrich 2012; Aldrich and Meyer 2015; Fraser and Aldrich 2021; Fraser et al, 2021). Institutions act as intermediaries, facilitating bridging and linking ties between officials, the public and broader civil society, for instance, by convening community consultations or developing tailored communication materials (Myers 2021; Riboldi et al. 2022). Collective, community-centred approaches to disaster recovery are embedded in emergency management frameworks (Australian Red Cross 2012), and it is suggested that the ties developed therein may provide the foundation for greater resilience in future crises (Moore-Vissing and Mallory 2020; Revez and Corujo 2021).

La Trobe University's Centre for the Study of the Inland has been working with GLAMs in Murray-Darling Basin communities to share research on regional experiences of living with climate extremes. Through exhibitions and public talks, communities are invited to learn about the histories of their communities and to share their own insights. GLAMs also facilitate engagement with schools, ensuring education about local climate histories and conversations about resilience and adaptation begins early (La Trobe University 2025). These kinds of activities provide opportunities to discuss climate extremes without the often-polarising language of climate change (Perkin 2013; Rosenberg 2011).

For First Nations communities, *terra nullius* and its legacy of policies which dehumanised and forcefully removed Indigenous peoples from unceded lands is a form of mis- and disinformation. A storytelling tradition spanning tens-of-thousands of years has been key to preserving and building First Nations cultures and knowledge. It also validates experiences, nurtures community connection and resists false narratives, playing a key role in the longevity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resistance (Iseke 2013). Research explores how online platforms and communities have transformed and continued this practice in contemporary contexts (Barrett and Cocq 2019; Barrowcliffe 2021; Carlson and Kennedy 2021; Shiri et al. 2021).

The Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra was established in 1972 as a public display of the First Nations community's rejection of *terra nullius*. It is the site of the longest

protest for Indigenous land rights, sovereignty and self-determination in the world. More than a site of historic and political significance for First Nations peoples, the Tent Embassy can be seen as a cultural institution and social infrastructure for a group historically excluded from public life. The term ‘embassy’ was used to bring attention to the fact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had never ceded sovereignty nor engaged in any treaty process with the Crown and, as such, required a formal representative office. In the more than 5 decades since its creation, the Tent Embassy has become a site for continued resistance and ‘a potent symbol rejecting the hypocrisy, deceit and duplicity by successive Australian governments’ (Foley 2013). It provides and has endured expressly because it relies on deliberation, shared objectives and shared meaning-making and the bridging and bonding ties created during these processes (Carslon and Coe 2022; Coe 2024).

Evidence on networked approaches to COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among First Nations communities highlights the utility of cultural and community institutions in overcoming mis- and disinformation. With a long history of official systems that have actively upheld falsehoods and disregarded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems, an understandable culture of scepticism towards official information and structures has emerged. This helps explain how mis- and disinformation was able to take hold during the pandemic and impacted vaccination rates in some communities. The most effective strategies for addressing vaccine related mis- and disinformation were community-led, situated in local cultural and linguistic settings and leveraged trusted individuals and institutions as the sources of information. For instance, partnerships between the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, frontline healthcare workers and First Nations church leaders saw tailored education and pre- debunking campaigns, leading to increased vaccination rates among communities (Crooks et al. 2020; Fredericks et al. 2023).

References

ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority) (2020) *National assessment Program civics and citizenship 2019 national report* [PDF], ACARA, Sydney.

ACARA (2024) *National assessment program civics and citizenship 2024 public report* [PDF], ACARA, Sydney.

Ackermann B and Alstott A (1999) *The stakeholder society,* Yale University Press, New Haven.

AEC (Australian Electoral Commission) (2024a) *Australian Electoral Commission Annual Report 2023-24* [PDF], Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

AEC (2024b) *The AEC's role*, Australian Electoral Commission, accessed 5 December 2024.

AEC (2024c) *Disinformation register*, Australian Electoral Commission, accessed 5 December 2024.

AEC (2020) *Australian Electoral Commission Annual Report 2019-20*, Transparency Portal, accessed 5 December 2024.

