

CANBERRA POTTERS' SOCIETY INCORPORATED

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026 - 2032

Supported by

CanberraPotters WatsonArtsCentre

ACT Government

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Acknowledgement of Country

Canberra Potters acknowledges the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we work, create and come together.

We extend our respect to ancestors and Elders past, present and emerging and recognise the ongoing cultural and spiritual connection of First Nations peoples to Country and that cultural practice and care for Country continues.



Executive summary

Canberra Potters' Society Inc. is the ACT's pre-eminent ceramic arts organisation. As a membership organisation since 1975, we have shaped ceramics in the region, fostering creativity, skill and connection through clay.

We are unique as the only not-for-profit ceramics organisation in Australia that offers such a complete and comprehensive range of services and opportunities for artists, makers and the public. Our Watson Arts Centre facility includes ceramic workshops, professional kiln and glazing facilities, a gallery, artist studios, onsite artist accommodation, a retail shop and tranquil gardens.

Through exhibitions, residencies, classes, workshops, masterclasses and community events, we support everyone, from beginners to internationally acclaimed artists.

We celebrated our 50th anniversary in 2025 and stand poised for our next chapter. Our 2026–2030 Strategic Plan charts how we will grow our impact, reach and reputation by supporting our members; elevating our artistic program; expanding our world-class ceramics education; deepening our community engagement; and ensuring sustainable stewardship of Watson Arts Centre.

Building on 50 years of exemplary practice, we are ready to position ourselves and the ACT as a centre of excellence in Australian ceramics.



Vision

Build a nationally and internationally recognised centre of excellence for ceramics.

Mission

Canberra Potters supports its members and the wider community through world-class ceramics education at all levels. We support learning and experimentation, promote mastery and innovation, and encourage the professional development of ceramic artists at all career stages. Our artistic program and exhibitions attract a diverse range of national and international ceramic artists. Our events build community, inspire creativity, and ensure sustainable stewardship of Watson Arts Centre.



Cathy Franzi, After the Fires, 2025 | Photographer Tim Ng

Our values

Exploration

We embody creativity, innovation and mastery and innovation in all that we do. Our programs and people are inspiring.

Authenticity

Our work is grounded in purpose and integrity, honouring traditions of clay while embracing contemporary practices.

Inclusion + Diversity

Our membership is inclusive and welcoming - clay connects us across ages, abilities and backgrounds.

Integrity

We are responsible stewards of our organisation, its finances, our facility and our environment.



Who we are

Canberra Potters is the ACT's leading ceramic arts organisation. We provide internationally recognised ceramics education, a full artistic program including artistic residencies and exhibitions, and an engaging program of community arts events.

As a not-for profit membership-based association we are supported by artsACT through grant funding from the ACT government, but we finance 80% of our activities through our own income streams. We are the sole tenant of Watson Arts Centre, stewarding this public facility on behalf of the ACT government.



age

50-year legacy

In 2025 Canberra Potters' Society celebrated 50 years as a membership-based organisation that has shaped ceramics in the ACT and beyond.

Formed by thirteen potters who were recent graduates of the Canberra School of Art, we began as a support base for emerging professional potters and a place to offer pottery classes to the community. From humble beginnings renting space from the Crafts Council of the ACT, we have grown into a 700+ membership organisation that fully utilizes the Watson Arts Centre, a purpose-built facility that is home to an extraordinary range of ceramic programs and activities.

Key milestones in our journey

1975: Foundation as Canberra Potters Society

2001: Taking over management of Watson Arts Centre

2008: Opening of new 150m^2 kiln shed with upgraded power supply

2011: Completion of five new studios and artist-in-residence accommodation

2014: Appointment of full-time CEO following ACT Key Arts Organisation status

2025: Celebrating 50 years and major kiln shed extension and glaze room upgrades



Our unique offering

Canberra Potters offers:

- **Education and Professional Development Programs:** Comprehensive classes from beginners to professionals, including term-based courses, workshops, masterclasses and school holiday programs
- **Exhibition Program:** Professional gallery featuring local, national and international artists
- **Artist-in-Residence Program:** Onsite accommodation and studio space for emerging and established Australian and international artists
- **Public Programs:** Artist talks, events and experiences that engage with and connect artists, makers, members and the community
- **Membership Program:** Open to individuals and families at all levels of practice in the ACT and surrounding region
- **Purpose Built Making Facilities:** Two teaching workshops, a dedicated Members' workshop, extensive kiln facilities (electric, gas, soda, raku), a professional glaze room with spray booth and clay recycling
- **Artist Studios:** Four studios for professional ceramic artists
- **Retail:** Shop showcasing members' work and retailing ceramics supplies.
- **Community Spaces:** Tranquil gardens and outdoor areas located only 5km from Canberra's city centre





Moraig McKenna, Surfacing Bowls, 2025 | Photographer Katrina Leske

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Our impact

Every year, Canberra Potters:

- Welcomes **10,000+ people** through our gallery and retail spaces
- Delivers learning programs to **2,000+ students**
- Supports **700+ members**
- Provides opportunities for **150+ artists and makers** to exhibit, develop professionally and generate income
- Delivers **38,000+ contact hours** across adult, children and professional development programs
- Hosts **5 artists-in-residence**
- Presents **6-8 exhibitions** showcasing ceramic arts and practice



Our people

Governance

Our experienced Board has deep expertise in governance, arts administration, financial management, risk management, law and regulation, ceramics education and ceramic arts.

Staff team

Our team of passionate professionals includes our CEO and Artistic Director, Education Director, Gallery Manager, Shop Manager, Workshops and Facilities Coordinator, Technical Officer and Technical Assistants and 20+ experienced teachers and learning support assistants.

Membership

Our membership includes over 700 members ranging from beginners to full-time professional potters and internationally regarded ceramic artists, creating a vibrant and supportive community.



Our setting + sector

Our leafy site at Watson Arts Centre is located on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country. The region, now known as Canberra, is recognised as a significant meeting place that has been continuously occupied by First Nations peoples for millennia who maintain their cultural, social, environmental, spiritual, and economic connection to the lands and waters of Canberra and the ACT region.

Canberra Potters has a unique position within Australia's ceramics landscape and the diverse and supportive arts ecosystem of the ACT. We are the only not-for-profit ceramics organisation in Australia that offers such a complete and comprehensive range of services and opportunities for artists, makers and the public.

We operate the ACT Government funded Watson Arts Centre. Along with Canberra Glassworks, PhotoAccess and Megalo Print, we are also a medium-specific, skills-based arts organisation that attracts national and international acclaim.

Our local strategic partnerships include:

- ANU School of Art and Design
- Craft + Design Canberra
- Strathnairn Arts

Our national strategic membership and partnerships include:

- The Australian Association of Ceramics
- Australian Craft and Design Centre Network (ACDC)
- Walker Ceramics
- Keane Ceramic

Internationally, we are distinguished by having four current Canberra Potters members elected to the International Academy of Ceramics.

We benefit from access to national cultural institutions, policy makers and cultural decision-makers in the national capital. We are active drivers of Canberra’s visitor economy.

Nationally, Canberra Potters sits within a ceramics ecosystem that includes other not-for-profit organisations that are ceramics-specific or that feature ceramics such as the Jam Factory, Adelaide and public and private education providers such as Clayschool Brisbane, Slow Clay, Melbourne and Sturt Gallery and Studios, NSW; as well as a host of ceramics membership organisations; and public and commercial galleries that focus on ceramics practice.

Internationally, ceramics is experiencing a renaissance, with increased public interest significant government investment, particularly in Asia. Our next phase offers rich opportunities to expand our national and international networks and elevate Canberra Potters and the ACT as centres of artistic and educational excellence in ceramics.

Cultural policies + codes

Our strategic plan reflects key national and ACT-level policies, including the ACT Government's goal for Canberra to be known as Australia's arts capital[1] and the Arts, Culture and Creative Policy[2], built around three core actions:

- **Create** amazing art and culture – everywhere, at any time, for everyone
- **Develop** arts, cultural and creative industry, practice, and facilities – supporting creation and culture at all levels, via any path
- **Promote** our arts and culture – to attract artists and creators, arts workers, visitors and investment

In 2025, the ACT Government introduced new funding to strengthen its future UNESCO City of Design bid.

We follow ACT principles for respectful engagement and fair pay for artists and arts workers[3], recognising their essential contribution to the ACT community.

We also follow NAVA's guidelines for fair, ethical and reflective pay across the contemporary arts sector[4].

Our Strategic Plan also draws from the National Cultural Policy[5], a five-year framework designed to revitalise Australia's arts sector through First Nations leadership, storytelling, artist-focused support, strong cultural systems and deeper audience engagement.

Our strategic objectives support the ACT Government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body[6] in their work to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Canberra, especially through Cultural Integrity, Connecting the Community, and Lifelong Learning.

Our educational and artistic programs also follow the ACT government plan for a more inclusive ACT[7], where people with disability can join in all parts of community life.

We support plans that:

- help organisations create positive change
- build on successful projects and explore new ideas
- encourage progress across all sectors

Our values align with the ACT government's commitment to multiculturalism[8] and its focus on celebrating diversity and creating a welcoming place for all.