Aldrich DP (2012) *Building resilience: Social capital in post-disaster recovery,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Aldrich DP (2023a) *How libraries (and other social infrastructure spaces) will save us: The critical role of social infrastructure in democratic resilience* [PDF] (lecture), Fulbright Flinders University Lecture Series 8.

Aldrich DP (2023b) 'How social infrastructure saves lives: A quantitative analysis of Japan's 3/11 disasters', *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 24(1):30–40, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109922000366.

Aldrich DP and Meyer MA (2015) 'Social capital and community resilience', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 59(2): 254–269, https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764214550299.

ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association) (2024) *ALIA-APLA Submission on local government sustainability to the Standing Committee Enquiry on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport*, Australian Library and Information Association, accessed 15 December 2024.

American Alliance of Museums (30 September 2021) *Museums and trust 2021*, American Alliance of Museums, accessed 5 December 2024.

APSC (Australian Public Service Commission) (2023) *Trust in Australian public services: 2023 annual report*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Argemi M and Fine GA (2018) 'Faked news: The politics of rumour in British World War II propaganda', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 12(2):176–193, https://doi.org/10.1080/17526272.2018.1495905.

Attwood BM (2009) 'Settling histories, unsettling pasts', in Berg M and Schaeffer B (eds) *Historical justice in international perspective*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

Australian Academy of the Humanities (2023) *The Australian Wars: New insights from a digital map*, Australian Academy of the Humanities, accessed 20 December 2024.

Australian Red Cross (2012) *Relationships matter: The application of social capital to disaster resilience. National disaster resilience roundtable report* [PDF], Australian Red Cross, Melbourne.

Browne B (2023) *Polling – Misinformation and the referendum* [PDF], The Australia Institute, Canberra.

Barrett J and Cocq C (2019) 'Indigenous storytelling and language learning: Digital media as a vehicle for cultural transmission and language acquisition', in Barrett J and Cocq C (eds) *Perspectives on Indigenous writing and literacies,* https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004298507_006.

Barrett M and Zani B (2014) *Political and civic engagement: Theoretical understandings, evidence and policies*, Routledge, London.

Barrowcliffe R (2021) 'Closing the narrative gap: social media as a tool to reconcile institutional archival narratives with Indigenous counter-narratives', *Archives and Manuscripts*, 49(3):151–166, https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2021.1883074.

Benjamin LM and Doan DRH (2020) 'Evaluation and civil society', in List RA, Anheiser HK and S Toepler (eds) *International encyclopaedia of civil society,* Springer International Publishing, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-99675-2_59-1.

Bennett T, Stevenson D, Myers F and Winikoff T (eds) (2020) *The Australian art field: Practices, policies, institutions*, Routledge, London.

Biddle N and Gray M (2023) *Ongoing trends in volunteering in Australia*, Australian National University Centre for Social Research and Methods, Canberra.

Birch T (14 January 2021) *Do monuments hold any value?*, IndigenousX website, accessed 19 December 2024.

Blatt D, Maloney EK, Pawelski JO and Cotter KN (2024) *Libraries and well-being: A case study from the New York public library* [PDF], New York Public Library, accessed 15 December 2024.

Bradshaw S and Neudert LM (2021) *The road ahead: Mapping civil society responses to disinformation*, National Endowment for Democracy, Washington.

BrodeFrank J (2022) 'Crowdsourcing metadata in museums: Expanding descriptions, access, transparency, and experience' in Lew Fry E and Canning E (eds), *Perspectives on data*, https://doi.org/10.53269/9780865593152/08.

Brook O, O'Brien D and Taylor M (2020*) Culture is bad for you,* Manchester University Press, Manchester.

Brownett T (2018) 'Social capital and participation: The role of community arts festivals for generating well-being', *Journal of Applied Arts & Health,* 9(1), 71–84, https://doi.org/10.1386/jaah.9.1.71_1.

Cameron F and Neilson B (eds) (2015) *Climate Change and Museum Futures*, Routledge, London.