1. Canberra: Australia's Arts Capital, a statement of ambition for the Arts 2021 – 2026
2. Canberra: Australia's Arts Capital – Arts, Culture and Creative Policy 2022–2026
3. ACT Government Renumeration Principles and Practices for Artists and Arts Workers 2022
4. The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) Code of Practice for Visual Arts, Craft and Design
5. National Cultural Policy Revive: A place for every story, a story for every place (2023)
6. ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement (2019 – 2028)
7. ACT Disability Strategy (2024-2033)
8. The Charter for Multiculturalism, enacted under the Multiculturalism Act 2023 (ACT)

Strategic goals 2026–2030

Over the next five years, Canberra Potters will pursue five interconnected strategic goals that position us as Australia's leading ceramics centre while deepening our impact locally and expanding our reach nationally and internationally.

Excellence

Be a nationally and internationally recognised centre of excellence for ceramics practice that attracts leading artists and is a cultural destination in Australia's arts capital.

Innovation + Diversity

Foster contemporary ceramics practice and champion artistic diversity, experimentation and exchange.

Skills + Inclusivity

Elevate our world-class ceramics education program and foster wellbeing through clay for all learners.

Vibrant Community

Cultivate an engaged membership that respects cultural connection and diversity. Connect with, and build community.

Stewardship + Sustainability

Exemplify leadership in good governance, arts centre stewardship, sustainability and strategic partnerships.



Excellence

Be a nationally and internationally recognised centre of excellence for ceramics practice that attracts leading artists and is a cultural destination in Australia's arts capital.

Build a national and international profile

We strengthen Australia's ceramics sector by leveraging our unique position as a publicly funded, comprehensive ceramics centre. Our concentration of expertise, established partnerships and connections enable us to link local practice to global networks, fostering artist exchange, professional mobility and cultural diplomacy through ceramics.

Become a destination for leading national and international artists

Growing national and international engagement through our Artist-in-Residence and exhibition programs strengthens our role as a magnet for excellence and diversity. By broadening participation across career stages, cultures, practices and regions, we enrich local practice and amplify Australia's reputation within the global ceramics community.

Deliver world-class ceramics education and professional development

Comprehensive ceramics education from beginners to advanced practitioners positions us as the ACT's foundational provider and Australia's leading destination for professional masterclasses. By attracting participants nationally and internationally, we elevate sector standards while developing the next generation of ceramic artists and advancing Australia's reputation.

Innovation + Diversity

Foster contemporary ceramics practice and champion artistic diversity, experimentation and exchange.

Support professional pathways and experimental practice

Supporting artists to undertake experimental firing, materials research and large-scale work creates clear pathways from emerging to professional practice. Peer mentoring, masterclasses, expanded kiln access and institutional collaboration provide the facilities and knowledge-sharing that enable artists to push boundaries, take risks and advance their professional careers.

Establish a curated artistic program

Our artistic program is guided by curatorial expertise, engaging leading arts practitioners in our exhibitions and residency programs to present expertise and innovation in contemporary ceramics. Through curated programming and paid opportunities for artists that align with sector best practice, we strengthen artistic quality, provide professional recognition and demonstrate leadership that elevates standards across Australia's ceramic arts sector.

Embed First Nations practice

Embedding First Nations voices and perspectives throughout our programs recognises the enduring strength of First Nations cultures and creativity and their fundamental place in our past, present and future. Paid opportunities and prioritised representation across exhibitions, residencies and education honours cultural knowledge, supports self-determination and celebrates the rich diversity of Australian ceramic practice guided by First Nations leadership.

Increase artistic dialogue and exchange

Expanded opportunities for dialogue and exchange through the presentation of artistic and technical talks, panels, symposiums, and participation in partnered programs, builds audience knowledge, extends community and offers professional development and employment opportunities for artists and makers.

Skill + Inclusivity

Elevate our world-class ceramics education program and foster wellbeing through clay for all learners.

Grow education reach and progression

We improve learning pathways from beginner to professional practice through structured curriculum, skills mapping and expanded advanced offerings. Clear progressions, online resources and increased masterclasses ensure every student can advance their practice while achieving sector-leading satisfaction through continuous improvement and responsive programming that meets diverse needs.

Establish First Nations Artist–lead learning

Deepening relationships with local First Nations communities through co-designed programs supports First Nations-led ceramics practice and cultural expression. Building on local and interstate relationships and leveraging partnerships creates authentic opportunities for First Nations artists to lead workshops, residencies and exhibitions guided by cultural protocols.

Support wellbeing, access and inclusion through clay

Enhanced supported learning and accessible pathways for individuals and communities recognises clay's power to support wellbeing and foster creative expression. Partnerships delivering creative wellbeing programs, professional support for staff working with complex needs, and needs-based scholarships ensure everyone can experience the transformative and therapeutic benefits of clay.

Vibrant Community

Cultivate an engaged membership that respects cultural connection and diversity. Connect with, and build community.

Support an engaged membership

Refreshing membership to create meaningful engagement, participation pathways and belonging attracts diverse members while retaining supporters. Dedicated coordination, member-exclusive programs, formalised volunteering and cultural ambassador initiatives build an active community that sustains our organisation, enriches programs and extends our impact across Canberra and beyond.

Grow public audience and engagement

Enhanced visitor experience and increased engagement across artistic and public programs, retail and digital channels, make Canberra Potters more discoverable to local, national and international audiences. Transformed retail experiences, redesigned digital presence, expanded social media and refreshed brand identity convert interest into visits, visits into participation, and visitors into committed supporters.

Create signature cultural experiences at Watson Arts centre

Multifaceted public events and programs attract local and interstate visitors, positioning Watson Arts Centre as a vibrant cultural destination and "only in Canberra" experience. Signature festivals, exhibition-linked public programs, enhanced Open Studios and improved amenities including gardens and hospitality, create memorable experiences that celebrate ceramics, showcase our Collection and build audiences.

Stewardship + Sustainability

Exemplify leadership in good governance, arts centre stewardship, sustainability and strategic partnerships.

Maintain best practice NFP governance

We embody outstanding governance for our organization and as ACT facility stewards, ensuring transparency, accountability and strategic leadership that is aligned with sector best practice. Professional governance tools, continuous policy development, skilled Board recruitment, regular evaluation and member consultation maintains strong foundations enabling sustainability, community trust and responsible public asset stewardship.

Model strong financial sustainability and arts sector leadership

Diversifying income, growing earned revenue and maintaining prudent reserves demonstrates financial sustainability as a sector model. Strategic pricing, corporate and philanthropic partnerships, annual surplus budgeting and smart capital allocation reduce government reliance while investing in excellence. Our strategic partnerships strengthen the broader arts ecosystem and advance collective advocacy.

Support workforce capability and growth

We recruit, retain and reward best-qualified staff in the sector, providing professional development, fair remuneration and supportive workplace culture that sustains organisational capacity and resilience. Annual KPIs, development plans, education support and professionalised teacher recruitment strengthen our team. Structured volunteer and internship programs create pathways into the sector while delivering essential support and developing future leaders.

Lead sustainable ceramics education and practice

Leadership in sustainable ceramics practice, waste reduction and environmental consciousness positions us at the forefront of responsible making. Low-energy firing methods, partnership with sustainability leaders, lifecycle education and renewable energy investigation reduce our footprint while teaching responsible practice.

Governance

Canberra Potters' Society Incorporated is a non-profit membership association registered under the Incorporated Associations Act (1991) ACT. Its Board sets the strategic priorities for Canberra Potters' and comprises member-elected and independent members. The Board's professional expertise covers not-for-profit governance, arts administration, financial management, risk management, law and regulation, ceramics education and ceramic arts. The Board and its Committees (Finance, Artistic Advisory and Project-Specific) meet at least 6 times per year. The CEO reports to the Board.

Consultation

Stakeholder consultation to inform this Strategic Plan 2026-2032 was conducted over the period September-December 2025. It included an Annual Members' Survey with 120 responses (just over 17% of our membership); in person consultations with members, administrative, technical and teaching staff; individual meetings with arts industry representatives in and beyond the ACT and with our strategic partners; and a series of Board strategy sessions.



Looking forward

As Canberra Potters looks to its next 50 years, this Strategic Plan charts an ambitious yet achievable path forward. We seek to thrive in a dynamic ACT and national arts landscape.

Our success depends on:

- **Commitment** from Board, staff, members and supporters
- **Investment** in people, systems and facilities to support members and the public
- **Innovation** in programs, partnerships and ways of working
- **Inclusion** ensuring everyone can connect through clay
- **Quality** in all we do, from teaching to exhibitions to community engagement

Most importantly, our success requires staying true to our fundamental purpose: connecting members and the public through clay and advancing ceramic arts in all their forms.

The opportunities ahead - elevating our artistic program, enhancing our membership, expanding our national profile, deepening First Nations engagement, building financial sustainability - are within reach. They require focus, resources and collective effort, but they will position Canberra Potters as Australia's pre-eminent not-for-profit ceramics centre.

As we implement this plan, we will remain responsive to our members and stakeholders, emerging opportunities and challenges. We will maintain flexibility to adapt while staying focused on our strategic priorities. We look forward to writing the next exciting chapter in Canberra Potters story.

Clay connects us. Excellence inspires us. Community sustains us.



Robyn Campbell, First Light #2, 2025 | Photography Tim Ng

Policy: Canberra Potters' Society Incorporated Strategic Plan 2026-2032
Policy status: Revision of Canberra Potters' Society Incorporated Business Plan 2023-2027
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Authorized Officer: President
Approval date: 18 December 2025
Policy review due: 18 December 2028
Related policies and documents:
Constitution, Canberra Potters' Society Incorporated (9 March 2017)
Canberra Potters' Society Incorporated Management Plan 2026-2032

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CanberraPotters WatsonArtsCentre

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