Carlson B and Farrelly T (2023) *Monumental disruptions: Aboriginal people and colonial commemorations in so-called Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Carlson B and Kennedy T (2021) 'Us mob online: The perils of identifying as Indigenous on social media', *Genealogy*, 5(2), Article 52, https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy5020052.

Carman JG (2007) 'Evaluation practice among community-based organizations: Research into the reality', *American Journal of Evaluation,* 28(1): 60–75, https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214006296245.

Carslon B and Coe L-J (13 January 2022) 'A short history of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy – an indelible reminder of unceded sovereignty', *The Conversation*, accessed 11 December 2024.

Carson A, Grömping M, Gravelle TB, Jackman S and Phillips JB (2024) 'Alert, but not alarmed: Electoral disinformation and trust during the 2023 Australian voice to parliament referendum', *Policy & Internet*, 17(2): e429, https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.429.

Casara BGS, Suitner C and Jetten J (2022) 'The impact of economic inequality on conspiracy beliefs', *Journal of Experimental and Social Psychology,* 98, Article 104245, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2021.104245.

Coe L-J (2024) 'Unsettling the settler state and being on the frontline of Indigenous resistance', in Carlson B, Day M, O'Sullivan S and Kennedy T (eds) *The Routledge handbook of Australian Indigenous peoples and futures*, Routledge, London.

Cole JB and Lott, LL (eds) (2019) *Diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion in museums*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham.

Commonwealth of Australia (2023) *Revive: A place for every story, a story for every place – Australia's cultural policy for the next five years*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Cooke NA (2022) 'A right to be misinformed? Considering fake news as a form of information poverty' in Taylor NG, Kettnich K, Gorham U and Jaeger, PT (eds) *Libraries and the Global Retreat of Democracy: Confronting Polarization, Misinformation, and Suppression,* Emerald Publishing Limited, https://doi.org/10.1108/S0065-283020210000050002.

Creative Australia (2023) *Creating value: Results of the national arts participation survey*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Crooks K, Casey D and Ward J (2020) 'First Nations peoples leading the way in COVID-19 pandemic planning, response and management', *The Medical Journal of Australia,* 213(4):151-152e1, https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.50704.

Allen D (2004) *Talking to strangers – Anxieties of citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Darian-Smith K (26 January 2017) 'Australia Day, Invasion Day, Survival Day: A long history of celebration and contestation', *The Conversation*, accessed 19 December 2024.

Davis C and Pescud M (2020) *The arts and creative industries in health promotion* [PDF], VicHealth, Melbourne.

De Brasi D, Papathomas A and Tsiampokalos T (eds) (2024) *Fake news in Ancient Greece: Forms and functions of 'false information' in ancient Greek literature*, De Gruyter, London.

De Paor S and Heravi B (2020) 'Information literacy and fake news: How the field of librarianship can help combat the epidemic of fake news', *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 46(5): 102218, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2020.102218.

Dragomir M, Rúas-Araújo J and Horowitz M (2024) 'Beyond online disinformation: Assessing national information resilience in four European countries', *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11: 101, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-02605-5.

Edelman Trust Institute (2025) *2025 Edelman trust barometer: Global report* [PDF], Edelman Trust Institute, New York.

Edmonds P (2016) *Settler colonialism and (re)conciliation: Frontier violence, affective performances and imaginative refoundings,* Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Ercan, SA, McSwiney J, Balint P and Dryzek, JS (2022) *Building democratic resilience: Public sphere responses to violent extremism* [PDF], Department of Premier and Cabinet, NSW Government, Sydney.

Evans M (2021) *Guardians of our civic culture: What museums could and should do* [PDF], Ipsos Public Affairs, Melbourne.

Evans M, Dunleavy P and Phillimore J (2024) *Australia's evolving democracy: A new democratic audit,* LSE Press, London.

Fielding K and Trembath JL (2020*) A view from middle Australia: Perceptions of arts, culture and creativity* [PDF], A New Approach, Canberra.

Fielding K, Sidhu A and Vivian A (2023) *Intergenerational arts and culture: Lessons across middle Australia*, A New Approach, Canberra.

Foley G (2013) 'A reflection on the first thirty days of the Embassy', in Foley G, Schaap A and Howell E (eds) *The Aboriginal Tent Embassy: Sovereignty, black power, land rights and the state,* Routledge, London.

Fraser T and Aldrich DP (2021) 'The dual effect of social ties on COVID-19 spread in Japan', *Scientific Reports,* 11:1596, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-81001-4.

Fraser T, Aldrich DP and Page-Tan (2021) 'Bowling alone or distancing together? The role of social capital in excess death rates from COVID-19', *Social Science & Medicine,* 284: 114241, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114241.

Fraser T, Cherdchaiyapong N, Tekle W, Thomas E, Zayas J, Page-Tan C and Aldrich DP (2022) 'Trust but verify: Validating new measures for mapping social infrastructure in cities', *Urban Climate,* 46: 101287, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.uclim.2022.101287.

Fredericks B, Bradfield A, McAvoy S, Ward J, Spierings S, Combo T and Toth-Peter A (2023) 'The burden of the beast: Countering conspiracies and misinformation within

Indigenous communities in Australia', *M/C Journal*, 25(1), https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.2862.

Gattenhof S, Hancox D, Klaebe H and Mackay S (2023) *The role of the creative arts in regional Australia: A social impact model*, Australian Research Council Linkage Report, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane.

Ghazarian Z and Laughland-Booÿ J (2021) 'Becoming an informed voter: Compulsory voting and developing political knowledge in Australia', in Bonotti M and Strangio P (eds) *A century of compulsory voting in Australia: Genesis, impact and future*, Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore.

Given LM, Case DO and Willson R (2023) *Looking for information: Examining research on how people engage with information, 5th edition,* Emerald Publishing Limited, London.

Glow H, Kershaw A and Reason M (2021) 'Leading or avoiding change: the problem of audience diversification for arts organisations', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 27(1):130–148. https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2019.1709060.

Greenaway KH, Haslam SA and Bingley W (2019) 'Are 'they' out to get me? A social identity model of paranoia', *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 22(7):984–1001, https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430218793190.

Grotz K and Rahemipour P (2024) *The hidden capital: Trust in museums in Germany. The German public's view of a cultural institution in transition,* The Institute for Museum Research – Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin.

Hammonds, W (2023) *Culture and democracy, the evidence – How citizens' participation in cultural activities enhances civic engagement, democracy and social cohesion – Lessons from international research*, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission.

Hendriks CM, Ercan SA and Boswell, J (2020) *Mending democracy: Democratic repair in disconnected times,* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Hoes E, Aitken B, Zhang J, Gackowski T and Wojcieszak M (2024) 'Prominent misinformation interventions reduce misperceptions but increase scepticism', *Nature Human Behaviour* 8:1545–1553, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-024-01884-x.

Hooper-Greenhill E, Sandell R, Moussouri T and O'Riain H (2000) *Museums and social inclusion: The GLLAM report*, Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, Leicester.

Hornsey MJ and Fielding KS (2017) 'Attitude roots and Jiu Jitsu persuasion: Understanding and overcoming the motivated rejection of science', *American Psychologist,* 72(5):459–473, https://doi.org/10.1037/a0040437.

Hornsey MJ, Pearson S, Kang J, Sassenberg K, Jetten J, Van Lange PAM, Medina LG, Amiot CE, Ausmees L, Baguma P, Barry O, Becker M, Bilewicz M, Castelain T, Costantini G, Dimdins G, Espinosa A, Finchilescu G, Friese M, González R, Goto N, Gómez A, Halama P, Ilustrisimo R, Jiga-Boy GM, Karl J, Kuppens P, Loughnan S, Markovikj M, Mastor KA, McLatchie N, Novak LM, Onyekachi BN, Peker M, Rizwan M, Schaller M, Suh EM, Talaifar S, Tong EMW, Torres A, Turner RN, Vauclair C, Vinogradov A, Wang Z, Wai

Lan Yeung V and Bastian B (2022) ‘Multinational data show that conspiracy beliefs are associated with the perception (and reality) of poor national economic performance’, *European Journal of Social Psychology,* 53(1):78–89, https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2888.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2021) *Sculpting a national cultural plan: Igniting a post-COVID economy for the arts,* Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Humprecht E, Esser F and Van Aelst P (2020) ‘Resilience to online disinformation: A framework for cross-national comparative research’, *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 25(3): 493–516, https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161219900126.

Humprecht E, Esser F, Aelst PV, Staender A and Morosoli S (2021) ‘The sharing of disinformation in cross-national comparison: Analyzing patterns of resilience’, *Information, Communication & Society*, 26(7):1342–1362, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.2006744.

Hutchison M (2013) 'Shared authority': Collaboration, curatorial voice and exhibition design in Canberra Australia’, in Golding V and Modest W (eds) *Museums and communities: Curators, collections and collaboration*, Bloomsbury, London.

International Panel on the Information Environment (2024) *Trends in the global information environment: 2024 expert survey results* [PDF], International Panel on the Information Environment, Zurich.

Iseke J (2013) ‘Indigenous storytelling as research’, *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 6(4):559– 577, https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2013.6.4.559.

Jackson VC (2025) ’Knowledge institutions and resisting ‘truth decay’’, in Krotoszynski RJ, Koltay A and Garden C (eds) *Disinformation, misinformation, and democracy: Legal approaches in comparative Context,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Janke T (2018) *First Peoples: A roadmap for enhancing Indigenous Engagement in museums and galleries*, Australian Museums and Galleries Association.

Jasinskaja-Lahti I and Jetten J (2019) ‘Unpacking the relationship between religiosity and conspiracy beliefs in Australia’, *British Journal of Social Psychology,* 58(4):938–954, https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12314.

Jimenez A, Vannini S and Cox A (2022) ‘A holistic decolonial lens for library and information studies’, *Journal of Documentation*, 79(1):224–244, https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-10-2021-0205.

Johnston N (2023) ‘The impact and management of mis/disinformation at university libraries in Australia’, *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association,* 72(3):251–269, https://doi.org/10.1080/24750158.2023.2235646.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories (2019) *Telling Australia’s story – and why it is important: Report of the inquiry into Canberra’s national institutions*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Jones BT (26 January 2023) ‘Australia Day wasn’t always January 26, but it was always an issue’, *The Conversation,* accessed 19 December 2024.

Klimtman M (2019) *Knowledge resistance: How we avoid insights from others,* Manchester University Press, Manchester.

La Trobe University (2025) *Centre for the Study of the Inland* [website], accessed 15 December 2024.

Lachlan K, Hutter E and Gilbert C (2021) 'COVID-19 echo chambers: Examining the impact of conservative and liberal news sources on risk perception and response', *Health Security*, 19(1):21–30, https://doi.org/10.1089/hs.2020.0176.

Lee J, Aldrich DP, Kiyota E, Tanaka Y and Sawada Y (2022) 'Social capital building interventions and self-reported post-disaster recovery in Ofunato, Japan' *Scientific Reports,* 12:10274, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-14537-8.

Leigh A and Terrell N (2020) *Reconnected: A community builder's handbook,* La Trobe University Press, Melbourne.

Lewandowsky S, Cook J, Oberauer K, Brophy S, Lloyd EA, and Marriott M (2015). 'Recurrent fury: Conspiratorial discourse in the blogosphere triggered by research on the role of conspiracist ideation in climate denial', *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 3(1):142–178, https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v3i1.443.

MacDowell L, Badham M, Blomkamp E and Dunphy K (eds) (2015) *Making culture count: The politics of cultural measurement,* Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Mamtora J, Ovaska C and Mathiesen B (2021) 'Reconciliation in Australia: The academic library empowering the Indigenous community', *IFLA Journal*, 47(3):351–360, https://doi.org/10.1177/0340035220987578.

Martens H and Hobbs R (2015) 'How media literacy supports civic engagement in a digital age', *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 23(2):120–137, https://doi.org/10.1080/15456870.2014.961636.

McAllister I and Biddle N (2024) 'Information and campaign effects in the 2023 Australian voice referendum', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 59(3):331–343, https://doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2024.2409093.

McBrien T (2020) *Defending the vote: Estonia creates a network to combat disinformation, 2016–2020*, Innovation for Successful Societies, Princeton University, Princeton.

McDougall J (2019) 'Media literacy versus fake news: Critical thinking, resilience and civic engagement' *Media Studies,* 10(19):29–45, https://doi.org/10.20901/ms.10.19.2.

McGrath A, Rademaker L and Silverstein B (2021) 'Deep history and deep listening: Indigenous knowledges and the narration of deep pasts', *Rethinking History,* 25(3):307–326, https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2021.1966201.

McIntyre S and Clark A (2013) *The History Wars*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Message, K (2013) 'Slipping through the cracks: Museums and social inclusion in Australian cultural policy development 2007-10', *International Journal of Cultural Policy,* 19(2):201–221, https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2011.629045.

Mihailidis P (2018) 'Civic media literacies: Re-imagining engagement for civic intentionality', *Learning, Media and Technology*, 43(2):152–64, https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2018.1428623.

Moore-Vissing Q and Mallory B (2020) *2020 New Hampshire Civic Health Index*, Carsey School of Public Policy, University of New Hampshire, Durham.

Myers N (2021) 'Information sharing and community resilience: Toward a whole community approach to surveillance and combatting the "infodemic"', *World Medical and Health Policy,* 13(3):581-592, https://doi.org/10.1002/wmh3.428.

Nera K, Jetten J, Biddlestone M and Klein, O (2022) '"Who wants to silence us?": Perceived discrimination of conspiracy theory believers increases "conspiracy theorist" identification when it comes from powerholders – but not from the general public', *British Journal of Social Psychology,* 61(4):1263–1285, https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12536.

Newell J (2021) 'Museum occupations', in Cameron M, Kirsten W and Newell J (eds) *Living with the anthropocene: Love, loss and hope in the face of environmental crisis*, NewSouth, Sydney.

Nicholas J (12 November 2023) 'Australians aren't joining in any more – and it appears to be having big political consequences', *The Guardian*, accessed 19 December 2024.

NLA (National Library of Australia) (3 June 2022) *Trove turns a new page* [media release], NLA, accessed 12 December 2024.

NLA (2025) *Strategic vision*, NLA, accessed 6 February 2025.

NLA (2024) *Text correction hall of fame*, NLA, accessed 12 December 2024.

NLB (National Library Board Singapore) (2025a) *SURE elevated*, NLB, accessed 5 February 2025.

NLB (2025b) *About us*, NLB, accessed 5 February 2025.

Notley T, Chambers S, Park S and Dezuanni M (2021) *Adult media literacy in Australia: Attitudes, experiences and needs* [PDF], Western Sydney University, Queensland University of Technology and University of Canberra.

Notley T, Chambers S, Park S and Dezuanni M (2024) *Adult media literacy in 2024: Australian attitudes, experiences and needs* [PDF], Western Sydney University, Queensland University of Technology and University of Canberra.

O'Donnell J, Guan Q and Prentice Q (2024) *Mapping social cohesion 2024*, Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, accessed 2 December 2024.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co- Operation and Development) (2024) *The OECD reinforcing democracy initiative: Monitoring report – Assessing progress and charting the way forward*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Park S, Lee JY, Notley T and Dezuanni M (2023a) 'Exploring the relationship between media literacy, online interaction, and civic engagement', *The Information Society,* 39(4):250–261, https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2023.2211055.

Park S, Notley T, Thomson TJ, Hourigan A and Dezuanni M (2024) *Online misinformation in Australia: Adults' experiences, abilities, and responses*, University of Canberra and Western Sydney University, https://doi.org/10.60836/jpmm-dw04.

Park S, Walsh B, and Su J (2023b) *Libraries and media literacy education*, University of Canberra, News and Media Research Centre, Canberra, https://doi.org/10.25916/KAHM-ZR94.

Pek S and Wang D (2018) 'National library board's public education on information literacy: Teaching citizens to fight fake news', *Singapore Journal of Library and Information Management,* 47:2–14.

Perkin C (2013) 'Beyond the rhetoric', in Waterton E and Watson S (eds) *Heritage and community engagement*, Routledge, London.

Perkins R, Mason-Bertrand A, Tymoszuk U, Spiro N, Gee K and Williamon A (2021) 'Arts engagement supports social connectedness in adulthood: Findings from the HEartS Survey', *BMC Public Health,* 21(1208), https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11233-6.

Piko L and Brett A (2021) 'Trove, disability and researching history: Or, digital materialism for precarious times', *History Australia,* 18(4):855–857, https://doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2021.1993748.

Platow MJ, Foddy M, Yamagishi T, Lim LI and Chow A (2012) 'Two experimental tests of trust in in-group strangers: The moderating role of common knowledge of group membership', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 42(1):30–35, https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.852.

Pope J (2009) *Strengthening local communities: The community museums pilot project report*, Department for Planning and Community Development, Victorian Government, Melbourne.

Posetti J and Matthews A (2018) *A short guide to the history of 'fake news' and disinformation* [PDF], International Center for Journalists, Washington.

Pronyk PM, Harpham T, Busza J, Phetla G, Morison LA, Hargreaves JR, Kim JC, Watts CH and Porter JD (2008) 'Can social capital be intentionally generated? A randomized trial from rural South Africa,' *Social Science and Medicine*, 67(10):1559–1570, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2008.07.022.

Pronyk PM, Hargreaves JR, Kim JC, Morison LA, Phetla G, Watts C, Busza J and Porter JDH (2006) 'Effect of a structural intervention for the prevention of intimate-partner violence and HIV in rural South Africa: a cluster randomised trial', *The Lancet,* 368(9551):1973–1983, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(06)69744-4.

Prowse L (2015) 'Parallels on the periphery: The exploration of Aboriginal history by local historical societies in New South Wales, 1960s-1970s. *History Australia*, 12(3):55–75, https://doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2015.11668586.

Putnam L (2016) 'The transnational and the text-searchable: Digitized sources and the shadows they cast', *American Historical Review*, 121(2):377–402, https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/121.2.377.

Putnam R (2000) *Bowling alone – The collapse and revival of American community*, Simon & Schuster, New York.

Questacon (2021) *Year in review 2021*, Questacon.

Questacon (2022) *2022 in review: Our achievements*, Questacon, accessed 5 February 2025.

Referendum Council (2017) *Final report of the Referendum Council*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Rentschler R, Bridson K and Evans J (2015) *Stats and stories theme 1: Community Connectedness - the impact of the arts in regional Australia* [PDF], Deakin University, Geelong.

Revez J and Corujo L (2021) 'Librarians against fake news: A systematic literature review of library practices,' *The Journal of Academic Librarianship,* 47(2):102304, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2020.102304.

Riboldi M, Fennis L and Stears M (2022) *Nurturing links across civil society: Lessons from Australia's for-purpose sector's response to COVID-19*, Sydney Policy Lab, University of Sydney, Sydney.

Ridge M, Blickhan S, Ferriter M, Berglund Prytz Y, Brumfield B, Brumfield S, Burgher D, Casey J, Coleman S, Cybulska D, Haley Goldman M, Luther K, Mast A, White N, Wilkins N and Wilcox P (2021) *The collective wisdom handbook: Perspectives on crowdsourcing in cultural heritage,* https://doi.org/10.21428/a5d7554f.1b80974b.

Rosenberg TJ (2011) 'History museums and social cohesion: Building identity, bridging communities and addressing difficult issues', *Peabody Journal of Education*, 86(2):115–128, https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2011.561171.

Rupar M, Sekerdej M and Jamróz-Dolińska K (2021) 'The role of national identification in explaining political and social civic engagement,' *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 24(8):1515–1537, https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430220967975.

Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee (2021) *Nationhood, national identity and democracy*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Sherratt T (2021) 'More than newspapers', *History Australia,* 18(4):837–840, https://doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2021.1993744.

Shiri A, Howard D and Farnel S (2021) 'Indigenous digital storytelling: Digital interfaces supporting cultural heritage preservation and access', *The International Information and Library Review*, 54(2):93–114, https://doi.org/10.1080/10572317.2021.1946748.

Stevenson D, Barns S, Clements J, Cmielewski C and Mar P (2019) *The social impact of NSW arts, screen and culture programs* [PDF], Western Sydney University, Sydney.

Strengthening Democracy Taskforce (2024) *Strengthening Australian democracy: A practical agenda for democratic resilience* [PDF], Department of Home Affairs, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Swain S, Musgrove N, O'Neill C and Thurley-Hart C (2021), 'Trove and the history of childhood: combining microhistory and big data', *History Australia,* 18(4):840–845, https://doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2021.1993742.

Treasury (2023) *Measuring what matters: Australia's first wellbeing framework*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Trinca M (2024, forthcoming) 'Building cultural capital in the 21st century' [conference presentation], Annual Australian Academy of the Humanities Symposium.

Turner G (2023) *The shrinking nation*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane.

van der Meer TGLA, Hameleers M and Ohme J (2023) 'Can fighting misinformation have a negative spillover effect? How warnings for the threat of misinformation can decrease general news credibility', *Journalism Studies* 24(6):803–823, https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2023.2187652.

van der Staak S and Wolf P (2019) *Cybersecurity in elections: Models of interagency collaboration* [PDF], International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Stockholm.

van Kooy J (2022) *Social cohesion insights 04: On belonging*, Scanlon Foundation, accessed 18 February 2025.

van Prooijen JW and van Vugt M (2018) 'Conspiracy theories: Evolved functions and psychological mechanisms', *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 13(6):770–788, https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691618774270.

Vivian A, Fielding K and Rossi S (2024) *Transformative edge 2024: How arts, culture and creativity impact our prosperity, cohesion, security, health and sustainability*, Insight Report no. 2024-03, A New Approach, Canberra.

Wall M, Otis Campbell M and Janbek D (2017) 'Syrian refugees and information precarity', *New Media and Society,* 19(2), https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815591967.

Wang C, Platow MJ and Newman EJ (2023) 'There is an 'I' in truth: How salient identities shape dynamic perceptions of truth', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 53(2):383–400, https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2909.

Williams M (13 June 2021) 'Footprints 'take action' on inequality', *The Longreach Leader*, accessed 21 February 2025.

Woodward K (ed) (1997) *Identity and difference*, Sage Publications, London.

Yang F and Sukhmani K (2024) *Submission to the inquiry into civics education, engagement and participation in Australia*, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society and University of New South Wales, https://doi.org/10.60836/rqth-tc20.

Appendix A: Acknowledgements

This report was developed with guidance from an expert working group of leading scholars and representatives from the peak bodies for Australian cultural institutions. The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia gratefully acknowledges the expert working group for their contributions.

Expert working group members

- Professor Michelle Arrow FASSA
- Professor Bronwyn Carlson FAHA
- Mr Seb Chan
- Professor Kate Darian-Smith FASSA (Co-Chair)
- Professor Penny Edmonds FASSA
- Professor Lisa Given FASSA
- Professor Katie Holmes FASSA
- Professor Jolanda Jetten FASSA
- Professor Julia Kindt FAHA
- Professor Michael Platow FASSA
- Professor Lynette Russell AM FASSA FAHA (Co-Chair)
- Dr Mathew Trinca FAHA

Academy project team and lead authors

- Dr Honae Cuffe
- Dr Chris Hatherly